

of a socialist society. . . . The matter of our concern was the progress of a socialist society since the previous structures proved to be a catastrophic source of exploitation, social injustice and conflicts.

“However, the atmosphere of the cold war soon blocked these efforts, and with it the possibility for fruitful, peaceful cooperation. . . . We have no choice but to oppose the destructive powers and threats coming from unjust and inhuman social structures. . . . In our countries, we [Christians] make this effort together with our citizens, some of whom are not Christians, because we feel united by the awareness of the value and dignity of every human life. From many of them we learned to think more about concrete material as well as spiritual conditions of life. We also learned to understand the impact of social structures on the life of human beings in order to preach in correlation to reality. . . .”

“With our prayers, with our social activity and with the hope of our faith, *we support the initiatives of our countries’* leaders for cooperation and peace. There are a number of propositions for a nuclear freeze and disarmament which envisage peace perspectives for Europe and the rest of the world. . . .”

Metropolitan Emilianos. Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (one of the original founders of the World Council of Churches). Emilianos gave a seminar on “The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches.”

“The presence of Orthodoxy in the ecumenical movement is important because it has brought Orthodoxy into the West. . . . Western culture protects itself again Orthodoxy by presenting it as a quaint cult, with icons. . . . What is lacking is a sense of witness, of outreach. Most Orthodox see religion as a private concern. Orthodoxy has to emerge from its native ghetto and culture. . . .”

Emilianos then addressed the importance of appealing to non-rational elements of the population. He gave as an example the method by which the Ecumenical Patriarchate had, many centuries earlier, converted the Russians to Orthodoxy. “The beauty of the [Orthodox] liturgy was key in Christianizing the Russians. Today theology is too rational and less liturgical. . . .”

“Until now our [Orthodox] practice has been to take small hesitant steps, instead of full involvement with the World Council of Churches. We want more representatives in the active bodies of the Council. . . . The Patriarchate was ecumenical before there was an ecumenical movement. . . .”

“Most of the problematic begins with the Reformation. Theologians act as if Christianity began in the 16th century. . . . We are orientals. We use a different kind of language. Our theologians don’t know enough of the conflicts of the 16th century onwards, how Luther et al. introduced a new era. If the Roman Catholic Church were a World Council of Churches member, you [of the WCC] would be more competent to deal with some of these things than we. We never experienced a Reformation.”

Liberation theology vs. ‘urban culture’

Report of the Moderator, Archbishop Ted Scott Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

“I have become sharply aware of the seriousness of the global issues and of the very great need to take action—often radical action in light of this new knowledge. . . . The ’60s saw the zenith of the postwar prosperity boom as the reconstruction of Europe and Japan progressed. It was a decade marked by optimism. . . . [Now] we are, I believe, at the end of an era.

“It was an era dominated by what, for brevity, I would call urban industrial culture. This culture grew out of the discovery of the scientific method and the technological development which followed. Science and technology were seen by very many to be the source of the ultimate answers to human aspirations.

“This culture came to be expressed in two major competing ideologies—capitalism and communism. There are many differences between them but there are also some very great similarities. Both, in practice if not in theory, are materialistic, and both tend to limit their focus of achievement to what happens in space and time, focus attention on people and things. Both are very much concerned about the production and delivery of goods and services, and both tend to measure progress, in a country or in the world, in terms of the Gross National Product. . . .”

“It is my conviction, however, that neither of these present ideological expressions of this culture is adequately responding to the challenges of our day. These ideologies are no longer satisfying the deepest human aspirations. . . . I believe that both of these ideologies, although they remain powerful, are no longer adequately responding to the challenges which confront us. An era is ending.

“The Churches . . . have . . . accommodated themselves to the cultural values of the world. If they had remained truly faithful, they would have affirmed much more positively that human beings are not mere units of production or consumption, but relationship beings. . . .”

“[W]e must say ‘yes’ to all that conforms to the love of Christ, to all who seek for justice, to the peace-makers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man (humanity), to all who—even without knowing it—look for new heavens



NSIPS/Elisabeth Chambless

and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Dr. Jan P. Pronk, deputy general secretary of the UN Conference on Trade and Development; Ex-officio member, Brandt Commission (1977-81); Chairman of the WCC’s advisory committee on economic policy.

“Concrete action is necessary to fight [today’s economic] crisis. But we shy away from action. . . .

“ ‘Why should we do anything at all’ is the present answer of the North to the demands by the South. Well, there is one reason, and that is interdependence between countries or, in the words of the Brandt Commission, a ‘common interest’ of all countries in the survival of the world economy and of the world itself. It may seem doomsday language, but indeed, survival is at stake. The present international economic crisis is, for a number of reasons . . . more fundamental and more complex than any previous one. . . .

“[T]he only promising option is one which would enable us to cope with the problems of the 1980s. You may call it a new international economic order, or *international democratic socialism* [emphasis added]. . . .

“Churches are people’s movements who can challenge power, act as vanguards and as advocates for change. That is essential, because people and in particular the poor are easily being forgotten during negotiations.”

Dr. Allan Aubrey Boesak. South African citizen, President, World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

“The life of the world, the destruction of this world, the future of this world, is . . . the concern of the Church. . . . And if this world is threatened by the evils of militarism, materialism, greed, racism, it is very much the concern of the Church. . . .

“This Assembly must speak out. . . . We must not hesitate to address ourselves to the questions of peace and to the possibility of total nuclear destruction. We must be clear: the nuclear arms race, the employment of God-given human talents and possibilities for the creation of ever more refined weapons of mass destruction, and the call to put our faith in

The Russian Orthodox Church delegation to the World Council of Churches conference.

these weapons so as to secure our peace, is not simply a temporary madness, *it is essentially sinful* [emphasis added] and contrary to the purposes of God for this world. . . .”

The *Globe and Mail* of Vancouver, July 30, reported further statements by Dr. Boesak: “ ‘Reconciliation means paying the price—being willing to die for the sake of what we believe.’ . . . speaker, [Boesak] immediately threw the nascent meeting into controversy by saying that *the church should not abandon oppressed people who had turned to violence*. [Emphasis added] . . . Dr. Boesak has flowered as a leader in South Africa, leading a resurgence of black political activities and renewed opposition to the Government’s constitutional proposals. . . . For him . . . the church must always side with the poor and the oppressed. If after years of non-violent attempts to win justice, such people take up arms, Dr. Boesak says, he personally believes the church must continue to support them.”

Dr. Dorothy Soelle. Liberation theologian from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Dr. Soelle was a participant at the pre-conferences that prepared the theological discussion for the Assembly. From the keynote speech:

“Fullness of life, the kingdom of God, eternal life, all are destroyed by wealth of possessions. . . . Wealth acts as a wall more invincible by far than the famous walls of Jericho. . . . There is a way of doing theology in which the poor and economically exploited are never seen or heard—and that is apartheid theology. . . . Do not pursue the idea of ‘fullness of life’ as we have developed it in the Western world. It is a delusion. . . .

“We have chosen a system based on money and violence. . . .

“[T]he mild depression prevailing in so many European and North American Churches is tantamount in practice to acquiescence in militarism. They have no hope because they trust in the deadly peace of the arms advocates. . . .

“Becoming empty for God means emptying ourselves and relinquishing or reducing all the possessions of our world: money and violence. . . . We do not live in El Salvador, but we do live under the domination of NATO. . . .

“Our historical task is to fight for peace and against militarism.”

Dr. Soelle at the July 29th Assembly seminar on theology:

“It is impossible to speak of theology without talking about the poor. We have to listen to them. . . . To listen to them is to listen to the voice of Christ. This is the priority for any theological work today. This is also the criterion for judging theology today. There is an existentialist dimension to theology. It starts with experience, understanding our responsibility for everyone else. . . . *We must overcome the bourgeois form of spirituality. We must become both more pious and more radical. . . . At the heart of the peace movement is the search for God. . . . They are moving in the direction I am trying to describe. . . .*” [Emphasis added].