

Report from Germany by Rainer Apel

Iran Offers New Partnership to Germany

Revitalized economic and cultural relations will contribute to the restoration of peace and stability in the world.

The visit of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to Germany on July 10-12, was historic in several ways: Not only was it the first visit of an Iranian leader in 33 years, since the visit by the Shah in 1967, but it also featured one of the rare moments of diplomatic relations, in which the highest level of statecraft, one based on Classical philosophy, was in evidence.

When leaders are guided by Classical statecraft, they are enabled to define a wider horizon for a nation. This is a principle diametrically opposed to the kind of geopolitics practiced today in global diplomacy, particularly Anglo-American diplomacy.

This Classical approach became visible in Khatami's remarks when signing the Golden Book of Berlin, the German capital, on July 11. There, he said that he liked being in Berlin, because the city is indeed something very unique in the world: The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 not only reunified Berlin and Germany, but it also was a "symbol of the awakening and birth of a wise nation and its successful efforts to gain . . . its due dignity." The fall of the Wall thereby symbolized a "point of departure for majesty, authority, and progress for all of the world." Khatami said he believes "that improved ties between Iran and Germany not only would benefit both nations, but it would contribute to the restoration of peace and security in the world."

Progress is a right belonging to all nations, Khatami said, and Iran and Germany, each with a long history of civilization-building, have a common

mission to cooperate, along with "other nations that respect freedom, sovereignty, and justice, to make use of the global potentials" to bring about this better world for all nations. In a prime-time TV interview broadcast on Germany's Second Channel on July 11, Khatami added that Iran and Germany are particularly qualified for this broader world mission, as neither has a tradition of colonialism.

The day before, in a speech in Berlin to several hundred invited representatives of German industry, Khatami said that Iran was important as a partner in politics and economics for Germany, because of its unique geostrategic position bordering the Indian Ocean, the Caspian Sea, and the Central Asian region. Investments in the developing industry of Iran, he said, would be to the broader benefit of several hundred million human beings living in that region, and economic development would help establish peace. Two investment projects in Iran's petrochemical sector, each with about \$500 million in funding by German, French, and Italian banks, were made public during Khatami's visit—with more projects already under discussion.

But investments and specific projects, important as they are, are only "mere details," Khatami emphasized, in an interview with the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on July 12. Rather, political and religious philosophy should be the fundament of politics, he explained, saying that his ideal is the Platonic state, in which the politicians are philosophers. "I am proud

of having been a book-reading intellectual before I became a politician," he said. He added that, for him, thinkers, not politicians, are the real heroes of the "dialogue of civilizations" that he proposed. Khatami "has, as it seems, come to Germany as a thinker and politician: as a philosopher king," the daily commented in its article, headlined "Philosopher King Khatami Is Showing Another Image of Iran."

At the state luncheon that German President Johannes Rau hosted in Berlin on July 11, Rau reflected the high level of discussions, saying that "Islam belongs to the spiritual sources of Europe. . . . Indeed, the classic, enlightened Islam itself was herald and guide of the modern age, between the 9th and 14th century. In mathematics and cartography, in philosophy and medicine, it was Islamic scientists who transferred the knowledge of Greek Antiquity to the medieval West. The writings of Aristotle and Plato would have been lost to us, without the translations by Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Wise rulers like Emperor Frederick II [Hohenstaufen] or Alfonso the Wise of Castile worked with Islamic scientists."

Rau also mentioned that Germany's great 18th-century Classical poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, had been inspired by from the writings of the 14th-century Persian poet, Al Hafiz. Goethe's *East-West Divan*, which Rau quoted from, was born of this poetical dialogue between Germany and Persia.

On July 12, Rau and Khatami were in Weimar, the cradle of the 18th-century German Classics, to unveil a monument dedicated to Al Hafiz. In this context, it was made known that Iran would like to establish an Al Hafiz Institute in Germany, maybe in Weimar, in parallel with the re-opening of the Goethe Institute in Tehran, which was closed down in 1987.