

CATHOLIC BISHOPS HIT POWER POLITICS

They Call Big 3 Peace Pattern 'Disappointing'—Unilateral Acts of Russia Assailed

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 17.—The Catholic Bishops of the United States declared today that the pattern of peace emerging from conferences of the United States, Great Britain and Russia "is disappointing in the extreme" and, they say, a return to power politics. The Bishops, closing an annual meeting, also deplored the "absorption" of the Baltic countries by Russia and the latter's activities in the Balkans.

Criticizing the United Nations Charter, the Bishops declared that the Security Council provisions created a virtual alliance of the great powers to maintain peace, giving them a status "above the law."

Nevertheless, the Bishops were of the belief that the United States was wise in joining the world organization, and in the Charter provision for a constituent assembly they saw hope for the evolution of a sound, institutional organiza-

tional organization of the world community.

Russia distorted the vocabulary of democracy, the Bishops said. They asked for a frank recognition of differences as a preliminary to cooperation for peace. The United States, the Bishops asserted, should collaborate with all in making a good peace, but added that there was a limit to the concessions that should be made.

The Bishops also deplored the plight of the Italian people, and said it was neither right nor politic to treat the people of Germany, Austria and Hungary in a spirit of vengeance.

TEXT OF BISHOPS' STATEMENT

The text of the statement follows: The war is over but there is no peace in the world. In the Atlantic Charter we were given the broad outline of the peace for which we fought and bled and, at an incalculable price, won a great martial victory.

It was that ideal of peace which sustained us through the war, which inspired the heroic defense of liberty by millions driven underground in enslaved countries. It made small, oppressed nations confide in us as the trustee of their freedoms. It was the broad outline of a good peace.

Are we going to give up this ideal of peace? If, under the pretext of a false realism, we do so, then we shall stand face to face with the awful catastrophe of atomic war.

Since the Moscow conference of 1943, the United States, Great Britain and Russia have undertaken to shape gradually the peace which they are imposing on the nations. From the conferences of these victorious powers there is emerging slowly their pattern for the peace. It is disappointing in the extreme.

Assurances are given us in the announced peace principles of our country but so far results do not square with these principles. We are in perhaps the greatest crisis of human history. Our country has the power, the right and the responsibility to demand a genuine peace, based on justice which will answer the cry in the hearts of men across the world.

Profound Differences

We want to work in unity with other nations for the making of a good peace. During the war perhaps, it may have been necessary for strategic reasons to postpone final decisions on many questions mooted at the conferences of the three great powers. Now we must face the facts.

There are profound differences of thought and policy between Russia and the western democracies. Russia has acted unilaterally on many important settlements. It has sought to establish its sphere of influence in eastern and southeastern Europe, not on the basis of sound regional agreements in which sovereignties and rights are respected, but by the imposition of its sovereignty and by ruthlessly setting up helpless puppet states. Its Asiatic policy, so important for the peace of the world, is an enigma.

The totalitarian dictators promised benefits to the masses through an omnipotent police-state which extends its authority to all human relations and recognizes no innate freedoms. Their theories, moreover, look to the realization of world-being as ulti-

mately to be secured by the inclusion of all countries in their system.

Sometimes Russia uses our vocabulary and talks of democracy and rights, but it attaches distorted meanings to the words. We think in terms of our historic culture. We see God-given, inviolable human rights in every person and we know democracy as the free collaboration under law of citizens in a free country.

There is a clash of ideologies. The frank recognition of these differences is preliminary to any sincere effort in realistic world cooperation for peace. The basis of this cooperation must be mutual adherence to justice. It would be unjust for us to be an accomplice in violating the rights of nations, groups and individuals anywhere in the world.

A first step toward effective negotiation for peace is to have a plan. A good plan states principles in terms of all the specific questions at issue. Instead, so far we have compromised and sought to make mere piece-meal settlements.

Return to Power Politics

Instead of honest, promising discussion even on diverging plans, we are witnessing a return of the tragedy of power politics and the danger of balance of power arrangements which, with the substitution of mere expediency for justice, have begotten war after war. We must, indeed, aim at collaborating with all of our Allies in the making of a good peace. There are, however, concessions which we dare not make because they are immoral and destructive of genuine peace.

Our peace program envisions a world organization of nations. The Charter which emerged from the San Francisco Conference, while undoubtedly an improvement on the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, does not provide for a sound, institutional organization of the international society. The Security Council provisions make it no more than a virtual alliance of the great powers for the maintenance of peace. These nations are given a status above the law.

Nevertheless, our country acted wisely in deciding to participate in this world organization. It is better than world chaos. From the provision in the Charter for calling a constituent assembly in the future, there comes the hope that in time the defects may be eliminated and we may have a sound, institutional organization of the international community which will develop, not through mere voluntary concessions of the nations, but from the recognition of the rights and duties of international society.

While peace is in the making, there are urgent issues which we can no longer evade. At Yalta we gave a pledge to the Polish people and assumed responsibility before the world that they would be unhampered in setting up their own independent, democratic government.

Polish, Balkan Issues

Are we working to the fulfillment of that pledge in the full

measure of our responsibility and our power? What apology can be offered for the failure of the protagonists of democracy to protest the absorption by force and artifice of the Baltic countries into the Union of Soviet Republics?

We are shocked by the news which is leaking out from Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia and other southeastern European countries. Religious persecution, which is both brutal and cunning, rages in many lands. No reason of policy justifies our silence. What is happening behind the blackout of eastern and southeastern Europe is a stark contradiction to the high ideals which inspired our fighting to save the world from totalitarian aggression.

No one can fail to see the importance of a reconstructed, revitalized Europe, which is the cradle of western culture. We deplore the tragic indifference to the plight of the Italian people who threw off the chains of a fascist regime, who fought side by side with us in ardent loyalty. For over two long years of agony the friends of democracy in that country have had to stand by in impotence while we have toyed with the vital problems of relief and rehabilitation and deferred the fulfillment of our own solemn promises.

Our own national interest, as well as the cause of world peace, and the fate of Christian culture are at stake in Italy. Today it is an outpost of western civilization. We are fully confident that the Italian people, if we save them from despair by our helpful interest, will stand fast against the deceitful appeal of alien and subversive ideologies and shape their future in the spirit of their own noble Christian tradition.

We cannot be unconcerned about the future of Germany, Austria and Hungary. Whatever period of probation must be imposed on the vanquished nations, we must help them to take their rightful place in the family of nations. To treat them in a spirit of vengeance is neither right nor politic.

Relief Urged in Congress

Justice demands the punishment of the guilty and reasonable reparations of damage done. But we cannot forget, or allow our representatives to forget, that our traditional system of punitive justice is anchored to the concept of individual responsibility. The inhumanities which now mark the mass transference of populations, the systematized use of slave labor and the cruel treatment of prisoners of war should have no place in our civilization.

Acute suffering is the daily lot of whole populations in many war-torn lands. Every report indicates that unless heroic measures are taken at once, millions will die from starvation and exposure during the coming winter. The feeding and clothing and sheltering of these suffering people is not a work which can be left to some future convenient date.

Our country, because of our

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greater resources, must do the major part of this work of relief. In it we have the right and duty to insist on the leadership which corresponds to our sacrifices and contributions. It is imperative that Congress make adequate appropriations for this work from the public treasury.

It is equally imperative that private relief agencies be given a full opportunity to carry on their beneficent work among all suffering peoples. And relief must envision something larger than merely feeding the starving and sheltering the homeless. Help must be given to peoples whose economies are ruined. They have the right to assistance in getting back to normal economic life. Neither the prosperity of the greater nations nor their might will prevent war unless conditions are removed in which poor, helpless peoples are denied the opportunity of a decent living standard. The world is one only in so far as men live together as brothers under God.

Our Main Responsibility

Ours is a grave responsibility. The heart and hand of America are called upon in a way that is unique, not only in the history of our country but even in the annals of mankind. We know that democracy is as capable of solving the admittedly difficult problems of peace as it has shown itself in war. We must be true to ourselves. We must hold fast to our own free institutions. We must resolutely oppose the few amongst us who are trying to sabotage them. We may well pity those who in their half-veiled sympathy for totalitarianism are playing with the thought that perhaps in this great emergency its day is at hand. On bended knees let us ask God in His blessed providence to help us to be the vigorous champion of democratic freedom and the generous

friend of the needy and oppressed throughout the world.

Signed by the members of the administrative board, National Catholic Welfare Conference, in the names of the Bishops of the United States:

Samuel A. Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago.

Joun Gregory Murray, Archbishop of St. Paul.

Francis J. Spellman, Archbishop of New York.

John Mark Gannon, Bishop of Erie.

John J. Mitty, Archbishop of San Francisco.

Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of New Orleans.

Richard J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston.

James H. Ryan, Archbishop of Omaha.

John F. Noll, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

Karl J. Alter, Bishop of Toledo.