



Report:

From NOLI to CAPE VERDE

International Scholarly Conference on the 550th Anniversary of Antonio de Noli discovering of Cape Verde

by Marcel Balla

The city of Noli, Italy declared the 18th of September 2010 to be an international day of study on Antonio de Noli, the discoverer of Cabo Verde in commemorations of the 550th anniversary of the discovery. A conference was held at the S. Antonio Cultural Foundation in the city under the title “Da Noli a Capo Verde” (from Noli to Cabo Verde). The event was organized by the Comune di Noli, the Republic of Cabo Verde, Regione Liguria, The Antonio de Noli Academic Society and the S. Antonio Cultural Foundation. It was sponsored by: Cabo Verde Time, Savona-FSC, Pro Loco Noli and BC Congressi Genova (who provided simultaneous translations services at the conference).

This conference is believed to be the first of its kind for the purpose of clarifying the role played by Antonio de Noli and Cabo Verde in the development of the modern world. Guest speakers were invited from Sweden, Italy, Portugal, Jamaica, Cabo Verde and the USA.

The program was divided into two sessions, the morning session and the afternoon session. Introductions were given by: the Mayor of Noli, Ambrogio Repetto; the CV Ambassador to Italy, Dr. Jose Eduardo Barbosa; the Tourism and Culture Assessor of the Region of Liguria, Dr. Angelo Berlangieri and the President of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society, Prof. Marcello Ferrada Noli.

Scholarly presentations were made by: Prof. Corradino Astengo, University of Genoa: “From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic: Navigation and Nautical Maps”, Prof. Dr. Marcello Ferrada Noli, PhD. Karolinska Institutet, ex researcher -Harvard University: “Returning to Italy- descendants of Antonio de Noli’s family in Cesena and Genoa 1497-1881”, Prof. Trevor Hall, PhD John Hopkins University-faculty UMASS-Dartmouth: “Governor Antonio de Noli and his family: discoverers, colonizers and governors of the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands (1460-1704).” Prof. Lourenço Gomes, University of Cabo Verde: “Antonio de Noli, the official discoverer and first settler of Cape Verde Islands”. Dott. Marcel Balla, University of Boston: “The Greatest Story

Never Told. Cabo Verde, the genesis of the New World”. Capt. Vasco Pires, author, USA: “The Impact of the 550 year history of Cape Verde on the USA”.



Prof. Ferrada-Noli spoke at two occasions, one as the President of the Society in the inauguration of the Conference and then when presenting his research paper. In his first speech Professor Noli stressed the link of Antonio de Noli with the city of Noli was twofold: (1) Quoting a manuscript by Della Cella found at the University of Genoa he said the Noli family had its ancient origins in the City and Castle of Noli before their establishing in Genoa around the 13th century. And (2) the Noli's expedition to Portugal might have started in the harbor of Noli, a close port to Genoa, apparently as consequence of the political problems that forced the brothers Antonio and Bartholomew and nephew Raphael to leave Genoa. Finally, Professor Noli paid homage to the courageous and proud people of Cabo Verde and its fight against colonial rule and stressed that by the nature of its national genesis (started to be inhabited at the same time by Italians, Portuguese and Africans) Cabo Verde has a very special relationship to Europe. He also saluted; on behalf of the Society; Cabo Verde's 35 years of independence.

In his research presentation Professor Ferrada-Noli exhibited manuscripts indicating the Genoa origin of Antonio de Noli and then summarized the return voyages of descendants of the Governor Antonio de Noli and family back to Italy during the 1490's, meanwhile a few members of the Noli family apparently remained in Cabo

Verde. He also presented manuscripts from the Malatestiana Library in Cesena and from the Parish of Valleregia in Northern Genoa showing the genealogical continuity of the descendants of Antonio de Noli up to present. He also described the migration of the Noli family back to Genoa and the political/historical circumstances that made possible their return..

Prof. Astengo, showed various maps that were being used in the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean before the famous voyage of Vasco da Gama to India. He explained how the maps evolved from one generation to the next as different navigators explored the coast of Africa. He ended his talk by explaining how Cabo Verde became the center of the world for other nations during the discovery phase of history.

Prof. Hall surprised everyone with his vast knowledge of the Noli family during their years in Cabo Verde from the 15th century to the 18th century. He even had a facsimile of the original signatures of the Noli descendants, which proved to be very interesting for everyone in the audience. He also talked about the three phases of the African slave industry; before the discovery of Cabo Verde; after the discovery of Cabo Verde and finally the Atlantic Slave Trade in the beginning of the 16th century.

Prof. Gomes expressed his views that it was clearly Antonio de Noli who had officially discovered Cabo Verde, while providing good reference material to support his arguments. He also showed photographs of Ribeira Grande and several of the new books that have been written recently about Cabo Verde by Cape Verdean authors, which included a photograph of a historical stamp with a full length portrait of Antonio de Noli on it. The stamp was used during the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of Cabo Verde in 1960. He also explained that it was Antonio de Noli who had established a new settlement to begin a new civilization in the beginning of the New World in Cabo Verde.

Capt. Vasco delivered a report about the impact of the 550 year history of Cape Verde on the United States of America. He spoke of 5 major events that contributed to this impact on the United States of America: The birth of the Cape Verdean people; the Atlantic Slave Trade; the growth of the whaling industry; emigration and the struggle for independence. He explained how Antonio de Noli brought together the Portuguese, Spanish, Italians free Africans, African slaves and others. This mixture of people would have unintended consequences that were never anticipated. He provided many details about the whaling industry and the key role played by Cape Verdeans in that industry which began in the 18th century and ended in the beginning of the 20th century. He also reminded the audience that there were slave revolts against their oppressors and some such revolts were successful. He gave an example of President Obama, as well as many successful Cape Verdeans as being a result of the impact of the discovery by Antonio de Noli 550 years ago. In his summary, Capt. Vasco questioned if we learned anything from the past 550 year history of Cape Verde's discovery.

Prof. Mario Lorenzo Paggi, President of the S. Antonio Cultural foundation served as the chairman for the afternoon session

Prof. Peluffo served as chairman for the morning session of the conference, however, he did say that there is a need for the people of Noli to know more about Antonio's life and enterprises, as information about both of these issues are very poor.

The Ambassador of Cabo Verde in Italy, Dr. Barbosa expressed his delight with the talk given by Prof. Astengo for describing Cabo Verde as the center of the world during the discovery period. He also explained that this argument fully supports my personal views of Cabo Verde during this historical period and that the history of the navigators-explorers revolved around the archipelago of Cabo Verde.

Dott. Balla -As for me, I talked about the Cape Verdean story as being the Greatest Story Never Told and compared it to the Bible. I explained that in the Bible, it was the Old World that the authors described and that they knew nothing about the New World which was authenticated by Antonio de Noli and other navigators during the discovery period. I also explained that it was de Noli who had prepared the way for Vasco da Gama to discover the route to India. This particular subject is rarely discussed in history books, but in this case it is fully supported by the distinguished Professor Trevor Hall from the University of Massachusetts. I said that de Noli actually discovered the first part of the New World, but preferred to use the expression the “**Gateway to the New World**” during the discovery period. Professor Hall also suggested that this was a better term to use.

Dr. Manuel de Pina, Mayor of Ribeira Grande de Santiago, Cabo Verde-Unfortunately, the mayor had to cancel his participation in the conference due to circumstances beyond his control. His presence was greatly anticipated because of his desire to form a sister city program with the mayor of Noli. However, we will be in contact with the mayor and hopefully work out an arrangement for the future. It should be noted that the mayor is in an excellent position to be of tremendous help to the research of the history of Antonio de Noli and Cabo Verde. At the present time the city is being visited by archaeologists and researchers in search of the information that could reveal many of the secrets that created the New World.

Cultural Events

The Ambassador and Consulate of Cabo Verde in Rome did a magnificent job in bringing together a small but animated group of Cape Verdeans to offer Cape Verdean cuisine and music in the city square. The local municipality even had the Cape Verdean menus printed in Italian. There was also a display of photographs that showed the Cape Verdean people on the islands and the landscapes of the country. The highlight of the cultural events had to be the Cape Verdean-Italian tenor who reminded the audience of Mario Lanza or Pavarotti. Hopefully, one day soon, he will be invited to sing in Cabo Verde or the USA. Such talent has to be seen and heard in order to appreciate it. His name btw, is Francesco Ciotola.

In my opinion it was a great conference and the first time that experts from around the world had a chance to compare research on the findings of Antonio de Noli and Cabo Verde.

Summary

Naturally, there is much more to be done, but at least now we have an organization in place (The Antonio de Noli Academic Society) with scholars from around the world who appear to be passionate about their subject. They all have a personal interest in seeing that the project is successful. It is noteworthy, that all of these people have made many

sacrifices to reach their goals. A key objective in my view is to show the world that Cabo Verde is a very important country with a rich history that has never been recognized by the academic world. Now that prominent scholars from around the world have documented the facts, it is clear to me at least, that Cabo Verde will have a bright and prosperous future once the world begins to launch extensive programs in the school systems. Once this is accomplished, people will know who the Cape Verdean people really are and there will be a new pride within the Cape Verdean community. I must admit that for many years, it seemed as though I was working alone on this project, but now we can see that other people are very interested in this project. This is good news for me personally, because, I was kind of running out of gas. Now I have a new lease on life.

I encourage all readers to visit the web site for the Antonio de Noli Academic Society to learn more about this organization: www.adenoli.wordpress.com

(Marcel Gomez Balla, Sep-2010)