

# World-noted Spokesmen Air Views on War, Religion

By RUTH MARTIN  
(Special to The Courier)  
(Some of the world's best known statesmen and analysts spoke to students at the University of Toronto at a recent 'teach-in.' Miss Ruth Martin, a student there, wrote this article for the Courier.)

The International Teach-in at the University of Toronto is unique among teach-ins for unlike the American teach-in it was formed not as a vehicle for the protest movement but rather as a vehicle for the learning process. Its purpose is to give both the student and the community in general an opportunity to hear learned men speak on topics related to a theme of international relevance.

This year the theme was Religion and International Affairs — a theme which posed such questions as "What relevance does organized religion have to the world situation?" "Can the moral man kill?" "What can religion do to combat intolerance in the world?" Consequently, the topics and the speakers of the five sessions were geared to attempting to answer these questions.

Session One was concerned with Religious Faith and War. The panel of speakers consisted of Dr. Kenneth Thompson, vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation; Canon L. John Collins, former Chairman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and Dr. Connor Cruise O'Brien, Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at New York University.

The specific problem these men spoke on was "Is war morally justifiable?" Dr. Thompson urged a type of "ethical pragmatism" which he felt was the only viable solution in the nuclear age. "I fear moral absolutism in the face of nuclear war," he said. There is no absolute ground upon which all situations can be based, rather each situation must be seen as it is and a new decision must be made each time. Dr. Thompson ended his talk by pointing out that government operates not in trying to achieve high ideals but in tackling immediate problems and that while "... there can be no compromise in individual morality there has to be a compromise in social morality."

Canon L. J. Collins, in contrast, stressed that war in the nuclear age is never justifiable — "Either war is off or humanity is off." He stated that "the only thing the nuclear deterrent has deterred so far is common sense." Canon Collins did not raise a call for absolute anarchic pacifism but rather he raised a call for individual self-appraisal in the light of the world situation.

Dr. Connor Cruise O'Brien stressed in his talk that the basis of ethics lies not in religion but rather in human nature itself. The desire for war, he said, is also inherent in human nature and it is political wisdom which directs this personality trait to a good end: the just war. The just war, said Dr. O'Brien, is fought for only two reasons: in defense of one's country or for the overthrow of "the man who has fallen horribly in love with high renown." Applying this specifically, as Dr. O'Brien said must be done, he stated "It will be seen by future generations, I believe, that Johnson's war (in Vietnam) belongs in the same category and with all other wars of grandisement, dignity and prestige."

Session Two, Religious Faith and Revolution, was paneled by the Honorable R. S. Garfield Todd, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, 1953-58; Father Gustavo Perez Ramirez, Founder and Director General of the Columbian Institute for Social Development; and Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Treasurer of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The Hon. Mr. Todd spoke from his own experience in trying to abolish apartheid in Rhodesia when he said, "Men who hold ... Christian beliefs will not support violent revolution to achieve their ends but they betray their faith abjectly if they fail to take all possible action short of violence against their fellow men—(who are causing injustice). He concluded that "If all men of goodwill should be moved in anger because of the hurt done to their fellow men and so to themselves, they would bring a

united conviction upon the conscience of the world... (and) demand the loyalty and involvement of men of religious faith."

Father Gustavo Ramirez stated that his work was "... trying to find a theological response to conflict in society." In the light of this he spoke of the problems in the Third World of underdeveloped countries, the responsibility for which rests with American and European political policies.

Dr. Ralph Abernathy, who after the teach-in was going back to Birmingham, Alabama, to be jailed for the twenty-second time as a result of his Civil Rights work, spoke about the Negro Revolution going on in the United States. "There is a revolution taking place in America today," he said. "It can correctly be called the second American revolution."

Session Three was concerned with Religious Faith and Intolerance and the panel included Dr. Alex Quaison Sackey, Foreign Minister of Ghana 1965-6 and President of the UN General Assembly, 1964-5; Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, 1947-54, Judge on the International Court; Father Trevor Huddleston, Bishop of Masasi, Tanzania; and Mr. Saul Hayes, Executive Vice-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Mr. Saul Hayes stressed that historically organized religion has done little in the past to alleviate intolerance. He pointed out that institutionalization produces certain tensions, psychological, sociological and political. These tensions must be realized, admitted and overcome in order to effectively combat intolerance. The Schema on the Jews at Vatican II, said Mr. Hayes, was a great step forward in accomplishing this realization.

Mr. Quaison-Sackey also pointed out that in the past organized religion has preached not tolerance but a fanatical insistence on its own superiority leading to wars and persecutions. Even today such phenomena as the partition of India and Pakistan and the apartheid position of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa show that we are not yet completely tolerant. "What is required, then," he said, "is that men of faith should influence the policies of their governments, and their words should be listened to with attention." Both Popes John XXIII and Paul VI have done this, Mr. Quaison-Sackey said, and what is needed is that all Christians must work unceasingly for tolerance, amity and peace.

The panel for Session Four, Religious Faith and Ideology, consisted of Dr. Patrick Corbett, Prof. of Philosophy, University of Sussex; Dr. Richard Schaufl, Prof. of Ecumenics, Princeton Theological Seminary; Dr. Milan Opocenski, European Secretary of World Student Christian Federation; and Rev. Alan Booth, London Secretary of the Commission of the World Council of Churches on International Affairs. Dr. Patrick Corbett called for a secular ethics which is not based on one particular religion or ideology. This ethics, "must, if it is to enter into human conflict on the side of peace, arise as directly as possible out of the actual, unambiguous situation in which we find ourselves and must owe as little as possible to contentious abstractions."

This secular situation ethics is termed "the ethics of understanding." It is an ethics of

listening rather than talking, asking rather than asserting, inviting criticism rather than making it, of feeling your way with the help of your opponent beyond the confines of your established thought rather than entrenching yourself immovably within it." Perhaps Dr. Corbett's most striking reason for promoting his "ethics of understanding" was contained in his comment, "From what I have heard of the speakers at this teach-in I can only say that Christian principles hang like shackles on the good they wish to promote."

Rev. Alan Booth stressed the realization that ideologies can not be set and structured sets of principles for all time. An ideology is a set of guidelines pertinent to a particular time and place which must be reconstructed as times change. The

shaping of the new ethic needed for the modern world, said Rev. Booth, will include the contributions of Christianity but cannot be monopolized by it. "It will be a co-operative human effort, increasingly international, and it will produce something both noble and corrupt, which someday in its turn will have to be superseded," he said.

Session Five was probably the most eagerly awaited of the sessions, not so much for its topic, Religious Faith and Peace, but for its speakers, U Thant, Secretary General of the UN; Krishna Menon, Defence Minister of India, 1957-62; Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Buddhist monk, scholar and poet; and Bishop Stephen Neill, a member of the Joint Committee that founded the Ecumenical Church of South India. The

speech of U Thant, filmed especially for the Teach-in, dealt with the relevance of his religion, Buddhism, to his position as Secretary General of the UN.

Krishna Menon stated that peace is not the responsibility of, nor should it be the responsibility of, organized religion, rather it is the responsibility of all people. Peace, he said, is not comfortable existence. In the nuclear age it is survival, for war is no longer a game between people trained to fight but now involves all of humanity. Disarmament, he continued, is meaningless unless you destroy not only all weapons, but also the will to manufacture weapons.

Thich Nhat Hanh spoke as a religious man currently involved in a struggle to save his fellow men. His attitude was summed up in his statement about his position as a man of faith in Vietnam "... in a situation of war, where the destruction of lives and human values is going on, like the present situation in Vietnam, religious leaders are compelled to act. The monk or priest who lives in his community among those who die and suffer every day cannot sit quietly and still remain a spiritual or religious leader of the community. A sermon would mean nothing, the only

sermon is action." He was calling for action to stop the suffering which is going on in his homeland, suffering which is the result of two forces, Communism and anti-Communism, trying to save mankind.

The Vietnamese, Mr. Hanh so validly pointed out, are not being saved; they are being killed.

That was the Teach-in that was. It was a fascinating and valuable contribution not only to the academic world but to all those men of faith who are interested in what they can do and it stressed the fact that men of faith, all faiths, have a responsibility here and now for, as Thich Nhat Hanh put it, "The problem of Vietnam as well as many other problems around the world have become so much international problems that the responsibility for these crises falls on every man of faith."

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