

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

DISTINGUISHED
SENIOR **C**ITIZENS
OF THE
WORLD”



10 OCTOBER 2009, İSTANBUL ,TURKEY

TÜRYAK 

Variety in Unity ...



FOREWORD

*H*aving assumed the universal mission of acting as the voice of all senior citizens regardless of their religion, language, race or gender, Turyak Seniors Council Association is determined to hold an international congress annually, one which each year will bring up one of the important common problems on the world's agenda.

These congresses will be held in İstanbul and invite from all countries of the world senior citizens who are distinguished for their wisdom, to deliver papers on the congress topic, choosing them as authorities in that field. Pertinent international organizations will also be invited to these congresses, reports of which will be submitted to all political leaders in the world.

Our first congress, on the subject of **bridging the cultural gap**, is being attended by thirty-nine highly distinguished participants from thirty-four countries, and this plus the fact of His Excellency. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's keen interest and attendance as guest of honor suffice to provide us with great encouragement for the future. We would like to extend our thanks to him on behalf of our board of directors as well as all our senior citizens and participants.

That such an extremely sensitive and vital topic as bridging the cultural gap has been taken up by such an eminent delegation of distinguished senior citizens in all their wisdom marks a groundbreaking event for the entire world, and as such is a source to us of excitement, pleasure and pride. With all our hearts we believe that the congress will make observations beneficial to humankind in general while offering proposals toward a solution. Future congresses, meanwhile, will bestow on İstanbul the title of **“city where wise people come together for the sake of humankind.”**



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON SENIOR CITIZENS
“BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN”

INTRODUCTION

I see the International Congress on Senior Citizens, the consultation council of which also includes our AK Party Coordination Centre for the Elderly, as a great opportunity for establishing an inter-generational and inter-cultural meeting.

As Turkey, I must express the immense pleasure we feel for hosting such a vital meeting and taking yet another important step towards “Bridging the Gap in Between Cultures”. This glorious organization, which brings together hundreds of exemplary senior citizens from many countries all around the world, also provides a good opportunity to ensure international cooperation against cultural erosion. Through this organization, wise people coming from many different nations will share their life experiences gained on various different geographies of the world, will address the phenomenon of old age with its universal dimensions, and will convey to their own countries and communities the call for intercultural unity rising from our country.

As emphasized sagaciously in the introduction of the organization, elderly people are the “Senior Citizens” of all societies and all countries. They represent wisdom, common sense, patience, and sound logic and perception.

We belong to a culture that has always held our elderly in high esteem, given them priority and treated them with reverence in all areas of life throughout all ages of the history.

In these modern times, it is a reality that the social life is going through a rapid transformation and that in the meanwhile some humanistic traits are being neglected and that sometimes we see the erosion of the principal values that make us who we are... We observe that in some families the contact between generations is becoming weaker and even reaching the point of breaking away. Yet we must maintain our identities without damaging our values and we must ensure our social development, because a society can only stay erect to



Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN
Prime Minister of Turkish Republic

the extent it can pass down its values, its culture, from generation to generation, like a chain of rings brought together side by side.

The Justice and Development Party is a party that has placed the family institution to the heart of the society and politics, while following the line of conservative democracy.

Family is the core of society. When the family starts disintegrating, losing its sacred status and its importance, it heralds the start of erosion and decline in a society.

It will be an undisputable assurance for our future if families are the first to take care of their elders before the intervention of the state or its institutions, if family members can benefit from the knowledge and experience of the elderly and if new generations build a life style drawing on the life experiences of their elderly.

Of course, a social state must, under all circumstances, provide care for and meet the needs of its senior citizens who have spent their long years in the service of their country. However, we regard it as extremely important that the elderly are, if possible, protected and cared for within their own families.

As the Justice and Development Party, we are very pleased to be able to contribute to and support such a grand organization that fits our fundamental political philosophy.

Such organizations contribute in developing the sensitivities which we must protect, and in increasing the resilience of our society at the point of preserving humanistic values.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to those who have made possible such an important and fruitful meeting, and hope that it will yield successful outcomes in the name of our country and the whole humanity.



**MR. PRIME MINISTER, ESTEEMED GUESTS,
DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,**

*F*irst i would like to welcome and extend respectful greetings to you all on behalf of the board of directors of the **Türyak seniors council association**, which aims to put the life of all senior citizens on the social agenda, wherever they may be in the world, and to make this agenda permanent.

We are gathered in this magnificent congress center, which the municipality of İstanbul has been kind enough to provide, for the purpose, with your valuable contributions, of working toward the solution of one of the world's most important issues, namely **bridging the cultural gap**. In your presence i would like to thank the Mayor of Greater İstanbul, Dr. Kadir Topbaş, as well as all the institutions and organizations which helped make this congress possible.

With a known past dating back two thousand eight hundred years, this center of civilizations, İstanbul, has been invaded perhaps more than any other city in the world. And each invasion has naturally meant some degree of cultural exchange. One must also not forget that during its 2800-year history İstanbul is the only city in the world to have served as capital to three great empires; the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. Even dreaming of the cultural wealth created by the deep, buzzing history in İstanbul is enough to make one dizzy. And when you think of the most recent finds, which show that we are living above paleolithic, neolithic and bronze age settlements, it's truly mind-boggling.

On top of these historical riches, İstanbul has been the center for the three religions of the book at the same time – judaism, christianity and islam.

Joining the continents of asia and europe by two beautiful bridges, İstanbul, according to the good news we have received from our prime minister, will soon be blessed with a third. These bridges not only link continents, more importantly they unite two separate spheres of culture and the hearts of the people who belong to them. Every day hundreds of thousands of İstanbulites cross these bridges in both directions, commuting from home to work or vice-versa. But the truth of the matter is that at least twice a day they make an inter-continental voyage. Yes, İstanbul really is a lovely city.

Meanwhile i can't help reminding you that in 82 days, that is, on january first, 2010, this glorious city of İstanbul will become the cultural capital of europe, and i must add that we are gathered in the city which of all those in the world best suits the definitions of "culture" and "bridge" for a meeting the theme of which is "bridging the cultural gap."



Distinguished participants, guests and members of the press:

The bridge to be built between cultures is, simply put, one of “communication” and “interaction.”

The first of these two elements forms the necessary underpinning for the second to work, while the second is the inevitable outcome of the first.

When the requisite conditions exist here there is a mechanism that always operates: provided there is communication between two phenomena, there is interaction as well.

One of the first scholars to link the element of “culture” to such a mechanism was İbn-i Haldun.

He was born in Tunisia in 1332, toward the end of the middle ages which for a thousand years had plunged Europe into darkness, and apart from Tunisia he lived in Algeria, Morocco and Andalusia. He died in 1406 at the age of 74 in Egypt, where he had spent the last 22 years of his life.

A highly interesting person, this İbn-i Haldun.

His life was divided between, on the one hand, acting as administrator at the highest level to the sultans of North-West Africa, Andalusia and Egypt, and on the other hand carrying out scientific studies.

İbn-i Haldun said the following:

“first there is the nomadic society. Its culture involves such positive values as courage and frugality. This society then settles down and founds a state. And...the culture (both among the rulers and among the people) rapidly begins to decay, as courage is replaced by hypocrisy and frugality by greed. When these conditions develop, another nomadic society with an unblemished culture attacks the settled society with its decadent culture, and conquers it. The members of the defeated settled society soon begin to imitate the behavior of the vanquishing nomads. But in the long run the decadent culture of the settled society comes to dominate the society as a whole, including the former nomads who now rule. The result is that the state is vulnerable to the attack of another nomadic society with its unblemished culture, which will come from without and conquer in its turn.”

This is the mechanism which İbn-i Haldun foresaw!

Another mechanism that can be applied to cultural interaction came from Friedrich Hegel, who was born 438 years after İbn-i Haldun.

This mechanism is called the dialectic.



The concept was first discovered 2500 years ago by Heraclitus of Ephesus.

In various guises it had visited the minds of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, wandering through hinduism, buddhism and brahmaism to pass from hand to hand in the europe of the middle ages before taking the form that is best known today, in Hegel. It is even the foundation of the class conflict mechanism developed by marx.

Back, then, to the dialectic of Hegel...

As all of you will be aware, this philosophical mechanism can be expressed, in its simplest form, as the spiral of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

Distinguished guests:

In a gathering whose theme is “bridging the cultural gap”, i wanted to recall the “communication-interaction” mechanisms of two great thinkers from two cultural spheres.

In today’s World the most prominent means of communication and interaction is not war and invasion, as it was when İbn-i Haldun was alive 600 years ago.

The weapons of that time seem innocent compared to the much more dangerous “weapons of communication” in use today.

Although examples of the nomadic societies cited by İbn-i Haldun, with their “unblemished” cultures, can still be found here and there today, it is unthinkable that they might conquer the “decadent” settled societies of our time.

As for the dialectic of Hegel, who was born 239 years ago:

It is obvious that such a mechanism, with thought as its basis, can only operate in a society whose communication networks are sufficiently developed.

We may assume that in Hegel’s time communication among german principedoms (and indeed throughout europe) was sufficiently advanced to make “the dialectic of ideas” possible.

With communication as universally advanced as it is today, might we replace the concept of “thought” in Hegel’s mechanism with that of “culture”?

I think we can; but on two conditions:

If we agree that



1. Culture does not change as fast as ideas
2. A culture may not have been created as the antithesis of another culture.

Such being the case, doesn't the conflict between cultures turn into a mutual act of communication and interaction? Isn't conflict itself a direct relationship, and thus a milieu of communication?

That is to say, wherever there is a relationship, of whatever kind, isn't there necessarily communication of some sort, either positive or negative?

So the important thing is to be able to take a relationship, even a negative one, and turn it into a positive interaction.

If we consider all this to be correct, then it means that even if cultures can't completely come together in a single framework, with today's universal resources of communication a way can be found for them to approach each other and mutually adopt a more peaceable attitude.

Only provided that:

- A way be found to level the excessively great difference in impact among the communication resources used by cultures today;
- In an awareness of the commonly shared principles and values which supecede all our differences, cultures approach each other with good will, tolerance and understanding as they avoid the reverse of these, antagonistic acts..

And that

- Where necessary we be able to see admitting that we are wrong as a victory.

It is precisely in order to follow this path that we are met here today, the exemplary senior citizens of numerous countries.

And from the cradle of civilizations, anatolia, from the land that was home to Yunus Emre, known to human history as the man who said **“because of the creator we love that which is created;”** home also to the great mystic Mevlana Jelaleddin Rumi, who laid a foundation for the mightiest bridges between hearts and souls with his lines



**“come then, whatever you may be, still come
Whether infidel, fire-worshipper or idolator, still come
Our lodge is not the lodge of hopelessness
You may have broken your vow a hundred times; still come”
From this land I raise my voice to you**

And say:

It looks like world peace, solidarity, awareness of our common destiny, and living differently will come about thanks to mental experience. Before regrets multiply and expectations wane we must realize that ours is a shared world. You who have lived and learned the meaning of patience will give the needed warning.

Like everyone, I have a dream, and I see it whether my eyes are open or closed...

The major step we have taken here today with this splendid congress will reverberate throughout the world. At our annual gatherings in İstanbul we will draw up declarations concerning the world’s most pressing problems and present those declarations to the political leaders of our respective nations as our proposal for a **“road map”** or **“plan of action”**.

In hopes that my dream of today may tomorrow become a reality for all of us,

And wishing you a hearty welcome once again, Mr. Prime Minister and distinguished participants,

To İstanbul, symbolic city of our mutual goal, **“the bridging of the cultural gap”**.



Taj HAMAD

Secretary General / Wango

*P*rime Minister Of Turkey, H. E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Chairman, Mete Bora

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my high honor to be with you in this important gathering. I'm humbled to be invited to speak in such an occasion and location.

First of all, I'm thinking of having a raffle with a prize. But I haven't decided which to make the prize. I have two coins. One is very old. It is from the ancient Kingdom of Nubian. And the other coin is brand new. Nice and young. Minted only yesterday.

Which coin would you like me to raffle off? ... Really? You want the old one? You don't want the nice brand new shiny, young one?

Well OK. I thought young was cool. That shows how much I know

I am proud to share with you the chance to place an importance stake in current affairs, in the effort to prevent further erosion and decline to the irrational squandering of the hardest won of all treasure, and most precious of all human resources, namely wisdom.

The vision and purposes of this group speaks to one of the most vital necessities and horizons of our time.

The positive insight and impulse is to transcend external differences such as religion and ethnicity, so as to live in the higher mind that recognizes our common humanity as the true basis of our oneness and our relationships.

This is the way to peace and the only right way to think and behave.

While this is always needed and always to be praised, we must acknowledge that TURYAK is not unique here. By the grace of God there are other organizations that have been blessed with this insight.

What makes TURYAK stellar is that it combines this all-important foundation of peace and unity with the profound purpose to care for the elderly.



Taj HAMAD

Secretary General / Wango

Begging your pardon though, I have to confess that I reject this view that we must care for the elderly.

In my eyes, our obligation, and in fact simple common sense dictates that we allow the elderly to care for US!

We refuse to buy the current trends of ignorance and blindness by which I refer to the mindset that blinds us to the incalculable value of every older member of our world family.

Please allow me to explain what I understand to be the project of being human in this world.

To me, being human is a brief (say 70 – 100 year) job and effort to create ourselves as the loving beings to God, Allah and humanity.

The coin of this realm of effort is love. The one who reaches the finish line having loved the most wins.

When the game begins, you are given a physical body, and you are supposed to use that body (and all your smarts and all your talents) to love, love, love. To love your parents, to love your brothers and sisters, to love your wife or your husband, to love your children, and at last to love your grand children. Every time you chose to love, you grow. Every time you chose to take at the expense of another, you shrink and corrupt

But loving is hard. And THIS is the reason we cherish the elderly, NOT out of some misplaced notion of compassion or some favor or kindness.

As we, and all young people try to grow, try to love, try to navigate the treacherous and stormy waters of self creation, of life and of true love, we NEED you! The Senior Citizens!

We need you for your wisdom, your knowledge, and your expertise. The secrets you've learned on the path of life. On the path of love.

Live long Omma and Oppa and grand Mommy and Daddy. We need you. We long to know what you know. We long to become what you have become.

Because of the alienation of generation from generation, care and involvement in each other's life as one family has no longer become the outlook. Money and assents have become more the issue of the dialogue and not honoring the spiritual assets that each generation brings. Bridging the cultural and age gap entails that we first acknowledge our interwoven destiny and moral responsibility for each other.

General Assembly Resolution 47/5, following the International Conference on Ageing in 1992 designated 1999 International Year of Ageing.



Taj HAMAD

Secretary General / Wango

It committed to create an international framework that would help create a “society for all ages.”

By addressing the value that each individual contributes to society. This entails that we see beyond the various categories that traditionally define us, those of nationality, religion, culture and of course age.

Through recognizing that we are all interlinked and make up one extended human family, we can find the space to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of our family members.

The definition of what a person can contribute to society needs to be transformed in order to erase the context for discrimination, again whether it is religion, nationality or age. In this respect, the elderly provide a profound asset to the community. They bridge decades of history, bringing first hand experiences that garner vast wisdom and knowledge that should be transferred to the succeeding generation.

Societies need to implement the proper framework that can capitalize the assets of each generation, from the youth to the elderly.

This brings us to the second side of the UN’s approach, fostering enabling environments.

At the heart of this matter lies the family. The UN Program on aging states that the family is, “The launch pad for early life and the landing pad of late life.” It is the primary care giving place through life’s course, from its beginning to its end. It is in the family that witnesses intergenerational linkages. It is in the family that honor toward ancestors and the elderly can be instilled. Furthermore it is through this interaction that values are handed down from each generation. In this respect, faith traditions have lent insight into the importance of these practices. The UN has coined the term “multi-generational citizenship,” asking that the needs of the present, past, and future generations be considered.

However, the issue with care giving for the aged is that unlike care giving for a child, which is towards independence, for the elderly it intensifies over time. The nuclear family is not enough to provide care. The current trend of elderly care has shifted from institutional care to encouraging families to take responsibility while providing resources and support to meet the needs of their elderly.

A well-known version of this is the AARP in the United States. When elderly are able to find places to congregate base on age or special interests they have found creative and impactful ways of contributing to their community. Many of these associations have contributed in community development, environmental protection, violence free cities, and global peace by partnering with youth and other organizations.

Another example of this is Silver Corp in America, a version of Ameri Corp, volunteer organization sponsored



Taj HAMAD

Secretary General / Wango

by the US Government that engages elderly in community service. They are a massive source of volunteer power, mentoring, reading, and teaching amongst other activities.

In Japan they have local elderly “day care” where the elderly spend time together doing crafts, reading and sometimes engaging in advocacy.

As stated before most faith traditions teach the importance of honoring past generations and building towards the betterment of the next. This creates a binding force for each subsequent generation to consider the care and wellbeing of the preceding generation, whether it is economically, socially or spiritually. It also enables the prior generation to be engaged continually in building and empowering the coming generations.

Dialogue across these faith traditions on this topic would greatly benefit the issue of ageing and care of them by raising a moral awareness of the sanctity of our ancestors and coming ancestors in our progress towards the future.

Although social structures can be implemented to help support the elderly, fundamentally it is a state of heart towards our grandparents that defines how they are treated, incorporated and cared for in our greater society. We are all tied together in our common bond as a greater human family. We are all accountable for the wellbeing of each other.

I thank you for your attention.



Greg SHAW

**Director, International and Corporate Relations
International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**

“BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN THE CULTURES”

*M*igration is now an essential, inevitable and beneficial component of the economic and social life of every country and region. Older migrant people today are more visible, active and independent than ever before. However with the high rate of urban migration across the globe over several decades many countries are now facing the complexity of a rapidly ageing ethnocultural population. This growth and complexity provides a range of challenges for practitioners and policy makers. The absence of an interface between mainstream and ethno-cultural services has impacted negatively on knowledge sharing and capacity building to prepare the general community, health professionals, care providers and families with cultural competencies to support the cultural diversity of our seniors and their families.

Culture is and always has been central to development. As a natural and fundamental dimension of people's lives, culture must be integrated into development policy and programming. A high dependency upon ethnocultural services has created an unmanageable demand on relatively few professionals and community workers, many of whom are not adequately equipped to respond to the cultural norms of the older people for whom they support. Also many of the multicultural communities themselves do not fully recognise the value of elements and sources of mainstream programs. 'Silos' are growing as a consequence of a lack of knowledge, and knowledge transference and exchange. Social exclusion and marginalisation rather than inclusion is a mounting concern.

Often the image of migration focuses on people of working age. However, people migrate at any age in their life course with younger migrants growing older in places far different from their homeland. Currently around 17% of the total number of migrants are aged 60 and over (UNDP), this proportion being higher in Europe and Oceania.

Central to an understanding of migration is that it is a disruptive life event with short and long-term implications for the ageing process. Furthermore, international migration poses questions concerning cross-cultural



Greg SHAW

**Director, International and Corporate Relations
International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**

understandings of ageing, national and international policies about older immigrants, and the best ways to enable active ageing in a multi-cultural context.

A bridge needs to be built between mainstream and ethnocultural services so that the cultural determinants of health and wellness, and the associated cultural 'norms' of self help, holistic care and the role of families in multicultural communities are incorporated into mainstream programs. Without such a bridge, globally we will see a continued rise in a lack of tolerance and understanding and a widening of the cultural divide.

This climate of change and acute vulnerability raises new challenges to our ongoing pursuit of universal human rights. How can human rights be reconciled with the clash of cultures that has come to characterize our time? Cultural background is one of the primary sources of identity. It is the source for a great deal of self-definition, expression, and sense of group belonging. As cultures interact and intermix, cultural identities change. This process can be enriching, but disorienting. The current insecurity of cultural identity reflects fundamental changes in how we define and express who we are today.



Essays



Dr. Myslim Tahir HOTOVA / Albania

- 1940 Born in Hotova-Permet,
- Lived for 55 years in the city of Berat,
- 1965 Graduated from Tirana University in the branch of history and geography,
- Worked for 27 years as the chief of specialised museums of Berat,
- Lectured in University of Berat for ten years,
- 1987 earned his degree “Doctor of Sciences”,
- Wrote three books, lectured in Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, USA, Italy, Germany, France, Montenegro, Kosova etc.
- Lives in Tirana.

CITY OF BERAT, ALBANIA an ECUMENICAL GALLERY IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Little history

In museum city of Berat, along with the Ilirian foundations (4th century B.C), gold script codex (6-12th century A.C), its unique epitaph (14th century), Onufri pictures and paintings (17th century), all trades and handicraft flourinshings (17th – 18th century) you can find present characteristic boroughs with multi window houses which look like vivid eyes, full of mystery house-yards, decorated gate archs, stone paved streets, minarets, steeples, religious fraternization, intelligence, city fortress, the bridge and Osumi river passing through the city, Tomori and Shpiragu mountains standing as a screen to the city which are both perpetuated in legends.

WHAT ARE MOMENTS THAT MAKE THE CITY OF BERAT AN ECUMENICAL GALLERY

During the Ottoman empire flourishment, in Berat along with the Islamic Cult Objects there were more than 40 churches and chapels small and large ones most of them still present in our days.

In Berat parallel with the home-made coins you can find coins of Ottoman Empire endowed with symbols and scripts which merely show the very moments of time. On the relief of these coins, the Berati handicraftsmen has carved the Christian cross and what is more they look particular ones because they were not used as to commercial purposes but only to ritual ceremonies both at Christian and Muslim Cult objects. And it went so far that many Berati religiousmen used them to put round their necks as medallions for their trust and worship to God.

Beside the above mentioned examples we possess four other foreign coins that are linked with province of Berat. They are: the first is a French coin of the 1638, the second is a Venice (Italy) one of the year 1661, the third is an Austro-Hungarian coin of the year 1846 and the fourth a Mexican one of the year 1805. The four of them are pierced and been hold within bodies as amulets by both Christians and Muslims. These talismans (amulets) were kept and heired from generation to generations just like a temple within bodies.

On the other hand, these amulet coins merely show the fact that the Albanians have had early trade, cultural and spiritual relations not only with European countries but even with countries beyond the oceans.

I would like to emphasize in my communication the very fact that the Ottoman Empire with so great powerful might, at its policy toward other countries and people has experienced original relations between the spiritual world of Empire-Islamism and the spiritual world of people living under its juridisdiction who went on with christianism as their own religion.

The following are some facts testifying its original relations:

- In the iconographical museum “Onufri” at Berat, you will find original pictures painted by this great painter of 17th century such as that of St.Mary Icon “Resurrection” with its frieze 12 cm wide full of Turkish –Arabic ornaments and motives is a picture with mere ecumenical character. Kinds of such paintings painted by Onufri himself and by his school are numerous both at home and abroad.
- - In his icon “Bracing Springwater”, painted in 17th century, some religious and planes are interlaced by the painter; that of sacred water , St.Mary and Jesus as well as the minarets and we find it unique even in European scale.
- - In his typical religious picture “St.Mary Birth”, too painted in 18th century, you can clearly see the oriental construction style and women dressed in Turkish-Arabic clothes coming out of the gates; women who are serving Jesus at birth.
- While in the Icon “Last Supper”, a picture of the 18th century too, you have ecumenism present, too. The table where the 12 apostels have sat is not a rectangular shape such as the Christian tradition is but a round one just like an oriental tray round which the Muslims sit for their meals. There are objects of oriental origin such as wash-basins, kettle, brazers etc, painted both on and under it.



- The it is unique in Albania that it is only in Berat where the Muslim Cult Object known by the name “Mosque of Celibates” is set up in a completely Christians borough. It was constructed in 1827-1828.
- At Berat, you will find elements of oriental construction such as arch gates, verandas (cardaks), mafels, even in places where Christians only permanently lived.
- Tus ecumenism at Berat is not only in cult objects but in dwelling houses too, as you can see it in one constructed at “Gorice” borough in 1830 by a Muslim by religion who decorated the house interior with mosques and floual motives which are characteristic in orient countries. A Christian bought this house in 1869 and he destroyed nothing in the interior only putting the Christian cross at the mosque cupola. It has been successively dwelled by different Christians and muslims and the tradition of respect to the religion has been kept.
- As for what I above mentioned I would like to emphasize the fact that in city of Berat, the real ecumenical gallery, both Christian Islamic and Islamic Christian civilization during the Ottoman empire had the following reflections:
 - A – Dogmatic tolerance (spiritual, respect and veneration to every religion)
 - B – Social and civil tolerance (understanding relations: society individuals to the religion)
 - C – Social-political tolerance (society – state- religion co-existence)
 - D- Ecumencical Devise: “We are equal because we differ and the differences are to be appreciated as wealth and not separation...

Thus, Berat as one of the most ancient cities in Europe, gives proofs of the fact that the Ottoman Empire have for centuries familiarized religious in Balkan to the very degree that they coexist with one another without substituting or neglecting and putting each other but evidating one another.

And it all happened because Ottoman Empire at the Islamic – Christian religious practices the Koran’s advice: “Our God and your God is the very same ONE, and we obey to HIM” was applied.

(Suretu 29/26)



Like a general conclusion:

Turkey (not only for its geographical position) is not the place where the cultures are being interlace, but it's the place where are meeting and producing new syntheses.

Turkey position in global plan seems more near with the reality then are evocative fantasies by Samuel Huntington. The Empire Turkish and the today Turkey, testimony that the universalism of the civilization has need for pluralism of the cultures, because without pluralism of cultures, has not progress of the civilization, and this together: faith, culture, civilization they don't confrontation each- other, they travel together.

Note: The study completed in June 2009: "Faith and civilization, co-travelers", in its whole argues and presents the Ottoman Empire as a mission Penetration.



Flora AHMEDOVA / Azerbaijan

- Born 1934 in Yerevan,
- Graduated as lawyer-jurist in 1950 from Azerbaijan State University,
- 1950-1979 Worked at various posts in the Ministry of Justice,
- 1979-2000 Appointed as the chairman of the Supreme Arbitration Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
- Received the Government award "The Deserved Lawyer of the Azerbaijan Republic" in 1982,
- Participated in many international conferences and symposiums and although retired still active in social activities focusing on problems of women, children and families.

DEAR PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONGRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

I welcome all participants of the congress of high level organised "TÜRYAK" devoted to the most actual problems of the present.

Today the mankind faces to very difficult dilemma. It is a problem lying as in a political and scientific plane. The part of modern scientists speaks about collision of civilisations, people taking of other position consider that our rich variety is the greatest property of mankind; they support dialogue and we share their opinion.

At each people the history, the features. But one of the major factors for the future, for tomorrow of each people - the culture is. The people respecting the culture, the history, the traditions should concern with the same respect other cultures. Xenophobia, fascism, feeling of hatred to other nations all is the extremely dangerous phenomena.

In this sense with a pride I can tell that my country Azerbaijan possessing the highest tolerance can be an example for many countries. In our country mosques, synagogues, catholic and orthodox churches today function.

Azerbaijan - historically was the multinational country. Today the world faces to a dilemma: or to move to adjustment of dialogue, partnership and cooperation between religions and cultures, or to roll down to intolerance, isolation and intensity. The purpose of the union of a civilisation consists in creation of trust, a recognition of ethnocultural values, a variety of civilisations and the valid relation to it. In the history there were many examples confirming the big advantage of an exchange of cultures. In 1918 in Azerbaijan the first has been created in the east de-



mocratic republic. It was the first in all Islamic world parliamentary republic of the European type. At the same time, in Azerbaijan for the first time among the Islamic countries the opera, ballet, theatre, female schools, a free press equal for men and women the suffrage were generated. One of the important factors consists that Azerbaijan is the secular state, the country the different high tolerance establishing new perspective communications between different areas of culture, knowledge between the East and the West. National traditions are necessary, but it should be in the conditions of judgement of a modern vector worldwide developments. After all tradition - not fallen asleep set of norms, ideas and subjects. We do not lose sight **креативность** of tradition, its huge creative potential allowing to find our own original way in a labyrinth of global problems of the present.

Today on this congress we confirm the fact of inevitability of the union of civilisations. And consequently a present forum special possibility together to discuss actual problems.

Authoritative foreign visitors underline high level of a freedom of worship and religious tolerance in our country. Azerbaijan synthesises the best traditions of the East and the West.

Within the limits of the project “Fund of Heydar Aliev“ of headed first lady A.Mehriban “Adress of tolerance - Azerbaijan” has come to the end reconstruction of orthodox church and mosques in Baku. Within the limits of the cooperation agreement with the International Fund “Or Avner” - with the assistance of the first lady A.Mehriban in an inhabited file Abilov building of the complex including high school, a kindergarten for the Jewish children living in Azerbaijan, a museum of the Jewish history and culture has begun one of the influential organisations of Jews of the world.

The goodwill ambassador of UNESCO the first lady of the country Mehriban Aliyeva has started wide activity. In a short space of time it has shown the big merits in the field of propagation and preservation of traditions of oral and musical creativity. 10 years ago M.Aliyeva has created fund of friends of the Azerbaijan culture. A.Mehriban’s merits are invaluable. She spends the big work in the field of cultural heritage protection, including the musical. The Prime minister of Turkey Redzhep Tajib Erdogan after acquaintance with Fund has left record in the memory book: “I Express respect to the outstanding politician Heydar Aliev who in the heaviest for Azerbaijan days in the second time has taken up a management of the state and for very short time has transformed the country into one of the developed states of the modern world. The name Heydar Aliev will live eternally together with Azerbaijan”.



The modern period of development of a society bears in itself deeper understanding people of a cultural heritage, its role in spiritual development of the nation. This problem is the general for all Euroasian cultural space. After all the culture is formed by summation of experience of many generations, as a result of their material and spiritual activity. Thus cultural values are spiritual basis of the nation. Azerbaijan is the ancient land, different a rich cultural heritage and traditions. Throughout centuries Azerbaijan played the important role in carrying out of dialogues between civilisations. Art of mugam is perceived by Azerbaijanians as one of the main cultural values making a basis of national consciousness and self-identification. Art value Azerbaijan mugam, its high importance both for national culture and for culture of all mankind have been recognised in 2003 by such authoritative international institute as UNESCO, declare by its one of "masterpieces of an oral and non-material heritage of mankind". A.Mehriban considers that "preservation, development and propagation mugama, magnificence finishing mugam, its deep philosophy to future generations is a moral duty of each of us". At the initiative of Mehriban Aliyeva competitions of mugam have been held, musical albums "Garabag hanandarlari", "by Mugamnaja the Encyclopedia" are published. Opening international centre of mugam also is bright display of huge attention to art of mugam. In March, 2009 we were witnesses of the international festival "the World of mugam" which has collected in Baku the best researchers-executors from every corner of the globe. Azerbaijan mugam sounded in the USA, France, Belgium, Germany and in many other countries of the world. Here and a vivid example of all our work on functioning of "the intercultural bridge".

It is transferred in gift to library of national institute of France of 100 names with samples of the ancient classical and modern Azerbaijan literature.

In the Council of Europe the statement under the name "Role NPO in dialogue development between civilisations" is extended.

Our country is located on butting the East and the West. A question of expansion of dialogue between civilisations and cultures - extremely important kind standing on the summons for European, and also world community, tolerance both in culture, and between religions necessary a dialogue part between civilisations. One of the most cultural masterpieces of Azerbaijan is an carpet deal. The gallery "Magic patterns" shows the Azerbaijan carpets. Age of some of them makes more than century. The carpet of school ShejhSafi the area of 37 square metres which original is stored in London, consists from more 9 is lovely loops. The Azerbaijan carpets are shown in many museums of the world, being unique exhibits of their collections. Azerbaijan is one of the world centres on fabrication carpets. In 1983 of UNESCO has spent the first international symposium



Flora AHMEDOVA / Azerbaijan

Carpet art of the East devoted to the Azerbaijan carpet. Symposiums have taken place in 1988, in 2003 in the Staff to apartment of such authoritative organisation as UNESCO and is a great honour to Azerbaijan. For us also big honour that Gobustanskiy state historian-artistic game reserve is enclosed in list of the worldwide cultural heritage.

The fine architectural city of Icheri of Sheher also is included in the list of a world cultural heritage, and Azerbaijan mugam performed by hananda Alim Gasymov - in the list of a non-material heritage of mankind.

But with the big heartache I should ascertain that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a difficult situation more than 1 million refugees and the compelled immigrants unprecedented humanitarian accident. At each of these one million refugees and immigrants the tragedy. Cities and villages are destroyed, the most valuable monuments of history are on the verge of destruction. But we believe that justice will triumph, occupied territories will be released also they to return to the homes.

Once again I express profound gratitude of organisation “ ÜRYAK” for the fine organisation so a congress vital topic!



Hussain TADAYON / Bahrain

- Studied Electrical Engineering in London University. Is a fellow of UK Institution of Electrical Engineers and Bahrain Society of Engineers,
- Is a veteran oil executive with a wealth of senior managerial and technical expertise,
- Chief Executive of Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) till 2006,
- Chairman of Eastern Industrial and Oilfields Services Holding Company (EIOS),
- Has served on the boards of number of professional, cultural, social, sporting and friendship societies including his services in the Rotary Club for 22 years,
- External Member of Bahrain University's Scientific Research Council.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE CULTURES

"We build too many walls and not enough bridges."

Isaac Newton

The history of our planet earth is dotted with conflicts and wars, both within nations and between countries, resulting in much misery to their populations. Some of these are embedded in cultural differences between the parties whilst others are caused by sheer greed and desire for dominance. Over the past 30 years in particular the world has witnessed growing fanaticism and polarization of views, and an almost acceptance or tolerance to this global situation. We must do away with all forms of extremism in order to bring about peace and harmony to all.

Since people are born and bred under different circumstances, it is only natural that they will develop a multiplicity of cultures. These are influenced by ethnicity, traditions, ideology, religion, upbringing and geographical locality. Such diversity of cultures can be a source of strength to communities and nations. It is very evident that in countries where multi-ethnic communities live in harmony, this multitude of cultures enhances their lifestyle, economic opportunities, wellbeing and culinary delight, as well as attracting tourism and investment to their lands. In my own life, I can say that my family and I have benefitted from a life made wealthier by exposure and integration to other cultures. As a Bahraini married to a Malaysian with British grandchildren, our world is truly global.



Yet often, with rapidly changing demographics and cultural makeup in the world, people struggle to create an inclusive and peaceful society. By the nature of past patterns of existence, few people have experience in cross cultural communication and collaboration. Therefore, taking steps to establish and maintain cross-cultural dialogue is difficult. They are often unable to bridge the barriers of race, lifestyle and conditioning.

This is where professional groups with varied backgrounds and expertise can help. By providing a network of human resources that can contact, inform, educate and enlighten the general public, we can facilitate peaceful interactions between people of all cultures and societies and so lay down the foundations of the bridges our global community needs.

Thus conflicts that are rooted in ignorance, fear and prejudice can be addressed through dialogue, education, negotiation, cultural exchange, and collaboration between the concerned parties. Direct interaction linking people is the most powerful way to overcome suspicion and fear, and achieve common understanding. By building tolerance we can alleviate prejudice and unfair practices.

However, clashes that arise through pursuit of self-interest, quest for hegemony, and theft of natural resources or property have far deeper repercussions. Such acts result in destruction, misery and oppression. They cause severe and long lasting resentment, promote fanaticism, resulting in radical and desperate counter measures. As we have seen, the vicious reactions are not confined to the boundaries of the warring parties. They transcend borders and engulf any related parties.

These gaps can only be bridged through justice and the realization that durable, peaceful coexistence requires mutual respect for each other's rights and values. Here is where third parties, especially neighbouring countries, can play a leading role in mediation efforts and conflict resolutions.

The myriad peoples of the world must join together to seek justice and fight extremism in whatever form it takes. We should accept our differences without antagonism, and instead be open to enjoy the diversity with which our planet has been blessed. We have one world in which we all live and we must understand that, only by building bridges between our different cultures, will we be able to do so peacefully and happily.



Kiro KIROV / Bulgaria

- Born 1939 in Dragana/Bulgaria,
- Graduated from the University of Machines and Electrical Engineering as a Mechanical Engineer,
- He is a former racing car driver,
- Before establishing KIROV AD Holding in 1990 he worked in various companies as well as representing Ingersoll Rand,
- Is engaged in active membership in the National Agency of Safety and Security (NASS), in an honoured membership in the Order of Jesuits, as well as in the Global Organization of the Family Business Network FNB,
- Sponsors Bulgarian Drag Racing Association, Bulgarian Motor Sports and Motorcycling Association together with his son Ivan.

OVERCOMING INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES

To cross the abyss between cultures, you need to build a bridge, which should start from your side.

Bridges between cultures are built, so that systems of traditions, worldviews, symbols, signs and beliefs can connect and interact. Our ancestors, with their will to develop life, have laid the grounds for these bridges a long time ago. In Bulgaria, one proof of this is that you find three temples of three world religions in the centre of our capital, Sofia: the church “St. Nedelia”, the mosque “Bania Bashi” and the synagogue. In this sense the differences between cultures should be viewed as an opportunity for enrichment and saturation of the world with additional information, values, traditions, worldviews and practices.

In many cases intercultural variations define the particularities of business in different part of the world. Like everything else in life, business reaches high stages in its development thanks to the exchange of information and experience between peoples. Sometimes it uses the color and variety of intercultural differences to provoke curiosity or to put freshness in its activities, through uncommonness. In Bulgaria many businessmen collect antiques and art objects with different cultural value and origin from all over the world.

Overcoming intercultural differences can only be made possible after one becomes conscious of the need for partnership and friendship. It can happen through tolerance to the characteristics of different peoples, good business relationship, integration of the working force, sharing of literature, music and art. The world, as well as culture, does not



Kiro KIROV / Bulgaria

only belong to your, your family and friends. It belongs to anyone, who wants to get to know and feel it as a part of themselves. If a person is ready to exchange his cultural richness with all its advantages and disadvantages for a different cultural reality, the first step to overcoming intercultural differences is made.

The different cultural traditions must be taken as a separate branch within the tree of achievements of human civilization as a whole.

It is time to fathom the words of Solomon, spoken 3000 years ago:

“Spiritual abundance is the key to material prosperity.”



Mehmed ZAIMOVIC / Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 1938 Born in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Graduated from the school of Applied Arts in Sarajevo,
- Member of the Artists Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Participated in more than 450 collective and group exhibitions,
- Had more than 60 solo exhibitions at home and abroad; Sarajevo, Belgrade, Vienna, Paris, Köln, Aarhus, Modena, Prague, Casablanca, Doha Rabat and Istanbul,
- Received more than thirty awards and prizes at home and abroad,
- Member of Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BRIDGES AND BIRDS

*I*t is about the primordially native and rudimentary - the rudimentary that is incorporated in the very gene of a being – the one that is unconscious and unintentional, the one that has not been chosen or selected. Something imposed, primal, that gives a chance to choose and take.

If we are giving to the other and different, then, following spiritual balance, we are considering that other and different as ours, as a universal value, with lot of understanding and respect, incorporating it in our civilisation-wise and spiritual being, thus rounding up a cultural, spiritual and intellectual assembly, a magical garden inhabited with those magnificent plants.

And we do not ask ourselves whether they have arrived from East or West, North or South. Because in the real space of spiritual imagination, intellectual and civilisation impulses, these values are welcome to us, we embrace them, we lean on them, we adopt them, and, together with them, we build a spiritual world of universality.

The greatest evil is to close oneself, to erect barriers and to create refuges. Not to appreciate and not to accept other and different, it means to loose one's humanity, to loose what makes us more human and human. That leads to becoming null, to loose signs of what is the most precious thing given to humanity.

Because of such exclusiveness, misunderstandings and divisions are created, gaps are created, even abysses between people, alongside problems and turmoil that often turn into wars. They turn into wars and even to something worse. If there can be anything worse than wars?! I come from a country where a war happened, an outrageous



Mehmed ZAIMOVIC / Bosnia and Herzegovina

aggression was committed against unprotected people, there was genocide, culturocide, ecocide. It was a catastrophe and cataclysm, something beyond human's mind.

And why? Are there different people, different human beings? No, I do not believe it and I do not want to think like that.

I do not want war, I do not want evil.

I long for beauty, for beauty of human living (it was meant and granted to us by our birth), and I want people to be generous and friendly with one another. At the top of the pyramid of our conscious decisions there is a possibility of choice, while that choice is conditioned by consciousness of every human being. I want to build a new world, not to discover it, since it is already here, between us, and within us. I want to be a member, to share in that new and more beautiful world. However, in order to enter that new world, to enter the new relationship between people, a ticket needs to be paid, consisting of good will, humanity, respect for others, tolerance, ethics, morality, understanding.

We all need to be on the same road. I believe that, perhaps, the most important road is the one where we take culture as our witness and advisor. Because culture is a sum of all noble human achievements – in general, culture is the culture of living, comprehending all major human characteristics, and, of course, all major human values, morality and ethics above all.

Connecting cultural traditions, bridging gaps between cultures – that needs to be a crucial tasks for us in this time of great turbulences of our civilisation. Culture is a fluid that floats like ocean waves, without limits or lines to be crossed. That true, primal culture does not need artificial bridges – it transfuses from spirit to spirit, it develops and inoculates itself to our cognitions, to our spiritual habitus. Spirit is birthplace of humanity and beauty where art floats as a crown of humanity. Because art is a crown, a golden crown of our comprehension and our sense of the world, our transcendental being which, in that way, is searching for an answer to the very essence of our existence. The reason and the process.

Indeed, the art is the one that carries the mite, the mite of possibility, of explaining ourselves to us, as well as providing understanding to others. Because art would not be what it is if it did not open the door to others, helping them to reach, with their own emotions, out to the author himself and his work. It is that sublime feeling which emanates both aesthetics and ethics; it is transcendence that absorbs the human being, as well as the soul, if you wish. In this regard, there are both attempts and achievements – for example, one of the biggest conductors in the world, Italian Riccardo Muti, together with the Ravenna Orchestra, established a



musical bridge of friendship between peoples and held concerts in many cities of the world.

Bridges are something that brings people closer together. They are hands that touch two river banks, even continents. By their laws, these bridges connect not only people, but also ideas and people's will to communicate. Consequently, they connect spiritual, not only material components. There is architecture that left us so great and significant objects in that sense. I carry in my eyes and my soul images of several magnificent works of human hands, for example, the magical arch of the bridge in Mostar, the work of ingenuous Mimar Sinan, or the bridge on Bosphorus in Istanbul. However, we do not always need bridges to extend our hands to others. What is perhaps most beautiful and most permanent comes to us through our spirit, through our memory and remembrance. Were not the drawings in Altamira and Lascaux created also for our eyes? Indeed, they were. Images from the past are being born in our spirit, we adopt them and love them, they become part of us, of our general culture – a culture of remembrance.

The famous names of art - Da Vinci, Picasso, Kandinsky and others who have settled in us, in our souls and our hearts, in our memory, who have created in us the vast spaces of beauty. They, and many others, have ennobled us and have become our friends forever. I do not question myself of where Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mozart came from. They are in my ears; I hear them because I listen to them. Can anyone claim that their music is not created for our ears also? For my ears, for that matter? No, because no one has the right to do that since it is impossible.

Rumi, Tagora, Hajjam, Pamuk, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Kurosawa and others, are they not my friends? They are. Because they have developed our consciousness and our soul in a way that makes me capable of understanding them. No, I do not ask where and how they came from. They do not need bridges – physically. They came to my world across spiritual bridges. They came across imaginary borders, they came on the wings of art. Like birds, like white birds. Lots of beauty, sublime, on the wings of spirit which is eternal and will remain eternal. That is something that lasts, something that is religiously sublime, and as such, is untouchable. It continuously enriches us, nurtures us, because without knowledge, without culture and art, we would be bare, we would be null.

In his novel „The Wild Palms“ Faulkner writes: „If I were to choose between pain and nothing, I would choose pain“.

I listen, I watch, I think, I love. I love people, those who were, those who are, and those who will be.

Do not be surprised because I write so emotionally, I am just a painter.



- Graduated from Zagreb University Faculty of Philosophy,
- Visited Universities such as Columbia, New York, UCLA, MIT and Cambridge as an IREX grantee,
- 1978 received his Ph.D at University of Pennsylvania,
- Former Professor University of Zagreb the Faculty of Architecture
- 1987-1992 Director of Institute for Culture of Croatia,
- Was co-editor and editor of publications such as BIT-International (Zagreb) Journal of Communicational (Philedalphia) and published several books such as from "Particular to General", "Design Theory" and "Environmental Problems", The World; Consciousness and Dependence. Dispersion of Meaning etc.

THERE IS NO CULTURAL EVOLUTION 'PER SE'.

The process always advances under conditions that reflect human constitutional choices. We can only choose among alternative frameworks within which we let cultural evolution proceed. If we can identify the constraining conditions on which the beneficial working of the process of cultural evolution depends, it becomes a constructive task to assure that such conditions prevail (Vanberg, 1994).

As we head into the Third Millennium, the dominant modality of socio-cultural evolution must shift, says Ervin Laszlo (2001). This does not mean that socio-cultural evolution with its attainments of social and cultural development must come to an end, only that another mode of evolution must take precedence.

Lazlo believes in going deeper into the structure of social communities toward reaching greater heights in the development of human communication and consciousness. The full potentials of human communication unfold only when the communicators apprehend the strands of connection through which they communicate.

Awareness of these strands is an important factor in humanity's continued evolution. It opens vision to a wider culture and ultimately species-and planet-centred dimension. The technologies that drive intensive evolution create and sustain connection by multiple and quasi-instant links. Intensively evolving communities are oriented not toward conquest and consumption, but toward a deeper structure of social relations. A new phase is about to open for our species, but the threat of delay remains real, Laszlo warns.



The key notions for the improvement of contemporary democracy are participation and power, but no contemporary analyst has adequately dealt at an overall theoretical level with the question of the low level of participation in voting at elections. This reflects a feeling of what Pierre Bourdieu describes as political 'dispossession', rather than satisfaction with the present state of affairs, observes Nick Hewlet (2000).

Analysts who promote direct, or more direct, democracy, address this question head-on arguing for measures which include more local debate, more education to encourage participation, more recognition of 'difference' among voters, and democratic structures on an international level. But many of the same people seem to avoid the other key issues of the power of those with vested interests in keeping contemporary democracy as weak democracy.

How can present structures be transformed in order to reduce the power of big business, professional politicians, the media and patriarchy, the forces which resist democratic change precisely by using tremendous power? - Hewlet is asking with good reason.

The most crucial area of modern life in which culture exercises a direct influence on domestic well-being and international order is the economy, Francis Fukuyama (1995) asserts, giving notice immediately that there is a mistaken tendency to regard economy as a facet of life with its own laws. In all successful economic societies economic communities are united by trust.

The ability to associate depends on the degree to which communities share norms and values. It is out of such shared values that trust comes. The accumulation of social capital is a complicated and in many ways mysterious cultural process. Fukuyama does not explain it, but he refers to cultural anthropologists. They allegedly insist that there are virtually no aspects of culture that are common to all human societies. Cultural factors are therefore incapable of being systematised into universal laws. On behalf of a more general truth Fukuyama makes no use of distinction between culture and social structure: all cultures seek to constrain the raw-selfishness of human nature! There is no doubt that human beings are, as economists say, fundamentally selfish and that they pursue their selfish interests in a rational way, but they also have a moral side in which they feel obligation to others. A healthy capitalist economy is one in which there will be sufficient social capi-



tal in the underlying society to permit businesses, corporations, networks, and the like to be self-organising – explicitly says Fukuyama at the end of his book *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*.

French social scientists introduced the term social economy in the 1980s in an attempt to clarify the distinction between the Third Sector and the market-exchange economy. The social economy is not measured the way one measures capitalism, in terms of salaries, revenues etc., but its outputs integrate social results with indirect economic gains. Jeremy Rifkin (1995) is trying to identify the necessary elements for a compelling alternative vision to the utilitarian ethos of the marketplace. Non-profit organisations help preserve traditions and open up doors to new kinds of intellectual experiences. The Third Sector is where many people first learn how to practice the art of democratic participation. It is where companionship is sought and friendships are formed, where people relax and play and more fully experience the pleasure of life and nature. Margaret Mead once remarked: "... anything that embodies our deepest commitment to the way human life should be lived and cared for, depends on some form... of volunteerism". Nonetheless, the spirit of the social economy has yet to gel into a powerful worldview, countervailing that which has led to a rapacious consumption of the earth.

Contemporary societies are going through a fundamental transformation which radically challenges the understanding of modernity rooted in the European Enlightenment. The changes take place despite the fact that they are to the disadvantage of large majorities and to the advantage only of elite minorities of global players.

The term 'reflexive modernity' which Ulrich Beck (2000) proposes refers to the transition from the first modernity locked within the national state toward a second, open, risk-filled modernity. The transition will take place within continuity of capitalist modernisation, which removes the fetters of the national and welfare state. The guiding ideas and core institutional responses of the first modernity no longer appear self-evident. This is true of the idea of territoriality in relation to globalization; of full employment in relation to the work society; of fixed ideas of community and hierarchy in relation to individualization; of a 'natural' division of labour in relation between the sexes. It is true of limitless growth in relation to the ecological crisis.



The farewell to the work society will perhaps cause less pain and anguish if there is the prospect of successfully moving toward a world civil society that is at once global and local. This step requires an attainable and enticing goal to be present on the horizon, capable of awakening a still dormant hope that a new gaze can be directed without shame at the hidden charms of the new, Beck points out emphatically. Those who wish to escape the spell of the work society must enter political society in a new historical meaning of the term – a society that gives material form to the idea of civil rights.



František HINZ / Czech Republic

- Born 1932 in Prague,
- Received his MSc. in Mechanical Engineering at Charles University,
- Worked in various jobs in Czechoslovakia, Europe, Africa and Asia as designer and project manager,
- Did postgraduate studies in psychology and sociology,
- Elected as General Secretary of Union of Finance and Insurance employees,
- Elected as a member of EURO-FIET executive committee,
- Presently Vice-Chairman of "Seniors Council" of Czech Republic.

*L*adies and gentlemen,

I am representing here the Seniors Council of Czech Republic, which is an association of 17 seniors and disabled people organizations and has more than 300.000 registered members. We have been established in 1993 first as a Coordinating Committee of 13 seniors and disabled people organizations and in 2005 transformed into Seniors Council of CR, having today already 17 member organizations. So we work already 16 years for the benefit of Czech seniors.

We are recognized by the government and as an organization representing seniors and are legislative place for comments and proposals during preparation of new laws. We also deal with ministers, representatives of political parties, members of parliament about our views on social policy, pension system, valorisation of pensions, housing policy for senior generation, discrimination and other problems and the ways how to solve them.

We are first of all working to reach economical and social conditions and services improvement and against any type of discrimination, social exclusion, psychical and physical tyranny on seniors and disabled people. We are trying to improve relations between generations, better public view on older people, their activities, possibilities, competence and capabilities for the benefit of whole society and generally improve relations between different groups of community, which also relates to the main theme of this conference.

Bridging the gap between the cultures is not going to be an easy goal what is the reason to start to work on it very hard. Culture is not an independent notion, it has been created by generations of people of different regions, nationalities and religions who are still its carriers. During thousands of years of human history, the relations between the cultures



have been formed by the situation in relations between nations, continents and races and unfortunately not always in smooth and a good way.

We have to explain and to convince the politicians, leaders and most people that war and terrorism are definitely not the ways to build the bridges between cultures, nations, continents, but to destroy the existing. The rightest way is to stop all injustices and exploitations and try to remove the results of those, made in the past as much as may be possible.

In my opinion the best way how to build bridges between different cultures is to support the education all over the world, to reach very fast that no human being will be without a basic education. It is going to be very costly, will mean a lot of organisational work, will need a lot of educated volunteers, but it is going to be the best investment ever done, assuring peace, better understanding and even a control of population explosion. It also possibly brings advantages and profit in the future.

Very important role in bridging the gap between the Cultures have the information media as newspapers, radio, television and film industry. We need more informations and programs showing the best of all cultures in all kinds of arts and science. We need more exchange of artists, ensembles, companies, more films showing other cultures. More than a half of our television programs show us criminals, murders and catastrophes, but we hardly hear about positive results of peoples work in art, science etc. in different countries of the world.

I am sure, that this conference will start a more intensive struggle for bridging the gap between the Cultures.



Yousriya Loza SAWIRIS / Egypt

- Founder and Secretary General of Sawiris Foundation.
- Holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Cairo University and MBA from American University in Cairo. She is an alumna of Harvard University's executive education programs,
- Owner of a private audit firm providing services to NGO's,
- Former member of the Egyptian Parliament and founder and current treasurer of the association for the protection of the environment (APE),
- President of Egypt liver care society she sits on the boards of; National Council for childhood and Motherhood, National Council of Women, Social Fund for Development, Cairo Municipality Egyptian water and Wastewater Regulatory Agency and Oikocredit International Share Foundation based in Netherlands.

Egypt: The Land of Tolerance

*I*n my country, Egypt, we have, by and large, a long history of tolerance. We have been, over the centuries, a melting pot for different ethnicities and faiths, each becoming part of a broad culture of harmonious co-existence. From the Egypt of the Pharaohs through the Greek Ptolemaic period, followed by the Roman and Christian eras, and finally the Islamic conquest. This in itself brought many rulers - Arab, Mameluk, Circasian, Albanian and Ottoman Turks, - our land has smiled upon and absorbed the many influences that have created the Egypt of today.

So it is no surprise that today, Egypt is a land of unity within diversity. Our understanding of tolerance has deep roots. It has impacted on our national identity. Equal citizenship for persons of different religions is part and parcel of our societal consensus. Egypt is a fairly homogeneous society with no significant ethnic or linguistic minorities other than the Nubian in Upper Egypt. Our Coptic Christian population – more than 10 percent of the total - is ethnically indistinguishable from the majority Moslem population. Indeed, Egypt's Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. Mahmoud Zaqzouq, has said that Egypt has been involved in a unique experiment in multiculturalism from time immemorial. Over the years it has welcomed to its shores people from the entire Mediterranean and beyond, notably from Greece, Italy, and Turkey. Up until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Egypt's Jewish population was one of the most vibrant in the region, a community whose contributions to culture and the economy, were widely felt.



Yousriya Loza SAWIRIS / Egypt

Today, and since the largely secular revolution of 1952, our constitution and laws prohibit incitement to violence and insulting people for reasons of their religion. Egyptians from different cultures do not live in separate communities within the country; they take an interest in each other and generally have a single hierarchy of core values. We share the same language, the same family values, the same music and food, and one of the shared expressions common to both Muslims and Christians is “Al Hamdulillah” or “thanks be to God.”

How does cultural tolerance translate into political pluralism? In Egypt, as elsewhere, there are divisions on the role religion is to play in politics. Some are satisfied with the present largely secular system; but others call for increased secularism; the Moslem brotherhood wishes to implement Islamic law within the present political system; on the other hand, the tiny radical Islamic groups reject the legitimacy of the present system; the Coptic Christian expatriate community, especially in the US, has raised the issue of better political representation and increased places of worship.

All of these matters are under government scrutiny, and the official position is that so long as everyone abides by the law, it is believed not necessary for citizens to become defenders of any divisive orthodoxy. Nevertheless, many citizens, both Muslim and Christian, fear that the comeback of religion – witnessed not only in Egypt, but in many other parts of the world - could mean new oppressive codes of conduct based on intolerance and narrow interpretations of religious dogma.

This is perhaps what concerns me most. As a senior citizen, I still celebrate the days when tolerance was such that a person was judged by his or her personality and achievements rather than by affiliation to this faith group or that. My friends at school were Fatma, Mary or Rebecca, regardless of their faith. Today, there is contempt for the “Other” with, sectarian strife, suicide bombings and ethnic wars visible in numerous countries of the region. What went wrong?

The reasons are obviously very complex, and I will content myself to mention just one or two factors that have contributed to this sorry state. First, I would say that the radicalism we are seeing is the result of the speed with which family ties have broken down. Secondly, and on account of globalization, there is little free time to contemplate on our blessings, as we are bombarded by external stimuli that demand an immediate response. Two generations ago, watches were used to measure the hours. Today, in an increasingly computerized and



Yousriya Loza SAWIRIS / Egypt

electronic world, it is the minutes that matter. It is no wonder that some young people seek absolute answers and choose radical solutions in a stressful and relativistic world.

It is my conviction that the threat of any form of radicalism demands action. The reason for defending the values of tolerance, mutual respect, forgiveness, loyalty, justice, is that they are based on good ideas, and not because they belong to a particular culture. Development and progress can only flourish in an enabling environment of peace and harmony. Integration, rather than disintegration is the outcome of social stability based on tolerance of differences.



Dr. Esko Aulis REPO / Finland

- 1935 Born in Iisalmi, Finland,
- 1963 Completed his studies in Architecture,
- 1963-1990 worked as planning and zoning architect in various provinces,
- 1990 received his Ph.D in Administrative Sciences from University of Tampere,
- 1992-2000 Director of Helsinki University Institute for Rural Research and Assistant-Professor of Regional Environmental Planning in University of Lapland,
- Chairman of a number of societies, active contributor to main newspapers, founder and chairman of Senior Party.

THERE IS NEED OF THE BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES

The theme of this Congress, "Bridging the Gap in between the Cultures", is internationally important but also very challenging. Increasing immigration and refugees, and also crowing relations in the sci-ence, technology, economy, and travel are the phenomenon in this time. Nearly all people are the first time in a situation, where they have to try hard together for maintaining of the human life. For this reason different cultures meet, and crash into each other, whether we want or not it. In this growing chaos there is the challenge of the bridge builders to make interaction systems, which advance the cultivation, the interchange of the opinions, and the human action between different civilizations.

Basic principle in this bridging between different cultures is to safeguard universal human rights. This means among other things, that it will be carried equality, same worthy, and refusal of discrimination. Immaterial advantages as appreciation, status, and influence and material advantages as physical safety, sufficient of food, and good circumstances of living are most significant things, when it will be estimated human rights. Many people think of, that these opinions of human rights are only characteristics of the Western culture. However all the cultures in this current globalizing world have to take a stance on the supranational challenges. Result from that, human rights are nowadays, more than before, the all world question. It is also written down the agreements of the international human rights. This indicates, that human rights are at present very widely accepted among the different people.

Perhaps the most difficult happening at the separate levels of the culture-life is to take possession of the meeting in the different religions, because it applies basic values to all of people and populaces. Therefore



it is very understandable, that in the course of the globalizing world it is lifted up the philosophical discussion about characteristic and mutual relations of the different religions. As a challenge in this discussion it has been the need to find an explain, which can be accepted by different religions of their own historically, culturally, and traditionally viewpoints. On the basis of that, there is turned out, that same ethical basic principle can be found – in some form or other – in all big world religions. That principle requires: You have to treat your neighbour in the same way as you are waiting the treatment by he. This collective regulation demonstrate, that in all big religions there are basically very sublime and justice principles even though they are perhaps express in different ways. In that light you can place a question, weather realization of this common moral-idea could be able to get representatives of the different religions to accept its other so at they could live in harmony with one another.

You have however to observe, that cultural conflicts are not the caps merely between the nations. Identity crisis, which are joined for example language, religion, race, or even age, can cause serious problems also inside of the national civilizations. Sacrifices of these conflicts are those members of the society, which have of all the least the defending ability. In my own homeland there are in this croup, among other things, the elderly persons. They are got into the objects of the economic, social, and even emotional discrimination. In the background of the phenomenon there is outlook of life ideology, which emphasizes looking out for own best interests and getting rid of responsibility. Within of this context it is begun to talk of the elderly people as unproductive, unnecessary, and even senile citizens. Also our Parliament is guilty of this abasing in his legislation. It turns out at the seniors – among other things – as follows: the growth of the retirement pays are retarded, taxation of the employee pension is higher than of paid labour, and there are serious failures in the nursing- and medicinal-services. Besides that, senior citizens have stayed out of the safety web for workers and employers. They have also not possibility taken care of own interests by way of strike. Be due to all this, there is established in 2006 Finnish Seniorparty working as an advocate of the elderly persons. The meaning of this ideological uncommitted party is to collect all our senior citizens working together on behalf of legal rights and a life worth living and supervising social and economical benefits of they own.

Chaos and collision of the cultures, which is going on, appear to foresee, that the long period of the secluded civilizations is going down in the world. It does not need in any case to mean the end of the human history. There are echoes of the better morrow already on display. It is being the order for a cultural model, which will be based on the mutual connection and collective responsibility of all the world people. Carrying out that



culture model will after all demand open conversation on the values, attitudes and even physical living conditions in the different countries. Only on that basis we can find the building materials for bridging the Gap in between the Cultures. In this task it can be a remarkable opening move to benefit the wisdom, knowledge and vast experience of the elderly persons. In that way Senior Citizens' Congress can even be the first step in the origination of the supranational coherent culture.



Guram DOCHANASHVILI / Georgia

- 1939 Born in Tbilisi, Georgia
- 1961 His two novels were published in the magazine “Tsiskari”
- 1963 Completed his university studies,
- Participated in thirty archeological excavations,
- 1975 Worked as the department manager of the literature magazine “Mnatobi”,
- 1985 Chief Editor of “Georgian Film” studios.
- Published 80 books and produced a lot of Films.
- Awarded with “Ivane Javakishvili” and “Order of Honour” medals and more.
- Presently working on the second volume of his autobiographical novel.

THE ART DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN GEORGIA

In spite of the fact that last twenty years Georgia passed several hard wars, the extremely bad situation in economy and poor material situation, presently in such a small territory country and which part is under occupation, our native land – state, with the support of our patri-archate and successful businessmen, still is able and conducts various activities in the art, for ex. Only in 2008 the Z. Paliashvili Opera and Ballet State theatre of Tbilisi held 44 opera and 44 ballet performances, 13 concerts, 55 independent arrangements, 5 exhibitions, 1 presentati- ons, 1 seminar, 7 excursions for foreigners/students/schoolchildren, 4 tours in USA and in Israel and in the different cities of our country; from abroad there were guest various famous artists by the initiative of our world famous opera singer Mr. Paata Burchuladze, who donated their concerts to the charity fund IAVNANA (funded by Mr. Paata Burchula- dze) for more then 40 homeless large families in country and kids from orphanages returned back to their native families and received the right to work productively in their homelands. Also many charity activities by inviting famous artists were been implemented by our world famous ballet dancer Mrs. Nino Ananiashvili and there was held the premie- res of “Attila” (by Verdi), ballets under Mozart and I. Kilian artworks; “Requiem” (Verdi) and various famous Opera stars and including the participation of our Mr. Paata Burchuladze – in total more then 10 000 spectators attended them. “Nabucco” (Verdi) was presented on stage with the participation of our famous singers, and four artists out of them are presently the successful performers at “La Scala” (Milan) theater- such “Nabucco” will be enough gift for any world concert hall.

The Tbilisi Shota Rustaveli Dramatic theatre implemented 177 perfor- mances, out of them 3 as a charity event for the internally displaced per-



sons and poor families; there was held 11 premieres, 6 tours in abroad (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Romania, Armenia, and Georgian cities); The tours in this theatre was performed by such theatres as Yerevan, Rustavi, Batumi; There was implemented 38 memorial jubilees to different special dates concerts, exhibitions, conquests.

The Tbilisi Kote Marjanishvili State Dramatic Theatre implemented 253 performances, out of them 7 premieres; the charity fund IAVNANA with “Tbilisi Tunes” for internally displaced children and socially vulnerable families; there was held various tours in USA and country too.

Very successfully are working Tbilisi M. Tumanishvili State Movie Artist theatre, Tbilisi Puppet theatre (6 tour performances, including in Germany), Tbilisi N. Dumbadze Youth Central theatre, Tbilisi V. Abashidze Musical Comedy and Drama theatre, and also other dramatic and various theatres such as Meskheta (Akhaltzikhe), Batumi, Kutaisi, Gori, etc.

Sukhishvili and N. Ramishvili State Georgian National Ballet theatre group held 12 concerts in Tbilisi, 3 in Batumi, 1 in Poti, 1 in Moscow, 16 concerts in Mexico and Central America countries, 18 in various cities of Ukraine, 35 in Lithuania, Latvia, Czechoslovakia; 4 charity concerts in Z. Paliashvili theatre.

The Georgian Folk Song and Dance State Academic group “Rustavi” very successfully performed 9 concerts in Tbilisi (5) and one of each in Madrid, Kiev, and Moscow.

The Georgian Folk Song and Dance group “Erisioni” performed 25 concerts, out of them 10 in Germany, 2 in Kiev and Moscow and 5 in Georgia.

Georgia Folklore State Center issued the catalogues of the self-educated painters, folk poetry, ecclesiastic chants and folk song CDs, there was held the Georgian chants and folk song folkloristic expeditions in various regions of Georgia.

Georgian National Musical Center implemented 27 concerts in Tbilisi and other cities of country. There was held 4 exhibitions, concert devoted to the Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch, other charity events.

Presently the 7 full-length, documental and short-length movies are launched; our movies participated in the European movie market of the international movie festival (Berlin); Under the Cannes international festival, there was issued the catalogue of “Georgian Movies”; In Berlin there was implemented the Georgian movie week; There was issued several books about our movie workers; there are various movie festivals of youth and students; hosted famous foreign cinematographic; issued annual catalogue of the Georgian movies, table gift calendars.



It's a huge work done by the Georgian Katholikos-Patriarch self established Fund: with their support there are issued books of gifted artists and scientist literature; scientific works, supported poor families, funded wide geological researched for natural layers – we ourselves (not waiting for external support) constructed and renovated many temporary forgotten churches in while Georgia; there were implemented local and other scientific sessions and exhibitions of all kind of art, concerts.

It has a big attention to support and development culture of national minority; productively working in Tbilisi theatres of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia; participating in charity events.

Productively is working the Georgian Jewish History museum, Georgian Cultural Relations Centre “Caucasus House”, Azerbaijan Culture museum.

Under the programmed of the development of the Georgian professional theatre art there was established the “Theatrical Basements”, “Royal District Theatre”-they are performing their performances and also the memorial days of the famous artists.

There were tours of Sokhumi and Tskhinvali displaced theaters in Tbilisi and Georgian regions.

As usual very productively is working Tbilisi State Conservatory, and its many alumni instrumentalists and vocalists won various high prizes in international prestigious competitions?

Presently there was restored and established the “newspaper of literature”.

Annually is implemented the Tbilisi Book International festivals; The Georgian book productions are annually participating in Frankfurt (Germany) Book International festival; by various organizations support there were held literature competitions; Young artists are granted for education in abroad; implemented traditional youth musical festivals, which is a big motivation for the young generation; held famous Georgian composers and musicians jubilees, concerts; often there are big scale international exhibitions in art with local and foreign famous artists-participants. The Georgian art is widely introduced in various international forums (Venice biennale, Prague Quadrennial, etc.).

During the current 2009 year, in the Georgian cities (Tbilisi, Signagi, Batumi) there was held the exhibition of Pablo Picasso's art.

As usual, the high professional level of the artists is produced by he Theatre and Movie University, Kutaisi Musical College, State Art Academy, Central Musical School, Ballet Art State School,



Hasan ÖZDENYAZAR / Germany

- 1943 Born in Tarsus, Turkey,
- Worked as a reporter in Kurtulus newspaper in Mersin and Yeni Newspaper in Istanbul,
- Since 1970 lives in Germany working as a technician in a number of newspapers and printing houses,
- In 1990 established an advertising agency,
- Retired in 2007 ,
- Is a social worker interested in care of elderly.

*T*HE BUILDING OF INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES / For years the matter of dialogue has occupied me.

Why are there such misconceptions about us and our great religion? How did this mistaken information get into people's minds, and how much longer will it go on damaging our relations?

Examining the situation under a magnifying glass we find that Islam and the Turkish Society have been dealt their greatest blow in the recent past.

Khomeini and Bin Laden came out and spoke on behalf of the entire Islamic world, and although we had not the least wish for it made us partners in what they had done. The real disaster was that they cited precepts of the Koran to support their horrendous acts.

Thus as far as the West was concerned the image of both Islam and Islamic Societies was gravely damaged.

“THESE PEOPLE IN NO WAY REPRESENT ISLAM; WE REJECT THEM.”

“ISLAM AND THE KORAN REJECT VIOLENCE, AND HERE IS THE PROOF, THE TRUE MEANINGS.”

This is the kind of vehement reaction the West expected from Muslim states and institutions.

EUROPEANS UNFORTUNATELY TOOK THIS NEGLECT, THIS LACK OF RESPONSE, AS PARTISANSHIP.

For this reason the matter of BUILDING INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES has never been as necessary, as urgent, as it is now. But naturally it won't be easy to dispel the negative impressions created by so many mistakes and so much neglect.

First our people in Europe have to get rid of the CONFUSION and MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES with which they are beset. If we pull toget-



her there is no reason we can't be one of the strongest lobbies in Europe.

Our resources are practically unlimited:

In Europe we are a cultivated, dynamic society, one which enjoys human and economic power while having rights of the vote and election not to be underestimated.

Only UNITY and TOGETHERNESS are missing, i.e. acting as a SINGLE VOICE!

A living example:

Here the leader of the Jewish Community speaks up so loudly at the slightest violation of rights, you'd think the sky was falling. That community has a single umbrella organization, and a single Community leader speaks for all.

If we can establish such an effective lobby, not only will we be able to combat prejudice, but we will have the means to promote ourselves culturally. Such promotion on the cultural and religious fronts should be accomplished through our scholars who are deeply versed in the three great religions, and through their publications.

BUT ADDRESSING EUROPEANS IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE, VIA THEIR OWN TV AND PRESS!

The activities in which our musicians took part have been very useful. In addition:

An active institution is needed to organize events such as inviting associations, party members, school classes, church dignitaries and members of the press to our associations and societies, where they can ask questions and receive answers.

There are a number of mistaken views in the area of religion and ethnicity, views which impede INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE while disturbing social life. These must be combated on a broad platform.

For example, if all the discriminatory arguments and prejudices in the school books could be refuted with the idea that THERE IS ONE GOD and ALL PEOPLE WHOM HE HAS CREATED HAVE THE SAME VALUE, this will certainly plant better seeds in those young minds TOWARD THE BUILDING OF INTERCULTURAL BRIDGES...

And of course the heartfelt participation of local government officials will form a vital link in the chain of these efforts.

Respectfully,



Ulrika ZABEL / Germany

- Born 1953, Germany,
- Social pedagogue and inter-cultural family therapist,
- Worked in the immigration sector for 25 years,
- Head of the Competence Centre for Intercultural Opening in Elderly Care,
- Lecturer on the Faculty of Intercultural Studies at the Catholic University for Social Sciences,
- Intercultural cooperation with the Akdeniz University in Antalya/Turkey,
- Voluntary mentorship for students from immigrant families.

“BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE CULTURES”

*G*ermany currently has around 15 million immigrants and their descendants. Compared to the German born population these are more socially disadvantaged. Of the numerous and complex reasons for this development some are connected to the lack of acceptance of immigrants and their unequal opportunity to participate in economic and social life. Successful coexistence requires tolerance, trust, understanding and the appropriate framework conditions. But, not only are these non-existent, there are also few agendas that help and encourage immigrants to participate in social and political life. The proportion of immigrants and their dependents, especially of children and young people, continues to grow. Society's most important tasks are therefore to encourage the different skills and abilities of immigrants, to apply them where they can be seen and to recognise immigrants as citizens.

Shaping future demographic changes in Germany will require the abilities and experience accumulated by **all** older citizens, but even here support is focused on German born elder citizens. Integrating the knowledge and abilities of older immigrants is left either to chance or to dedicated individuals. This does not encourage the representative participation of immigrants and they are left with a feeling of exclusion. It is against this background that efforts must be directed at bringing about a general shift in the culture of participation; the social and political participation of immigrants must not be regarded simply as an unavoidable necessity.

The common basis for our coexistence must therefore be a person's right to unconditional dignity irrespective of age, origins, social standing, religion or culture.



Constructing bridges between the different cultures in the country of immigration will be possible if, in keeping with the motto

“strengthen the links and respect the differences”,

the mutual and connecting aspects of the different cultures are prioritised, instead of those that separate and alienate.

A common understanding of coexistence between different cultures involves developing certain basic attitudes:

1. Exchange and cooperation that allows the chance to recognise differing abilities
2. The recognition of cultural and religious diversity
3. The recognition of different biographies and life-time achievements
4. Willingness to find out more about the differing worlds of origin of the immigrants
5. Willingness to take a ‘new’ common path
6. To look for common features and to develop something new from these
7. To overcome the mechanisms upholding segregation

One city – many worlds

The recognition of cultural diversity as an important aspect of contemporary social reality is an essential precondition for coexistence and a positive social climate. An important factor for sustainable welfare development is the way in which citizens bring their wide-ranging potential into their own neighbourhoods. This serves to activate the cross-generational dialogue and communicate personal life histories from one generation to the next, the principal aim being the continuous and sustainable involvement of immigrants. An assimilating society cannot afford to ignore the knowledge and experiences of life that have been acquired in the process of immigration. Immigration can then be regarded as an asset and added social value. On this is based the demand that those responsible recognise and draw upon diversity in general, and cultural diversity in particular, as coexistence enriching qualities.

Conclusion:

When Germany recognises the reality of immigration as a societal process and accepts the cultural diversity of German born and immigrant populations in equal measures, this should result in more action being taken. Society as a whole must recognise the actuality of the immigration society and develop more awareness and new ways of thinking. This requires a common effort by all German citizens and intercultural openness across all sectors of society.



Damianos DAMIANOS / Greece

- Born 1946 in Athens,
- Received his MSc in Chemical Engineering at Polytechnion (1968) and MBA (1981) from Harvard,
- Worked in companies such as “Aluminium de Greece”, Billiton, “Hellenic Alumina”. Alpha Ventures, Alpha Bank and World Bank.
- Managed a Venture Capital Fund investing in the Balkans,
- Has interest in a number of different businesses,
- Sits on several boards including a major Greek bank.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURES

*C*ulture is defined as a set of beliefs, values and behaviors, shared by a group of people, for example a family, a village, a nation, a profession, a sports team. It is formed and developed slowly over time, it can take very deep roots and control and guide the actions of individuals or communities more directly and strongly than formal state law.

The characteristics of a culture derive from the circumstances of the group. Tribes living in barren lands where food is scarce become thrifty and inventive. Others living in crowded plains become more communal. Afghanis are independent, the Dutch are better traders. Soldiers are tough, artists are sensitive, etc, etc. In short, cultures are influenced by the environment, they are not genetic from the start.

Of course certain adaptations can pass in the gene pool over many many generations, but equally cultures do evolve over one or two generations as the environment changes, for example honor killings vanished everywhere by mid-20th century.

Also the strength of a culture is often amplified by the fact that many people subscribe to the cultural norms not because they agree with them but because of the human need to belong, peer pressure or sheer enforcement.

In any case, different environments or circumstances, I believe much more than the genes of the tribe founder, result in differing cultures. The people in the next valley or across the sea may have a different culture, say Athens vs. Sparta, English vs. Irish, Hutu vs. Tutsi, Turks vs. Greeks. And the differences have led at best to wasteful antagonism, at worst to bloody wars.



Damianos DAMIANOS / Greece

Anyone who has travelled a little, better yet with eyes open, must have noticed that the differences between different peoples are massively outweighed by the similarities. Even superficially different customs in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism derive from the same universal themes: the rites of spring, mating rituals, coming of age, hope for life after death. East and west and north and south, we humans share the same aspirations, the need for sustenance, security, belonging, dignity. And all of these, without exception, are promoted by cooperation and peace.

Bridging the gap between cultures, I believe, requires no more than seeing through the temporary effects of nurture and of the changing environment and focusing on the permanent, on nature; building on our similarities rather than stressing our differences; listening with an open mind; exchanges, visits, especially of younger people; trading; joint enterprises

Then better than business or trade, which was described as war by other means, cultural exchanges are much more effective in opening our souls, especially those expressions that transcend language: visual arts, architecture, music, even cooking.

In my experience, personal contacts between individuals from different cultures are much more effective at bridging the gap than group exchanges. Groups still carry the labels, after all by definition we are grouped by our differences, without them we are just one human race.

Turyak obviously is covering all of the above: cultural, individual, charitable, and this year going international. What a privilege to participate in this feast!



Prof. Dr. George P. FOROGLOU / Greece

- 1931 Born in Thessaloniki, Greece,
- Studied medicine at University of Lausanne and obtained his medical degree in 1956. After receiving his diploma in Neurosurgery he got further training at Neurosurgery centers of Universities in Zurich and London,
- 1970 Assistant Professor at University of Lausanne,
- 1975 Extraordinary Professor at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,
- 1975 director of the University clinic of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) hospital,
- Is a member of 19 international and 5 Greek societies and 3 international academies,
- Wrote 6 books delivered more than 300 conferences,
- Active member of the “Poormen Fraternity of Thessaloniki” and President of Northern Greece Branch of the Hellenic Cancer Society.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURES – A NEUROSURGEON’S PERSPECTIVE AND FAVORITE TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION.

*A*s a neurosurgeon I shall take this opportunity to describe the experience of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies (EANS) of which I am a member for over 20 years, functioned as vice-president and chairman of the education committee.

After the 2nd World War, with the financial reshuffle in Europe, one of the main problems national neurosurgical societies were faced with was the rapidly increasing number of road traffic accidents, their associated morbidity and mortality together with the ensuing social and economic consequences.

For this reason, some heads of neurosurgical departments, from almost all European countries (western and eastern at that time), decided as a core group, during a meeting in Madrid in 1973, to handle this problem in a joint European effort aimed at delivering appropriate emergency and hospital care to handle this issue.

The task of coordinating the diversity of people involved (i.e. paramedics, policemen, firemen, volunteers, transport facilities) wasn’t easy; neither was the quality of hospital care provided standardized.

In order to find a solution to this issue, these pioneer neurosurgeons came forward with the idea of organizing a postgraduate teaching programme staffed by experienced neurosurgeons such as university professors, chiefs of departments and specialized doctors. This was to be a continuous, repeated and joint international effort with theoretical and practical courses.



This initial attempt proved entirely successful in that with the postgraduate training of young neurosurgeons, the acquired knowledge was practically implemented in all European countries.

The success of this educational effort on the management of road traffic accidents and the vast interest of the young neurosurgeons made the group of teachers to further expand the course to the entire spectrum of neurosurgery (brain tumours, vascular incidents, spinal cord and peripheral nerve pathology, etc.)

This eventually culminated to a full 4-year circle of training course ending by an examination leading to European Board Certification by the Union Europeene de Medecins Specialistes (UEMS) – thus giving the possibility to doctors to work freely in any European country. One of the first one to allow free movement of specialized doctors in the EU.

Currently, those training courses last for 1 week and are held in a different country every year. Attendance is not mandatory but contributes to continuous medical education accreditation.

Far more important is the cohabitation of northerners and southerners, westerners and easterners, both trainees and trainers in the same living space, meaning free exchange of thoughts, break of the trainer/trainee barrier, essential and meaningful communication, comparison of ideas, cultural values, knowledge and work experience - all building bridges of communication and friendship through ensuing mutual invitations and visits to respective institutions.

The initial experiment proved successful. From the 10-20 postgraduate students who followed the initial 2-3 first courses, enrollment now ranges, in 2009, to more than 200 students/year. Due to this high demand, the education committee of the EANS now runs the course twice-yearly.

On another note, the financial cost of the experiment was rather low since education was and still is provided free of charge on a voluntary basis by the teachers.

The initial efforts the “pioneers” provided in their endeavors and that of the succeeding “teachers” was and continues to be a liberally generous way of professional life and also to building solid links between doctors of different cultures.

In retrospect, all that was needed to succeed was enthusiasm, a few adventurous and caring minds that were also passionate and giving personalities.

All to the benefit of the well-being and of peace between people. This is also a prime scientific paradigm of the handing on of personal wisdom and knowledge from the older generation to the next innovative one.



Giuseppe MANNINO / Italy

- 1939 Born in Graniti (Messina-Sicily)
- Graduated in Law at the “Sapienza” Roman University,
- Is a lawyer, journalist, poet, author, painter and sculptor,
- Published several books and essays,
- Together with Pope Karl Wojtyla and Salvatore Quasimodo he is the author of “MASS FOR PEACE”,
- 1997-2001 member, vice president and president of Rome’s City Council
- Made the “Monumento alle FOIBE” placed in Foibe Istriane in Rome.
- Works in Berlin

WORDS OF PEACE

*I*n the face of a visible reduction of recognised values and at a time when human relations are based only on personal interest and need, the words of men of culture, experience and wisdom represent the way of salvation to overcome imbalances and inequalities. But it is the example of men of probity who are able to speak the language of peace, of ethics, of solidarity and tolerance, that most especially constitutes a message of hope for a world where peace and not war might break out in every place with the result that there would no longer be either martyrs or heroes and no-one would need to sacrifice themselves for freedom.

I have done my own personal research and have quite effortlessly managed to find hundreds of words of peace which need only to be uttered for them to bring joy and peace, like a refreshing drink for a man in a desert. I would like to list just a few which spring to mind without having to consult a dictionary:

Embrace, welcome, love, friendship, kiss, caress, goodness, altruism, charity, dialogue, serenity, wisdom, understanding, relaxation, freedom, equality, tolerance, forgiveness, brotherhood, joy, smile, generosity, forgiveness, hospitality, respect, balance, sobriety, honesty, ethics, patience, poetry... I could go on. These are words that are never offensive and tend to break down barriers and inequalities.

In my official role as President of the Rome City Council, at the Capitol, a prestigious place where the history and memory of the splendour of ancient Rome is preserved, I have had the opportunity of meeting many Nobel Peace prize winners at the annual meeting. But my favourite recollection relates to Turkey where I am a guest on this occasion.



I had the honour of supporting the erection of a monument for peace proposed by the Association of Friendship between Italy and Turkey in memory of the great Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. On the monument, which is located in the Roman Piazza bearing the same name, are inscribed the words “Peace in the Nation, Peace in the World”. On that occasion I also remember the words spoken by His Excellency Ambassador Sitki Ugur Ziyal. It is to that event, to the friendship between Italy and Turkey, to the organisers and participants of the **“International Distinguished Senior Citizens of the World”** conference, that I would like to dedicate a poem which I have written, a sort of hymn to peace:

Peace is not the end of war.

Peace was born before the Earth.

Peace cannot be achieved through war.

War is the end of peace.

Peace is liberty.

Peace is serenity.

Peace is equality.

Peace is tolerance.

Peace is brotherhood.

Peace is not a division.

Peace is a multiplication.

Peace is an infinite table.

Peace is the battle for life.

Peace has no gender.

Peace is a process.

Peace brings joy.

Peace brings dreams.

Peace brings love.

Peace has no religion.

Peace has no opinion.

Peace knows no frontiers.

Peace is as joyful as dolphins.

Peace is relaxation.

Peace is understanding.

Peace is forgiveness.

Peace is Heaven.

Peace is a smile.



Peace has no prisons.

Peace has no limitations.

Peace takes no soundings.

Peace makes men wise.

Peace is liberty.

Peace is serenity.

Peace is equality.

Peace is tolerance.

Peace is brotherhood.

Peace has no police.

Peace is liberty.

Peace is serenity.

Peace is equality.

Peace is tolerance.

Peace is brotherhood.

Peace needs no arms.

Peace is friendship.

Peace knows no colours.

Peace is liberty.

Peace is serenity.

Peace is equality.

Peace is tolerance.

Peace is brotherhood.

Peace is infinite.

Peace is the battle for life.

Peace is liberty.

Peace is serenity.

Peace is equality.

Peace is tolerance.

Peace is brotherhood.

Make the gift of peace. Give yourselves peace.

It is superfluous to add that to ensure peace one must first eliminate cultural, social and economic differences in order to achieve a true and lasting equality.



Raouf SA'D ABUJABER / Jordan

- 1925 Born in Al-Salt, Jordan,
- 1946 Received his BBA from American University of Beirut,
- 1984 Received his M.A from Jordan University Amman,
- 1987 Received his D. Phil from Oxford University, England,
- 1968-2000 has been very active in a wide range of business (industry, banking and insurance) as founder president and chairman of a number of companies,
- President of the Orthodox Center Council,
- Honorary Council General of the Netherlands in Jordan,
- Honorary Vice President Jordan Turkish Friendship Society,
- Member of Jordan Foreign Affairs Council,
- Decorated with "Highest Rank Independence Order" of Jordan and "Commander of the Order of Orange Nassau".

“ MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS LIVING TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE EAST “

*J*ordan is the south-eastern part of Bilad Al-Sham or Greater Syria and being so closely attached to Palestine, the south-western part, it is often included in the area designated as the “Holy Land”. The people in the two areas have enjoyed, since time immemorial, a demographic unity that continues to the present. The writer is an example of these close relations. The son of an old Jordanian clan from Central Jordan, his mother is Palestinian from Nazareth and he, his daughter and one son are married to Palestinians from Acre, Haifa and Jaffa simultaneously. The clan were originally followers of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem but they now have amongst them followers of at least seven different churches while a cousin, (an engineer) has converted to Islam when he married, fifty years ago, a lady from Pakistan. People here seem to have realized, since the advent of Islam, that the followers of the two religions could live together in friendship. They also never allowed the River Jordan to be a barrier.

Jordan became in 1921 a British Mandated Territory under Prince Abdullah who in 1946 was proclaimed King Abdullah the First, of the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Christians then, nearly 22% of the principality's population, accounted for around 75000 people. However, over the years that percentage dropped to nearly 5% of the total accounting now for around 300000 people. A larger proportion of Christians than amongst Muslims, have been migrating while the Palestinian refugees who came to Jordan, were mainly Muslims. The present population is around six million Jordanians and a million and a half visiting residents.



All through the modern history of Jordan, Christians were an integral part that played an important role in the social, Educational, Economic and administrative life of the country. Through their representation quota of nearly 8%, their nine deputies in the House of one hundred and ten representatives and four senators in the senate of fifty five senators, they have been over the years, active in supporting the work of our legislative body. Christians have been also well represented in Government Departments where two or three ministers in every cabinet were active together with a good number of under-secretaries, directors and government officials. In the educational field a similar situation prevails and presidents of few of our thirty universities and many professors are Christians. Religious freedom is recognized by all and mosques as well as churches are built where and when the need arises.

These strides have been made in spite of the great strain that the Palestinian crisis has laid on the shoulders of neighboring Jordan after 1948. Since then, the country has received nearly half its population in new waves of residents. Most of them are now citizens as a result of the Union that was announced between Jordan and Palestine in 1949. They have never abandoned their aspiration to go back to their homes in Palestine and their right of return is for them, and the world at large, a sacred legacy. The solution of the Palestinian dispute through the establishment of a Palestinian state next to Israel will undoubtedly bring around better reasons for the followers of the three monotheistic religions to live together peacefully in the land of peace, Palestine.

The Hashemite Royal family, of Jordan, being direct descendents of Prophet Muhamad (ﷺ) have been the guardians of this noble tradition of common life which the people of Syria, as a whole, seem to have inherited from the early days of Islam. His Majesty King Abdullah I (1921 – 1951) was the ruler who master-minded the system, in the early twenties, by which Muslims and Christians became jointly involved in the Jordanian modern way of life including the Parliamentary Tradition. That system, strongly supported by his descendents, King Talal, King Hussein and our present King Abdullah II, has given Jordan the stability and drive for progress that the country so much needed. The whole country is now so grateful to that drive which gave Jordan and the Jordanians the opportunity to join hands and take full advantage of the advances and progress that our present era in the twenty first century offers to humanity at large.



Mohammed Al-Naki / Kuwait

- 1941 Born in Kuwait,
- Commissioned from Military Academy, Aldershot, Surrey, U.K.,
- Royal School of Military Engineers, Richmond, Kent, U.K.,
- Took various courses in Egypt, Baghdad and the Hague,
- Board Member in Kuwait University and Al Ahlia University in Bahrein,
- Member of Staff, Kuwait Military Academy,
- Second in Command, Kuwait Army of Engineers,
- Board Member of Al Safat International Holding, Al Madina Financial&Investment Co., Al Ujain Corporation,
- Life Member of WWF and member of a number of societies in Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt,
- Received the Presidents medal, Lion of Republic of Finland in 1996.

*T*hroughout my career, I have moved back and forth between the practical world and the academic world. I found that the liberal art and the professional programs still constitute two rather distinct groups.

Building effective communication skills and relationships with a single culture is often challenging. Bridging the gap between different cultures makes building communication skills and relationship even more difficult.

Typically, some of the basic assumptions we make, when communicating with people from different cultures, must be questioned and modified. First on the list of items for review is verbal communication. Parts of verbal communication, such as tonality, tense, gender generalities and structure vary greatly from culture to culture. A majority of these differences must be acknowledged if effective communication and relationships are to occur.

A principal rule of mutual respect is the basis for success in communication and relationships. Mutual respect should be based on the following criteria :

- Always allow and assume differences, until similarity is proved.
- Emphasize description, rather than definition or judgement
- Practice empathy
- Treat your interpretation as an unproved theory until further understanding proves certainty.

Showing respect for traditions and values other than ones own is probably the single most important aspect in developing good cross-cultural communication and relationships. Practicing respect is relatively simple if people from different cultures both show each other equal respect; however it is much more difficult to develop good cross-cul-



Mohammed Al-Naki / Kuwait

tural relationships if one does not feel that the respect given is being reciprocated. Learning to respect each others cultural values is an ongoing process in building successful cross-cultural communication and relationship professionally and personally.

We should encourage the exchange of diverse views on International Issues, and initiate programme via modern educational methods aimed at transmitting knowledge on issues of concern worldwide and strice to create a common ground to bridge the gap in between the cultures.

Thanking you,



Prof. Abdurazakov ISHENBAY / Kirgizistan

- Born 1937 in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan,
- Graduated (1959) from Moscow State Economic Institute, USSR,
- Graduated (1979) from Diplomatic Academy of MoFA of USSR,
- Worked at various diplomatic posts of USSR in Japan as well as Kyrgyz Republic,
- Served as the State Secretary of Kyrgyz Republic,
- Presently professor and head of the sub-faculty of International Relations at the Bishkek Humanitarian University,
- Has been rewarded with the Honorary Diploma of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Order of Donaker, Medal of Pushkin of RF and Japanese order of the "Rising-Sun" of 1st degree.

CULTURE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

I am obliged above all to recognize the Government of the Republic of Turkey for calling together such an interesting, unprecedented conference to which has been invited such an extraordinary group of individuals. I imagine that behind this initiative is not simply a gesture of traditional respect to the elders, but rather a genuine desire to hear opinions, hopes and concerns about matters of concern to most, if not all people. It is my expectation that those who have lived through the triumphs and tragedies of the prior century will have important experiences to share at this conference.

Many of those who have passed the threshold of the new millennium have done so without special illusions and very aware of the world's contradictory processes. One thing is clear: the contemporary world has experienced unprecedented developments which to this day are neither clarified nor easily interpreted. For this reason it remains essential to think further about these matters.

At the same time there is the hope that the intellectual process will return us to a critical appreciation of the events of the past with the goal of drawing lessons from them. The primary basis for these hopes is the end of the strident ideological confrontation of the cold war, giving us hope for a more stable world and allowing us to seek a new paradigm beyond the illusions and errors of the past. Resolution of such extremely broad and deep problems of course demands considerable time and effort. There is still a long way to go.

Moreover, it is impossible not to observe that the new millennium began with distressing symptoms. Recent challenges and threats make this very concrete. The gap between rich and poor, rather than disap-



pearing is widening, leading to multiple and potentially dangerous problems. The world remains far from the great ideals of freedom from fear and freedom from poverty. Ideologically, concurrent with emerging global values that transcend national boundaries we see stereotypes in thinking which do not inspire the will to reconcile nor strengthen the resolution of common challenges. And in the sphere of international relations there is no sign of retreat from incidences of geopolitical games that include ambitious claims to global and regional leadership and the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of others.

All of the above does little to strengthen confidence in the solidarity among nations and the formation of a new world order. To address each of these challenges we must find pertinent clues. And as a precondition for action, we must link the ideas of the mind with the ideas of the heart that emanate from culture.

People entertain many contradictory ideas about culture, from the very positive notion that culture is a source of salvation to the nihilistic notion that it does not even exist, leading to posing the question: how can we place hope in culture? The answer is clear: culture inheres in spiritual values and in conscious attitudes toward nature, toward one another, toward oneself and one's own life. Indeed, in culture there is great potential. The communicative capacity of culture is great, both as spiritual activity and social legacy. This capacity acts both vertically (from population to population, parent to child, elder to younger) and horizontally (from one culture to another, and one people to another).

Culture and its role in the construction of the new world order is susceptible to misinterpretation since students of culture and creative people have tended to focus their attention on individual cultures and their specific features rather than on the underlying and unifying bases of culture itself.

Nevertheless there is good reason to think that various quasi-theories about the inherent opposition of West and East or the mismatch of local culture and civilization can be left in the past. Today the theory of the collision of civilization is not perceived as the prophecy of inevitable clash, but rather as a warning against fanaticism, extremism, intolerance to different opinions, beliefs and cultures.

In this context, it would be very helpful to consider the dynamics of the historical development of culture. The works of ancient thinkers, both Western and Eastern, support the thinking of European philosophers about the universality within any individual culture and about the primordial axis of any culture. Kant's categorical imperative is a synthesis in the European philosophical vernacular that is strikingly similar to thoughts on morals expressed by Confucius, Hillel, many Indian and other wise thinkers.



The similarity of cultures, given the variations of its forms, was the inevitable result of direct or indirect influence of cultures upon one another which was one of the most important sources of the cultural development of all nations.

Although culture, due to some factors, is comparatively conservative, it is improper to view it as static. A person, who grew up and was educated in a specific cultural environment finds it near and dear and even the very best simply because that person often identifies himself with what he perceives to be his own mother's milk. This is perfectly understandable. At the same time, historically, culture is mobile and is developed and shaped by the transformation of the environment which brings definite ideas and shapes behavior. Only time and human activity can guide the way a person shapes his values. New values required in life will become a natural part of perception and behavior just as mobile telephones became a part of modern life. Any attempt to impose perception arbitrarily is useless and counterproductive.

The culture of nations is strikingly diverse, and this is what makes it colorful and interesting. At the same time culture has a commonality that unites nations and builds the foundation for mankind's unity and integrity. The challenge facing educators and intellectuals is to grasp this commonality and create a bouquet with the aroma and colors of humanity!

If we admit that word culture originates from notions of "cultivating the land" and "educating the person" then today at the beginning of the new millennium, the time is ripe for seriously exploring the spiritual aspect of culture.

Hegel may have been right saying that people do not learn the lessons of history. The historian Kliuchevsky was even more correct when he said that history punishes for that failure. History, culture and education should become the basis for becoming closer, for the reconciliation and partnership of nations, rather than for distrust and alienation.



Grozdan-Dan K. POPOV / Macedonia

- 1939 Born in Kumanova, Yugoslavia,
- Studied Macroeconomics, History of Arts and English Literature and Socio-Politics at “Kiriland Metodi University” Skopje and at University College, London University,
- As a Journalist and Editor, he worked in daily newspaper “Nova Makedonija” and “Vecer”,
- As a free-lance reporter and special correspondant he worked for “BBC” and “Westdeutschland Rundfunk-K”,
- Accredited with the Greek government worked as the Yugoslavia National Tourist Envoy in Athens.
- Member of board of directors of “Robotnicki” sports club and “National Tourist Office” of Macedonia.

The story about the millions of years of life on Earth and the history of millennia of our human civilization is a fascinating one. It is a hymn of aging and maturing, processes that symbolize the progress of mankind. The people of all cultures, creeds or ages, whether individuals or nations young and old, fully understand that fact. Nobody would dare say that the junior age of the planet, the Jurassic period, with the dinosaur rexes all around, was a better time for living here just because the Earth was 230 million years younger than it is now.

Therefore, at least for us, who are 70 on average, it is clear that despite we were all physically stronger, more alert and more libidinous earlier than we are now – young age is like yet to be fermented wine. It is sweet, easily hits the head and cuts the legs but the taste, value, quality and appreciation of the old, well-matured wine is something different.

The question now is how to encourage the mankind to take a good look at itself in the objective mirror on the wall. Humankind has grown older, grey and silver haired but it is more beautiful than ever. The message is that Snow White has lost her goldilocks and grown hairs indeed white as snow but nobody needs to be sent to the dark, cold forest to die. We want to live together happily ever after.

When I was a kid destiny compensated for my immediate family dismemberment with an exceedingly romantic period of growing among tightly woven families of Muslim ethnic Turks, Russian orthodox refugees and a French catholic. This is all literally true. It happened 60 years ago in a derelict, abandoned Jewish building right in the heart of Skopje, the capital Macedonia. A huge sea of young very enthusiast communists engulfed this micro cosmos of my childhood.

The son of the patriarch of the Turkish family lived to become (he ran the campaign) the official candidate for the first elected President of the



Republic of Macedonia. He, d-r Halit Shaban, was much older than myself but we were friends and I learned from him that people express their good manners through respect of seniors. He showed that literally kissing hands of grandparents or friends within a family circle is a manifestation of respect, not servitude. Even today **hand-kissing** or as the Italians call it **baciamano**, the Croats **rukoljub** or the Germans **Handkuss** - is practiced in Turkey and other cultures too. During the young feudal age actual kissing of the hand of the senior was a required gesture, expression of politeness. In some cultures that is still a norm.

Standing up when a senior enters a room or giving up one's seat in a bus, manifests other, deeper, substantially more meaningful form of social climate for the elderly in the society at large.

The times have changed, though.

Modified forms of mutual respect between and within various cultural and age groups will be established. There are political parties promoting and defending the rights of seniors. The sheer volume of old population indicates to significant changes ahead. The seniors will vote themselves into respect. Alert and creative senior women will spectacularly outnumber the men in the sea of those over 65. The ladies will articulate their rights ever more persuasively. In short, our wisdom will determine the forms and the pace through which a balanced relationship among the individuals and peoples will be achieved.

I have no doubt that this meeting in Istanbul, motivated by a great Turkish culture of respect for its seniors and supported by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, will become a beacon for the entire world for the inspirational journey towards dignified old age.



İlhami EMİN / Macedonia

- 1931 Born in Radovis, Macedonia,
- Graduated from Pedagogical Academy in Skopje,
- Worked as a teacher at Tefeyyuz School and as a reporter in a number of newspapers and magazines as “Birlik” and “Sesler”,
- Director of Skopje Radio responsible of pogrammes broadcasted in Turkish,
- 1978 was appointd as the director of Skopje theatre,
- Served as the assistant to the minister of culture till he retired,
- He is a poet and and author.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND THE EXAMPLE OF RADOVISH

Based on the achievements of the *International Interreligious and Intercivilizational Conference* held from 26-28 October 2007 in Ohri, I have high hopes that the “Example of Radovish” will be a beacon in bridging the gap between different religions and cultures, and am pleased to take this opportunity to present it to you.

According to the historical record, no unpleasant incidents of a religious or ethnical nature were experienced between the Orthodox Christian Macedonians and Muslim Turks living in the small town of Radovish in Macedonia, either in the Ottoman era or in the Serbian (1912-1941), Bulgarian (1941-1944) or Tito Yugoslavian (1944-1991) periods. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, during the Macedonian-Albanian conflict of 2001, a mosque in, for example, Pirlepe was torched and shops owned by Muslims damaged in Monastir, but in fact these were outside the zone of conflict, Western Macedonia, and even then nothing untoward happened in Radovish.

Looking for a reason, and as someone who personally lived under four Radovish regimes (Monarchical Yugoslavia, the Fascist Bulgarian occupation, and both the Stalinist and Liberal-Socialist Tito regimes of the Federative Yugoslav Republic), I find the answer in an intriguing linguistic exchange. In Radovish the Orthodox Christian Macedonians spoke to the Turks in *Turkish*, and the Turks to the Macedonians in *Macedonian*.

Thanks to the fact that Macedonian and Turkish were spoken mutually, the old-time Macedonians understood and spoke Turkish very well, and likewise for the Turks with Macedonian (the author of these lines,



in fact, wrote his first two books of poetry in Macedonian before he wrote in his mother tongue, Turkish). Unfortunately, because of a range of oppressive measures between 1945-48 during the Stalinist period of the Tito regime, most Turks had to migrate to the Turkish homeland, and thus the Turkish population of Radovish suffered a major decline. However, a few Turks continued to live in Radovish and the surrounding Turkmen villages, and the **language bridge** between them and the Macedonians persisted. When, for instance, ethnically Macedonian inhabitants of Radovish took part in Turkish programs on the Skopje state television channel they spoke Turkish, a fact to which I myself was a witness.

The bridge of friendship that was built thanks to the mutual dialogue in Macedonian and Turkish continued between the emigrant Radovish Turks and the Radovish Macedonians even after the peak of migration around 1955, and indeed was passed on to young Radovishians born in Turkey.

Even during the rise of Serbian and Croatian chauvinism, which was among the chief reasons for the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and in fact even when Macedonian and Albanian chauvinism reared its ugly head in Macedonia, there were no incidents of a fanatic religious or nationalistic nature seen in Radovish.

With your permission, let me offer my humble opinion on this subject of **civilizations**, the greatest source of misunderstanding among religions. In my view we should say **world civilization** rather than **civilizations**. You may ask why. Because the Creator, the World, Adam and Eve have the same meaning in all the religions of the book, and hence the Prophet Abraham is regarded as the father of three religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). If we think of humanity as a great tree, its branches are the various religions, nations and regional cultures. I believe that this approach will enormously facilitate bridging the gap between religions and differing cultures.

Meanwhile we should learn the religion and cultural differences of our neighbors, and above all their language. Only thus can we make an important contribution to the real interreligious dialogue, we who have considered the language, religion and culture of **the other** as our own spiritual heritage. Thanks to interreligious dialogue, people in small societies made up of different religions and nationalities, like Macedonia, can easily solve their common problems.

We must immediately tear down the bridges that divide us along religious and national lines, erecting in their place bridges based on mutual respect and love. Such bridges should of course be created not for we the Elderly, but for the younger generations of the present and the future.



At the cost even of violating the rules of grammar, we should think of people not as **us** and **them**, but only as **we**.

Rather than taking our accumulated experience of life to the grave with us, we the Elderly should leave it as a legacy to our younger generations. In short, and starting with our own immediate family, we should fight to our last breath to preserve democratic human rights, and eliminate poverty, for the world family at large. Our most sacred duty, I would think, is to strive with might and main to leave a world at peace for the generations that follow.

Finally, I recommend that we take a leading role to put **a library and reading room on every street**, for these, I feel, are important in building cultural bridges.

With greetings to everyone who brings two more people together, I offer all of you my deepest respects.



Yaakov TICHMAN / Moldova

- 1945 born in hmelntsk, ukraine,
- 1979 graduated from moldovian technical university in chisinau,
- Worked at various positions in enterprises such as bugceacki alchol and starch complex, ternopol, ukraine, chisinau beer factory, soroca beer factory, vitanta-intravest and finally as general director of "efes vitanta moldova brewery",
- Took active jobs unions such moldpishrom, moldpivrom and moldfruktminvod,
- Was decorated with a number of medals by the state,
- Member of the "center for tranparancy and democracy" vice president of "moldova-israil" association.

The troops fought to the last soldier. The battle field was bathed in human blood. The souls of those killed were already in heaven, seriously wounded were expecting their fate. Dull eyes were staring into the sky, waiting for a miracle. And the miracle happened. Black storm clouds parted and the muse descended on the earth with the sun's rays. She sang. Her voice was magic. The song flowed not only over the battlefield, but also far beyond its borders. The solders, listening to the enchanting sounds, stopped the battle. They changed the weapons on musical instruments. Brushes and canvases appeared in their hands. At the improvised sites original actors were playing scenes.

As if this was typical of our time. Since, unfortunately, in various parts of our planet still thundering explosions, people are dying, tears are falling.

But the tears could be tears of joy, tears of happiness. National culture and art should be a vaccine against violence, brutality and aggression.

There are many examples of how national culture could contribute to peace and understanding between people of different countries and nationalities.

In 1857 the great Russian and Armenian painter Aivazovsky visited Constantinople. During this visit he presented a gift to the Turkish chief architect Sarkis Balyan, one of his works. Sarkis Bey presented this work to the Sultan Abdülaziz, a great lover of paintings. The Sultan was impressed and placed to Aivazovsky an order for a series of paintings with the Bosphorus view. Aivazovsky said that the beauty of the city on the Bosphorus, had a strong impression on him. He believed that it eclipses the beauty of Venice and Naples. Aivazovsky wrote 40 splendid paintings for the Sultan and was awarded with the Osman Turkish Order.



It is remarkable that the peace treaty between Russia and Turkey in 1878 was signed in the hall decorated with Aivazovsky's paintings.

Famous Turkish diplomat Mr. Kent, the father of Muhtar Kent - President of the one of the biggest companies in the world Coca-Cola, while he was a consul in Marsell, during the Second World War, saved about 3 thousand Jews and send them with a motor-vessel to Turkey. He saved with us our culture and traditions. Their descendants now living in Turkey, while maintaining their national culture, art, originality and creativity thrive in the business and culture of the same people.

Mete Bora the organizer of this international congress has already done so much for the development of multinational cultures that it is impossible to estimate. It is priceless. During the last 5 years he is the ideological inspirer and organizer of international symposiums of artists from different countries such as Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Turkey and so on. This is not just an event; this is a festival of understanding that without the merger of national cultures, the world can not be sure that would be able to look in the future.

The foundation for the building a lasting peace in the world without upheavals and wars, is the culture and art.

Dear Gentlemen! In our difficult times, times of crisis and upheaval take care of the national culture - the foundation of peace and prosperity.



Fiodor ANGHELI / Moldova

- 1935 Born in Moldova,
- 1955-1964 Studied and completed post graduate work at M.LOMONOSOV Institute at Moscow State University,
- 1965-1983 Worked at various jobs in Moldova and Romania and in the meantime got his Ph.D. in Philology at the Faculty of Journalism at the Higher Party School.
- Served in the Moldovan Parliament as a member for 13 years,
- 1990,2001 Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Moldova in Turkey, Egypt and Kuwait ,
- Author of number of books about Gagauz and Ottoman history and Suleyman Demirel.

Any man, looking at the world map, thinks about the amazing diversity of countries and nations. Each nation creates not only material, but also spiritual values, expressed in the generalized concept of culture and art. The art supposes a group of varieties of human activity – painting, music, theatre. Only by art and culture, part of which are the artworks, you can feel the national spirit of any nation. The language is its most important heritage. This is where the national culture is expressed. Perceiving of the language is the way to perceive the culture of a nation.

The culture, referring to the sphere of spiritual life of people – is a universal human phenomenon. The culture of any people is born on national basis, becoming heritage to other nations. And thus it is enriched with their spiritual values. Culture and art make together a historical encyclopedia of human knowledge and perception. Their goal is to serve the people, to contribute to their happiness and to improvement of relations between them, contribute to unity of people and not to their separation. This is their strong constructive power.

The culture is a distinctive bridge between nations. Over seas and oceans it makes the way towards human souls. It does not recognize any censorship. As a bridge consists of many pylons the bridge of national cultures has national roots feeding it. Without these life-giving roots it would have only one color. The diversity of cultures of nations, let them be bigger or smaller, is the thing that makes the modern human civilization rich. Even the concept of universal literature could appear only in the period of universal literary contacts and synchronic interchange of spiritual values between nations.

In multinational states it is really important that the titular ethnic group permanently take care about development of cultures and languages of smaller ethnic groups. During the process of common habitation the citizens of such countries enrich each other with spiritual values. It is important that the authorities in these states ensure not only the translation of the works of titular ethnic group authors to the languages of the small ethnic groups, but also the translation of works of ethnic minorities to the official language



of the state. Another very important conclusion is that only by means of official languages of different nations the best works of representatives of ethnic minorities may become patrimony of world culture.

Evidence to the above said may be, for example, the experience of the international organization “Türksoy”. In the annals of history at the beginning of the XXI century were mentioned 44 Turk nations. This is more than 150 million people. Each Turk ethnic group suffered a complex and difficult development, but did not lose the common national peculiarities. Even today all of them do belong to the antique Turk society. Türksoy has a considerable contribution in the promotion of the culture of small Turk ethnic groups. The translations to Turkish language of works of authors from these ethnic groups, become, later, translated to other languages, patrimony of other nations.

In the conditions of rapid technical-scientific progress the fruit of spiritual activity of separate nations more rapidly become universal patrimony. The national unilateralism and limitation become more and more impossible. Despite the huge role of television, radio and internet, none of them can substitute the scientific literature and the belles-lettres. The book is the faithful memory of the humanity. The future is born not only from immediate present. It is also born from the past. Our modern consciousness and our attitude towards the present - is the result of the experience of millions of people who lived before us. Their transformed amount of knowledge and feelings are kept in books, which make the spiritual heritage from one generation to other. The book is an open door to the souls of other nations – wrote the excellent French writer Andre Morua.

The nations do not have present without past. We read in order to rise over our personal life and understand the life of others. By means of books unknown to us people become close to us. We start to understand them, to approve or disapprove their deeds. Without such close acquaintance with people living in different countries it is impossible to educate in people really kind human relations. In books we search and find answers to many questions we are worried about. And there are the excellent translators from different countries who help us in that, becoming good friends to millions of readers around the world.

One of them undeniably is the remarkable poet and translator Samuil Marshak (1887-1964). His translations to Russian language of Shakespeare's sonnets, Berns' and Blake's poems, English and Scottish ballads for the first time opened to russian speaking readers the souls of their nations. It has been half of a century since Marshak is not with us, but he is still coming in the homes of russian speaking readers together with Shakespeare and Berns, who started speaking russian by the “voice” and poem of this translator.

Yes, the book is the expectation of the meeting with a mysterious world, it is the perfect keeper of spiritual values of all nations and all centuries. Great intellects of the past were calling people to widely get acquainted with the literature of other nations. The book is an eternal source of light. A great role in accurate keeping of this source belongs to UNESCO, which could increase the number of prizes for translators of works of small nations.



Mohamed BENMEJDOUB / Morocco

- Studied mathematics in Paris Academy and got his MS in mathematics from Sorbonne University,
- Got his diploma in engineering from “Ecole des Travaux Publics” in Paris in 1958,
- In between years 1958-1976 he worked as Chief Engineer in the Ministries of Public Works and Internal Affairs and the city of Casablanca,
- From 1977 till 2002 was the President of SEGMA and CROM companies,
- Involved in tennis and cycling he took a number of posts in Moroccan Federation as well as International Federations representing Morocco. He has received a number of awards for his services,
- A devoted rotarian since 1958 he is a Past Director of Rotary International.

TO THE CONGRESS PARTICIPANTS,

*I*t is a great honour to be invited by Mr Mete BORA, Chairman of your association, to attend the “International Distinguished Senior Citizens of the World” prestigious Congress, I would like first to say how privileged I am to have been selected to represent my country Morocco, as “The Distinguished Senior Citizen” and would like to extend my warmest thanks to you Mr Chairman, for this mark of consideration for my country as well.

Certainly, Turkey and Morocco enjoy friendly relationship and an ancestral cooperation that have always placed them in the forefront of the Mediterranean topics.

I Personally have many friends in Turkey, with whom through our NGO Rotary International, we have undertaken and achieved several noble actions for our communities, including a twinning between our clubs of Casablanca and Istanbul. This has strengthened my attachment to your wonderful country, Turkey; very close to my heart, that I’ve visited several times and where I have always benefited from a warm and friendly welcome.

I wish to take this opportunity to greet my friends present at this Congress and especially those who have proposed my nomination. May I also convey my thanks and greetings to the Government Authorities, the representatives of international Organizations attending, all personalities and the whole honourable audience.

My joy to be a part of this Congress, on the theme “Bridging the Gap in between the Cultures” matches with my continuous interest in the noble ideals of building bridges of friendship and dialogue between



Mohamed BENMEJDOUB / Morocco

men and women of different cultures around the world who distinguished themselves by their desire and commitment to promote mutual understanding and universal peace.

More than ever, the world really needs organizations like yours, which are credible and committed to advocate a sincere and constructive dialogue between our different cultures.

This is no doubt a very sensitive area of our daily life. A lot of misunderstandings and confusions as those we have witnessed in recent years, lead to clashes and conflicts which are very dangerous for the stability and fate of humanity. A genuine dialogue between cultures and religions is likely to promote and establish a spirit of tolerance, mutual respect and trust between nations, and beyond to set up and insure this international understanding, and the peace we all wish to build for a better world. I fully advocate this lofty goal of building bridges between the cultures, that NGO TÜRYAK is actively promoting and for which it deserves admiration and unanimous recognition of the whole world community.

Thank you for all that you are doing in this regard.

Morocco, also, as you probably know, has already started working in this field, through initiatives to promote dialogue between cultures, religions and civilizations.

Co-founder with Spain of “The Mediterranean Three Culture and Three Religions Foundation”, Morocco is also member of “The Committee of Wises for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations”, co-chaired by the former General Director of Unesco, Mr Frederico Mayor of Spain and Professor and State Minister Mehmet Aydin of Turkey.

Therefore, Morocco can only support your Organization’s ideals and suscribe to them.

I do hope to have the opportunity to work together and again, my warmest and sincere thanks for your hospitality and kindness.

May God help us all fulfill our noble missions.



Petter DALE / Norway

- 1936 Born in Norway,
- Educated at Trader College (1957-59),
- Founder of Petter Dale Trading (1962),
- Founder of Italian House of Norway AS,
- Co-founder and Board Member of Bio-Aqua in Turkey,
- Founder and CEO of Gold Invest Ltd. which targets to establish a state of the art health facility,
- Awarded the “Cavaliere Ufficiale” knight of the order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

“BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN CULTURES” A NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVE

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Turkish Embassy in Oslo and “TURYAK” who choose me as the “The Distinguished Senior Citizen” to represent Norway in the “International Distinguished Senior Citizen of the World Congress”. I believe that the discussions in the Congress under the theme of “Bridging the Gap in between the Cultures” will provide a significant opportunity to identify the ways to improve mutual understanding among different cultures. I am very proud to represent my country in this important gathering.

Taking this opportunity, firstly I would like to mention shortly about my deep attachment with Turkey and the Turkish people. I first came to Turkey 27 years ago and since then I have visited this beautiful country more than 50 times. During my visits I have observed many similarities between the Norwegian and Turkish people. Both they are peace-loving, frank, kind and friendly. Thanks to these similarities every year more and more Norwegian tourists are visiting Turkey. Their numbers have reached 250.000 last year and around 2.000 Norwegians permanently living mainly in Alanya region. I believe that Turkey will be a very nice home for retired people of Norway. Therefore, I am working very hard to construct a healthcare center in Turkey in which around 1.000 Norwegian patients and retired citizen will live permanently. Furthermore, the Turkish people living in Norway are providing significant contribution to the development of friendship between our countries. They are hard-working people and well integrated into the Norwegian society.

I believe that when the Turkish and Norwegian people know each other more, the friendship between our countries will be strong. Therefore, we should increased interactions and cultural exchanges between our friendly people.



The world has been going through a great transformation. Globalization has made our world a small village. The problems of our world have become more complex and interrelated. Whatever happens in the very far corner of the different continents everybody becomes aware of this development. This big transformation has brought some opportunities, but also some serious risks to us. An event can immediately create worldwide repercussions. Recent caricature crises started in Denmark clearly showed this fact. Therefore, as citizens of the world we have more responsibility to show utmost attention to our actions and need a comprehensive approach to address them.

To have a better world we have to overcome existing prejudices or misperceptions between different civilizations and cultures. The best way to succeed this is to learn more and more about each other. We should intensify our efforts in this field and explore the new ways and means to increase people to people contacts between all citizens of the world. Mutual understanding and tolerance are the key words for a more stable and peaceful world.

Being a Muslim country and also a candidate country to the European Union (EU), Turkey is in a unique position to improve understanding and cooperation between civilizations and bring them closer. I am following Turkey's efforts in this field very closely. In this respect, Alliance of Civilizations Initiative launched by Turkey and Spain, under the auspices of the UN, is a very important step and has made substantial progress. Turkey's full membership to the EU will be a turning point not only for Turkey and the EU, but also to the whole world. It will clearly show that the EU is not a closed "Christian club" and Christian and Islam religions can co-exist. Therefore, my country strongly supports Turkey's membership to the EU. I also would like to mention that Intelligence Guru George Friedman is predicting Turkey as a Superpower in his new book - "A forecast for the 21st century". With its rapidly growing young, educated and hard working population Turkey is becoming increasingly important to Europe and the rest of the world.

Norway is also playing an important role in solving some important international issues. My country actively mediates between different states and actors to find peaceful solutions to the political and armed conflicts. Efforts of Norwegian Government is highly appreciated by the international community. As two NATO allies and non-EU countries, Norway and Turkey have similar concerns on most international and regional matters. They adopt similar policies on various global issues. I believe that close cooperation between Norway and Turkey will provide significant contribution to the world peace.

As experienced citizens of this world, we have the responsibility to convey our lessons to the young generations who definitely deserves a more peaceful and better world. We should do our very best to give the necessary support to build a peaceful and prosperous future without conflicts and wars. I sincerely believe that this Congress will constitute an important step in this endeavor.



Majid NIZAMI / Pakistan

- Born 1928 in Sangla Hill, Sheikhpura, Pakistan,
- Received his M.A. degree in Political Sciences at the University of Punjab,
- Awarded the honour of “Soldier for the Cause of Pakistan” by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan,
- Studied International Affairs at the University of London,
- Took over the reigns of Nawa-i-Waqt group Newspapers as Editor-in-Chief and Publisher after his brother,
- Managing director of Waqt News TV Channel,
- Was awarded the Human Rights and Hilal-i-Pakistan and “Sitara-i-Imtiaz” awards and nominated to the Parliament,
- Numerous times elected the President of the APNS and CPNE professional bodies of publishers and editors.

HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURES: THE VALUE OF PLURALISM

All of us here at this conference hail from different countries, with different cultures, religions, climates, geographical positions and any number of other variable factors. In some cases we have moulded our habits to suit our physical environments, at other times our habits are reflected in the physicalities around us. For each of our unique cocktails, there is one thing that we must have in common. That is that without each other to compare ourselves to, we are incomplete.

The philosophy of identity and selfhood, i.e. “oneself” evolves as a reply to the perceived values of the “other” we are interacting with.

We don’t enter our shared fields or arenas with already established identities. Our experience of identity comes not just from within our culture or community, but is also established when we come into contact with, or realize the existence of the “other” and become conscious of what distinguishes us from them. Social identities exist for the moment of politics or interaction and thus our identities are reliant on one another. If each of us existed in a vacuum, there might have been no need for an identity at all.

Into this comes the idea of pluralism. Yes, we are all different and yes we do compete for limited resources; but it is the beauty of our world that we also complement. Our specialties and our separate sets of expertise are something to celebrate, not be jealous of. There is strength, not weakness in our differences. We have possibilities of solutions to every problem humankind has ever faced all around us, but we are either too proud or too prejudiced to ask for, offer or accept help. Respect for each others strengths and understanding of their weaknesses,



with a humble realisation that these problems could equally easily have been ours (as in Rawls' Veil of Ignorance) will mean everyone working in harmony; with each of us, doing what we do best and sharing it; this will see the best results for this world.

Once we can eliminate unnecessary hostility by seeing that “ourself”

and the “other” are not motivated by the need to eliminate each other, instead both identities are legitimate and have the right to exist, prosper and it is the duty and to the benefit of both to share, share and share more. The ‘rules of the game’ that so far are one thing for superpowers and another list for developing countries must be fairly established. Once we feel confident and have proof that everyone, regardless of size or power is being treated in one manner only, with kindness and tolerance rather than impatience and arrogance, the gap between our respective cultures will become a friendlier place. Inside us all, veiled in our rhetoric, cloaked in our beliefs, hidden in our ideologies, lies part of the truth, a fraction of the answers to our questions. Not the absolute truth, because there is no such thing, but part of the truth. Religion already does and will play an important part in this process. We need more religion, not less as is currently being prescribed the world over. Religions which recommend peace, meditation and thankfulness among other positive qualities to be a part of every follower’s personality are a positive influence and not a malfunction of a person’s mind. A global society which can tolerate diversity of thought and encourage, even embrace it as a positive move, has the potential to get to all these scattered fragments of truths and thus bring them together. Should we achieve this we will truly astonish and amaze ourselves discovering the limits which the human mind can reach beyond, the extent to which our grasp can stretch and the miracles we can perform.



Mahira DAJANI / Palestine

- Belongs to a well known Jerusalemite family,
- After graduation with a metric certificate she worked in the field of education for 38 years in the Ministry of Education of Jordan,
- Awarded the Jordanian Medal Education by the Hashemite Crown Prince Hasan on behalf of King Hussein,
- Honored by many other associations for efforts extended to preserve the Palestinian Heritage,
- Worked as a Volunteer at Inash Al-Usra Society since 1967 up to now,
- Elected and re-elected for several times as the President of Dar Al Tifel Al-Arabi Board of Trustees and worked as the President of Museum Heritage Committee,
- Traveled widely visiting very many countries attending very important conferences and work-shops, wrote two books.

“BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN THE CULTURES”

The theme of culture is vital to understand. The culture of any nation shapes the way its people live. It affects who they are, what they do and how they think. It includes ideas, values, customs, traditions and morals that are transmitted through generations to be learned then fully be proud of and respected. On the other hand, it can be developed as it adapts continuously to change that happens around.

Some cultures can be destructive and aim to promote destructive values similar to the terrorism culture that our world is challenged by these days. In order to make such cultures collapse we utterly need to build bridges between the culture of our own and the cultures of importance. We need to understand the values of the people of these cultures and respect them even if we do not appreciate them.

There are many tools that can help us in building these bridges. Education is a vital bridge. Children need to learn about the cultures that are different than their own. This helps them to have broader understanding of the world, appreciate the differences between the cultures and decrease what causes discrimination. This needs to proceed and develop by acquiring Knowledge through enrolling in international universities, using worldwide libraries, conducting and circulating researches, holding international conferences and workshops that help studying and knowing the different peoples' beliefs, customs in practice, religion, history and languages. This helps generations to communicate promoting international understanding and friendship; that we so crucially need now.

Common Values and Ethics can bond different cultures together. Values like the respect of the rich diversity of the beliefs and the practices around the world in addition to the caring and the responding to the international calls for saving humanity and earth.



Dialogue between different cultures is a solid bridge if it is well used. Cultures that are in the process of dialogue need to understand each other and the one of its own, the strengths and the weaknesses. The principle of the effective dialogue is to treat the other as one would like to be treated.

International cultural interactions and activities as international visits and trips help people in becoming familiar with the different cultures' common meals, conversations, religions, point of views and living experiences. Moreover International Camps, festivals and Sports gatherings as the Olympic Games also are considered as means to learn about the different cultures invited and to develop an understanding of the people of those cultures besides what is told about them on the news. They help the participators appreciate each others' similarities and differences and facilitate cultural sharing.

Arts have a unique power in connecting human beings together regardless their race, religion, color, culture and national identity. Music for example is a universal language, although each culture produces its own musical forms but it can be understood worldwide. Collaborative musical ceremonies, art exhibitions and cross cultural mobile museum exhibitions can be means to bridge different political, ethnic and religious cultures.

Food expresses the different peoples' cultural identities, enhances sharing and gives the opportunity to develop the different cultures' economies through food trade.

Media and technology as internet have great roles in making the far near, enhancing the communication between the different cultures and helping in promoting them.

On the other hand, who in the world does not know and celebrate the Mother's Day or Valentine or the Labor Day and other well known occasions worldwide. These occasions shape a universal language stemmed from human feelings that all people know how to respect and cherish. Marriage and social bonding between lovers from different cultures can help in bridging between cultures too, but on personal levels that do not exceed their families.

All the means above can help all the countries of the world come together. So they are great opportunities for all of us to take advantage of them in resolving our conflicts with others and help in spreading the friendship, the love and the peace instead.

God says in His Holy Quran "A good deed and a bad one are not equal. Repel a bad deed with one which is better, and behold the one with whom you had enmity, will turn to be a close ally". And He also says: "Oh you human beings! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you peoples and tribes in order to know one another".



- 1930 Born in Moscow,
- 1953 Graduated from the Department of Eastern Studies, Faculty of History, Lomonosov Moscow State University,
- 1953-1956 Postgraduate studies in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. After graduation was hired to the conjecture department of the same institute,
- 1959 Master thesis. Thesis title: "Tax system and Tax Policy of Turkey",
- 1991 Doctoral thesis. Thesis title: "Problems of Accumulation and Financing of Economic Development of Turkey"
- Works in the Department of Near and Middle East in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences as specialist of the economies of Turkey and Cyprus.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ECONOMIC FACTOR IN OVERCOMING OF THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GAP AND INTERNATIONAL ALIENATION BETWEEN BACKWARD AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Approach to this issue requires consideration of many factors, among which, as I see, the biggest and prevailing one is a significant social and economic lagging of numerous underdeveloped countries behind highly developed western countries. The ultimate goal in overcoming of this lag should be improvement of the income and quality of life of people of these countries up to the average world level.

When millions of people now living in poverty, without access to the benefits of civilization, suffering from hunger and lack of medical care, finally have prospects for a decent life - an opportunity to get an education, a permanent job, to expand their cultural horizons – it will inevitably, if not entirely eliminate, considerably reduce the alienation and intolerance towards people of different nationality, color and creed. Such psychological changes in behavior can already be seen in most advanced countries.

However, the gap currently existing between countries in the level and quality of life is tremendous. Its generalized indicator can be the amount of average income ranging from 200-300 dollars per year in less developed countries and 1000-5000 dollars in average level countries up to 20.000-40.000 dollars in highly developed countries. These contrasts are increasing because of the extreme inequality of income distribution typical of many less developed countries: its main part goes to a small group of rich population and its less part is divided between the predominant low-income population. These inequality and injustice support and enhance the existing enormous property stratification and inequa-



lity between people which cause acute contradictions and conflicts in the territorial, ethnic, religious and other grounds.

Economic and social inequality between rich and poor, developed and underdeveloped countries stimulates the formation of extremist and terrorist organizations representing nowadays a serious menace to the safety of both individual citizens and most countries of the world.

Profound concern of the international community with these issues was reflected in the UN Millennium Declaration, passed in September 2000, in which hunger and poverty, women's inequality as well as solution of other acute social and political problems was declared the main task of mankind in the 21st century.

Economic lag and the resulting disastrous state of the large population of backward countries are being overcome by various methods. An essential role here belongs to provision of humanitarian, financial and technical support by international organizations and individual states under the auspices of the OECD. Though, much depends on the course of development chosen by the country itself. It is well known that quite a number of countries in choosing this course were not guided by the real requirements of life, but false ideas, which led them to a dead end and doomed to lagging behind. Currently, most of these countries with transition economies, as well as developing countries, are implementing economic modernization on the basis of overtaking development strategy.

At the cost of enormous effort and sacrifice, raising effectiveness of the use of domestic resources, attracting external credits and direct investments, many of these countries have achieved significant progress in overcoming underdevelopment, and some countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia have acquired the status of newly industrialized countries.

Turkey also came close to these countries according to most factors, as in recent decades it created a well developed and diversified agricultural and industrial complex, formed a dynamic business class. The increased economic potential of Turkey has allowed it after the collapse of the Soviet Union to provide substantial support and assistance to Russia and other newly formed countries of the CIS which found themselves in severe crisis. As it is known, in the early stages of its industrialization Turkey used loans and technical support of the Soviet Union. In hard times, following its collapse, Turkey rendered its help to both Russia and other former Soviet states, especially to ethnically close countries of Central Asia and Caucasus. Many of the Turkish construction companies undertook the construction of infrastructure facilities, public buildings,



educational and recreational facilities, restoration of historical and cultural monuments. Turkish companies invested billions of dollars in our light and manufacturing industries, services and other sectors of the economy. Productions of the established enterprises, as well as the significantly increased export of Turkish goods into our countries, have helped to reduce the consumer demand.

This activity was supported by the transfer of experience in creating a market economy, extensive assistance in manpower training and retraining. Much of the credit for this goes to the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency.

Russian-Turkish trade and economic cooperation, as well as energy cooperation, has become really impressive. Our countries have found reliable business partners in each other. Joint creative activity of the two countries was accompanied by recognition and integration of our peoples. Cooperation in the field of culture and education, sports and tourism, which involved hundreds and thousands of people, became more and more diversified. This often resulted in establishment of friendly and trust relationships between people; mixed marriages became usual, a lot of Russians preferred spending their vacation in Turkish resorts.

In other words, our peoples, having a long history of competition and fight, feeling quite persistent prejudice and mistrust, now not only share common interests and understanding, but also realize that in many respects are similar in character. Nothing can prevent from this, neither cultural, nor religious, or even language differences. Centuries-long suspicion and distrust have been surprisingly replaced by respect and sympathy. Is this not an example to follow?



- 1943 Born in Nis,
- 1968 graduated from Faculty of Medicine, Nis as medical doctor,
- Worked for 36 years as a reumatolog and 13 years as head of the department in the Institute Nisk Spa,
- Member of the Humanitarian Association "Circle Serbian Sisters" in Nist (Kolo Srpskih Sestra) and since 1997 the president,
- Initiator of many humanitarian actions related to care of the elderly.

BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN THE CULTURES

*H*aving worked as a doctor for 36 years I met people of different nationalities, colour, education, age; but in all those encounters their pains and sicknesses of different intensities were the most important for my vocation as a doctor. Only later did I recognise them as people of different sex, age, profession and other characteristics important for identification. It is important for sick people to recover, which is the imperative of our profession, all the rest is of secondary importance. That was the essence of my work, as well as of my colleagues'. The most important thing in our job is the sick man and that is the link which has to unite cultural differences.

In political and cultural problems the absence of tolerance causes verbal and physical conflicts among people, as well as among nations. I spent one part of my life with people who were running away from war horrors and formed societies which could be bearable or not depending on the tolerance the people had. Misfortunes can unite people or make them irritable and it again depends on the level of their culture and tolerance. I was watching the people in one refugee camp : some were acting selfishly and wanted to take most of the food and clothing, others were more modest and took only what they really needed while some others only waited to be given the necessities. Sometimes fights arose, good and bad intertwined and harsh words were exchanged. It is a very hard life with no joy, with rough conversation, and it is difficult to be in those places where there was nothing but life that passes by. Such life is very difficult and could be bearable if there was tolerance and understanding. Often our presence is enough to make a bridge among the quarreling parties.



There are also other examples: in multinational societies where there are different religions, national feelings of the people and of a single man are usually intimate, discrete and hidden, but when political and cultural misfortunes appear, those national feelings get various aspects. In war times where there is destruction and killing and everything turns into a brutal force, we meet unrealities in national life and creation, especially with nations not well educated and largely unemployed, that are not able to keep all their national desires and dreams. In times of peace that nationalism should be deprived of irrationalism and should suppress the mysticism by knowledge and the right dealings. That nationalism should essentially be the high culture, culture in its best sense which includes education, humanism, ethics, moral, decency. Only with patience, tolerance and respect is it possible to overcome misunderstandings in different national circles. In those circles there are different religions, customs, eating habits, clothing and the question is how to overcome all that? What is needed is mutual understanding and respect of a single man and nation in their way of expressing various events (religion, wedding ceremonies, baptism). Nothing is possible without mutual tolerance and understanding. Every single man and a nation should be happy if they have an inner ideal to be better, better today than yesterday of the day before, and for that purpose there is only one way and that is wider, better, more humane culture, culture which in its best sense means moral, humanism, education, ethics and decency. That way we become spiritually richer, more generous and, with a little effort to respect others, the mutual life is possible.



Prof. Henrik NEUBAUER / Slovenia

- Born 1929 in Golnik,
- Professor at University of Ljubljana,
- Opera director, choreographer, medical doctor, opera and dance historian,
- President of Slovenian Center of ITI (International Theatre Institute) UNESCO,
- Active member of Dance Nation Bureau, New York, U.S.A. President of the Slovenian Chamber Music Theatre,
- Coreographed more than 80 ballets, directed 13 French Plays and 39 operas and operettas in Slovenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Serbia and Slovakia,
- Lectured in number of countries and received awards including Docteur Honoris Causa-L'Universite de la Dance, Paris and Golden Order of the Republic of Slovenia for Services.

BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN THE CULTURES

We can discuss and speak about this theme as it is present ubiquitous on a global level. But it is also present in each of the countries in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore my contribution to the theme will be limited to the situation in our country, especially regarding the bridges built between the majorities and minorities which that are because of their smallness and submission to the processes of assimilation more vulnerable as the majority nation.

Slovenia, which has gained its independency in 1991, has about two millions inhabitants with two autochthon ethnical minorities – the Hungarian one (0.4 % of the whole population) and the Italian one (with 0.2%). On the territory where these two minorities are located bilingualism was introduced with schools in Hungarian and Italian language and both have each one representative in the Slovenian Parliament.

Beside the mentioned ones there was before World War II another autochthon minority - rather large German linguistic enclave, who were nearly all during and after the war resettled, mostly to Austria.

Besides these officially recognized autochthon minorities there are now in Slovenia also some people who moved to Slovenia. One is a gipsy minority (0.12%) and the other a large number of immigrants from other parts of the former Yugoslavia. They came to Slovenia in the seventies and eighties, before the independence of Slovenia, mostly as foreign workers, who were later joined by their families. According to the statistics for 2002 declaring as their native language were 0.2 % Macedonians, 0.4% Albanians, 1.4% Bosnians, 1.6% Serbs, 1.8 Serbo-Croats and 2.8 Croats, altogether 8.2%. But they are not a homogenous population as they are coming from different parts of the multinational



former Yugoslavia with different languages and different religions as well. In some towns in Slovenia there exist schools with supplementary lessons in different languages for their children.

The autochthon minorities and immigrants, have now in Slovenia libraries and publishing houses, radio station and special TV programs and Italians have even their own TV station. All other activities – mostly children and adult choirs, some instrumental groups, dance ensembles and acting groups – are on an amateur basis.

Regarding religions, different from the official Roman-Catholic with nearly 90% of population, 3% declared themselves as Orthodox and they have in Ljubljana an Orthodox Church, which was built between 1935 and 1940 and is just now in the stadium of enlarging. The Orthodox Churches in Celje and Maribor were destroyed during World War II.

Of other immigrants from former Yugoslav republics, there is now a rather great Muslim community, which formed in 2006 an independent Slovenian Islamic society with about 50.000 people who declared Islam as their religion and their seat is in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana. For years the Slovenian Islamic Society is struggling to have the possibility to build a mosque in Ljubljana. Now they have got the ground for it and are acquiring money for its building and just a month ago their provisional oratory was moved to a larger place. All other religions are marginal.

I would like to mention that Slovenia has also its own large minorities on the other sides of its borders in Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary with much less rights. Bilingualism is steadily decreasing, they don't have a representative in national parliaments and there is a steady pressure for assimilation.

The situation between different minority cultures and the majority people in Slovenia and outside is not ideal. There are still possibilities to influence positively on different points (schools, social services, in the offices as well as on the streets) through better knowledge of each others. That way the bridges between both of them should steadily grow and the intolerance and xenophobia between both will be diminishing. I am sure that if we will be able to close or at least to decrease the gap between cultures in each country as the first step it will be easier to do the same on the global level and the present Congress is an additional step to achieve those goals.



Franz BUCHER / Switzerland

- 1939 Born in Solothurn-Switzerland,
- Worked primarily in Banking sector at various banks such as BCV Banque Cantonale Vaudoise, Banca de Bilbao and UBS till he retired as Managing Director/ Senior Vice President in 1999,
- Presently is the Chairman of the Board of directors of BCP_Banque de Commerce et de Placements S.A,
- Board member of Nidera SA, Renens VD and Constance Finance SA,
- Member of the committee of PODUL and associate of Pro Senectute NGO's with interest in reintegration of street children and improvement of living conditions of the elderly.

BRIDGING THE GAP IN BETWEEN THE CULTURES

*M*y country, Switzerland, as a landlocked country in the midst of Western Europe, has a long history of living with many cultures. Firstly, for centuries it has been surrounded by the strong cultures of France in the West, of Germany and Austria in the North and East and, last but not least, of Italy in the South. Secondly, in the years following the Second World War workers from Italy, Spain and even Portugal looked for a new life in our country. Shortly after their families joined them, to form what are nowadays the largest groups of immigrants, often spanning now three generations. In the Eighties, Greek and Turks discovered Switzerland as an attractive country and in the Nineties workers and families mainly from the countries of ex-Yugoslavia followed.

With the profound influence of all these nationalities over the decades and centuries, the Swiss culture today is multilayered in many ways - in customs, traditions, literature, arts, architecture etc. We Swiss therefore tend to be a cosmopolitan, curious, busy and multilingual kind of people, but also somewhat haughty and even provincial when our interests are at stake.

Nowadays, Switzerland with its population of around 7,7 million counts about 23% of immigrants, most of them have comfortably settled and diversify and enrich the culture of our small country. An active naturalizing policy in the various Cantons is encouraging them to become Swiss citizens and therefore to be able to participate actively in the public life of our country, while at the same time holding onto their typical characters. Unfortunately, one of the negative aspects of the immigration is the relatively higher delinquency rate amongst certain groups of immigrants for which no lasting remedy has been found so far and which calls for more comprehension and novel efforts of all concerned parties.



Overall, however, immigration has proven to be a very positive factor for Switzerland. Immigrant families not only add to the cultural mix, they are also helping to boost the population as there is a higher birth rate amongst immigrant families than Swiss families. This leads me to the another interesting “cultural” shift within Switzerland, **the widening gap between the young and the older generation.**

Until some hundred years ago families even in Switzerland used to have numerous children (even more than 10 was not an exception) who “guaranteed” the well-being of the older family members, whose life expectancy was also much lower than today’s average of around 84 years for females and 79 for males.

The children of today (in our country the birth rate is only 1,5 child per family) have fewer siblings and cousins but, in compensation, more grandparents, uncles and aunts and even great-grandparents. The families develop in so-called “long-stemmed-societies” in which relations between generations become more important than those between brothers and sisters.

Paradoxically, fewer children also means an increasing proportion of worries for their parents and at the same time these children remain in the focus of parents and grandparents for decades. *“The worries with my children will only stop when they themselves enter the nursing home”* – a witty but probably true statement!

The other way round, fewer children face a greater individual burden regarding aging parents and grandparents. What could be the consequences of such development? Will the grandparents find distraction, responsibilities and a **fountain of youth** in their contacts with their grandchildren and will the younger generation become more **tender** and **forbearing** with the older generation?

One aspect of the gap between generations is certainly the **financing of the pensions** through Switzerland’s Old-age and Survivors’ Insurance scheme. Not so long ago five active workers contributed to the allowance of a pensioner under the so-called “contract of the generations”-scheme, but this proportion stands now at 3,5 workers per pensioner and it will drop further, putting additional strain on the relations between youth and the older generation. Some painful measures (for both the contributors and the beneficiaries) will have to be taken, if this social program is to be maintained in the present form. An increase of the working life above the present 64 years for women and 65 years for men is on the horizon.

On balance we can certainly say that the “problems” with the “overaging” and the “underyounging” of our society have only just begun and more and more new approaches have to be found and applied if we wish to keep up a sympathetic and even tenderhearted co-existence between the generations.



Prof. Jacqueline FILKINS / United Kingdom

- Studied Social Sciences at Birmingham University and was trained as a nurse in the Red Cross Hospital in Berne, Switzerland,
- In 2004 appointed by the Secretary of State as Non-Executive Director for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (Cumbria),
- Co-founder and Hon. President of the European Nurse Directors Association (ENDA) and its elected representative to European Specialists Nurses Organisations (ESNO). She has recently (2008) been re-appointed Vice-President of ESNO,
- As retired Dean of Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (St Martin's/University of Cumbria), she is a frequent guest speaker on subjects relating to health professional education, leadership and nursing in particular. The title of Professor was awarded to her in 1997.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURES

*I*t is normally not too difficult to analyze a theme of a conference and to choose the key messages one wishes to share either in an abstract or presentation. The concept of “bridging a gap” is clear and “between cultures” also conveys clarity of purpose.

So why could there be a hesitation in selecting the right issues on which to focus? To find an answer to this we need to appreciate some of the background to this conference.

- “TURKAK” is an organisation that is committed to the welfare of the senior citizens of the world and advocates the concept that societies should aim to benefit from the knowledge and experience of their senior citizens.
- 2010 is designated European year for combating poverty and social exclusion. The EU is advising member states to establish active inclusion policies to provide assistance to people living in poverty and helping those who are marginalised.

I will therefore highlight issues relating to the needs of older persons and perceived and/or real gaps between cultures. The areas of needs of older citizens can fall into a number of categories such as: finance, health, social care, equality and human rights, housing transport and society in general. Not all is doom and gloom for senior citizens. Many are able to enjoy their retirement and may also choose to continue working past the “normal” retirement age in good health. This paper wishes to bring to light an often forgotten, or neglected, group of people: Older Citizens with Learning Disabilities. It is hoped that it will draw the attention to this group and to the fact that they often endure discrimination and that their potential complex needs are neither identified nor met as they age. Some of the facts are stated as follows (IASSID, 2002):



1. Older people with intellectual disabilities are subject to compounded stigmatization

Discrimination can arise from the fact that there is frequent misunderstanding about the term “learning disability”. It refers to a lifetime of lower than average overall capability for self-determination and independent functioning and performance. Such a handicap coupled with older age and its associated negative attitudes can increase marginalisation and discrimination in a society that is increasingly focussed on productivity.

2. Older people with intellectual disabilities have the same needs as other older people

Not only do they have the same needs, they also have the same rights to access appropriate health and social care provisions. The increasing life expectancy of people with learning disabilities coupled with lack of expert support, intervention and understanding bring risks of further deterioration in their health and wellbeing. The WHO (2000) in its summative report on Ageing & Intellectual Disabilities states a wide range of factors why there may be difficulties in accessing primary health care provision. For example, access barriers may emerge from widespread cultural attitudes and beliefs relating to both old age and learning disabilities that may reduce the willingness of otherwise caring families or other carers to access healthcare.

The purpose of this short paper is to highlight the gaps that exist but it would be unjust to fail to acknowledge that excellent provisions do exist and that many older persons with learning disabilities can lead an active, varied and inclusive lifestyle within a caring community. But demographic changes are such that the numbers of persons requiring skilled support are increasing and necessitate comprehensive policies that are sensitive to nations’ cultural values and reflect best practice. These action plans require investment in education at all levels as well as in specialist provisions for older persons with learning difficulties so that they may benefit from a universally acceptable quality of life.

Acknowledgement:

I wish to thank Prof. D Dagnan and colleagues of the Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who have raised my awareness of the needs of persons with learning difficulties.

i IASSID (2002) Ageing and Intellectual Disabilities. Fact Sheet (www.iassid.org)

ii World Health Organization (2000) Ageing and Intellectual Disabilities-Improving Longevity and Promoting Healthy Ageing: Summative Report. Geneva



Prof. Svitlana BILIAIEVA / Ukraine

- 1946 Born in Ukraine,
- 1969 MA in History, Voronez State University, RF,
- 1978 PhD in Archeology, Academy of Science, Kiev, Ukraine,
- 1987 Present, Senior Researcher at Institute of Archeology of National Academy of Science, Kiev, Ukraine,
- Full member of Ukrainian National Committee of ICOMOS,
- President of Historical and Cultural Association “Ukraine-Turkey”,
- Major Fields of Interest; historical archeology, Ottoman and Islamic art and architecture, problems of cultural contacts and integration, mediavel history, archeology of Ukraine and Turkey.

THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERRELATION OF THE CULTURES OF EURASIAN: NEW HORIZONS OF THE DIALOG OF CIVILIZATIONS.

The historical and archaeological investigation of interrelation of societies, belonged to different bases of civilization, became one of the most actual subjects of the modern period. It can be one of the paths of realization of the most important goal of nowadays, the formation of the unity of mankind in diversity of the cultural habitat. The results of many years excavation of sites on the contact territory of step and forest-step allowed to overcome old stereotypes and deformations of history of coexistence of nomads and settled population, different ethno linguistic groups, such as Turks and Slavs. It can be accepted toward Ukrainian and Ottomans, and other peoples of Eurasian in Medieval and New times. To understand and explain the concrete society, we need to study the mechanism of historical development on every stage of its existence, according to the world line of civilization. In any case, from one side, it will be full of numerous conflicts, wars, and conquests. But from another side, it demonstrated peaceful contacts and trade relations, cultural influences and integration. So, without any political aim, the old myths about “evil” and “kind” peoples lose its sense and can not be correspondence of the real position in the world.

The next sufficient contraposition based on the religious division, which had the enormous meaning in the political postulates, especially in medieval time and preserved till now days. For the first, it used to stimulate the conflicts situation and enemy relations, to concentrate all forces on the military decisions. The background of such approaches led us to medieval fanatics, which not correspondent to real sense of all world



religions, based on idea of monotheism, unity of mankind and immanent connection “peoples of Scriptures”, as it was stressed in Holy book and Koran .

In apart of sufficient contradiction, archaeological investigations gave us numerous evidences of penetration, interaction, and integration of cultures. It was realized by different ways and had different structure of influences. An interesting example of spreading of cultural influences gave the situation, which formed in the course of the period of Ottoman Empire possession on the lands of the Black Sea area and other lands of Ukraine from the end of 15th till the end of 18th century. As it was established, the penetration and spreading of Ottoman influences touched upon of various spheres of culture and mentality. This took place by different ways: trade, military actions and other contacts. The paradox was in the facts of spreading of Ottoman influences by Ukrainian Cossacks. Besides of military actions, it carries out the role of intermediates of the Ottoman culture. Cossacks took over the Turkish manner of smoking, type of pipes and its name. Pipes and its decoration began imitated in handicrafts industry and became of complicated part of Ukrainian culture.

As a trophy, Cossacks have brought several kinds of Ottoman things. In the mode of life of Ukrainian society was coming influence of Turkish culture – attributes of power, some types of weapons, smoking pipes, art ceramic, specific forms of wear, elements of decoration , such as “Turkish cucumbers”, motives of three leaves, leaves images and others.

Now day, Turkish culture in Ukraine represented by numerous historical-architectural monuments, great Museums collections, including archaeological findings. Further comparative research of Turkish and Ukrainian materials will allow better realize the process of cross-cultural influences in the local and global aspects, promote to growing of understanding and tolerance between the peoples of the modern world.



Prof. Dr. Nükhet HOTAR / Turkey

Vice President of AK PARTİ

Deputy of İzmir

INTERNATIONAL EXEMPLARY SENIOR CITIZENS CONGRESS “BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP”

INTRODUCTION

*I*n the faith that we can build tomorrow together, and acting on the dictum of our great leader Atatürk, who said “Peace at home, peace in the world,” supported also on its advisory board by the AK Party Center For Coordination of the Elderly, the International Exemplary Senior Citizens Congress this year focuses on the theme of “Bridging The Cultural Gap” with the aim of channeling, through the medium of younger generations, the knowledge and accumulated experience of senior citizens into the cultural memory of the world’s societies.

Taking this congress as an opportunity to reinforce communication and mutual understanding between generations and cultures, on an occasion when Turkey has the honor of welcoming senior citizens from various countries around the world, we are pleased to be hosting such a major event, one which makes it possible to benefit from the vast experience, distilled as it is by the years, of these distinguished senior citizens.

The congress also provides a chance to stress the role of senior citizens in securing intercultural dialogue and the maintenance of peace, and especially in reminding us of global value codes while helping to institute them, and a chance also to emphasize once again the need for putting not the conflict of civilizations but rather the meeting of civilizations on the agenda.

Culture includes all the material and spiritual values created during the process of historical and social development, plus the sum total of means that go to generate them, means which are employed to transmit those values to future generations, and which show the degree to which humankind has mastered its natural and social environment. Sociologically speaking, culture is the societal heritage which enfolds us and which we learn from human beings, and as such is a bridge of continuity from the past to the future. At a time when intercultural dialogue has increased thanks to such developments as globalization and technological advance, and when therefore we are experiencing intensive interchange from culture to culture, chief among the people



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who will contribute to the development of civilization must certainly be numbered our senior citizens with their vast body of knowledge and experience.

In the recent past humanity has witnessed numerous positive advances, but has also seen, and continues to do so, such misfortunes as war, misunderstanding and the loss of certain cultural values. As for us, we see our senior citizens, who are keenly aware of the value of peace, tranquility, tolerance and respect for differing cultures, as the greatest chance for passing the lessons of the past on to future generations. With their invaluable fund of accumulated knowledge and experience, senior citizens are the people who have reached heights from which they can contribute to the societies in which they live and consequently to the world. Intercultural bridges must be built not only between societies and people who belong to differing cultures, but at the same time from one generation to the next, and the sole condition for achieving this is to bring our senior citizens in contact with the coming generations. Shaping its policies with a consciousness of all these truths, our party takes its “Meeting of Generations” project, being run by the Social Affairs Directorate Center for Coordination of the Elderly, as a channel via which it constantly exerts efforts in this direction.

Senior citizens from all over the world have been invited to our congress, and the fact that their appeal to bridge the cultural gap floats up from Istanbul is rendered still more meaningful because this city is one with a great past in this sense, and today as well is recognized as one of the cultural capitals of the world. While stressing this, the AK Party Center for Coordination of the Elderly would also like to express the great pleasure it feels in being able to support an event which contributes to the development of the dialogue between cultures on an international plane.

It is our hope that in a world where all are neighbors, the ideas and methods which emerge at this congress will lead to geographical neighbors becoming neighbors in conscience as well, that peace based on borders will become peace and cooperation based on cultures and civilizations, and that as a result the cultural gap will indeed be bridged.



BUILDING BRIDGES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CULTURES

Although the frequently-invoked concept of culture is defined in different ways, generally the definition takes something like the following form: “Both human behavior and the totality of all the ideas and beliefs plus material and spiritual leanings acquired by a nation in the course of history as a result of that behavior.” In the sociological sense, culture generally signifies the lifestyle of a community and the features which distinguish it from other groups (1). Anthropologists, meanwhile, focus their discussion of cultural on four concepts: what a society has acquired in terms of civilization, its selfness, the sum of its social processes, and its memory (2). According to these approaches, culture is transferred from generation to generation and recounted as a social heritage, one characterized by sharing, transference, learning and change. In this context the older generation, referred to as the memory of our society, has important responsibilities.

The views of Mustafa Kemal on the subject of culture are reflected in his remarks that “Culture is the foundation of our existence” and “...a culture free of influences from the East and West, one in harmony with our national character and history....”

Atatürk saw civilization and culture, not as the monopoly of a race or nation, but as the common property and accumulated background of all humanity. Furthermore, he maintained that economic power depended on the power of human beings, that is, on culture.

Cultural change commences with interaction and communication. In its broadest sense, communication is defined as the “transmission of meaning,” and is a complex, multifaceted, dynamic, social process. Intercultural communication usually takes place between individuals or groups belonging to different cultures (4).

In daily life people from differing cultures interact, people from differing cultures and ethnicities live together similarly. Interaction among cultures is an inevitable and natural result of globalization, economically and politically motivated migrations and association, plus developments in communication technology (5).

Globalization is the arrival at interdependence of nations in a web of multidimensional relations guided by the concept of a world society. It has occurred thrice in three different guises. The first globalization came about in the 1940s through marine developments, the second in the 1980s with their industrial revolution, and the



third in the 1990s thanks to the revolution in communications technology. In the third phase, globalization arising from the communications revolution used cultural change as a means of expansion (5,6).

Due to globalization such national matters as economic, political, social and cultural values as well as savings have spread to the international arena. Developments in communications technology, i.e. in the third wave of globalization, have led to consumption and the spread of mass culture, to a uniformity of lifestyles, to an awareness of global issues, and to a weakening in national identity and culture (5,6).

In a globalizing world the basic goal of nations is to raise generations that attach importance to the common values of humanity, generations which are free and fair-minded without discrimination as to race, color, language or religion. The older generation has a great responsibility in the raising of such individuals (3).

Changing mores have led both individuals and societies to exert efforts toward establishing an identity (3). Culture can undergo change through political, social and economic developments, and the desired change is a process that is not forced, with wealth and essential patterns preserved, one shaped by the needs of the era (5). With globalization interaction becomes limitless, and due to the abolishment of national identity and culture plus the emergence of a uniform, homogenous structure may be interpreted as a cultural threat. Furthermore, in our time interaction and communication between cultures has led to prejudice, to the use of unlimited power by cultures which see themselves as superior, and to feelings of loneliness, alienation and humiliation against a backdrop of cultural assimilation, tension and frustration.

Interaction and rapid change among cultures has led to the emergence of multicultural societies. Diversity between cultures is the basic characteristic of society and must be considered as a driving force for development. The existing diversity is a rich source for solutions to common problems. Cultures which perceive, interpret and solve problems differently show the way to other cultures, and thus mutual exchange of ideas leads to the building of bridges between cultures (2).

Projects which help cultures live together and share their experience can be vital in bridging cultural gaps, developing respect and tolerance, and eliminating prejudice.

A society cannot break its bonds with the past. Culture is defined as a society's memory and the most important carriers of memory in society are the elderly. However, migration, economic difficulties and changes in family structure may result in loss of status, cultural gaps and intergenerational conflicts.



Prof. Nuran AKDEMİR / Turkey
Aging Platform Coordinator, Ankara, Turkey

In conclusion; globalization and the means of communication inevitably influence culture on a world-wide scale. Said influence can be taken as resulting in assimilation of cultures, stereotyping and the abolition of diversity and differences, and it can lead to problems of identity. For the elimination of tension, the goal should be to exhibit unity in variety, variety in unity, awareness of values, tolerance, and a culture of respect. In this context, the ties between the older and younger generations are of the utmost importance.

Atatürk saw the future of society not in conflict with the advanced nations but in reconciling with them, not in disconnecting from the West but in engaging with the strong, contemporary family of the Western world (3).

While catching up with the West and integrating with the world, it is a prime responsibility of our senior citizens, today's adults, to ensure that we remain faithful to ourselves and that the younger generations are groomed to preserve the language, which is among the fundamental elements of our culture.



THE CULTURAL GAP CAN BE BRIDGED WITH TOLERANCE, DIALOGUE, TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT

*I*t's annals filled with accounts of religious hatred, cultural or ethnic conflict, prejudice and misunderstanding, with rampant mistrust, intolerance, uncertainty, anxiety, violence and uneasiness toward the "other," the World entered a process of rapid change starting in the last quarter of the 20th century.

This process caused radical transformations in nearly every field, from the economy, social sciences, communications and politics to law, history, geography and the governing of states, while it deeply impacted both societies and individuals.

The policies and concepts applied in this process rapidly changed their clothes. The phenomenon which placed its stamp on this change has been globalization, with all the effects that have emanated from it to the surroundings.

Globalization has on the one hand made the world into a great marketplace while on the other hand reducing it to a tiny village, and has meant the proliferation of wealth, technology, competition, democratic pluralism, production and consumption, as redefinition begins to be required for such concepts as humanity, the individual, freedom of thought and belief, political, social and cultural tolerance, conflict and reconciliation, dialogue and quarreling.

Knowledge, power and technology have globalized, but so have poverty, deprivation and inequality, while theories of intercultural conflict and dialogue have also come on the agenda.

Starting with the fact, which has been verified by experience, that today harmony and agreement bring prosperity while conflict and intolerance bring want, the common mind of humanity unites in declaring that for Huntington's thesis regarding "the conflict of civilizations" to be discounted in the twenty-first century there is more than ever an urgent need to bridge the cultural gap.

Today an approach should finally be instituted which abolishes the distinction between 'us and them,' for the latter has become the symbol of polarization. In a globalizing world it is vital to live together while recognizing the "other" and respecting differences. Tolerating not only differing views but also cultural differences has become the fundamental condition for a global world, for pluralism, in the true sense.



Thus our first step should be to institute tolerance as Goethe defined it when he said, **“Tolerance means agreeing to live with what is other and different under equal and equivalent conditions.”**

Dialogue should be employed as a basic key to resolving the rigid ideas, prejudices and mistrust that lead to enmity and suspicion among societies. To make dialogue a means toward bridging the cultural gap and contributing towards world peace, long-term initiatives must be instituted in the areas of education, the media, youth, migration and the improvement of women’s lot.

Trust and mutual respect are the most important factors in developing solid foundations for the dialogue among cultures and in making those cultures liveable. In order to build trust and mutual respect, and to obviate intercultural differences, misunderstandings, stereotyped prejudicial ideas and even fear, an effort is required of states, civil societies, the private sector, and individuals – in short, of everyone.

Certainly it will not be easy, and indeed will necessitate patient efforts over the long term, to resolve problems which have arisen due to profound historical, political and cultural dynamics, and which now have a global character.

Yet in the 13th century, amid bloody struggles for power, political turmoil, religious conflicts and sectarian battles, a voice rose up out of Anatolia, the voice of Mevlana saying, **“Come, whatever you may be, still come; whether infidel, fire-worshipper or idolater, still come. Our lodge is not the lodge of hopelessness. If you’ve broken your vow a hundred times, still come.”** Thus an invitation was extended to all: let us coexist without regard to religion, language, or race, and this invitation complemented the words of Yunus Emre, **“Because of the Creator, Be tolerant of what is created,”** who with his works aimed to bring together, through love, all the world’s people so they could unite both with one another and with the universe, and who thus laid the first stone in the building of intercultural bridges.

Provided we act together, we can make it possible to live in a different world, one of greater justice and peace. Our aim should be not to put off today’s problems only to perpetuate them, but to find a solution to them now. This is our greatest debt to future generations.

In this context a great deal will be contributed by the “Türyak International Exemplary Senior Citizens Congress,” being held for the first time with the theme of bridging the cultural gap.



THE RETIRED AND THE OLD PEOPLES IN THE ESTABLISHING OF INTERCULTURAL BRIDGES

The Silk Road which stretches from China to Europe is not only a road of trade, but has also increased the comfort level of the people living in the regions it passes from and has been a bridge between the east-west culture civilisations. The Seljuks who were ruling in Anatolia, at the time have established an insurance system to watch over the trade life and they have built caravansaries in which people from all religions could find shelter and pray. Dialogue understanding and respect was developed among the people. Latitude was dominant and others were seen with latitude. Every human was receiving respect as a human.

Bridges are structures which connect people to each other. The function of a bridge is to connect. The history of Anatolia and Silk Road are full of bridge examples. Whomever wanted to do a good deed built either a bridge or a fountain. Bridges have stories and these stories sometimes emphasise the difference of classes in society and class morality. The material of the bridges is love. A bridge is connecting. Bridges between cultures accept the differences and direct people to peace. The common language of those bridges is humanity.

Culture is the resultant of social processes. Culture is a term of humanity and society. Each society must establish its own culture and unity. It must also create the culture of the group among the groups of the society such as retired and old people. Creating a fair society is only possible through these conditions. It must be different but equal. Differences must be seen as richnesses. Social state and the superiority of law provides a precise dependance on human right standards, which helps culture to develop and globalise. Social identity will be gained in a healthy manner. This will prevent cultural imperialism.

Globalisation put the world in a instability which has come to dangerous points. Inequalities and disagreements have increased. The international society is living with disputes. There is a need to establish a common political will in order to deal with the instabilities on the world. The poverty of the people along with hopelessness, iniquities and alienation creates terrorism. Economical and environmental problems are increasing and the health system is insufficient for humanity. The iniquity of income is increasing, the difference between the rich and the poor is growing and the middle class has disappeared. The groups in the society shares the discrimination and damnification. While it is necessary to improve friendship relations between countries by activating social and cultural connections, it is also necessary to develop the cultures of the aggrieved groups



among the states. Nobody should wait as a spectator. Teachings which are based on the mind and which are global provide a relationship based on love and respect between societies and the groups in the societies. The subjects emphasised on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are common values among all people. The teaching of history must be at a connecting style not separating. The need for people who think and who possess the skill of solving problems along with the non-governmental organizations these people establish is now at a greater level.

Atatürk says, "My moral heritage is science and the mind". The cultures of science societies are more modern and more social. We need to produce ideas and solutions based on the mind. Montaigne says, "We shouldn't spend a life swimming against the current". It is necessary to develop the custom and conventions that encourage the development of scientific thinking. Education systems that adapt racism and fundamentalism must be abandoned. Strong family structures can uphold humanity. Every society must contain a democracy culture. We must establish a civilisation with our cultural variations. We must administer varieties successfully and establish common values. All humanity must work together for the future. Nobody and no state has the right to make use of the nature unreturned. The earth is the sole place of humanity. Environmental problems, atmosphere pollution, changings in climates and global warming are common problems. These problems can also be solved if handled collectively. International solidarity is inevitable. We must keep the world standing and it's our duty to bring people together, listen to them, strenghten them, teach them the notions of sharing and altruism. We must protect the peace on the world and make it dominant. Getting to know one other is only possible through learning cultures. Culture and education are priority. We must gather around basic values, know how to live together and be aware of the human rights that need to be protected. We can move to elsewhere should one place desertificates, but there will be nowhere to go should all the world desertificates. Don't forget UFO's have enfolded the world.

The big technological development that has disrupted the relations between people is the "internet". The identities of the societies have corrupted and everyone is under threat. Internet rules everything as though a global government. Lives of people have lengthened while the number of old people have increased. Habits of production and consumption have changed. While it is necessary to protect moral trustability; that too is now under threat. Stock markets are ruling the economy not productivity. Stock markets are modern casinos which set the fairs of people. Habits need to be changed. There are no longer foreigners but comrades on the world. With the developments in the area of communication, the world has changed into a single economical



and political system. It is forgotten that the world is the common heritage of all humanity. At the end must come to identity, personality and beneficial conflicts. We need societies which are based on the principle of “variety in unity”, societies which are free thinking, productive and equal.

The world is the common heritage of humanity. Generations that believe in the common values and future of humanity, who don't believe in race, color, language, religion must be raised. Solidarity between generations have gained importance. Cultural variations are now of greater importance than in the past. The time to establish a new economic system and a new international relations system has come. A common life culture must be created and all humanity must accept it. This is not the disappearing of cultural variation but the protection of it. A Standard of value which will enable our better administering will thus be established.

The bridge between the retired and the working, old and young must be strong. Social and cultural connections can be activated through this bridge. While the cultural heritage, accumulation and alliance of civilisations in Anatolia is shared with all the world, the role of the old and retired in this must not be denied. The Retired's Day is only celebrated in these lands on June 30 as the retiring day of the great leader Ataturk. We invite all the world to celebrate June 30 as “ The Retired's Day” on the memory of Ataturk who had once said “Peace in the state, peace in the world”. Turkish Retired Worker's Organisation, which is one of the most important non-governmental organizations of the country with its 92 branches and close to a million members, has become a member of AGE-EUROPE (European Union Platform of the Aged) in order to fulfill its duty as an international bridge. It is making an effort to attract attention and produce solutions to the problems of the retired and old people. It is attracting attention to the retired people having to live under the hunger limit. It is seeking for solutions for iniquities among those who don't have no similar on the world.

We are addressing all the retired and the aged people of the world: “Let's unite under the retired culture.” Let's bring a touch of love, peace and humanity to the world. Let's awake the notion of humanity with the hope of showing the beauty of love, latitude and peace.



BUILDING BRIDGES FOR GAPS BETWEEN CULTURES

We are living in a world of contradictions.

On one side, science and technology has expanded its targets aggressively, far beyond our planet, to the limitless horizons of universe. Progress in science and technology, during the last century, has been more than that ever accomplished during the history of mankind.

Yet on the other side, 800,000,000 people do not have literacy and numeric skills on our planet earth. With the functionally illiterate, this figure goes up to two billion.

While numerous people enjoy living in the present age, masses of people practically live 100, 200 or even more hundred years behind. As the information and communication era continue its amazingly fast progress, this big gap of knowledge and information will grow even worse. Sharp and dangerous disputes will rise up between people of knowledge and people of ignorance.

Yes, we are living in a world of humanitarian controversies.

On one side, we are capable to produce more than double of the food needed to feed our entire population on earth. And yet, on the other side, over one billion people are starving in this world. At every three and a half seconds, someone dies from hunger. 30,000 children, under the age five, will die today.

Indeed we are living in a world of dramatic contradictions.

On one side, we suffer from terror and never ending wars, which bring blood and tears of thousands as innocent people perish out. And yet, on the other side, billions of all kinds of currencies are spent for all kinds of wildly killing weapons.

Environment of our planet earth is getting out of control. Erosion is expanding. Increase in the heat of our planet is now alarming. Our seas and water sources are polluted. Existing water sources become insufficient as the population grows. We complain from these happenings on one side, and yet we are a part of the environmental destruction on the other side.



If someone is suffering from hunger, if mothers and fathers see that their children fade away because they are desperately helpless, if people do not have a shelter to live in peace, and if billions of people live the Dark Age, without literacy and numeric skills, it is not possible to talk about values, rules, love and good human relations to these people. Apparently, it is not possible to talk about peace and common cultural denominators in an environment, where such controversies characterize polarized cultures.

To avoid and reduce this growing gap between masses, it is essential to build bridges of understanding between the camps of communities based on cultures in conflict. To build such bridges, our world needs volunteers dedicated to establish a common understanding on recognizing the value and dignity of each human life. This is possible. Because, in spite of the drawbacks that I have highlighted as controversies of our age, still there are people, in this world, who have committed themselves to:

- Provide health care and immunization;
- Combat against hunger and poverty;
- Improve quality of mankind through literacy and education;
- Struggle against the envisaged “Water Crisis” by empowering water management;
- Pioneer for environmental conservation;
- Facilitate mediation, conflict resolution and peace; and
- Restore the social disharmony and diminishing values.

These people reflect the knowledge and experience that they have accumulated in their lives, to the benefits of others, who need them. These people are the symbols of humanitarian affection represented here, in this meeting, by its distinguished participants. They are the leaders of their communities representing common human wisdom.

Another effective way of reducing and overcoming cultural conflicts is to facilitate common understanding between people of different nationalities, cultures, religions and races. It is always easy for people to build up prejudices and even hatred against each other, if they have no comprehension about their values, histories, traditions and challenges.



Örsçelik BALKAN / Turkey

Rotary International Director (2006-08)

As leaders of our communities, perhaps, we cannot initiate political solutions, but we can disseminate information among communities of different cultures by activating various sources through our capabilities and capacities. We can address to the challenges of human conditions by facilitating humanitarian services at areas where needs are apparent. Purpose of our meeting is to explore how we can address these challenges on human base, and how we can utilize the resources of developed communities to compensate the growing, dangerous gap between cultures.

WE CAN DO IT. At least we can encourage and lead the new generations to take the flag from us and carry out this noble mission with commitment and dedication. We can do it as long as we do not stay indifferent to the problems of mankind. We can do it, as long as do not say “it is not my business” or “I don’t care.”

Our capabilities, as respected community leaders, oblige us to originate and facilitate resolutions to conflicts among human kind even if some solutions may seem almost impossible at the first glance.

There are always new horizons even beyond what looks as impossible. British author of science fictions and inventor Arthur C. Clarke has said, “The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.”

So, let us challenge, what some people may think is impossible. Let us not suffice by accepting things as they are. Let us use our experience and vision to appeal to the present and future challenges that keep on opening the gap between masses of people belonging to different cultures. Let us do it.

If we don’t, who will do it?



Ali ŞEN / Turkey

Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2009

**AGEDNESS IS INEVITABLE,
SENILITY CAN BE PREVENTED....**

I see that TÜRYAK has served people in a manner so different from many association established in Turkey. Attention is something to which the aged people would be most interested and required. Generally 12% of world population is named as aged. However 6% of Turkish population are considered to be aged.

The status and happiness in life of aged people; are related with the social reassurance system of the countries in which they live. It is evident that the life standard of a person at 65 years or above in poor countries of Africa is much tougher than that of people in the same age in developed countries.

However happiness is not as such...

I always see in many countries that the old and rich are very unhappy, whereas there exist many happy old people in poor countries.

In Turkey, 7/10 of aged people are spending their final years by the side of their children. Certainly, such a life style is burdensome on the bride or groom at home or their own children. The aged people living in those circumstances are not so happy either. In Europe 1/10 of the aged people are leading their lives together with their children.

Agedness; is highly related with health. A healthy person enjoys life at agedness. Even though he does not have much money, he leads his life in happiness.

In various societies, there is no universal acceptance regarding limit of agedness. There is no evidence either indicating that intelligence, which is more related with education and life standard is negatively affected from agedness.

In agricultural societies like Turkey, the aged command an esteemed status. Particularly in societies with no culture of writing where information is passed verbally; life experiences are so valuable. Whereas in industrial societies; the status of the aged people recede as technology comes forward.



Ali ŞEN / Turkey

Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2009

Even though agedness is still seen as if it is supremacy, in some fields like politics; many aged people whose productive period is not completed, cause problems of non-congruity.

A significant social dimension of agedness is concerned with the values and education of this generation. In societies where change is accelerated, someone above the age of 60 becomes obliged to conform with moral values and expectations that are very different from those in his youth. Besides the difficulty of “Resistance to Change” which is largely accepted as a feature of the aged, those bearing the feature to accept life as it is, are people who have attained happiness. At the moment we learn and admit that some sides of life can not be changed; we will see that a healthy agedness will pass on with happiness.

It is for sure that neglecting the beauty of life, being pessimist, dejected will devastate the life of aged person.

We would rather maintain a happy agedness...

Let us smile and make smile.

Let us make our surroundings happy.

But let us not bring senility into our mind.



İnan KIRAÇ / Turkey

Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2009

I cannot imagine a land other than Anatolia, a country other than Turkey and a city other than İstanbul that is best suited for the establishment of cross-cultural bridges.

For thousands of years, these lands have catered to the amalgamation of different cultures and the preservation of diversities. In this respect, I find it highly meaningful that this conference is organized in İstanbul, a city that left its unique imprint on great civilizations, namely Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, which shaped world culture from Byzantium to İstanbul.

My wife Suna Kiraç and I adamantly believe in the people of our country and the power of knowledge. We are convinced that crowned with a background in culture and arts, a strong, well-educated, well-equipped human infrastructure is of critical importance for helping Turkey assume its well-deserved place amongst contemporary societies and in establishing cross-cultural ties. With this ideal in mind, we continue to develop, over the last thirty years, our initiatives that prioritize education, culture and the arts.

Our initial undertakings in this respect came about in the 1980s. During those years, both Suna and I sought solutions to the problems encountered in the educational institutions from which we had graduated. 1981 was the year of Galatasaray Education Foundation's inauguration. In more or less the same years, Suna began to prepare the groundwork for the Koç High School. In the 1990s, we combined our efforts towards the establishment universities. Galatasaray University was opened in 1993, the same year, in fact a day before, as Koç University. Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation, on the other hand, was inaugurated in January of 1995.

Our first endeavor in the realm of institutes and museums was Suna-İnan Kiraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED). Housed in two buildings that we bought and restored within the old town of Antalya, the institution opened its doors in 1996. The institute is created with a view to conduct and support academic studies on the historic and archaeological structure of the Antalya region, as well as on Mediterranean civilizations. Also catering to the Archaeology Department of Akdeniz University since the day of its establishment, the institute successfully continues to serve as a respectable institution that follows and reports updates on all archaeological excavations in the region.

Our efforts to serve the needs of Turkey in the fields of education, healthcare, culture and arts were further accelerated by the establishment of Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation in 2003. As a continuation of this undertaking, we opened Pera Museum in June of 2005. As we convey to younger generations the ethnographic, archaeological and artistic values that are about to fall into oblivion, we also offer our visitors outstanding selections of world art.



İnan KIRAÇ / Turkey

Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2009

Today, Pera Museum showcases exhibitions of our permanent collections, namely, “Kütahya Tiles and Ceramics,” “Anatolian Weights and Measures,” and “Orientalist Paintings,” all of which my wife and I began to collect in the 1980s and eventually donated to our Foundation in 2003.

Furthermore, Pera Museum continues to house exhibitions of great masters from a variety of nationalities, such as Jean Dubuffet, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Rembrandt van Rijn, Joan Miro, Niko Pirosmani, Josef Koudelka, and Akira Kurosawa. Pera was also the first private museum to collaborate with institutions and collections of global renown, including Tate Britain, Victoria & Albert Museum, Nordiska Museum, JPMorgan Chase, Fondation Maeght, FNAC, Otto Mauer, and New York School of Visual Arts, to organize exhibitions.

To this day, we have brought together over 350,000 art lovers with thousands of artworks from hundreds of countries. More than 100,000 tourists who visited Pera Museum over the years were introduced to cross-sections from the culture and arts of Anatolia, as well as the lesser known aspects of İstanbul.

Throughout our endeavors, we came to realize that İstanbul was in dire need of an institute on a global scale that would be open to the exchange of information across the world, contribute towards the collective cultures of humanity and bring to the light of day assets of its own culture that remain to be discovered. We thus offered to the disposal of researchers, İstanbul Research Institute in Tepebaşı in 2007. The Institute currently holds “Şevket Rado Ottoman Manuscripts”, “Prof. Dr. Semavi Eyice Library”, “Necmeddin Hilav (Necmeddin Molla) Library” and Kiraç Family Library, as well as more than 60,000 books and archive materials centered on Atatürk and the Byzantine, Ottoman and Republican periods of İstanbul.

Equipped with a state of the art infrastructure, the Institute collaborates with globally-renowned educational institutions such as Harvard, Sorbonne, CNRS, Oxford, and Brown. We believe that tens of young local and foreign researchers, who develop projects under the auspices of the Institute, will use the advantages that IRI provides to shed light to the history and culture of İstanbul. We are convinced that such works, which will unearth the roots of our tradition to coexist with diverse cultures and customs, will prepare a strong foundation for Turkey’s relations with Europe and other nations of the world.

We can thus say the institutions that we have established over the years, including AKMED, Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, Pera Museum and İstanbul Research Institute, function, in their respective fields, as strong cultural bridges between Turkey and other nations of the world. Suna, our daughter İpek and I are extremely pleased to see this achievement.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to TÜRYAK administration for providing us with the opportunity to share our views with the esteemed readers.



Kemal BAYTAŞ / Turkey

Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2007

- In between years 1973-1979 was the assistant undersecretary of Ministry of Tourism and undersecretary of the same in between years 1979-1983,
- Founder and chairman of TUTAV, Turkish Promotion Foundation, Turkey-China and Turkey-Russian Federation associations as well as number of other friendship associations with a number of Turkic Republics,
- Has been decorated with medals from many countries and has been appointed by the People's Republic of China as the "Ambassador of Friendship and People" ,
- Received honorary doctorates from "Gazi" and "Dumlupınar" Universities,
- Received the "Sema Yıldızı" award and has been selected as the "Distinguished Senior Citizen" of Turkey by TURYAK in 2009.

CULTURAL BRIDGES

Cultures, with the life styles of societies, their feelings, accumulation of ideas, and their art, are products of humanity. Culture or civilization emerges and takes shape within its own social or physical living conditions. However, these are enriched by harmonizing and becoming integrated with other cultures.

Civilizations develop and become modernized through interaction and communication between cultures. This is how international cultural phenomena can mutually be assimilated. The basis for this is the opening out and promotion of cultures. When cultures close in on themselves they gradually loose touch with life and become barren. Cultures cannot be politicized or suppressed. Cultures get enriched and are strengthened by conscious syntheses and gain vitality by preserving their essence and individuality. And this is what Atatürk's cultural reforms envisage. The most meaningful response to the view that traditional cultures should remain untouched in their original form was given by the famous minstrel and folk philosopher Aşık Veysel. This is what Veysel said about the arrangements of his music: "Let's say I am a gardener. I eat the tomatoes I produce by munching on them, and I enjoy this. But others take my tomatoes and add additional ingredients to it, sauce it up in salads, cook them stuffed or in stews, and make them more tasty. But let's not forget that the main ingredient is still my tomatoes." This is a plain illustration of how cultures should first be enriched by culture itself and by technology. Synthesis among cultures is what adds spice to each of them. However, the main culture is still the core. Cultures that do not succeed in doing this can only survive in archives. Civilizations that have withdrawn into their own shell and are hostile to other cultures cause conflicts among cultures. History has



Kemal BAYTAŞ / Turkey
Distinguished Senior Citizen / 2007

witnessed dramatic conflicts between different faiths and cultures, and bigotry (such as the Crusades). It is a duty of civilization to put an end to the notion of cultures as foes and bogies and put them at the service of humanity through mutual assimilation. The opening out of cultures enables modern means of communication and transport. Mutual cultural activities, performances, exhibitions, concerts, conferences, and publications are the elements, the instruments of cultural bridges. Mutual agreements among cultures greatly contribute to building these bridges. And the phenomena that most effectively give vitality are tourism movements. Different cultural assets are experienced and felt through tourism. If these phenomena did not exist the world would be deprived of the enchanting music of Africa with its tempo and rhythmic patterns. And the Turkish folk dances, melodies, and döner kebab, now famous throughout the world, would have been confined to Anatolia. We would not have known the world-renowned Chinese cuisine if China had not opened to the world in 1979.

Cultural tourism provides a very important background and environment for all types of international relations, political, social, and touristic. It develops rapport and friendship among the people of different countries. Therefore, cultural assets and values must be very well preserved, developed, and promoted. Among these, it is of vital importance that historical and archaeological structures be uncovered, restored, and introduced.

Within this context, it is a requisite of modern civilization to restore structures and places of worship belonging to all Abrahamic religions on the one hand, and put them at the service of humanity on the other. As for the “art and folkloric assets” of different countries, they are regarded as “a showcase for the phenomenon of culture.” Anatolia is one of the major life centers of history, culture and beliefs. To date, Anatolia has been the cradle of 38 different civilizations, 15 of which are great. Virtually resembling an open-air museum, Anatolia is considered to be the natural heir of these civilizations, property of the world as they are. Furthermore, as one of the centers of life and evolution of the 3 great Abrahamic religions, Anatolia has resplendent richness and holiness with the temple ruins and places of worships belonging to these religions.

Faith culture makes possible mutual tolerance, respect, and peace among civilizations. It is a prescription for spiritual happiness and inner peace beyond the 21st century’s material, and technological confusion. Hagia Sophia is virtually considered the Kaaba of the Christian world; opening it to international worship and religious services on certain days of the year would be the most meaningful passage of our cultural bridge. And this is what the tolerance of Islam would demand.



Ahmet C. GAZIOĞLU / Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

- 1931 Born in Cyprus,
- Studied International Relations at Gazi University in Ankara and later in London University,
- As a teacher, author, journalist and a research fellow he worked as a columnist in a number of dailies and magazines,
- He founded the weekly "VATAN" in 1952 and was the editor-in-chief of "Bozkurt" daily for some time,
- Since 1983 he has been managing the "Cyprus Research and Publishing Center,
- In between years 1991-2004 served as a special consultant on Political Research and Publicity for President Rauf R. Denktas.

THE STRENGTHENING OF BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES

Endeavouring to build bridges between the Turkish and Hellenic cultures in Cyprus has never been an issue that has been dwelt upon or considered at any period of time. On the contrary, the majority community has given priority to the aim of imposing its own cultural hegemony and adamantly avoided building bridges among the two communities.

A BRIEF HISTORY: The culture of every country and every society is closely related to its history and takes shape and form under the influence of historical events, regional civilisations, trade, social life, the struggle for political and military superiority and the influence of national and international powers. Thus, throughout its long history, Cyprus has gone through all the stages in this process of interaction.

So, at times, it has been a place where various rivalries of the region have struggled and fought for political and military superiority and has also been a place where the civilisations of three continents, Asia, Europe and Egypt have come together and merged.

However, despite this integration and perhaps only for this reason, a Cypriot nation or culture did not emerge. Just as under the sovereignty of the feudal "derebeylik" and particularly in the Latin and Venetian period (1192-1570), the Greek Orthodox people had, for hundreds of years, been a slave class called PARICI. As such, all their land and property was taken by force, churches were closed and all humane living standards were denied to them.

The native people of Cyprus were so weary of the suppression under Venetian authority that they welcomed with elation the Turkish forces which landed in Cyprus. The British author, Hackett, who wrote the history of the Greek Orthodox church in Cyprus, described the joy of the native Greek Cypriots as the Turks landed on the Island and under-



lined the fact that while the Turks seized control of the administration in the Venetian Palace, it was a Greek Cypriot who took down the Venetian flag and raised the Turkish flag.

SYSTEM OF “MILLET” AND TURKISH- GREEK RELATIONS

Before expressing an opinion on the strengthening of bridges between cultures and making proposals on cultural interrelations, we have to consider the cultural structure of the island. This is the reason for the introduction above. But it is not sufficient because it is necessary to know about the “Millet” system applied by the Turkish administration. This system explains how two communities and two cultures emerged.

As soon as the Turkish conquest of Cyprus was completed the system of serfdom was abolished and the native Greek people were allowed to buy land and property and were accepted into local administration. Churches were reopened and permitted to collect taxes from the locals. They obtained freedom of education, language and culture.

In the 308 years of Turkish rule there was no conflict between the two communities, apart from the uprising of 1821.

Moreover, the Turkish period had been appreciated very much because of advances in public works and welfare, especially the supply of drinking water to areas of settlement through aqueducts, chain wells and fountains.

BICOMMUNALITY AND TWO SEPARATE CULTURES

All along, the two communities in Cyprus developed their own separate culture, language and traditions, lived side by side as the descendants of two separate nations and educational institutions never applied the same curriculum programmes.

Secondary school teachers in particular were educated in institutions, universities and academies in Turkey and Greece, trained in separate courses and subsequently gained qualifications from separate countries.

Consequently, the formation of their cultures was different. Furthermore the different culture and tradition that they were a part of played an important role in this process.

It should also be stated here that the existence of two different cultures was respected by both communities. This is why a utopic approach to amalgamate the two cultures in order to create Cypriot culture had never been seriously considered and perhaps had never even come to mind. When, in 1960, British Colonial administration ended and Cyprus became an independent state, this issue was never raised, and the Constitution



of the new state was prepared on the basis of two separate communities and cultures. Thus, the first clause of the constitution underlines the bicommunality and specifies that a Greek Cypriot should be President and Turkish Cypriot be Vice-president, elected separately through different Turkish and Greek electoral rolls. The second clause of the 1960 constitution says that:

1. Greek Cypriot Community was composed of all citizens of the republic whose uncestors were of greek origin and mother language was Greek or shared the traditions of Greek culture, or were bound up with the Greek Orthodox Church.

2. Similarly Turkish Cypriot Community was composed of all citizens of the republic whose uncestors were of Turkish origin and mother language was Turkish or shared the traditions of Turkish culture or were Moslem.

THE STRENGTHENING OF BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES

There are many foreign researchers, academicians and authors who have studied this issue and written books about Cyprus. Therefore, volumes of books have been written on this subject. However, the issue of the strengthening of two separate cultures on the island has not been dealt with in a serious way.

Neither the 5 universities in the North, nor the Greek Cypriot university in the South has been engaged in organising seminars and conferences on this subject.

Instead, there is concrete evidence that the Greek Cypriot majority made systematic efforts to assimilate the Turkish Cypriot community's separate culture and to extend its own community's culture throughout the island, in unusual and unacceptable ways.

It is a well known fact that foreign Imperialist powers have financed, supported and guided such unreasonable efforts.

Whereas the aim of strengthening bridges between cultures is not to provide the facilities for one community to dominate the other, but to bring them to the same level on an equal basis in order to protect the different cultures and to serve peace, love and cooperation.

Only in this way, different cultures gain the quaitly to unite the separate conummities.

Hence to create bridges between different cultures and to strengthen them is not a futile effort, as long as curricula of schools give priority to this issue, educational institutions support eachother on this matter creating the required motivation and non-govermental organizations (NGO's) concentrate their efforts effectively towards this objective under a well prepared programme.



- 1941 Born in Scranton, PA
- 1959 Graduated from Scranton technical High School
- After completion of his military service at Fort-richardson, Anchorage Alaska, worked as operations manager, superintendent, manager partner and owner in construction and manufacturing industry, utilities treatment systems and finally in major infrastructure construction projects both in US and abroad.

A LIFETIME OF BRIDGING THE CULTURE GAP

*B*ridging the gap between cultures comes naturally in my family. You see, my nine siblings and I are the children of a man who emigrated from Italy to the United States in 1906.

My father, Vito, worked in the coal mines in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and my mother worked diligently to care for ten children. Life was difficult, times were tough, and there was very little money. Nevertheless, ours was a house of love. Memories of my childhood are rooted on strong family bonds, love, unity, and happiness. Being one of ten children certainly helped a young boy learn how to work with others, and being the child of an immigrant brought international experience to my everyday life.

Before telling you my own story on bridging the culture gap, please let me bring to your attention a great man of letters who has created a unique first step from this point of view by not only building a bridge over a gap but also crossing over that bridge to hold hands with a different bunch of people at the opposite side. This great man is John (with his authentic and full name, Johannes Ernst) Steinbeck. Sounds quite German; don't you think so? His family must have immigrated to the United States earlier than mine as his father was already serving as County Treasurer of Salinas, California, when he was born in 1902 at the same county -- four years before my own father's emigration.

John Steinbeck has been not only my hero but also my idol since my early teens with his masterpieces like *Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row*, *Sweet Thursday*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden* (...) which firmly grasped my mind and soul at my youth and which still impress me very much. Here you can also imagine how the sunny atmosphere of California descri-



bed by Steinbeck may strike a Northwestern Penn state boy like me... What is genuine about Steinbeck is the fact that his German background has never obstructed him from joining to, speaking for and, in a sense, defending the people of quite a different culture – the Hispanic community of California in many of his books and in many parts of almost all of his books. As you would know, the Spanish, as Italians, are considered to belong to the Latin culture. Therefore, I, as an American of Italian descent who has met quite a lot of Germans, definitely know how great Steinbeck's deed is!

Coming back to my story: // My cross-cultural experiences expanded in 1996 when I visited Europe as part of my responsibilities as treasurer with Linde International, Inc. On that trip, I was privileged to meet many hard-working and honest Turkish businessmen in an environment that reminded me of my work experiences in the United States. Since then, I have had the opportunity to continue developing successful international business relationships and building friendships based on trust and understanding.

I have enjoyed doing business and making friends in Turkey, Moldova, Libya, Romania, Italy, Greece, and Ukraine. Many cultural bridges have been crossed, and I have been given the opportunity to learn more about numerous diverse peoples. Throughout my travels, I have held firmly to my belief that the key to bridging the gap between cultures is in building trust. The world is truly a small place. Trust in your fellow man, and you will develop unity, honesty, and oneness. From there, we can enjoy harmony with one another and gain a broader perspective about the world's concerns.

It has been said that life is about the people we meet, the places we go, and the memories we make along the way. My journey has allowed me to meet many people, to travel to places far from my home, and to build excellent memories. I am grateful for the international friendships that I have been able to cultivate, the cultural doors I have walked through, and broader, more beautiful world I have seen. Thank you for bestowing the International Distinguished Senior Citizens of the World Award on me. I am honored, and I appreciate your trust.



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