



EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL ACTION

A free forum for the union of churches, founded in 1955 by
CONSTANTIN DRAGAN

“PEACE TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE GOOD EARTH”

Never in the history of mankind has the word of a sacred text resounded with such efficacy, with such significance and with such emotion for all men of all religions as the first verses of the Bible read on Christmas Eve by William Anders, Jim Lovell and Frank Borman.

From the capsule encircling the moon, from which the Earth to their eyes appeared like « a small lit-up apple » fallen from the tree of life, the words went right to the hearts of millions and millions who were following on their television screens with indescribable anticipation and fraternal participation, the most fabulous and exciting adventure of man.

The voices of the three astronauts, which came to us at home accompanied by the images of the moon, called upon men of the Earth to meditate on the origin of life in the universe.

“In the beginning, God created the Heavens and Earth,” intoned the voice of William Anders. “And the Earth was without form and void and darkness reigned over it. But the Spirit of the Lord was stirring above the space and God said: “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God separated the light from the darkness...”

“And God called the light Day and the darkness Night,” continued the voice of Jim Lovell. “And this was the first day. Then God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters to divide the waters; and so it was... And this was the second day...”

And then Frank Borman went on: “And God said: “Let the waters below the Heavens be gathered into one place and let the dry land be earth”; and so it was. God called the dry land Earth and the assembled waters Seas. And God saw that it was good...”

This was perhaps the most moving moment of the entire extraordinary undertaking which saw the beginnings of the exploration of our planetary system. To hear the voices of those three men practically from the moon, speaking to their brothers of the wonders of God, it was as if to rediscover God along with them: the God that today seems ever more hidden to our eyes which have been blinded by human power.

Three men, like three Christmas angels, a meeting with the Santa Claus of their infancy. And all around them, primordial dark-

ness, the “repugnant black starless void”, as Anders described space, passed through by waves which brought to their earth-bound brothers everywhere on the globe the key message from the Book of Genesis.

It was almost an ecumenical message with which the three pioneers, from a world which now considers its borders those of the cosmos, recalled men of all faiths, of all religions, to the glorification of God, unique architect of all creation, in which men are Man, in which they are the living image of His love.

And what a difference between the spiritual world of the three crew members of the Apollo 8 and that of the first soviet cosmonaut who, returning from a mission, was quick to reassure his compatriots that he had not found « even a trace » of God in the

sky “where He is believed to live.”

Rediscovery of God and the rediscovery of the Earth; on the spiritual and human plane, these are the two main aspects, perhaps more important than the scientific victory of the grandiose American spacial mission.

Yes, also rediscovery of the Earth which emerged triumphant over non-life on the moon, with its “desert made of nothing” that the three astronauts described with dismay.

And perhaps this will be the greatest gift that Borman, Lovell and Anders have brought to humanity: that of having taught man a new way of being terrestrial in the cosmos of being of the Earth; this Earth where seeds germinate and trees grow; and of feeling this as a privilege from the special grace of God.



Adoration of the Child (Anonymous, 16th Cent.)

The 50th anniversary of the union of Transylvania

The 50th anniversary of the union of Transylvania with Romania has been commemorated in Rome with a splendid cultural and patriotic ceremony organized by the Romanian Academic Society.

The celebration which took place at the Dragan European Foundation at the Trajan Forum, headquarters of the Romanian Academic Society, was attended by a select public including many friends of Romania and numerous Romanians who live in Italy.

At the chairman's table were Msgr. Octavian Barlea, founder and president of the Romanian Academic Society, Minister Pietro Gerbone, Dr. Constantin Dragan and Prof. Bruno Manzone, President of the Italian section of the Romanian Academic Society.

After a word of greeting to the guests by Msgr. Barlea, Constantin Dragan gave a brief but substantial summary of the two solutions proposed at the beginning of this century for the definition of the thorny problem of the Danube States.

One was the *federalist solution*, proposed by the « first Europist », the Romanian A.C. Popovici, who, in a book which quickly became famous - « The United States of the Danube » - proposed a federation of Danube states.

The other was the *nationalist solution*, which would have brought about the reunion of all the components of a determined nation into a single national State, corollary of the principle of nationalities.

Strongly opposed by the Hungarians, for whom the confederal formula meant the definitive fracture of the great Austro-Hungarian empire, the plan of A.C. Popovici —

had it been realized — « would have led to the formation of a United Europe ».

The nationalist solution triumphed, bringing about the realization of the ideals of unity of Italy, Germany, all the Slav nations of Europe, and Romania.

The national state however reveals itself today « unable to defend itself ». New solutions must be found which — whether they be called federalist or Europeist — do not contradict that national sentiment, or better yet, sense of patriotism, which must animate all the peoples of Europe in the future.

« There is no contradiction between nationalism and democracy ». The Europe of tomorrow must be the result of a strong impulse of European nationalism and sustained by European patriotism.

« Meanwhile, we are happy », Constantin Dragan concluded, « to host this ceremony and all ceremonies which emphasize these sentiments, these civic duties towards the mother country of yesterday, as towards the greater, wider mother country of tomorrow: Europe ».

Msgr. Aloysius Tautu, rector of the Romanian Church in Rome, then re-evoked in a moving and thorough historical « excursus », the political, social and cultural realities which determined and prepared the union of Romanians of Transylvania with their brothers of the Romanian Kingdom, concluding his fine speech with a thought for the Romanian Byzantine Rite Catholic Church of Transylvania which had such a leading role in the history of Transylvania and which is recalling the 20th anniversary of its arbitrary suppression on Dec. 1, 1948.

Msgr. Aloysius Tautu's speech

Msgr. Tautu began by explaining the « motives » for the union of Romanians of Transylvania with their Transcarpathian brothers in 1918, after almost a thousand years of Hungarian domination.

Summarizing the phases in an edifying historical, political, and cultural excursus, he pointed out on the one hand the rights of the Romanian « minority » in this province where it was the first occupant and the most numerous ethnic group, and on the other, the ferociousness of the policy of subjugation, dispossession, and denationalization, conducted by the Hungarians from the time they arrived in the region and up till the collapse of their armies and consequently their power in the First World War.

For the speaker, two were the causes which explain the domination of the Romanian majority (the Romanians represented 53.8 per cent of the overall population of Transylvania) by the Hungarians (who represented 31.6 per cent of the demographic total of the region): the Byzantine-Slav religion of the Romanians, which put them in a state of inferiority in regard to the Hungarian Catholics « sustained with much zeal but also with much political advantage » by Catholic kings of the Angevan dynasty who

If the policy of dispossession of the minority reached its culminating point in this epoch, not less grave was the blow to the cultural and scholastic life of this minority.

The only schools teaching a non-Hungarian language were the private schools — elementary and secondary — subsidized by the various confessions.

Put in difficult straits by laws which imposed on them insupportable expenditures,



the confessions little by little found themselves unable to maintain their schools.

Then, on the basis of a law of 1879, as many as 300 elementary Romanian schools had to be closed; then another 679 in 1907.

Equally as dramatic was the situation of the minority press. In 1914, about three million Romanians were served by only 39 publications and of these only two were dailies both having a fairly small number of copies printed.

It was also the epoch of publishing crimes (famous for its international repercussions was the « Memorandum » trial of 1892, against 200 Romanian intellectuals who, in a memorandum presented to the court of Vienna, asked for political, social and religious rights in Transylvania).

The Churches also had to pay tribute to this « desperate policy of denationalization of the alien populations ».

Thus, in 1912, as many as 104 Catholic parishes of the Romanian Byzantine rite and 200 Ruthenian parishes were incorporated into the famous dioceses of Hajdudorog, created with the support of Austro-Hungarian diplomacy and of the Magyar Catholic hierarchy.

All these vexations and tyranny could not but nourish in the Romanians the will to detach themselves from the Hungarian Kingdom and to unite with their brothers of blood and religion beyond the mountains.

The great opportunity for liberation came at the end of the First World War.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian army on the Italian front, the ethnic mino-

rities organized their respective national councils which took the fate of their people into their own hands.

The Romanian National Council, with its seat in Arad, declared in a proclamation its readiness to assume the responsibility for the Romanian populations of Transylvania. Then, after a series of fruitless negotiations with the government of Karolyi (which proposed a federalist solution) launched an appeal to all Romanians of Transylvania to organize themselves in local district and provincial national councils, and to send their delegates to the General Assembly of Alba Julia.

On Dec. 1, 1,228 delegates from all over Transylvania, from the schools, cultural organizations, women's associations and religious groups, plus 100,000 farmers, showed up for the Grand Assembly.

At this point Msgr. Tautu, who took part at the Assembly as a delegate of the National Council of his own commune, described the various moments of the historic event which culminated in the reading of a Motion with eight points, the first of which stating the decision of the Transylvanian Romanians to unite, together with all the territory inhabited by them, with the Kingdom of Romania.

To Monsignor Iuliu Hossu, then young Bishop of Gherla, fell the fortune of reading to the people crowded into Horia Field on the outskirts of the city the historical motion whose eight points established the principles of the future political, social and religious structure of a Transylvania based on the model of the most modern and progressive western democratic states.

Contrary to other minority groups which accepted without trauma the new order, the Hungarian minority, notwithstanding the prosperity and progress attained under the Romanian administration, continued (and continues!) to nourish nostalgia for times gone by, even if it could not support its claim with any of the arguments used by the Romanians to claim their union with Romania.

"Not the ethnic argument", Msgr. Tautu pointed out, "because they do not form the majority, rather a minority—though a conspicuous one—amid the dominant population; not the historical one, because even if they held hegemony over the territory for a thousand years, they came to Transylvania after the Romanians. They cannot even invoke the negative reasons adopted by the Romanians, because they do not suffer any of the limitations and oppressions suffered by the Romanians under their dominating regime.

So complete and detailed an account of the stormy history of Romanian Transylvania could not end without mention of the Catholic Church of the Romanian Byzantine rite, which had such a role in the formation of the national and Latin conscience of the Romanians and which, at the historical Assembly of Alba Julia, was present with all its hierarchy, its four bishops, and a great number of priests and faithful, supporting without conditions the decision for union "although it knew that the union was being made with a country where the Orthodox Byzantine Church was dominant and considered the national Church".

Under liberal regimes it was able to prosper, "perhaps arousing the envy of the Orthodox sister church.

"It is a fact that with the advent of the cataclysm of the Russian-Communist regime, this Church agreed to become an ally and instrument of that regime to destroy such a vital organism which represented the strongest spiritual tie of the Romanian people with the Latin and Catholic West".

Msgr. Tautu then recalled the tragic events which brought about the suppression of the Catholic Church of Byzantine rite in Romania, to the imprisonment of its Bishops and priests and to the cruel persecution of its faithful, and concluded:

"It is difficult to talk of responsibility in this inhuman, anti-Christian gesture perpetrated 20 years ago. When one speaks of it, the two principal protagonists, that is, the communist regime and the Romanian Orthodox hierarchy, display a sense of irritability. They would prefer not to talk about it any more.

"What is hidden behind this irritability is not easy to guess: a guilty conscience for having committed an enormous crime contrary to Romanian interests, or some other unspeakable reason"?



Rome: Trajan Column: detail

Attainment of the Rights of Man premise for True Peace

The attainment of the rights of man is "more urgent than ever", it still represents the principal objective of the activity of the United Nations, it remains the basis of every effective and fraternal collaboration among men, without which "true peace can never be reached".

This was said by Paul VI in a message addressed to the President of the 23rd General Assembly of the United Nations, Emilio Arenales Catalan.

Thus, Paul VI has once more emphasized the fundamental connection between the realization of the rights of the human person and the peaceful development of peoples.

It is not by chance that the "Day of Peace" celebrated January 1, has as significant theme "The promotion of human rights; step towards peace".

In his message, the Pope underlines how the Church "strictly" follows the example

of Christ and his message of love from which derive the norms of moral life which sanction "the full respect" due each man.

Unfortunately, the events of our time cruelly illustrate how in many parts of the world the possibility of cooperation in "an atmosphere of respect and of comprehension" are "contradicted by the forced subjugation of weaker nations" by "political regimes which deprive citizens of just freedom", by "recourse to threats and violence instead of negotiations" to resolve current conflicts.

"The Catholic Church does not remain indifferent to the responsibility towards the unity of the human family. It does not seek to impose new structures and to establish juridical norms for the city of man, but insists so that these norms be inspired by the principle of respect for human rights and by the promotion and the preservation of these rights".

News of Ecumenical Life in Europe

Italy

An ecumenical meeting in Rome

The Vatican recently issued a communique on the eighth meeting of the mixed work group of representatives of the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches of Geneva, which was held in Rome from Dec. 1 to 4.

Co-chairmen of the meeting were Msgr. Jan Willebrands, Secretary of the Secretariat for the Union of Christians, and Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches.

Task of the two delegations, which met in 1965 in a "mixed work group", is to "explore and develop the study and action programs" between the World Council of Churches, which includes the Christian non-Catholic confessions, and the Catholic Church.

In the last meeting were discussed several conclusions of the fourth general assembly of the Churches, held in Upsala in Sweden last July, with the participation of 15 official delegates of the Catholic Church in the capacity of "observer-counsellors".

Also discussed were the methods of conducting common work on the theological plane, the carrying out of a triennial program for social and economic development, and the peace of the world.

The meeting also dealt with the "coordination of the activity of organizations dependent on the interested churches for emergency assistance, particularly in the tragic situation of the war victims of the Nigerian conflict".

Finally, the group discussed "concrete proposals for study and common action in the general field of the questions of the laity and of the training of the laity, the situation of youth in society today, the changes in relations between men and women, and problems of family life".

One of the ten Catholic participants at the meeting was the secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Believers, Don Vincenzo Miano.

Vatican Statement on Relations with Prague

The Vatican would give no confirmation of press reports that Msgr. Giovanni Cheli of the Secretariat of State, was soon to go to Prague as "Apostolic Visitor".

The Vatican said however that it "hoped for possible contacts between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak government in the near future—contacts that would continue those begun several years ago, but in a different climate".

Greece

Under the title "Union Impossible", the religious magazine "O Sotir" publishes in its

edition of Nov. 20 an article against union.

This publication—previously favorable to union—has now changed positions because of the dogmatic controversy which has arisen between Catholics and Orthodox over the marriage of the ex-Mrs. Kennedy to Onassis.

Affirming that "union cannot be realized through the subjection of the Church to the Pope, but only through the subjection of all to that which the Church of the first centuries believed and taught", the article directs a harsh attack against the Catholic Archbishop of Athens, saying: "We recommend above all to the Catholic Archbishop of Athens greater prudence and good sense in his pronouncements on dogmatic questions. He also is Greek. And as such should know how sensitive the Greeks are when it comes to the question of their love, especially when it is a question regarding the Church and their Country".

"This is the second time that the Archbishop has been under fire. We remind him of his first imprudence. It was on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Sophia when he qualified the mystery of that blessed marriage by about 50 Orthodox Metropolitanans as "a simple civil act".

"After such attitudes, one cannot complain if the pens of the Orthodox who sincerely desire union are transformed into weapons of defense".

On the Planned General Council of Orthodox Churches

The Athens daily, "Ethnos", speaking of the General Council of Orthodox Churches which Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras intends to call as soon as possible, wrote recently:

"Orthodoxy must appear one and unanimous; one Church, one position, one indivisible and unanimous attitude. Independently of countries, nations, circumstances and conditions, the Orthodox world must present itself not only united, but unanimous, engaging itself in dialogue with other Churches".

On the Purge of the Clergy in Greece

The magazine, "I Tris Ierarchae", comments on the purge of the clergy in Greece as follows:

"That the Church has been gravely suffering for a long time has been shown by its best sons. Not the Church in itself, but its authority and its clergy. The Church in itself is holy and immaculate. The Lord purified it with his blood, as the Gospel teaches us. When we speak of the Church we do not mean the divine institution, but its members, men who—inasmuch as they are men—are subject to the plans of Satan because of the tepidness their faith.

"We knew, then, that the Church of Greece suffers. But we never imagined the gravity of its ailment and the multiplicity of the passions that assail it.

"The Holy Synod and the Synodal Tribunal, before which morally and incurably sick phases in an edifying historical, political and ecclesiastics of the Church of Greece have begun to appear, have demonstrated it to us.

"The purge must be profound and effective".

More prudent and aware of the possibility that these trials against the clergy could degenerate was the magazine, "Nemesis". According to Art. 8 of the law on ecclesiastic tribunals (Sept. 1967), "outside" testimony—that is, coming from the ranks of public opinion—will have a determining influence on these trials inasmuch as condemnation or acquittal should be founded on the good or unfavorable testimony that accompanies each defendant into court.

"It would, however, be an unpardonable error, and even a crime, to unjustly condemn the ecclesiastics on the basis of accusations, suppositions or suspicions without foundation, destroying in this way men who have devoted themselves to serving the Church and their country, at the same time recognizing that the point of view of external testimony is just and is based on apostolic dignity, according to which those belonging to the clergy must be men of incorruptible behaviour, and that they possess all those virtues mentioned by the Holy Scripture which are a need of the divine and sacred apostolate.

"However, favorable outside testimony does not depend only on the good conduct of a priest, but also on the good or unfavorable judgment or appreciation of those around him: of people of every class and calling and what's more with dispositions of soul perhaps unfriendly to the Church and its ministries.

"In such case, how can the lack of good testimony coming from outside the Church be taken as the basis for judging a priest?

"If today certain enemies of the Church and of the country, such as the communists, unleash an attack against one or more priests and cast on them truly grave responsibility and blame and do not admit pardon, how is it possible to destroy the clergy without keeping in mind the painful impression such would produce in the mind of the public?

"The people always judge on the basis of divulgations, hearsay, rumors, which could be due to the infamous campaign that wicked persons constantly launch against the church, as against the country.

"In such case, the Church must verify these judgments, this testimony, and rehabilitate the priest who has been victim of calumny and inflict severe penalties if he has committed deeds absolutely contrary to Christian teaching and dignity".