



EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL ACTION

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CONSTANTIN DRAGAN

The Invasion of Czechoslovakia: "An Offence to the Higher Concepts of the Rights of Man and of the Dignity of Peoples"

Freedom and peace are terms that should be considered in the light of the higher concepts of the rights of man and of the dignity of peoples, concepts that cannot be separated from the seeking, even though tacit, of God: this in summary is the point of the speech made by Pope Paul VI during a recent general weekly audience in which he commented on the Czechoslovak tragedy.

The speech repeats the severe judgment expressed by the Pope as he was leaving for Bogotá when he condemned another true act of political piracy for which the Soviet Union is once more guilty: the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

« We would like to remind men, » the Pope said, after having exhorted « all Christians », all men, to pray for a just solution to this new crisis which threatens the peace of the world, « that justice and peace cannot be separated from higher concepts on the rights of men and on the dignity of peoples; and that in their turn such concepts cannot be made operant for the common good by persons and by national communities if they are not upheld by constant appeal to God, to the absolute from which derives the moral conscience of humanity and the sense of its fraternal solidarity. »

« What happens when men renounce this, their vital link to God? » the Pope asked; « when to the contrary this link is denied? » We do not wish to be prophet of new calamities; the recent experiences of the modern world are enough to show where such renunciations of God lead.

« On the contrary, we would like to be optimistic—the Pope said—and this in virtue of the love that we bear for all peoples and in respect for that feeling of honor and of humanity that nothing can extinguish in the heart of man, for a human, rational and peaceful solution—for the common good, but above all for those who now suffer. A solution in which justice and peace prevail over any other interest and difficulty.

In his speech made at the airport before getting on the plane that was to take him to Bogotá, the Pope asked for special religious services and prayer meetings in favor of the Czechoslovak people. His appeal was heeded all over the world, especially in Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

During the same general audience in Castelgandolfo, the Pope spoke of his recent vo-

yage to Bogotá, recalling to the faithful two « particularly significant, particularly elevated » moments of his trip: the ceremony for the ordination of 150 Latin American priests and deacons at the « Eucharistic Camp » and the mass celebrated at the parochial church of St. Cecilia in one of the poorest and most populated areas of the Colombian capital.

Though limited to a single nation of the continent, this first voyage of a Pope to Latin America had the significance of an « overall encounter » with all the faithful of the Latin American area—the Pope said. An encounter that has revealed the faith and the profound religiousness, as well as the human and civil sentiments, of an entire continent. Latin America, said the Pope, could not have presented us with a more lively image, more worthy of our affection; we are still overcome by the impression, by the emotion that these exultant and engrossing encounters which took up our three days in Colombia ha-

ve left in our soul. They were days of spiritual fullness, of pastoral happiness and at the same time of true revelation. « It was, as a French journalist justly described, a triumph without triumphalism. »

The Pope then spoke of the urgency of an intervention of the Church that gives concrete expression, also on the human and temporal plane, to the faith of a people today troubled by economic and social problems, the resolution of which cannot be postponed. He spoke of the « duty of arousing new capacities of action » in a Church called upon to repeat the evangelical miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to satisfy an immense throng of poor people that we can no longer see torn by bitternesses and by the disadvantages of their condition without being copartakers of the Eucharist—doing all in our power to restore to these our brothers a well-being proportionate to their human necessity, to their Christian dignity. »



Prague... greeted by the Russians

The Church found itself again in Bogotá

Of all the many speeches made by Paul VI in Bogotá, two point out specifically, without the possibility of arbitrary interpretations, the position of the Church on religious and social problems that today stir the Latin-American continent in general and the Catholic world.

Addressing the 300,000 «campesinos» of the agricultural zone of Mosquera, Pope Paul VI suggested a plan of Christian action in favor of the underdeveloped levels that promotes «new and organic plans for the working class, especially for the rural levels» and condemned severely the violence preached by the Catholic left and by the Marxists as the only solution for the integration of these levels in the process of the transformation of the continent.

Violence and revolution—said the Pope—are contrary to the Christian spirit and do not but delay, instead of favor, the social ascent legitimately aspired to. This phrase is particularly important since it implies a clear orientation also for the Latin-American bishops whose conference, inaugurated by the Pope, continues in Medellín as we write these lines.

In the speech for the inauguration of the General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate, the Pope once again condemned violence, especially among members of the religious community who are often tempted to embrace ideologies foreign to the evangelical message and to allow themselves to be drawn to confusion and ideological «irreism.» Paul VI recalled to the hierarchy and the clergy of the Latin-American Church—and the warning was also heard by those responsible for the spiritual life of the entire Catholic world—the dangers of a «theology of violence» and the supremacy of love and charity over hate and violent class vindications.

«Strongly condemning both violence and theological deviations, the Pope brought the Church back to a firm position that rejects compromise and the lining up with ideologies and current progressive philosophies,» some commentators wrote during the visit, commentators who see in this position of the Pope the «third step» in a courageous doctrinal affirmation.

Beginning with the «Creed of the People of God,» pronounced by Paul VI during the ceremony for the closing of the Year of Faith, such affirmation continued with the Encyclical «Humanae Vitae» on the responsibility of Christians in the thorny question of birth control and now with the «clarification» of the position of the Church in both religious and social fields.

Return to the Gospel and to the justice in charity preached by Christ. This is the point of the message of Bogotá. Return to the truth of the doctrine founded on the word of Christ which has been the guarantee through the centuries of the life of the missionary and civilizing Church, for which the eradication of injustice and the gaining of true peace are possible only in the fullness of true Christian charity, that is, universal charity, of all men towards all men; of love that does not conquer evil with evil, but with good.

The crowds which acclaimed the Pope in Mosquera and in the tragic «bidonvilles» which surround the contradictory Colombian

capital, heard vibrate in the Pope's words a hope. A «patient, moderate, troubled» hope, such as that which Christ illuminated in the hearts of men when he set about associating, through the Church, all generations to his redemptive work. This hope is identified with the vitality of the Church. «We—said the Pope in his speech for the inauguration of the Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate—must reaffirm this vitality of the Church which is the first reason for the existence of the Church, in full fidelity to its teaching.

Today—said the Pope—the fundamental principles of Catholic theology are assailed by most ruinous currents of modern thought and the void left in Catholic philosophical schools by the abandonment of the great teachers

of Christian thought is often filled by a superficial and almost servile acceptance of the fashionable philosophies, often simplistic and obscure.

Much time will pass certainly before we see the concrete effects of this doctrinal re-affirmation and in general of the visit of the Pope to Latin America.

Will this visit, this «encounter» with the Latin Americans, succeed in re-launching the action of the Church on the continent, such as to determine an orderly development of the Latin American society without necessitating recourse to violence? This is what the commentators ask. One thing is certain: the Latin American Church has now before it an historical opportunity without precedent.

Pre-Roman Dacia and Proto-Christian Romania

A speech by Prof. Mariano Baffi to the F.E.D.

Prof. Mariano Baffi, lecturer in Romanian language and literature, gave a well-received speech to the Dragan European Foundation at its offices in the Trajan Forum on the subject: «Pre-Roman Dacia and Proto-Christian Romania», synthetizing in a clear exposition the history of the Romanian people from their origins.

The first information that we have from the territory that forms the Romania of today is that which we find in the writings of Ovid, the unfortunate poet forced to end his days on the (at that time) inhospitable shores of Dobruja, the speaker said.

According to what he wrote, the sojourn was not all pleasant, for the wildness of the country, the bitterness of the climate and the ferociousness of the inhabitants.

Much different were the conditions of life in the territory bathed by the lower reaches of the Danube, a century later, on the eve of the occupation by the Romans. A high form of civilization had meanwhile developed between the Danube, the Tisza and the Dniester, a civilization that was based not only on agriculture and on the raising of cattle, but also on artisan work and metallurgy, something which has been further proven by recent archaeological excavations.

At the same time the Danube — the sacred river of the Dacians — became a Roman river all along its course, and Dobruja, Scythia Minor, an outpost necessary to the Empire of Rome extended towards the East.

Roman camps and fortresses increased along its course and the legate of Mesia, Tiberio Silvano Eliano, without proceeding again to territorial occupation, confirmed the peace in the province, with the installation of several hundreds of thousands of Transdanubians south of the Danube.

The first clash with the Dacians — who in the meantime had organized their society on aristocratic bases — took place during the time of Domitian.

The Dacians, defeated at Tapae by Tettio Giuliano, accepted a protectorate of Rome, while their king, Decebalus, was declared ally of the Roman people.

Hostility however rose again at the time of Trajan who conducted two expeditions against Decebalus. Unfortunately, written sources are scarce making it difficult to reconstruct the event, but, the defeat and Romanization of Dacia remain recorded on the 19 centuries old Trajan column.

At the time of Trajan, the Dacians lived an intense spiritual life, along with their economic and social life. Their religion was monotheistic. They worshipped Zamolxes, lord of the earth and of the infernal abysses. They believed in a future existence, in life after death, reward for the good and punishment for the bad. These were all pre-suppositions which made the penetration of the Christian religion into the country easy.

Probably, the first Christians were the Roman soldiers, the legions occupying Dacia being recruited in Asia Minor and in the Balkan peninsula where the word of Christ had already penetrated thanks to the preaching of St. Paul and his disciple Titus. Moreover Tertulliano tells us that the Dacians could be counted among the first Christians, along with the Germans and the Sarmatians.

«Many scholars have written», says Nicola Jorga, «that we Romanians received the Christian faith at a rather later time, and through the Bulgarians. A bigger error could not be made, first of all because an old and highly cultivated people could not receive these spiritual gifts from another younger, more primitive people... finally, an entire complex of words such as «biserica», «botez», «cuminecatura», all of Latin origin show that we Romanians received ancient Christianity directly from the Romans.»

«These words seem to best point out what we wished to demonstrate.»

St. Peter's letters in a third century papyrus

Cardinal Augustine Bea, president of the Secretariat for the Union of Christians, recently presented to journalists in the press room of the Vatican an edition of the two letters of St. Peter that reproduces, in facsimile, the oldest text of these letters so far brought to light, that is, the so-called Bodmer VIII Papyrus, named after its owner. In technical language, this papyrus, published for the first time in 1959, bears the abbreviation P.72.

The document—Cardinal Bea said—was part of a fuller manuscript of the third century. Its authenticity makes it particularly important both for the history of the text and for the history of the « canon » since it is a proof that not only the first, but the second letter of St. Peter has been known and diffused since the third century.

The presence in the manuscript of the two letters is valid proof of the canonicity of the sacred scriptures, so long contested in various parts of the church.

Pointing out the characteristics of the papyrus, Cardinal Bea said that the rather reduced form of the document leads one to think that it had been transcribed for personal use. The scribe, certainly not a lettered man, has committed many orthographical errors. Faced, however, with the great uncial texts, it is almost a completely faithful reproduction and constitutes another proof of the « solidity » of the text of St. Peter's epistles in the form in which they came to us.

Besides two critical comments on the orthography which allow it to be compared with other known manuscripts, also reproduced, on pages facing the Greek text, is the Latin text of the two letters, taken from the Vulgate.

A preface by the Catholic philosopher and writer, Jean Guitton, opens this edition of the Bodmer VIII Papyrus.

More interesting information concerning the manuscript has been published in a special issue of the *Osservatore Romano*, dedicated to the commemoration of the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in an article by the Jesuit Father Carlo Martini.

According to Father Martini, the Epistles of Peter, preserved in the Bodmer P.72, belong to the oldest part of an anthology of sacred texts transcribed probably by four different scribes in a period extending from the beginning of the third century to the first half of the fourth century. Forming part of the same collection are the epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians, Solomon's Song and the epistle of Judah.

According to the editor, M. Testuz, the Bodmer VIII P.72 Papyrus comes from Egypt where it evidently was transcribed by Coptic scribes, as proved by the presence of a word in the Coptic language and the confounding of various sounds by the transcribers.

On the basis of its palaeographic characteristics, the manuscript would seem to originate in the third century, an estimation generally accepted by experts with the exception of Karl Oland who dates it between the third and the fourth century.

The initiative of the editor Testuz in publishing this new edition of the two letters of St. Peter—Cardinal Bea said during the press conference—« represents a concrete and useful contribution to the celebrations for the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of St. Peter. »

Unification of Europe: Garantee of Peace

During the audience accorded members of the Political Commission of the Council of Europe who were in Rome for a consultative meeting, the Holy Father Paul VI launched a new appeal for « international justice » to resolve the dramatic conflicts which today keep the world in a state of uncertainty.

The Church—affirmed the Pope—does not pursue political aims nor is it its responsibility to effect political solutions for the relaxation of international tension. At the same time however, it cannot remain indifferent to the efforts of those, such as the members of the Council of Europe, who seek the consolidation of peace, solutions to international tensions and who endeavour to defend the rights of persons and of peoples.

Unfortunately, the current climate is cloudy—the Pope said—even in Europe, which seemed to be safe from the dramatic conflicts which are taking place today in other parts of the world.

Recent events have harshly recalled to men of good will the precariousness of their efforts. And thus it will continue to be as

long as brutal force prevails over justice serving the interests of one to the detriment of others.

Is it necessary therefore to give up hope for the relaxation of tension and for peace? And who could do such a thing? Would it not be better to consider, realistically and courageously, ways to consolidate these hopes? The unification of Europe is without doubt one of these means: the surest one.

« May the member countries of the Council of Europe consolidate their solidarity to make heard, with firmness, but in the spirit of peace, the voice of reason and justice.

« May they defend the great international causes of the developing populations, not only on the basis of their economic interests, but—as we said in the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*—guided by the laws of international justice. Such a generous and unbiased action could not be without results. It would promote cooperation between the countries of Old Europe, whose cultural, religious and moral heritage, precious for their christian values, would shine with new light in the eyes of mankind. »

Possible “rehabilitation” of Galileo Galilei

During a speech on the theme « Religious and Natural Sciences » presented at the International Congress of Nobel Prize Winners, Cardinal Franz Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, mentioned the possible revision of the trial of 1633 in which Galileo Galilei was condemned as a heretic. The sentence handed down at that time by the tribunal of the Inquisition will probably be discussed by a special commission that will check all the documents of the trial.

The annulment of the sentence that condemned Galileo Galilei for upholding the theory of Copernicus (according to which the planets travel around the sun which is stationary and not the sun around the planets) would « help close one of the deepest open wounds in the relations between the Church and science, » Cardinal Koenig said.

« At the same time, rectifying this error, the Church would define the limits of its prerogative of infallibility. »

The Archbishop of Vienna then invited the scientists to meet with theologians to struggle together against the aggressions that constitute a grave danger for humanity, because « nothing stands in the way of this collaboration of the Church with those among the representatives of science whose concern about international political developments are known all over. »

Cardinal Koenig's statements, called « sensational » by all the Italian press, provoked immediate reaction in the Vatican.

It was pointed out that only the Pope can bring about the revocation of the sentence against Galileo, whose « rehabilitation » would in any case be only « formal » since all Catholic scientists and writers have for some time recognized the error of the Inquisition tribunal in this condemnation.

Moreover, the Church did not hesitate in admitting this « error » when in 1964 it « provoked » the publication of « The Life and Work of Galileo Galilei » by Msgr. Pio Paschini.

This publication, in two volumes, ordered by Paul VI and edited by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, recognized with absolute objectivity that the sentence against Galileo Galilei no longer had any validity.

One year after, the work of Msgr. Paschini was quoted in a note to one of the chapters of the Conciliar Constitution « *Gaudium et spes* » on the presence of the Church in the contemporary world, which said with reference to relations between scientific research and the faith: « May it be conceded to blame certain mental attitudes which sometimes appear even in Christians. Determined by an insufficient perception of the legitimate autonomy of science, they cause controversy and discussions that can induce many spirits to believe that science and faith are opposed to each other. »

Padre Pio dies praying for the suffering of the world



Padre Pio celebrating mass

More than 100,000 persons, arriving from all parts of the world by air and special trains, by all possible means of transportation imaginable, have attended the solemn funeral of the priest, with the stigmata, Padre Pio da Pietralcina, who died in the cell which for more than half a century he occupied in the monastery of the Capuchins in San Giovanni Rotondo, in the province of Foggia.

The fame of the miracle-working priest, who died at the age of 83, after a life dedicated entirely to Christ and to the physical and above all moral suffering of the faithful, had spread throughout the world.

Padre Pio was universally celebrated, venerated and loved and not only by Catholics, as the impressive funeral procession would attest, a procession that extended for at least five kilometers in which prayers for the deceased were recited in all the languages of the world.

Murmuring a prayer he crossed that threshold which fills us ordinary mortals with fear but which to him, elite of the elite, was perhaps more familiar than the threshold

of his cell. The day before he closed his big, black, honest, southern peasant eyes which could see the most hidden secrets of the soul, he celebrated the 50th in April, 1918. From that time, Padre Pio identified himself with the suffering of Christ. Padre Pio knew about the world only through hearsay, only by what was whispered to him by the penitents at the little window of the confessional where he spent most of his days listening, with wracked soul to the «horror and suffering»—as he wrote to his first confessor—the sins, the sorrows, the temptations and the doubts of those who, attracted by the fame of his saintliness, came from every corner of the earth to confess to him, humbly accepting the reprovals, often the anger of the monk who was not able to resign himself to the «wickedness» with which men repay the infinite love and sacrifice of Christ, and always accepting his advice and his exhortation which for many changed their life radically.

To many this attraction to Padre Pio was almost inexplicable, this priest of few words and brusque gestures who saw, as if through

a crystal, into the heart and into the present and future life of those who stood before him. He attracted even non-Catholics, many of whom, once fallen under the influence of this authentic «shepherd of souls,» became if not converts to the Catholic faith, at least integrated with the army of «the Faithful of Padre Pio,» who lately organized themselves in «prayer groups.» And perhaps this formidable strength of attraction, this total power of his over souls and consciences was the most important miracle of the life of the Capuchin miracle-worker whose miraculous cures, apparitions, and powers that defy natural or scientific explanations were countless. If, concerning the miracles of Padre Pio the Church has adopted the traditional prudence that has always characterized its attitude in regard to supernatural phenomena, the beneficial effect of Padre Pio on those who have come to him is now officially recognized, proved by the fact that the first mass in suffrage for the soul of Padre Pio was celebrated in the Vatican by the Pope himself.

Because of the enormous popularity of the «priest with the stigmata,» the myth which was created around his person was for Padre Pio motive for persecution and moral tribulation that often was brought upon him by his own superiors.

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We arrived at San Giovanni Rotondo after a trying trip of hours and hours, on roads literally paralyzed by thousands of cars, carts, bicycles, all headed for the monastery where Padre Pio lived. We were just in time to see him before the large glass cover was closed over the coffin where he rested for the veneration of the faithful. On his face with lines seeming as if they had been chiselled on some antique wood, was a serenely severe expression, of a patriarch, a majesty and a suffering that reminded us of him when he was alive, bent over the altar where he remained in prayer for hours his face pearly with sweat, consumed by unspeakable suffering. They had dressed him, according to his wishes, in the threadbare, faded habit he had worn for who knows how many years, shredded at the edge by the scissors of those who wanted to assure themselves of some memento. Between his knotted fingers was the dark wood rosary and around his shoulders the sacerdotal shawl. And one by one the crowd passed the coffin in a continuous flow, like black waters in tumult between the old walls of the church: as it had always been, day after day, for 50 years in this place: since, that is, on that day a long time ago in 1918 when Padre Pio received the painful and sublime gift of the stigmata.

It is probable that the cause for the beatification of Padre Pio, requested «vox populi,» will begin soon. But until the official proclamation of his sainthood, one thing appears certain now: Padre Pio belongs to that most rare, blessed human category from which saints arise.