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“ Dialogue knows no geographical, cultural or social boundaries. Even where conflicts has created seemingly insurmountable walls between people, the spirit and vision of human beings have in many instances kept alive the flame of dialogue “¹

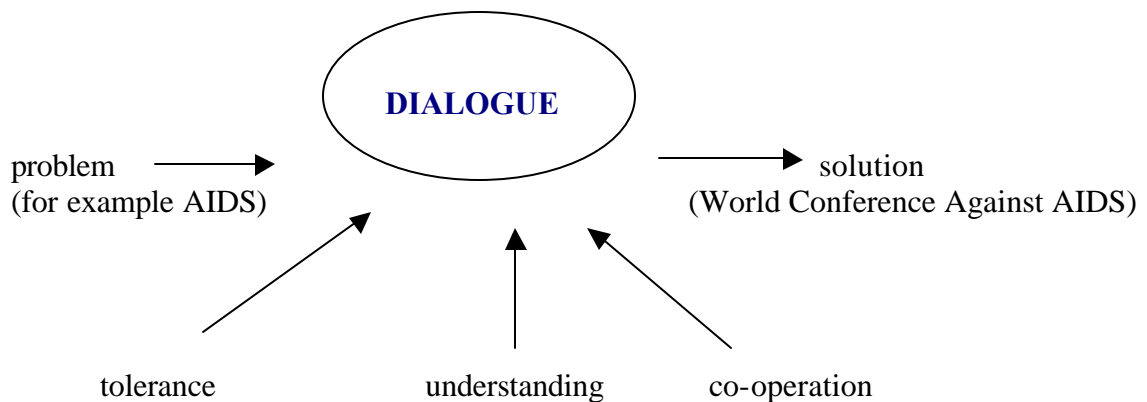
The future of peace and Civilization depends on agreement and co-operation between political, spiritual and intellectual leaders of main civilizations. This scope cannot be achieved without the will of changes and honest dialogue. The new millennium is for many people a reason to clear their conscience and to find a new way and identity. In the year 2000 the Pope John Paul II announced *Mea Culpa* of the Catholic Church and with Liturgy of Unity he did a mile step in dialogue with other religions. Now, a year after this event, the United Nations celebrate the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It proves that **dialogue brings people together, helps to find solutions and teaches tolerance and respect for diversity.**

After the Cold War political borders replaced the cultural ones and therefore the clashes of the civilizations may be the greatest danger for international peace in the forthcoming epoch. The matter of great importance is to define our own identity. Community of cultural features may make co-operation between nations easier and their diversity may cause new divisions and conflicts. Each of us has many identities and any of them may be in conflict with the other ones. It is essential to answer the questions: Who am I ? What is the most important value for me ? The role of dialogue is to help us deal with our identities. If a Muslim and an Israeli see human beings in each other they will live in peace no matter if in the Middle East or on the opposite sides of the same street. But if they are fanatics with a band of religion on their eyes they will treat each other as enemies in war. The solution seems to be eliminating fanaticism but not with bombs but simply with dialogue. It was shocking to see Palestinian children jumping and laughing after terrorists destroyed World Trade Center and thousands of people were buried alive. Both the events in New York and in Palestine are a tragedy of mankind. Nobody has a right to kill other people in the name of his own beliefs. We can have our views but we cannot treat them as if they were the only proper ones. The only hope for humanity is breaking the vicious circle of hate and starting everything from the beginning. Let us begin a dialogue and fill our *tabula rasa* with words of love and peace. We should not be afraid to ask and look for answers. Maybe children will no more know what hate means and will learn the value of human life regardless of race, religion or nationality.

The rise of the “universal civilization”² which presumes cultural unification of mankind and even often acceptance of common qualities, beliefs, orientations, rules and institutions by the nations of all the world is undoubtedly a chance for all of us. It requires, however, ceaseless dialogue which can be run on the ground of objectivity and reciprocal understanding. Coming out of mass manipulation and forgetting about stereotypes we can learn diversity. After some time we stop being afraid of otherness and we start to understand it. Building an universal civilization we should perceive diversity as a real state and like Fathers of the USA did it, we should overcome adversities and run a dialogue

under a catchword *e pluribus unum* (lat. one made of many). In Europe thousands of students have already learnt what *community* means. They participate in exchange programs organized by the European Union. By going abroad students gain not only the book knowledge but first of all the ability of living in peace with the youth from many other countries. They meet, exchange their views and plan the future – future for all of us. It is the power of dialogue.

Globalization brings new challenges which will have to be resolved by all of us. The co-operation requires frequent contacts with habitants of other parts of the globe – representatives of different cultures and languages but we are not allowed to step into someone’s life without knowing his history and situation. That is the reason why learning from others and about others is a key to success. If we manage to build a dialogue based on tolerance and understanding maybe no problems will be irresolvable. If only we open our hearts for other people and start to wish all the best for each other then no matter if we will have to face a great international problem or not, a “flame of dialogue” will burn and the world will change for better.



There are countries which set a good example to the others, countries where the ideas of dialogue, peace and tolerance have been safeguarded for ages and go together with deep patriotism and feeling of unity. Poland, experienced by the history is a glaring example. Nowhere else but here the idea of solidarity (pol. *solidarnosc*) was born. Here in 1989 the round table debate meant for many people the new beginning and brought hope for better future. Word *dialogue* is for the Poles more precious and significant than any other. Nowadays, Poland, thought by its own experiences, plays a role of advocate for many Easter European countries. But Poland is also a country where lack of dialogue claimed thousands of lives. Millions of people died during the World War II in crematories of Auschwitz. But even such a tragedy helped the Poles to show how strong their faith in humanity and dialogue is. Auschwitz is a bridge that not divides but connects the whole mankind. It’s a common tragedy of all of us, it is a place of dialogue between Poles, Jews and Germans. Here nobody blames anybody. Dialogue in Auschwitz starts not with discussion but with opening a heart, deep sympathy and silence. Listening to the ground of Auschwitz we experience something that cause unspeakable emotions. This place is a sanctuary of truth – the truth about a value of human life.

Dialogue is like a brush of postmodernist which every move integrates fragments of a greater whole in beautiful, colorful and full of various shapes picture. Although different all of the elements of the picture have one in common – a hand of artist. Likewise in the

many-civilization-world peoples of different culture should seek common values and customs as well as try to broaden their range.

The commonalities rule is a guarantee of peace. The world is not composed of races and ethnical groups but of human beings. One of the things that keep us together and that all of us need is freedom:

*“ Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world ”*³

It is high time to stop thinking in categories of “ them “, and finally see “ us “ – the mankind - because “ *the bell tolls* ” for all of us.

We cannot change the whole world on our own. We need to co-operate with people of many various nations. Dialogue helps to understand diversity . We do not know what will happen in few years but by building a civilization based on dialogue we will face everything as nobody will be alone no more. This is the contribution that dialogue makes – it unites people.



Sandro Chia *Enigma del volto*

“The truth was born 2000 years ago and if we follow it we will understand who we are. We will understand that we are all one and that we have the same Destiny which is good and beautiful”

Carlos (28), Chile

“Try to keep peace in whole the world and even within your friends and family do not think only of yourself. Develop yourself ! Be helpful for your country and for the world. And what is the most important ... do not forget to look at stars and feel love.”

Afet (22), Turkish-Cypriot

“Do not dream only for yourself, dream for us ... and believe in dreams !”

Alessandra (27), Italian

“Do not forget about other people and treat them with respect. Everyone has a right to live in appropriate conditions and to be free.”

Agnieszka (21), Polish

“Note how a critical thought may improve our existence, how important it is to be one and to love our unity. The unity which means being different among ourselves.”

Raffaele (21), Italian

“The youth are our future children and children who already live. They need to learn to go to school with children of other nations and study all the cultures and not only the one – the right one.”

Kalyani (46), Taiwan

Source: These are some of the answers given by the participants of the inquiry organized by myself and titled “Speak up”. One of the question was: *If you could address to the peoples of the world what would you say ?* The inquiry has been sent to 20 countries all over the world.

“ The Earth is a single country, and all people are its citizens. We have to share this planet, so don't be selfish. We want food to be shared so that everyone has enough. We want clean water and a home for all people. We are worried about pollution, war and children starving, while others don't appreciate the food they get. We are afraid that the world will soon belong only to the rich “. (Point 16)



“ We want to inherit a clean Earth. We would like everybody to understand that the Earth is like a beautiful garden in which no one has the right to destroy anything. We would like our grandchildren to know what is a tree, a fish, a dog. Leave us trees to climb in. “ (Point 1)

“ We want children’s right to be respected all over the world. No child should be imprisoned or beaten, no child should die of hunger or from diseases that could easily be prevented. All children have a right to have parents “. (Point 3)



Source: The pictures painted by pupils of one of the German elementary schools. These are illustrations to some of the points of the Children’s Appeal to World Leaders elaborated during the summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

¹ Giandomenico Picco, *A Dialogue among Civilizations*, The Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, Vol 2, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2001, pp 5-10.

² V.S. Naipul, *Our Universal Civilization*, The 1990 Wriston Lecture, The Manhattan Institute, “New York Review of Books”, 30 October 1990, pp 20.

³ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Adopted and proclaimed with the General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, at: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> .