

After 'Pacem in Terris' — What? by A. D. Lee, O.P.

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Although the suggestion of a dialogue with Communism has been looked upon by some Catholics as hopeless and unproductive, while being openly criticized by others, the possibility of such a dialogue is at least implied by Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*.

'It must be borne in mind, furthermore, that neither can false philosophical teachings regarding the nature, origin, and destiny of the universe and of man be identified with historical movements that have economic, social, cultural or political ends, not even when these movements have originated from these teachings and have drawn and still draw inspiration therefrom.

This is so because the teachings, once they are drawn up and defined, remain always the same, while the movements, working in constantly evolving historical situations, cannot but be influenced by these latter and cannot avoid, therefore, being subject to changes, even of a profound nature . . .

It can happen, then, that meetings for the attainment of some practical end, which formerly were deemed inopportune and unproductive, might now or in the future be considered opportune and useful.'

Applying this insight of Pope John XXIII, a distinction should be made between the theory of Communism and the Communist movement in history. Certainly Communism is based on a false philosophy of the nature, origin and destiny of man. The historical movement of Communism originated from those false teachings and still draws upon them for inspiration. Further, these teachings, as permanently recorded and defined, remain the same. But Pope John suggests that movements can change in the course of constantly evolving historical situations; in fact, he says, 'cannot avoid being subject to changes, even of a profound nature.' If certain changes are effected, then a dialogue never before possible can hope to achieve some limited success. If this is an authentic interpretation of Pope John, the question can be asked, 'Has the pressure of the world's present condition so affected the Soviet Communist movement that a dialogue on peace and peaceful institutions can be fruitfully undertaken?'

Pope John does not suggest that such changes have taken place, but he knows the absolute necessity of asking that question and how imperative it is that it be answered prudently.

'But to decide whether this moment has arrived, and also to lay down the ways and degrees in which work in common might be possible for the achievement of economic, social, cultural and political ends which are honourable and useful, are problems which can be solved only with the virtue of prudence, which is the guiding light of the virtues that regulate the moral life, both individual and social.'

No attempt will be made to answer this question on an ecclesiastical or a governmental level, but we will discuss the possibility of a continuing dialogue on the level achieved at the International Convocation on *Pacem in Terris*. The following reflections are purposely limited to observations on the Convocation itself.¹ The specific question about which we reflect is this, 'Was there evidence in what was said at the Convocation that the historical movement of Soviet Communism has changed to such a degree that a continuing dialogue concerning peace and peaceful institutions can be publicly and privately pursued?'

For the purpose of this discussion certain things will be granted: namely, (1) that an international forum can be used as a platform of propaganda in the worst sense (in fact, one of the severest criticisms during the Convocation was directed to the U.N. General Assembly for being a sounding board of propaganda); (2) that the Communist world attaches entirely different meaning to words which have been conceived and consecrated in freedom (and 'freedom' is one of them); (3) that every free government must so safeguard its own rights and the freedom and safety of its people, that it places trust in just deeds and effective action and not in words. On the other hand, it must be noted that the question is not whether out of good will and magnanimity the Soviet Communist Party has graciously altered its policy or its tactics, but rather, whether by force of present world conditions a *de facto* change has been effected toward the only sane policy of self-interest and survival.

Mr Inozemstev said:

'To prevent a world rocket and nuclear war is a matter of life and death to many hundred million people, a matter of securing a basic condition for any progress and a necessary condition for the successful solution of all other problems facing humanity, such as social, political and national problems.'

The Deputy Chief Editor of *Pravda* offered some of the reasons for the Soviet concern for peaceful coexistence, which we will outline here.

(1) Social-economic and political changes in the world

Modern era is an era of socio-economic and political changes of the magnitude that has not been witnessed before, creating necessary pre-requisites for the successful solution of the problem of preventing new world war.

¹The attitude of the Church with regard to its own dialogue with the world is further clarified in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* of Pope Paul VI and in the Second Vatican Council.

(2) Influence of the popular masses

The degree of organization of the international working class and of the wide popular masses has increased as did the mass influence on political parties and governments in favour of struggle for peace and reduction of international tensions.

(3) The threat of nuclear war

The impact of military and technical revolution has increased the realization among different public circles of the catastrophic consequences which may come as a result of war with the use of nuclear and rocket weapons.

(4) Old barriers have toppled

Achievements of scientific and technical revolution, its effect in industry and agriculture, in means of transport and communication, in the field of international economic relations have toppled old barriers on the way of contacts among peoples, and brought about new, and more favourable conditions for the development of economic, cultural and other ties.

Mr Millionshikov, Member and Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, added another reason. He implied that the change of the official Soviet attitude towards war has come about because of the rise to political prominence of Soviet scientists who are perhaps more cognizant of the catastrophic effects of nuclear war, on the one hand, and the opportunities science can provide for socio-economic progress without war, on the other.

By way of comment, it appeared very clear that the Soviet position has officially changed at least regarding rocket and nuclear war. More significantly the hint was given that the influence of the populace and the prominence of scientists who have a different view of Communist doctrine than of old has brought about this change within the Soviet party.

Mr Inozemstev found justification for this shift by appealing to Lenin as a non-militarist: 'The doctrine of peaceful coexistence is a Leninist doctrine'. And as to the interpretation of Marx, 'the name with which our ideology is closely associated', Mr Inozemstev said:

'In Marxists' view the basis for conflicts resulting in wars, the basis for cataclysms undermining normal international relations is found in deep social factors and as changes occur in the arrangement of class forces, connected with the development of social progress, more favourable conditions for the struggle for peace are being created.'

As might be expected from an editor of *Pravda* the statement is very carefully worded, but might he not be saying that these days are not the same, at least in the Soviet, as the first days of struggle and revolution, that in a more affluent society ('changes in the arrangement of class forces connected with the development of social progress') the class struggle is not so great a motivating force for battle as it is for peaceful progress?

Such an interpretation aside, Mr Inozemstev wished to stress that what

he did say reflected the actual policy of the Soviet Union :

'Lest I be unsubstantiated, let me refer to the programme of our party, representing the most important guiding document for Soviet policy, for all persons leading the Soviet Government.

"Peaceful coexistence" says the programme," provides for : rejection of war as a means of solving disputes between states, solution of disputes by means of negotiations ; equality of rights, mutual understanding and trust between states, respect for the interests of one another ; non-intervention into internal affairs, recognition for every people of its right to solve independently all questions of its country ; strict respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries ; the development of economic and cultural cooperation on the basis of full equality and mutual benefit.' "

Of course other governments will insist upon actions to prove the interpretation and significance of these words ; but, again, does a continuing dialogue need to await such action, in fact, may not further words indeed be essential to lead to effective action ? At least it can be said that on the governmental level some steps have been taken in the direction of control of nuclear weapons, and that required a great deal of 'official' dialogue. The Test Ban Treaty was proposed in 1956 ; it was signed in October, 1963. The treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, said Vice-President Humphrey, 'won respect throughout the world for the United States and the Soviet Union – indeed for all nations who signed it. It has inspired hope for the future of mankind on this planet'. He also commented on the resolution not to station weapons of mass destruction in space, the cut-back on the production of fissionable materials, the establishment of a 'hot line' between Washington and Moscow to avoid miscalculation which might lead to nuclear war. These are very small achievements in view of the gigantic problems still ahead, but they are effective actions which support on an official level the change of attitude of the Soviet toward war, at least nuclear war.

But, however valuable the 'hot line' may be in avoiding a miscalculation which might bring destruction to the world as we know it, it is hardly a continuing dialogue. It does not serve to communicate to others the genuine desire for peace, it does not communicate to the public the alternatives and dialectics of a dialogue. We return to the original question, 'Was there evidence in what was said at the Convocation that the historical movement of Soviet Communism has changed to such a degree that a fruitful dialogue concerning peace and peaceful institutions can be pursued ?'

We suggest that the answer is affirmative. Pope John XXIII envisaged it as a real possibility, and, with due caution, urged it. And we further suggest that the time may be as ripe for a continuing international dialogue on ideological, political, economic, social and cultural issues, as it

is for the ecumenical dialogue of Christian Churches on religious issues. It is no accident that Pope John, who convoked the Second Vatican Council and inspired its ecumenical spirit, was also the author of *Pacem in Terris*. While Pope John has won the respect of the Catholic world for his vision and for the timeliness of his action with regard to the whole Christian world, it would be a mistake not to recognize that his vision included a striving for peaceful solutions to ideological, political, economic, social, and cultural issues, and that the timeliness of his *Pacem in Terris* is verified by the enthusiastic reception of the encyclical by all people and all nations, a timeliness which was reflected in the response given to it at the International Convocation. The parallel between the ecumenical dialogue on Christian unity and international dialogue on peace does not end there. Three characteristics of the movement toward Christian unity can also be applied to a popular movement toward peace on earth.

(1) Historically, Christianity seemed destined to become always more divisive, with the tendency to multiply more vital and effective than the deeper roots of unity. (2) However, the attempts of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican to search for ways and means of achieving greater unity have proved most timely and stimulating to Christian life and hopes. (3) Everyone involved in the effort understands that no easy answers are available and the goal of Christian unity is yet far off, but the avenues are being kept open, concrete contributions are being made, and, although there is honest recognition of the obstacles which still remain, the great body of Christendom is also conscious of the dialogue and is eager to enter into it on all levels, both private and public.

These same characteristics would mark a continuing international, political and ideological dialogue. (1) The suggestion of such a dialogue might have been hopeless only a few years ago, but military stalemate and nuclear paralysis bids for dialogue, however cautious and provisional. (2) The attempts at such a dialogue, especially if they should relax some of the international tensions, would be welcomed by the vast majority of the population of the world. Certainly, an atmosphere less contaminated with the threat of nuclear war could promote understanding and accelerate co-operation. (3) As in the dialogue for Christian unity, the dialogue on peace and peaceful institutions is a long and arduous road. The participants must know that obstacles will appear at every turn, but ways of understanding can be kept open, some concrete contributions can be made, and, perhaps most important of all, the great body of mankind would be conscious of the dialogue and could enter into it on private and public levels.

Of course, many objections immediately come to mind. The greatest threats to such a dialogue might come from the national governments

themselves. Because of this it would have to be made clear that the dialogue be unofficial, and not designed to do the work of government. It should not ignore the fact that in many places the seeds of war are lingering, that nations committed to, and directly involved in, the discharge of sovereign obligations cannot forthwith withdraw from these obligations in favour of a possible dialogue, which might at some indefinite future date lead to just settlements of yet non-existing international disputes.

Further, the dialogue cannot ignore the fact that the ideological conflict continues to exist and will probably be stepped up to the pace that the economy of the principal nations permit. Russia has already made that clear: 'The Soviet Union did not and is not concealing its intentions to win the economic competition with the capitalist world.' Nor can free-world participants forget that the 'peace' which the Soviet seeks is the peace following the victory over capitalism; that for the Communists the long road to peace includes the social, economic and political disturbances created or protracted for the sake of the extension of Communist ideology; that while the Soviet may see itself moving through the stages of revolution and socialism toward the realization of communism, it still recognizes that other nations to which it wishes to extend its ideology must be supported in revolutionary and socialistic stages.

Indeed these are cautions, great and ominous cautions for the leaders of free-world governments, yet are they not also challenges at an ideological level which can be faced in dialogue? Perhaps they indicate the necessity of dialogue, and, rather than discourage it, call for putting our best efforts into the ideological conflict. An international dialogue, it must be remembered, will involve not only a face-to-face confrontation with Soviet ideology, but a better understanding and appreciation of the nations at our side, and will give other participants, including representatives of underdeveloped countries and uncommitted countries, the opportunity to challenge the ideologies with facts. Such a dialogue, then, is not conceived as a sport for the faint-hearted and uninformed, but a confrontation of ideologies struggling with the actual problems of the world in a realistic way.

In summary, the unprecedented encyclical of Pope John XXIII and the unique Convocation on the encyclical prove the possibility of a dialogue. The statements of the representatives of the Soviet Union, however styled, seem to imply that some limited dialogue can at this time be undertaken. So, at the same time and continuous with the dynamic political, economic, social and cultural movements in the world community, could not convocations be held in London, New Delhi, Tokyo, Berlin, Belgrade, Paris, Moscow, Bogota, etc., at the level achieved by the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions when it sponsored the International Convocation on *Pacem in Terris*? At least such an assembly can never again be called 'unique.'