

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

It does not require a conscious act of the human will to ignore an unheralded evil. It is easy to remain aloof and unchallenged by horrors we refuse to witness. That in essence is why it is encouraging to see American Catholics respond eagerly to the leadership provided by hundreds of priests, nuns, writers, politicians, editors, scholars and parish committeemen who witness and seek to eliminate the vestiges of social inequalities in the United States. (In the case of the unborn, who has been shamefully stripped of his legal and moral protection, Catholic laymen have stepped into the lead in many states — years in advance of their diocesan counsels.)

It's a good start toward the active social participation called for by both Pope John and Pope Paul. But where are the news releases of priests and nuns and writers and parish committeemen who provide leadership against the continuing slaughter — both physical and spiritual — of millions of human beings within the boundaries of the Captive Nations?

Pope Pius IX issued the first of many papal condemnations of communism in 1846 the year before Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were commissioned to prepare the manifesto. Leo XIII issued his encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris* in 1878 condemning atheistic communism. In 1881 his *Diuturnam* discussed the basis of sound political government. *Immortali Dei* (1885) covered the Christian Constitution of States, and *Libertas* (1888) discussed human liberty. *Rerum Novarum*, his most important encyclical, appeared in 1891 and gave answers to Communist clichés. His *Graves de Communi* in 1901 warned again of the evils of atheistic communism. Later in 1931 Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo*

Anno to emphasize the continued importance of Leo's *Rerum Novarum*. Pius XI issued *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* in 1931 condemning Fascism; *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937) condemning Nazism; and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) condemning Communism.

In more recent times Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (1961) urged the faithful to make the social teachings of the Church into state laws of their countries. His *Pacem in Terris* warned against communism. "Every human being is a person... he has rights and obligations which are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered. Every man has the right to life... the right to respect for his person... the right to share in the benefits of his culture... to honor God... to choose freely his state of life... and the right to set up a family. Parents have the prior right to educate their children. Man has the right to the opportunity to work without coercion... to working conditions in which physical health is not endangered, where morals are safeguarded. Women have the right to working conditions in accordance with their requirements and their duties as wives and mothers... (all) have the right of private property (ownership)." (*Pacem in Terris*)

Pope Paul VI in his *Populorum Progressio* (1967) rejected any Christian acceptance of a social order built on materialism and atheism. In *Ecclesiam Suam* the Holy Father reminded the faithful that communism still persecutes Catholics and others who represent the suffering Church of Silence in the slave labor camps of Brezhnev and Mao. And in 1971 he issued an apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* to re-emphasize Leo's *Rerum Novarum*. According to the 5/30/76 Sunday Visitor editorial, the Holy Father has termed as "traitors" all Catholics who join or support Communist causes.

The Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation of St. Louis issues reports and news releases on a regular basis, defending the magisterial teachings of the Vatican and publicizing the atrocities of Communist-led nations. The evils of atheistic communism are not unheralded. It only remains for free men to accept the leadership of the Vatican.

NEXT WEEK: The Captive Nations continued

Lithuanian Raps Vatican Policies

Maryknoll, N.Y. [RNS] — Catholics of Lithuanian descent feel betrayed by the Vatican's policy of rapprochement with Communist governments, a former prisoner of the Communists told representatives of the nation's Roman Catholic bishops here.

Not only do "we feel betrayed," said Simas Kudirka, who was born in Lithuania and is now a house painter on Staten Island, "we feel stripped and left to the elements. We feel the Vatican has, in certain cases, abandoned Christian principles" in its dealings with Communist nations.

Kudirka made his comments at the Bicentennial Convocation on Global Justice sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) Committee for the Bicentennial at the Maryknoll Seminary here.

"May I appeal to you, who represent the spiritual leadership of the free world, to put the human rights of the people in Soviet-occupied territories on your agenda," he told the committee, headed by Archbishop Peter L. Cerey of Newark.

Kudirka spent three years in a Soviet concentration camp after he attempted to escape by jumping from a Russian fishing vessel to the deck of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter,

Vigilant, somewhere off the New England coast. In the highly-publicized incident, he was refused asylum by the U.S. State Department.

"Because American authorities did not understand my position, they allowed Soviet crewmen to board the U.S. vessel and drag me back to the Soviet Union where I was sentenced to 10 years for my attempt to leave the system," he explained.

He noted that due to the efforts of many people, and the discovery that his mother had been born in the U.S., he was allowed to emigrate to the U.S., with his mother, his wife and son and daughter.

"The Soviet Union, like other totalitarian regimes, is blatantly trampling on freedoms guaranteed by international agreements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki accord," he testified.

"The Soviet Union is restricting emigration, suppressing religious freedom, persecuting and punishing political dissidents, and discriminating against the nationals of countries it has illegally occupied."

Kudirka also noted that Jews in the Soviet Union have also been deprived of their rights.

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