

the member nations for 17 years (Germany broke that unofficial blockade as well). During and after the war, Churchill used various means to undermine Franklin Roosevelt's commitment to building a strong China and a strong Asia. Roosevelt stated unequivocally that America did not enter World War II in order to preserve the wretched 18th-century British colonial methods. With FDR's death, however, Churchill succeeded in retaking the colonies, and turning Asia into a continent of continuous warfare for another 30 years.

Twice before in modern history there have been international efforts to overcome such oligarchical policy, by building an alliance of East and West to the purpose of developing the entire Eurasian land-mass. In the late 17th century, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, in collaboration with the Jesuit missionaries in China, proposed a "Grand Design" linking Europe with the highly developed culture and economy of China, such that, as he explained it, "as the most cultivated and distant peoples stretch out their arms to each other, those in-between may gradually be brought to a better way of life." He published a journal of philosophical, theological, and historical

works sent from China by the Jesuits. He proposed to the Russian czar and other European governments that the ancient silk routes be reopened, and that educational centers in Europe establish relations with those in China.

This potential for a Confucian-Christian alliance was sabotaged early in the 18th century through intrigue, both within and without the Catholic Church, by agencies of the Venetian oligarchy. Venice had established its power in Europe through an alliance with Genghis Khan, profiting from a "free market" for their trade among the nations of both Europe and Asia left in ruins by the ravaging Mongol hordes. By the early 18th century, the Venetian oligarchy, whose "Venetian Party" assets had recently consolidated power in England, recognized the threat which the "Grand Design" of Leibniz, uniting the nation-states of Europe and Asia, represented to continued oligarchical power. Through methods of cultural warfare, the Venetian enemies of the Renaissance succeeded in turning the Vatican against the Jesuit mission in China, resulting in the destruction of both scientific and cultural relations between Europe and China. When the British opium peddlers and war-

## The message of Venice'

What is not being sufficiently addressed, in problems of international relations, and particularly European-Asian relations, is "the cultural dimension," one of the European promoters of ASEM noted last autumn. At the behest of the European Commission, the Giorgio Cini Foundation, the most important institution shaping cultural and strategic thought in Venice, moved to fill the void.

Its founder, Count Cini, decisively undermined Italy's industrial development. Early in this century, in cooperation with Thomas Edison, Italian scientists had established Europe's first electricity plant in Milan. But Cini joined the Italian branch of Edison's company, and, over time, sabotaged the infrastructure projects planned to modernize Italian industry. He used his profits to set up his foundation on the island of San Giorgio in Venice.

The foundation invited over 100 "esteemed experts," to attend the Europe-Asia Forum, "On Culture, Values and Technology, Towards Mutual Understanding," on Jan. 18-19. Manuel Marin, vice president of the European Commission, told the forum: "No city is better placed than Marco Polo's hometown, to serve as a background for this renaissance, this new impetus in relations between Europe and Asia. . . ."

Europe first saw Asia, he said, through the eyes of travellers, "or through the ill-informed prism of our En-

lightenment philosophers." Then came the colonial period. Now, Europe and Asia look at each other, as "equals." Marin emphasized, "'All is in all and vice versa,' we are saying more and more in Europe, taking our cue from the Asian model . . . to build on the sustained strength of our trade, to foster our social and intellectual commerce."

Discussion included such topics as "Understanding Asian Values," and "A Geopolitical Approach to Unity and Diversity in Asia." The summaries' language gushed: "Mutual benefit and new synergies in a win/win situation must be the main principles underlying these exchanges of technology. . . . For business, what is at stake are relations between global business and local politics. . . . Beyond trade and investment issues geopolitical concerns have to be recognized much more clearly. . . . The differences are mainly cultural, hence in ways of doing things."

Most revealing is the summary of "Religions in Relation to Progress." The values of the European Golden Renaissance were buried deep. Instead, "The main conclusion is that religion does not stand in the way of progress, provided that progress is rooted in moral and spiritual values and does not violate these standards," the participants noted. "Progress is defined as the capacity of a society to learn continuously from inside and from outside. Even if the name of religion is sometimes used for the sake of extremist violence or for impeding social reforms, religions have contributed to the strengthening of tolerance, social cohesion, humanitarian concerns, the creative accommodation of plurality, family values, and environmental care."—*Mary Burdman*