

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Over the past few months the Meditation Group at the United Nations has held special commemorative programmes which have drawn participation from the President of the General Assembly and several Permanent Representatives. Reflecting one of the topmost recent concerns of the United Nations community, the observances often focused on the problems relating to the Iranian crisis. The three meetings highlighted in this issue—"Special Prayer Meeting for the Iranian Crisis," "Human Rights Day Observance," and "Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Philosophy of Non-Violence"—received television coverage. For two of the programmes, dedicated to Human Rights and Martin Luther King, WPIX-TV's U.N. Correspondent, Mr. Jeff Kamen, served as Master of Ceremonies.

At the back of this issue are questions and answers and talks about the United Nations and meditation philosophy, which are a regular feature of the *Bulletin*.



*Sri Chinmoy presides over the Meditation Group's special prayer session for the U.S. hostages in Iran. Participants include, from left to right: Sri Chinmoy; Mr. Herbert Rickman, Special Assistant to Mayor Ed Koch of New York City; Dr. Julie Loranger, Canadian Mission; Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, President of the American Jewish Committee; Dr Muhammad Abdul Rauf, Director of the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C.; and Sister Janet Richardson, Representative of the Holy See Mission to the United Nations.*

## SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING FOR THE IRANIAN CRISIS

*An emergency prayer and meditation service was held in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium on 16 November 1979 on behalf of the U.S. hostages in Iran and in support of the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Security Council members, all of whom had sent urgent appeals to the Government of Iran seeking immediate release of the captives. Speakers included representatives of four of the world's major religions, as well as a representative of the host City of New York.*

*The programme was originally scheduled as an International Thanksgiving Day celebration, and Dr. Julie Loranger represented Canada, which received recognition for its 100th celebration of Thanksgiving this year. Dr. Muhammad Abdul Rauf, Director of the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C., and author of the article in a recent National Geographic, "Pilgrimage to Mecca," spoke on meditation in the Islamic religion. The Meditation Group Singers also performed "World Gratitude" and "Human Rights."*

*Excerpts from the programme follow.*

*Sri Chinmoy*: The world has always experienced the indomitable strength of American arms. Now the world is experiencing the incomparable strength of the American heart. In life's battlefield, America's unparalleled compassion-heart will unmistakably and decisively win. And this unprecedented conquest shall supremely shine in the universal oneness-family of the aspiring and self-giving humanity.



*Mr. Herbert Rickman, Special Assistant to Mayor Ed Koch*: Guru, distinguished members of the clergy, members of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen, some thirteen days ago an event which took place in Teheran many thousands of miles away from here captured the minds and hearts of good people throughout the world. This is a tragic time not only for the people of America but for the people of Iran. It is a time that dictates

compassion and understanding—understanding of the rage that has dominated the Iranian people and the frustration that has caused them to perpetuate the events which have occurred in recent days; and compassion, of course, not only for these same men and women, but also for the sixty innocent people caught in the vise of international politics. In the name of humanity and in the name of all good people throughout the world, here at the United Nations we appeal to the students in Iran and the religious leadership of that country to give the world the most beautiful Thanksgiving gift of all, and that is the release of the sixty men and women in the American Embassy.



*Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, President of the American Jewish Committee:* This is a prayer from the Book of Psalms, which means, "Pour down, O Heavens, from above and let the sky rain right-

eousness. Let the earth open, that deliverance may flourish and righteousness, too, spring up. And it will be said on that day, 'Behold our God; we have waited for Him and His Deliverance. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him. Let us be glad and rejoice in His Deliverance.' "

We live by great symbols which have transcendent universal power for uniting people across the divergences of languages and geography. There are a whole range of symbols at loose in the world today. In the Middle East there is the symbol of Mt. Sinai—the flag of Israel being drawn down, Mt. Sinai being handed over to President Sadat of Egypt, and the President making his first announcement that he will establish atop Mt. Sinai a mosque, a church and a synagogue, as a symbol of the unity of humankind under the uniting power of God. Mt. Sinai symbolizes four thousand years of Jewish tradition and teaching. It is not just a Bible story. It is a symbol of the breakthrough in human consciousness, the transformation of the history of ideas. . . .

There is another symbol in Iran today which makes us aware of how much absurdity, how much irrationality governs human life today. An earthquake took place in Iran two days ago. Six hundred human beings were destroyed. Six hundred lives were wiped out, and the world acts as if nothing happened. Recently, I came back from Thailand, Cambodia, Southeast Asia. I see what can happen when human life becomes expendable, when people become a means to somebody else's end, a means to somebody else's programme, ideology, revolution, violence, terrorism. If religious people stand for anything in the world, it is to stand against the epidemic of de-humanization that is

taking place on every continent, to stand against the depersonalization, to stand against the idea that human lives are expendable for purposes beyond human beings. It is to stand and affirm that which is central in all of our high religions: the preciousness of every human life.

For the sixty people in that embassy whose lives have become symbolic of the vulnerability of every human being, we come together to affirm that sanctity, and to commit ourselves again in prayer and in hope and in daily action to uphold the value of every human life: to say no to tyranny, to say no to religious and racial and ethnic hatred, to affirm above all that what unites us is greater than what divides us, to affirm that in the oneness of God we find our solidarity and our unity as brothers and sisters, and to say that we will not sleep nor slumber until deliverance and redemption and healing is brought to the sixty people in that embassy, and to all of our brothers and sisters who suffer in the world today. God bless all of you.



*Sister Janet Richardson, the Holy See Mission to the United Nations: Perhaps we could join together in prayer: Heavenly Father, our hearts are full*

of thanksgiving, but they are also full of pain and of petition. We thank You for the gift of life. We thank You for the graces and blessings that have come to us today. We thank You for the inspiration that You gave to those who organized this programme. We ask that You reward their efforts. Heavenly Father, we turn to You in petition for the safety of the hostages. We ask Your Blessings on their captors. We ask Your Consolation for their families. And may peace and love return to all our hearts. Amen.



*Dr. Muhammad Abdul Rauf, Director of the Islamic Center, Washington, D.C.:* Our Lord, we thank Thee for gathering us at this moment when humanity is going through a difficult test—a test of the strength of the spirit, a test of the degree of restraint. Please, Our Lord, strengthen us during



this crisis; guide our leaders on the right path. We thank Thee, Our Lord, for guiding this Group of Meditation at the United Nations in holding this meeting. Please bless everyone who is here at this moment.

*(Dr. Rauf then gave the main address in honour of International Thanksgiving Day. An excerpt of his talk is below.)*

I am very grateful indeed for the opportunity to address you on the concept of meditation in the Islamic religion. In Islam there are three major categories of reflection or meditation. The first is reflection upon the creation of God—by this I mean the things created by God—in order to estimate the greatness of the Almighty, the triviality of human existence and also of material life, in order to cleanse one's own soul or to elevate oneself to a greater level of spiritualism. Muhammad himself has said, "One hour of meditation is greater than worshipping in other categories for one year." One hour is greater than one year because the effect of meditation on the soul is so great. It improves, it reforms one's soul, one's heart. So that is one way, namely to reflect upon God and His Creation.

The second category is reflection on social questions or social problems—to reflect, for example, upon the poverty of the poor people, who are our neighbours, and upon the bounties God has given us. Here you analyse yourself and how you are composed, reflecting not only on the physical matter, the cells and components of the systems, but also on the mind. You reflect on the fact that

you as a human being, unlike other living creatures, can perceive things, that you can store ideas, that you can make judgements, that you can even create ideas. This power is a real gift from Almighty God. If you reflect upon all your full physical and mental perfection and then think of the others who are deprived of this, you become more charitable, more sympathetic and hopefully more helpful to the members of your society.

The third and last category is meditation, or reflection on one's own behaviour every day. It is recommended that, especially before going to bed, you spend a few moments reviewing what you have done during the day. This is because you are so closely involved with what you are doing that you may not really appreciate its value—whether it is right or wrong appropriate or inappropriate. But when you review it afterwards, when you are somewhat removed from the influences around you, then you can assess your works more impartially. If you reflect on your major works during the day and if they are desirable and good, then you thank God the Almighty for helping you and giving you the strength to perform these good things. We Muslims always believe in God's Will. It is true that you have a choice and to some extent you have a role in bringing about your action, but without God's Will to help you, you cannot do anything. If you find that you have done something wrong, then you should seek God's forgiveness to absolve your mistakes. Acknowledging the fact that you have made mistakes is a good thing for a person. When you realise that you can also make errors, you don't become unduly arrogant or overestimate yourself.

So, these are the three categories of meditation in Islam, and these are the ideas and thoughts I

intended to relate to you today. I would like to repeat my gratitude and express my thanks to you all for this opportunity. May God bless you.

*(Dr. Rauf then presented a letter of appreciation from Thanksgiving Square in Dallas, Texas, to Dr. Julie Loranger of the Canadian Mission, for Canada's 100th celebration of Thanksgiving this year.)*

THANKS  
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November 12, 1979

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The universal impulse of mankind to show gratitude to their Creator is expressed in different ways on each continent.

Only a few nations, however, including Canada, Switzerland, Liberia, Japan and the United States have formal Thanksgiving days every year for their people. Many others express gratitude in other ways through ancient customs and observances.

Canada's one hundredth continuous Thanksgiving unites their great people with the other peoples of the world who give thanks to God for life itself as one human race.

CENTER FOR WORLD THANKSGIVING

  
Peter Stewart  
President

## First Emergency Prayer & Meditation Service At UN



**UNITED NATIONS --** Representatives of four of the world's largest religious denominations gathered for Iran hostages on short notice at the U.N.'s Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium on what might be best described as an emergency hostage prayer service. (Left to right, Sri Chinmoy, Herbert Rickman, Dr. Julie Loranger, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Rauf, and Sister Janet Richardson.