

'We must address the danger of beam weapons systems'

Dr. Laurens Hogebrink. Dutch Reformed Church theologian. One of the recognized leaders of the European disarmament movement; executive board member of the Dutch Interchurch Peace Council (IKV). Hogebrink conducted a seminar on "Peace and Justice in the Light of the Arms Race."

At his seminar, Hogebrink discussed two central topics: the decisive role of the churches in directing and making possible the existence of the peace-disarmament movement, particularly in Europe and, secondly, the need for the disarmament movement to begin concentrating on doing away with conventional and not merely nuclear weapons.

Hogebrink reported on the literally "thousands and thousands" of grass roots meetings held by his church in Holland to mobilize the population. This is exemplary of the central position occupied by the churches in this area. Hogebrink also emphasized that "what the nuclear arms race is really about is amassing enough nuclear weapons to ensure that no nuclear war will ever be fought with them. The real action is at the level of conventional weapons." The peace movement must begin to shift from being a "one-issue movement" to address the full spectrum of conventional plus nuclear disarmament.

Archbishop Habgood. Archbishop of York, Anglican Church of Great Britain.

The Archbishop gave a presentation at a seminar on "deterrence," entitled: "Maintaining Peace or Fueling Destruction."

"I am not going to talk of nuclear war nor of the immorality of nuclear war, because everyone is convinced of this. I wish instead to speak of particular policies. . . . Deterrence is inherently unstable. But there has to be *some* system of deterrence in the world. We do not escape it by saying we don't like it.

"How can we make deterrence more stable. . . ? I have been associated with a small foundation in Great Britain trying to identify which people really count in this area. You find only about 200 people really count. The foundation is the Foundation for International Conciliation. . . .

"We have also to face the fact that nuclear weapons are

with us for the foreseeable future. We won't be rid of them in our lifetime. It is utopian to think they can be abolished. The Church of England . . . wants no first use position for NATO, although it also rejects unilateralism."

Dr. Alan Geyer. Founder of the Center for Theology and Public Policy, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Geyer was another participant in the deterrence debate.

"Archbishop Casaroli [Vatican Secretary of State] at the United Nations said that deterrence was morally acceptable. Then Dr. Potter [general secretary, World Council of Churches] . . . said that deterrence was not acceptable. Thus the line is drawn between the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. . . .

"Deterrence has increasingly become a theology, a credo-justification for nuclear weapons, a dogmatic structure. Deterrence is a manipulation of fear, hence the opposite of faith, a sharp theological challenge to faith. . . . It has become a technocratic escape. It also dehumanizes the enemy. . . ."

Ron Sider. Identified as an American active in the anti-nuclear movement, Sider was a third panelist in the deterrence seminar.

"Even possessing nuclear weapons is immoral." This statement essentially summarized Sider's position at the debate. He also attacked the position taken by the Archbishop of York Habgood, saying that the latter's approach just gives an argument in behalf of nuclear weapons. Sider instead proposed a model of "civilian based defense" modeled on the techniques of Mahatma Gandhi.

Habgood responded to Sider's criticism: "I am as sympathetic as anyone on the issue of nuclear disarmament. But I have to be practical. Ron Sider's position is a lovely one. But we have to recognize that Gandhi and Martin Luther King made their moves in fundamentally decent societies. . . . These no longer exist. . . ."

Metropolitan Paulor Mar Gregorios. Orthodox Syrian Church of the East. A very active figure within the World Council of Churches, the Metropolitan is chairman of the Council's "Church and Society" division. He was the fourth and final speaker in the deterrence debate.

"The fight between the Pope and Potter [see Alan Geyer's speech, above] is something that will surface in this Assembly. Therefore, be careful. . . . The Pope goes on to propose disarmament, whereas Potter says that deterrence is not morally accepted *now*."

Gregorios then described some of the arguments on which Potter's position is based: "Deterrence has consequences which are bad. Therefore *it* is bad. The use of nuclear weapons is a crime against humanity," is the next part of the argument. "This is a true moral argument. The use of these weapons is morally evil. Therefore the *intention* to use them is also morally evil. Since for deterrence to work you have to convince the enemy that you mean to use nuclear weapons,

you have to act accordingly. Therefore . . . Potter's point is that deterrence is immoral.

"There is another conflict at the Assembly: which is the priority, peace or justice? If doing away with these weapons is all you are concerned about, that is no good either. Justice is [equally important]. . . .

"It is simplistic to say that we have to use money spent on nuclear weapons for development. This amount is only 6 percent of the money spent in the world overall. We must deal with the other 94 percent. . . .

"While we sit here speaking of nuclear weapons, a more sophisticated laser beam technology is being developed in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. ostensibly for purposes of defense. . . . We have to deal with this, watch this. . . . Some people who leaflet outside support these weapons [referring to the organizers of the *Club of Life* who were distributing literature to the seminar participants calling for the support of President Reagan's March 23 speech announcing a new military policy based on the development of energy beam weapons]. They have been sent to make people aware of this new technology. We cannot leave it to these people alone to address this important issue. We have to do so ourselves, be aware of this new problem."

Resolutions made by the World Council

Debate on Soviet atrocities

Resolution on Afghanistan

The resolution was finally passed by a small margin (306 to 278 votes), following a heated debate on the floor. It called briefly for an end to the supply of arms to opposition groups from outside, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and a guarantee of a peace settlement by the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan, and China.

Bishop Alexander Malik of the Church of Pakistan was among those who charged that the resolution used "the weakest possible language. . . . If it were any Western country, I'm sure the World Council of Churches would have jumped on it and denounced it for a similar action in the strongest possible language in the dictionary," he said, to general applause from delegates in the plenary session. He added, "The atrocities committed by Soviet troops are not even mentioned." Other delegates similarly pointed out that the U.S.S.R. was hardly even mentioned in the resolution.

Archbishop Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church an-

swered the criticism in what the press generally described as "an impassioned speech." He was adamant that the resolution's language not be changed, warning delegates that they are at a critical point in the development of an ecumenical fellowship which could be disrupted if they did not "put aside their emotions." His comments were echoed by other Orthodox delegates and by Rev. Nikolai Zverev, a Moscow delegate for the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer coverage of the resolution was characteristic of press treatment of the document. The newspaper said in its lead editorial Aug. 11: "The World Council of Churches fulfilled expectations of conservatives the other day by adopting a resolution containing wishy-washy language about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but harsh criticism of U.S. policy in Central America. The vote lends credence to charges that the Council practices a double standard of morality when it comes to judging the East and the West."

Nuclear arms condemned

Statement on Peace and Justice

"We . . . counter the trend to characterize those of other nations and ideologies as the 'enemy' through the promotion of hatred and prejudice; [The Central Committee . . . appeals to the churches to] assist in demythologizing current doctrines of national security and elaborate new concepts of security based on justice. . . .

"We call upon the churches, especially those in Europe, both East and West, and in North America, to convince their governments to . . . turn away now, before it is too late, from plans to deploy additional or new nuclear weapons in Europe [reference to U.S.-built 'Euromissiles'], and to begin immediately to reduce and then eliminate altogether present nuclear forces. . . .

"The Central Committee [urges member churches to pay special attention to the following]: (a) a nuclear war can under no circumstances, in no region and by no social system be just or justifiable. . . .

. . . (d) the concept of deterrence . . . is to be rejected as morally unacceptable. . . .; (e) the production and deployment of nuclear weapons as well as their use constitute a crime against humanity, and therefore there should be a complete halt in the production of nuclear weapons and in weapons research and development in all nations, to be expeditiously enforced through a treaty. . . .

"In addition, we urge the churches to press their governments to abstain from any further research, production, or deployment of weapons in space. . . ." [Emphasis added. This sentence did not appear in the first draft of this document. Some observers at the Assembly reported that they believed it was added in agreement with the injunction given by Metropolitan Gregorios—see above—that discussion of space-based energy beam weapons be addressed by the Assembly, instead of being left entirely to the LaRouche organizations such as the Club of Life for discussion.]

"We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. . . ."

"We urge the churches to press their governments, especially in those countries which have nuclear weapons capabilities, to elaborate and ratify an international legal instrument which would outlaw as a crime against humanity the possession as well as the use of nuclear arms. . . ." [Emphasis in the original.]

The voting on this document, like the Afghanistan resolution, also met with debate among the delegates to the plenary session. For example, Dr. Aaron Tolen from the Cameroon Presbyterian Church, attacked the notion of outfitting the Third World only with "appropriate technologies," and denying them nuclear technology and other advanced technologies. Such a policy, he argued, only increases Third World dependence on the advanced sector. An Indian delegate put forward a similar argument.

The Brazilians cause a furor

Resolution on "Justice and Human Dignity"

"Since the misuse of God-given power is the crucial issue . . . it becomes imperative that technological, economic, political and military power be made accountable once again. Until that is obtained, Christians are called to resist any power that demands our complicity in sin. . . ."

"The struggle for justice and human dignity . . . calls us to be in solidarity with those who build up peoples' power designed to shape a more participatory society. . . . Thus international networks of support, provided by the churches, should be strengthened and widened, to enable people to resist oppression, denounce and combat the roots of injustice and to take risks for the search for a new society. *The networks help accumulate forces among the poor, accompanying and stimulating acts of resistance to abusive power. . . .*

"Recommendations for Ecumenical Action to the Churches: . . . to repudiate the misuse of economic organization, science and technology in service of powers and principalities and against people. . . . *That the churches be in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and discriminated in order to empower their movements and organizations. . . . That all churches increase their efforts through concrete action to be in solidarity with those who are struggling to redress unjust power structures. . . .*" [Emphasis added.]

The plenary session called upon to vote this document came to a sudden halt at the instigation of the chairman following an intervention given by a delegate who introduced herself as speaking in behalf of one of the Brazilian bishops. Repudiating the document, the delegate developed the argument instead that her country, as indeed the rest of Latin America and the Third World, owed their exploitation to the policies of the International Monetary Fund and related international financial institutions. She said that it is such insti-



Metropolitan Gregorios

tutions which have willfully overseen the destruction of her country and others, by imposing even more stringent fiscal and economic policies while imposing cruel austerity conditionalities. It is the imposition of such policies, which seek to keep Brazil and the Third World underdeveloped, which is the real cause of our problem. Brazil and her population, however, she said, intend to fight this, referring to the "Operation Juárez" policy being organized for at the Assembly by the *Club of Life*.

The Brazilian delegate, among others in her delegation, had been present at the Caracas, Venezuela "Congress on Latin American Political Thought" held in early July. That congress, involving the most prominent—and powerful—Ibero-American intellectuals and leaders, had adopted the tenets of Lyndon LaRouche's "Operation Juárez" proposal for the creation of an Ibero-American debtors' cartel to force the establishment of a development-oriented new international economic system.

Denounce Marxists

Resolution on "Witnessing in a Divided World"

For the first time in WCC history, a major position paper was sent back, at the instigation of the conservative evangelical delegates at the Assembly. About half of the delegates from these churches issued a harshly-worded document of their own which in part summarized many of the accusations made inside and outside the assembly against the WCC.

The criticism by traditionalists within the Council and hundreds of official and unofficial observers was that the position papers are adopting a Marxist precept concerning the poor, that is, "seeing history in a materialistic context." The evangelical document read in part, "The credibility of the WCC's claim to be a prophetic voice decrying the oppression of human rights is damaged once again by the political one-sidedness in which such violations are pointed out only in the non-Marxist world, while serious offenses by socialist states, whose ecumenical representatives are applauded by the assembly as passionate advocates for peace and justice, are dealt with mildly or passed over in silence. . . ."