

## World summit on Nobel Peace laureates. (Reflections).

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The view from the balcony of the Campidoglio, overlooking the ruins of the Roman Forum, provides a good perspective on the war culture of the modern age. Not even the might of the Roman Empire could prevent its collapse; yet, the human spirit soared again and again through the ages to create the vibrancy of today's Rome.

The Campidoglio provided the setting for a remarkable gathering from 18 to 20 October 2002 of Nobel Peace laureates to consider the principal challenges of our time: widespread war, violence, terrorism, poverty, water and the ecological crisis. The laureates sought solutions leading to a new world order emphasizing peace, humanity and equity.

Organized by Mikhail Gorbachev, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990 and now heads the Gorbachev Foundation, and Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Rome, this was the third such Nobel gathering. The other attendees included: Adolfo Perez Esquivel (1980), Lech Walesa (1983), Rigoberta Menchu (1992), Joseph Rotblat (1995) and Betty Williams (1976), as well as representatives of these Nobel Prize-winning organizations: Institut de Droit International, International Peace Bureau, International Red Cross, American Friends Service Committee, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Labour Organization, Amnesty International, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Medecins Sans Frontieres and the United Nations. Messages were sent by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2001), Yasser Arafat (1994) and Aung San Suu Kyi (1991).

Though the topics of the meeting were weighty indeed, it opened on a light note with the presentation of the 'Man of Peace' prize to Italian actor-director Roberto Benigni who, seizing the baton, conducted a children's choir to the delight of the astonished singers. It was this moment that perhaps best captured the hope that animated the meeting.

The Nobel laureates quickly asserted that war clouds notwithstanding, they refused to accept the cynicism and despair that crushes hope and vision. In fact, they began their final statement by affirming "our common humanity and capacity to work cooperatively, informed by compassion and inspired by love. Our humanity demands this."

Mr. Gorbachev eloquently and firmly outlined the crisis of our civilization brought about by war, violence and the instability caused by poverty. The status quo of dominance by a few cannot be allowed to continue. He warned about the over-abundance of power in the North Atlantic Organization (NATO), expanding once again, which possesses 70 per cent of the military power in the world. Quoting President John F. Kennedy's famous address to the American University on 10 June 1963, Mr. Gorbachev said a Pax Americana was not what was needed today; rather, the cooperation of all must overcome the tendencies of unilateral domination. Thirty-one countries now have the ability to develop a nuclear weapon--a terrifying situation.

He excoriated Governments for pleading that they do not have enough money to cure poverty but, at the same time, spend enormous sums on arms. He especially criticized the development of nuclear weapons--this will go on and on, he said, unless the world community is energized to stop it. Certainly, new weapons were not needed to fight terrorism.

A principled position against nuclear weapons should be taken, he urged. The world could contribute to the alleviation of terrorism by implementing new models of development. Expressing a strong no to nuclear war, he said that we should get on to the next stage of civilization. The speech won him prolonged applause.

With the United States-Iraq crisis looming over the meeting, a two-hour "extraordinary session" was held on "Overcoming Unilateral Militarism: Responding to Threats to Human Security". I had the honour to chair this along with Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute. With the Nobel laureates and the representatives of Nobel organizations grouped around a table, the discussion ranged from the urgency of today's crisis to the need to preserve human rights values while fighting terrorism, and the need for a code of ethics for scientists.

In their final statement, the laureates spoke clearly about the Iraq situation: "The problems concerning Iraq must be resolved on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions. Unilateral action is not acceptable. The world community must ensure that Council resolutions are fully adhered to. This will help normalize the situation in the Middle East and bring stability and safety to the region. In particular, this implies respect for the rights of the Iraqi people, and for Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The laureates also emphasized that the struggle against terrorism must not become a pretext for unjust constraints on human rights. The statement sharply criticized new military doctrines, which seek to legitimize a pre-emptive nuclear-weapons attack. Calling for the abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, it said that "nuclear weapons are immoral and every use of them is illegal". The statement concluded: "A culture of peace must overcome today's culture of war."

Looking toward the horizon, the laureates stated that solving the global water crisis is an essential step in achieving sustainable development. Thus, they gave their support to the "Water for Peace" initiative of Green Cross International and urged Governments, science, business and civil societies to contribute actively to its successful implementation. They expressed regret that the Johannesburg Summit did not lead to binding decisions on such fundamental problems as poverty, environmental degradation, and the increasingly acute energy crisis.

"The participants unanimously declare that the problems of poverty, suffering, the humiliation of millions of people and the growing gap between North and South represent a time bomb. These problems are a source of conflict and are fertile soil for terrorism."

The participants endorsed the Johannesburg Joint Declaration of Nobel Peace Laureates and Mayors of Major Cities--"The Battle for the Planet"--which deplored the massive spending on military budgets to the detriment of the economic and social needs of the huge number of poor and vulnerable people in the world.

Though the problems of the human security agenda appear at times overwhelming, the Nobel laureates themselves have not lost their sense of hope. Sometimes the freshness of life needs to be asserted when the situation seems grim. Mr. Gorbachev offered such a lesson. At the conclusion of the final dinner, in an impromptu moment, he began to sing Russian songs. There was joy on his face, and the joy spread around the room.

Senator Douglas Roche, O. C. of Canada, is author of "Bread Not Bombs: A Political Agenda for Social Justice" and Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative. He attended the Nobel Summit as the representative of the International Peace Bureau (Nobel laureate of 1910).

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