

VORE10-880127DR-39

SEVENTY YEARS OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Anniversary of the Decree of the Council of People's
of the Russian Federation
Commissars (Ministers)/On the Separation of the Church
from the State and of the School from the Church

The current changes in Soviet society concern also millions of believers who welcome perestroika and want to help reform the Soviet Union. Today, 70 years after the Decree, is the day to remember what Lenin said of the freedom of conscience.

The idea was first advanced by revolutionary bourgeoisie and advocated as an inalienable right of people to freedom of religious belief. Fundamentally differing from this postulate, Lenin's Decree introduces Marxist understanding of the freedom of conscience as a dialectic unity of the freedom to believe and to popularise atheistic views.

These principles were incorporated in the Decree on the Freedom of Conscience, Church and Religious Communities (later renamed the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church). It was passed on January 20 (February 2), 1918, the third month after the October Revolution.

The Decree did not aim to destroy or ban the church and religion, as our opponents claim. It created legal, organisational and material conditions in society where each citizen could choose between religion and atheism.

The Decree nullified all legal obstacles to practicing religion. Local government bodies were to create conditions for a free profession of religious rites, if this did not violate public order and was not accompanied by infringements on the rights of other citizens and the state.

It ended the division of religions into ruling,

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tolerated and persecuted. They all became equal private organisations formed voluntarily and financed by believers. Though the Decree proclaimed the possessions of churches and religious societies national property, it stated that religious premises and property would be given over to the church for free use.

Democracy and respect for the feelings of believers were important elements of the Decree. It provided for a possibility to give a believer another work that would not contradict his belief (this concerned even service in the army). Instead of army service, the Doukhobors, Menonites, Molokans and members of some other religious sects were assigned other jobs, and during hostilities formed into special groups providing services in the hinterland and to the front.

The humanitarian and democratic spirit of the Decree was welcomed by both believers and non-believers. Bonch-Bruyevich wrote that they supported the long-needed Decree, thus thwarting the counter-revolutionary acts by the clergy.

The Decree's provision that separated the school from the church caused an outcry in the Russian Orthodox Church and other religious organisations. They accused the Soviet government of interfering in that part of human soul and Christian consciousness that cannot be state-regulated. They inspired numerous collective appeals by believers who demanded that bans on religious instruction at school be lifted.

The government patiently explained to the people that state, public and private general schools were freed from the influence of religion. At the same time, the Decree allowed private religious instruction at specialised schools; parents themselves can teach their children religion or invite members of the church for the purpose.

In short, the Decree catered to the interests of both believers and atheists, and created a major condition for

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the moral and political unity of the people in the work for "paradise on Earth", which Lenin thought was more important than "the unity of views of the working people about paradise in heaven".

Lenin knew that however important in itself, a Decree would hinge on it not "hanging in the air" but being implemented. A Section for the Implementation of the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State was therefore set up at the People's Commissariat of Justice of the RSFSR, headed by P.Krasikov, a prominent bolshevik. It was the prototype for future state bodies called upon to verify the implementation of the legislation on freedom of conscience and to provide constitutional guarantees thereof. It should be mentioned that even then the Section, along with explanatory work among the mass of believers and the clergy, had to combat the striving of some Party and government officials to solve religious issues through administrative pressure instead of persuasion and education, supposing that the rougher the attack against religious superstitions, the quicker they would be done away with.

Our 70-year history proves that the Party and the State, guided by Lenin's principles, pursued, on the whole, a correct policy towards religion, the church and believers, preserving the unity of citizens with both materialist and religious outlooks. Both believers and non-believers took an active part in the upbuilding of socialism, the defence of its accomplishments in the Civil War and in the fight against the interventionists, in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 against the fascist invaders, and in the post-war revival. It can be stated with confidence that today believers and religious organisations in the country support perestroika. They approach its long-term goals and first steps and success as care for improved living standards, for the maintenance of peace, and for the consolidation of the principles of social fairness and public morale.

Naturally, it would be wrong to overlook losses.

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Such negative phenomena of the 1930s as the personality cult, violations of the legislation, arbitrary rule and repression have also influenced the policy towards religion, the church and the believers. Voluntarism, administrative commands, bans and limitations were supported and justified. It resulted in the unfounded closing of prayer premises on a mass scale, arbitrariness towards the clergy, and disregard for the legitimate rights of believers and their religious sentiments, which can only be recalled with bitterness now. There was a gap between the real religious situation, and the glossing over of truth about it in the years of stagnation.

The policy of rejuvenating all spheres of society, adopted in April 1985, calls for perusing the Decree again with due account taken of the concrete historical situation in which it was adopted. The Decree was then, above all, a tool for cleaning society of the feudal-bourgeois limitations of the freedom of conscience, when the church was in the State's bondage, while Russian citizens were in the State Church's bondage, and secondly, it provided the basis for the realisation of the democratic potential of the Marxist-Leninist principle of the freedom of conscience in the future, in the course of progress of socialism.

History had so willed that the first task was fulfilled at the stage of socialist development led by Lenin. Fulfilment of the second one, however, has been put off for many decades. It is only now, when a new political, moral and psychological situation has taken shape in the country, that real conditions are being created for fulfilling it. In the conditions of broader democracy, people speak ever more clearly of problems of the functioning of the church in socialist society, and a number of "road-blocks" are being eliminated on the road of ensuring all citizens real freedom of conscience. The religious organisations are taking an appreciably more active part in the struggle for peace, in the movement for preserving the historical and cultural heritage, and the forms of cooperation with the public

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organisations in this country and with progressive movements abroad are being invested with a new content. This has a favourable influence on the attitude to the world of both believers and non-believers, and helps them overcome mutual watchfulness and prejudices. Nevertheless, the practice of exercising the principles and provisions of the Decree and the standards based on it is yet to be perfected in many respects. This is particularly true of local workers. Some of them are opposed to the new, expatiating upon the inadmissibility of "concessions" to the church. Others, not knowing how to correctly build relations with believers, are awaiting directives from above--on how to act in each particular instance and go in for red tape in making decisions on simple questions. This gives grounds for believers' complaints to Moscow. Last year alone, for example, the Council For Religious Affairs received more than 3,000 complaints. Decision-making on questions of registering the religious societies in Lvov, Ternopol, Grodno, Kulyab, Perm and Leningrad Regions and in a number of districts of the Moldavian SSR has dragged on for many years. The long-standing prohibition syndrome has also proved enduring: the mosque in Arkalyk, Kazakh SSR, is still under lock, despite the legitimate protests of believers. In Arkhangelsk and Sverdlovsk regions, there is a ban imposed on ringing the bells (sic). In Krasnodar Territory, obstacles are being raised to constructing and repairing religious buildings.

Spiritual life on the basis of a world outlook different from ours takes its own course. It is impossible either to eliminate this course by a fiat, or to merge it ideologically with ours. What is possible and necessary, however, is to unite the efforts and aspirations of people for humanitarian, moral and spiritual values, for peace, to our common benefit. It is possible and necessary to ensure this unity, even if we, all of us, have to study as though anew. The same purpose should be served by improvements in

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legislation on religious affairs and a new interpretation by philosophers and jurists of the principle of freedom of conscience in present-day conditions. Here we have something to learn from the fraternal socialist countries, too.

At a recent meeting with religious leaders from abroad, the following question was put to me: can the believer live and feel better under socialism than in the developed capitalist countries today? I answered in the affirmative, saying this:

The essence of changes taking place in this country lies in making man, irrespective of his attitude to religion, a master in his Fatherland. The purpose of this is to reveal everything that is the very best in him, seeing to it that his thoughts and deeds are in complete harmony with his conscience.

(Izvestia, January 26. Abridged.)

VORI25-880104DR35

WHO CONNIVES AT TERRORISTS

Veniamin Shurygin

The leaders of the newly-formed extremist organization "Raabt-i-alam-i-islami" in Pakistan, which has come to include several members of the Pakistani Parliament, have announced their intention at a press conference in Islamabad to carry out actions against Soviet representatives throughout the world. They have announced the formation of a so-called "World Jihad Council" which will immediately attend to the said terrorist activities.

What has led to the emergence of that openly terrorist organization? The point is that the more obvious the contours of a political settlement in Afghanistan, the more fierce attacks are being levelled at it by those who over the years of the undeclared war have grown used to building their well-being and who have sought to capitalize, both politically and financially, on the Afghan people's suffering. So today they are virtually enraged by each new success of the policy of national reconciliation which is pursued by the Afghan leadership and which encounters support among the Afghans tired of the fratricidal war, including those who have for different reasons found themselves outside their native country.

As revealed by the recent visit of the President of Afghanistan, Dr. Najibullah, to India, Vietnam and Kampuchea, the course of the Afghan government at restoring peace in the country enjoys growing support with the international public. There has been a positive response in the world, too, to the political decision by the Soviet Union on the withdrawal of its limited military contingent from Afghanistan within strictly specified terms if, for their own part, the US and its Western allies pledge to stop their

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arms deliveries to the anti-government forces and other forms of interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. It is thus becoming increasingly obvious that, given good will on the part of the parties concerned and in the light of the latest realities in the region, there are solid opportunities for an immediate political settlement of the problems involving Afghanistan.

Despite this, however, and probably exactly because of this, a fierce campaign has been unleashed recently over the Afghan problem in a number of Western capitals. By now that campaign has acquired a truly indecent character, to the point of acts of hooliganism and provocations against Soviet diplomats and other representatives. An unseemly contribution to this anti-Soviet propaganda fuss has been made by some high-ranking Western statesmen. With its lavish aid promises the West strongly encourages the extremist leaders of the counter-revolutionaries who won't settle for anything but a capitulation of the Afghan government and their own "victorious ride into Kabul on a white horse".

The formation of "Raabt-i-alam-i-islami" is yet another manifestation of the anti-Soviet campaign by the enemies of political settlement in Afghanistan. Everyone must realize the serious danger posed by its activities. At its supreme forum, the United Nations, the international community has strongly condemned terrorism, so those who are conniving at it are bearing heavy responsibility for the potential consequences.

(Pravda, January 3. In full.)

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BELIEVERS AND POLITICS

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Nuns chanting psalms and Communists marching together among thousands of demonstrators for peace, surprise no one in Belgium today. But we still remember the time when anything like this was inconceivable. During the cold war years, the word "peace" was unacceptable in the Christian political vocabulary; it could only be used in the strictly religious sense. Views equating "peace" with "anti-patriotism" were imposed on public opinion. People were told that they must "defend themselves against the East", and the drive to sign the Stockholm Appeal and other initiatives of the World Peace Council were interpreted in such a way as to prompt as many people as possible to identify champions of peace with Communists. Given the anti-communist hysteria of those years, with many Christians believing that Marxist was close to devilry, these attitudes were aimed at discrediting the peace movement and made involvement of non-

This is another feature on the dialogue and cooperation between Christians and Marxists (see WMR, No. 3, 1985), contributed by a well-known expert in the sociology of religion, author of over 20 monographs on believers' participation in civic affairs. The Rev. Houtart, adviser to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), is a prominent Belgian peace activist and director of the Tricontinental Centre which studies liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Communists in it extremely difficult if not impossible. Action for peace was seen as treachery and any pacifist, as an "agent of Moscow".

After World War II, powerful quarters of the Christian community adopted the Atlantic cause, playing on the sentiments produced by Western Europe's liberation by the Allies, notably by the Americans, and fomenting fears of communism.

It took many years, the impact of objective reality and unswerving efforts by the more progressive and sober Catholics (including those who worked in the Pax Christi movement¹ and on the Peace and Justice Commission), to gradually begin to overcome anti-communist stereotypes. Naturally, that was a very painful process. When I organised youth marches against nuclear weapons together with the Communists in the 1950s, a large part of the Christian community regarded my behaviour as scandalous. Today I am gratified to say that the attitude to cooperation with the Communists has changed substantially.

New types of Christian participation in socio-political affairs have emerged. Christians have begun to turn more often to the burning problems of social justice, peace and development, and their action has grown bigger and more vigorous, specifically, within feminist and environmentalist movements, urban improvement groups, cooperatives and other organisations.

¹ Sponsored by French and German Catholics after the war and officially recognised by the Catholic Church, the Pax Christi movement holds independent views on a number of issues.

The arms race, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, the crippling increase of unproductive expenditures, the alignment of Belgian foreign policy with that of the United States and, finally, the deployment of US medium-range missiles on Belgian soil--all this has alarmed Christians and prompted them to take specific initiatives for peace.

Obviously, the political control exercised by the ruling Christian parties (the CVP and the PSC),² as well as the ideological conditioning concerning the "imbalance of forces between the two military blocs" and the "aggressive intentions of the enemy" have not contributed to the evolution of Christian opinion towards a more pronounced anti-militarist position. The Christian world is heterogeneous and contradictory. Opinion polls indicate a certain connection--for example, between involvement in ecclesiastical affairs and a more favourable view of weapons deployment in the West, a connection that evidently reflects the social status of those surveyed.

Nevertheless, the peace movement has expanded in recent years, especially in the Flemish part of the country. It has drawn together people of different philosophical, political and religious views. Youth participation in it is massive. Its basis for the analysis of international issues and for the choice of common political options has remained rather vague, although one must admit that given the current ideological situation,

² The Flemish and Walloon Christian Social Parties.--Ed.

this was what helped the movement to acquire its mass character. Otherwise it would have been impossible to find believers, Socialists, Communists, environmentalists--people representing widely different components of the political spectrum--marching together in anti-missile demonstrations (50,000 participants in 1979, 200,000 in 1983 and 400,000 in 1984).

Indignation over the decision of the Wilfried Martens government to begin the deployment of US missiles in Florennes has united currents whose positions on other domestic and foreign policy issues (including some aspects of the problem of war and peace) are diametrically opposed. This, of course, is no effective basis for the establishment of a new united political organisation. Christians ^{participate} in the Belgian Union for the Defence of Peace, the Vrede ("Peace") movement in Flanders, the Concord, Peace and Development group that strives to highlight the connection linking the arms race, economic underdevelopment and the crisis, the VAKA (Flemish Action Committee Against Atomic Weapons) and the CNAPD (National Action Committee for Peace and Development) pacifist associations as well as in other organisations such as Rencontre (Encounter).

The role Christians play in the VAKA and CNAPD pluralist movements is particularly significant because it demonstrates such salient features as mass involvement, orientation on specific goals and the impact of motives that are more ethical than strictly political. There is no doubt that such movements

contribute to the erosion of the established Catholic socio-political philosophy with its idea of class collaboration, although they are too heterogeneous to pose a new and tangible alternative to it. Still, these movements help to create a climate free from the strict rigidity of traditional Catholic organisations and open the way to new ideas and new types of practical action.

Naturally, the concern felt by Christians over the problems of today's world features different levels of awareness and of political opinion and, consequently, different forms of social activity on the part of believers. First, many Catholics respond with revulsion to the system of nuclear weapons per se, a reaction rooted in the view of the value of life inherent in the Christian faith. I think that this approach makes it possible to mobilise broad masses of Christians to the struggle for peace--even those whose political consciousness is low. Their response to the nuclear threat is rather of an emotional nature. It stems from the Christian postulate that life is a sacred gift of Jesus Christ and that its preservation is the central imperative of humanity, especially in relation to the poor and the oppressed.

Second, there are those whose approach to peace, security and progress is more analytical. But this analysis, too, is above all ethical. These Catholics believe it simply immoral to spend astronomical sums on armaments while so many countries are afflicted with economic underdevelopment and thousands of

people die of hunger and diseases. Guided by this social ethic, they often condemn both those who instigate the arms race and those on whom it is forced. This is where one frequently encounters regrettable oversimplifications such as the opposition of the West to the East, the notions of "equal responsibility of the two superpowers" and the like.

Finally, there are also Christians who are already turning to a class analysis, a social analysis of the contradictions of our age. They understand the connection between the deteriorating international situation and the course pursued by the imperialist powers who, by the very logic of capitalist development, are interested in the arms race and force the socialist countries to bear this burden too.

In other words, the philosophy of the Christians who become involved in the struggle for peace is based on different precepts. Still, these differences did not prevent the ^{masses} / of believers from joining other sections of the public in opposition to the Euromissiles, from voicing their refusal to accept the fatalistic idea of an inevitable nuclear conflict. This is a new development: earlier, individual Christians did take part in anti-war movements, but such massive involvement of Catholics when hundreds of thousands are marching in demonstrations has never been witnessed before.

Many believers who have joined the peace movement admit that the daily contacts they have established in pacifist, anti-imperialist and other pluralist organisations are gradually dissipating their erstwhile anti-communist prejudice.

Influential Christian and secular quarters do try--and sometimes it pays off--to present Marxism as an essentially aggressive doctrine. This is what underlies the talk of the "menace from the East" and the "Soviet threat", as well as "crusades" against the "evil empire". To me, all these concepts are thoroughly fallacious. They distort both the meaning of Marxism and historical reality.

Marxism has not only influenced the development of social and economic thought but also emerged as a very important element of human accomplishment that can no longer be ignored. Believers and non-believers use Marxist analysis as the key to the discovery and understanding of social realities--not only in the realm of pure theory. The Marxist approach also implies a person's individual attitude to the contradictions of capitalist society and the struggle of the oppressed classes.

Some Christians see the ideas of Marx and Engels as a means of freeing their own thinking from the burden of social structures that run counter to the ideas of equality, love and brotherhood. This enables them to contribute to the revolutionary struggle and to take part in the building of a new society.

Of course, the political concepts of some churches are in open conflict with Marxism. For example, this is reflected in the rejection of the class struggle as something that is opposed in principle to Christian views. According to the advocates of this

position, only class collaboration can lead to what is called a "common weal". This is what is behind the "supraclass" slogans of Christian Democratic and similar parties.

Condemning the "class struggle" and invoking Christian principles, these people commit a profound error. First, we are dealing not with relations that are not interpersonal but concern large social groups as they are involved in production and with all the political and social concomitants of these relations--in other words, with objective reality and not some individual human intentions. Second, if anything deserves to be condemned, it is the practices of the ruling classes and not the struggle of the exploited for emancipation. Viewed from this angle, the concept of the class struggle is by no means incompatible with the principle of "love thy neighbour"; on the contrary, it implies suppression of those social relations that result in inequality.

It took the Catholic Church centuries to acquit Galileo. Even in the 1960s, in the age of space flight, some participants in the Second Vatican Council opposed this. Still, one of the main city squares of Louvain-la-Nueve, the site of the famous Catholic University, is now named after the great astronomer. I expect that it will take a long time for another square in a Belgian city to be named after Karl Marx. Nevertheless, some Christians are already seriously contemplating the legitimacy of Marxist social analysis and its compatibility with the Christian faith. It would be wrong to explain this merely as a tactic of certain religious groups designed to ensure their survival in the new conditions.

Marxism is by no means a contemplative philosophy but a social force striving to transform society in the interests of the oppressed, of the working class. The classes that rule bourgeois society feel threatened by Marxism. And, brandishing the "Red peril" bugbear, they want to safeguard their privileges, their position, the capitalist regime as such--not to "protect the Christian faith from the Communists". They lie when they try to pass off their own ideology as the embodiment of "Christian values".

One must admit that throughout human history, religious organisations and institutions have identified mostly with the ruling classes and been used by the latter as an ideological and even material means of consolidating their domination. Today, concepts still exist whose adherents zealously advocate a more or less reformed, so-called liberal (that is, capitalist) society. Some members of the church hierarchy may criticise capitalism sometimes, and even quite harshly--but only its consequences, not its structure. The political ideal they propose is an "improved" capitalist society. The criticism they engage in is not a fundamental critique of the system, of the kind expounded by Marxists. Still, sizable numbers of Christians are adopting a class analysis and criticise capitalism radically.

And despite certain negative experiences in the application of Marxism, despite the fact that the leaders of the now defunct Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea fraudulently assumed its name, many

believers no longer think that Marxism is necessarily unacceptable. I personally am convinced that Marxism is incompatible with military expansionism. After all, any unbiased, realistic observer can see that the socialist world needs peace to build, to develop its productive forces and its social system. The peoples of these countries do not want war to be imposed on them.

The unprecedented acerbity of the social problems stemming from economic dislocation, unemployment, underdevelopment and from hunger that persists in whole countries and regions leads many clergymen and simply honest Catholics to join the search for ways to transform society on a more just and humane basis. In Belgium, the Christians for Socialism movement is one example bearing this out. Christians on all continents are increasingly concerned over the issues of the liberation struggle in Asia, Africa and Latin America. There, the struggle has already entered a new stage: the objective is not only political but also economic independence, as well as self-determination of the people, "the people" defined primarily as the lower, oppressed classes; in other words, the objective is social. This is what we see in Nicaragua, in El Salvador and in the Philippines.

Revolutionary movements cannot be explained by the influence of some external factors. Their roots should be traced to the objectively existing class system of economic and political oppression, as well as to an obvious rise in the level of social and, eventually, class consciousness. A liberation move-

ment is unthinkable without this basis. The world's progressive quarters should be gratified that there are countries which display international solidarity with the newly free peoples and extend economic and other assistance to them in the struggle against counter-revolution and reaction.

The position and the moral choice of Christians have always been made more difficult by the fact that the political regimes which suppress these popular movements for social emancipation and national liberation officially designate themselves as Christian (the way it was in Portugal under Salazar and Caetano) and by the pressures coming from the Catholic elite allied with the authorities (the way it is in several Central American countries). Besides, swayed by reactionary propaganda that exaggerates isolated historical facts and hampers a correct analysis of the existing contradictions, some believers fear that "if power passes to the revolutionaries, this would mean the victory of communism and the end of religion". These views are very hard to overcome.

Despite all these difficulties, however, Christians are active in liberation movements in Latin America, Southern Africa and the Philippines. Please note that I refer to the massive alignment of Christians with forces that are guided by Marxist ideas and advocate political transformations of a socialist type, not to any contribution of official Christian movements or organisations. Christians join these movements of their own personal accord, without sacrificing their religious feelings or

convictions. This is why some of them see themselves as both Christians and Marxists.

These processes manifest themselves on two planes. On the practical plane, we are dealing with a tangible contribution to the struggle for liberation and for building a new life, with the willing assumption of certain political obligations; Nicaragua is one example. On the theoretical, ideological plane, we are witnessing the emergence of what is called the "theology of liberation". This is no longer a purely speculative theology seeking to explain reality by the great precepts of the Gospel but, conversely, an approach to reality interpreting the Christian faith and the Gospel from the viewpoint of the experience jointly accumulated by the oppressed. As a result, proponents of the "theology of liberation" are not only reappraising the Catholic social ethics. People involved in the social struggle interpret the life and death of Jesus Christ in a distinctive way: they hold that salvation and the Millennium will be brought about by the work of man and not by divine will at the end of time. Consequently, participation of Christians in liberation movements is essential and does not contradict the precepts of their faith.

The conservative quarters that have always regarded the clergy as their supporters are gravely alarmed by these developments and see them as a great threat to their social hegemony. Hence the criticism of "priests who meddle in politics", their exile, arrests, torture and assassinations. Suffice it to recall the fate of Monsignor Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador who defended the oppressed and was assassinated by right-wingers.

I personally know priests who serve on the revolutionary government of Nicaragua or cooperate with it. My conclusion is that they are anything but power-hungry. It is simply that after 45 years of the dictatorship and given the scarcity of intellectuals and experts, the popular government cherishes every person who can be relied on in the efforts to rehabilitate and rebuild the country. That is why, accepting the Sandinist Front's offer of important posts, Miguel d'Escoto and the Cardenal brothers³ had every reason to expect understanding from the Holy See and the Pope who uses every opportunity to urge assistance to peoples afflicted by poverty, illiteracy and economic underdevelopment. However, when, during his visit to Nicaragua, he faced Father Ernesto Cardenal in front of television cameras the Pope refused to proffer his hand, in a gesture of discouragement and disapproval of the respected national poet and clergyman.

This threw into bold relief the contradiction that runs deep in the Catholic Church. According to statements made by the Pope, the church identifies with the cause of the poor; in actual fact, it condemns priests who are serving the people and helping them to overcome poverty. But the Pope said nothing to rebuke those high-ranking monsignors at the Vatican who were implicated in the Banco Ambrosiano scandal and in other unsavoury affairs symbolising the evils of capitalism--just

³ The Rev. Miguel d'Escoto accepted the post of foreign minister, the Rev. Ernesto Cardenal became Minister of Culture and the Rev. ^{Fernando} Cardenal, the Minister of Education.--Ed.

as earlier, the Holy See could not bring itself to publicly condemn "President" Tiso of Slovakia, a man of the cloth who was an ally of Hitler. Essentially, members of the propertied classes denounce the priests and nuns in Nicaragua not for their involvement in politics but for allying themselves with the oppressed and because their activities threaten the capitalist system and its regime of exploitation.

The issue of cooperation between Christians and Marxists in European developed capitalist countries does have its distinctive features. In the Third World, social contradictions are more visible and it is obviously much easier to develop political consciousness among Christians there. This promotes interest in Marxist ideas. Meanwhile, in the industrialised "consumer societies" the antagonisms inherent in the capitalist system are hidden from sight by the patterns of this consumption. This is why here, fewer Christians really grasp the existing contradictions. There are also the difficulties connected with the fact that to move in the direction of a Marxist, class-based analysis of reality means to "swim against the current" and reject the illusory logic of reformist "common weal". The view that it is better to promote this "common weal" by accepting "class collaboration" and ignoring the actual class contradictions is still widespread.

The struggle against the economic crisis and unemployment, for a shorter workweek is justly seen as representing those burning social issues that can and do unite Christians and Marxists. The demands formulated in this regard by the working

class movement and by certain Christian organisations are virtually the same. Many people are alarmed at the state of the environment and concerned over pollution--factors that are also linked with a definite economic system. Efforts are needed to go beyond the purely "environmental" approach, to explain the connection between the state of the environment and not only the development level of the productive forces but also the criteria, purposes and social forms of production. The slogans and ideas advanced by Christians and Marxists regarding the issues of migrant workers and the struggle against racial prejudice and xenophobia also have much in common.

As I said, issues of peace and disarmament offer great scope for cooperation. Christians increasingly welcome the ideas of a freeze of nuclear arsenals, no first use of nuclear weapons, and nuclear-free zones. A drive to declare entire regions and communities nuclear-free has been launched in Belgium. The community council of ^{Florennes} / where cruise missiles are to be deployed has also made such a declaration.

Nevertheless, one must not succumb to illusions. Many Christians are still swayed by anti-Soviet propaganda. They believe that the Soviet Union wants war and that the Eastern bloc has attained nuclear superiority. All this is compounded by the stand of high-ranking Belgian clergymen who, like their other West European counterparts, are much less aware of the war danger than, say, the US bishops. The fathers of the Catholic Church in our country condemn the use of nuclear weapons but accept possession of such weapons for the sake of deterrence.

At the very least, this is an unrealistic position: history proves that accumulation of arms increases the risks of their use. Can one really say that another Hiroshima or Nagasaki are now completely ruled out?

The arguments marshalled against Christian-Marxist cooperation by all those who believe in the Soviet "hostility" or "aggressiveness" are rooted more in political than in religious considerations. The Christian faith poses no obstacles to cooperation among peace movements.

Unfortunately, Belgian public opinion is not yet fully aware of the dangers of Star Wars, of the "strategic defence initiative" advanced by the President of the United States. Some people believe that this problem has no direct or immediate bearing on Belgian society. Meanwhile, the ruling quarters are considering favourably the prospect of joining the US research effort in this sphere. It is important to help people understand that the United States promotes the "strategic defence initiative" to secure military superiority and enable American capitalism to develop new technologies at the expense of the taxpayers and US allies in Europe. This policy is designed to bolster the capitalist system, enhance its technological capabilities and force a new and burdensome round in the development of increasingly sophisticated types of weapons on the socialist countries. No one should accept the fallacious argument that the latest military space technology will block the danger of war. On the contrary, this escalation will increase the threat to peace many times over, for such is the logic of the arms race.

Unity of all champions of peace and social progress is a vitally important task full of contradictions and difficulties. But the need is now more pressing than ever before, and the effects of joint action justify the efforts taken by each individual to overcome prejudice and biased notions and to create a climate of mutual respect conducive to a patient search for acceptable solutions.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA ANKETİ
TÜSTAV