

Peace Involves Reciprocal Trust

Following is excerpted from the comments made by Pope John Paul II recently to President Reagan:

I am particularly pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican. Although we have already had many contacts, it is the first time that we have met personally.



In you, the President of the United States of America, I greet all the people of your great land. I still remember vividly the warm welcome that I was given by millions of your fellow citizens less than three years ago. On that occasion I was once more able to witness firsthand the vitality of your nation. I was able to see again how the moral and spiritual values transmitted by your founding fathers find their dynamic expression in the life of modern America.

At this present moment in the history of the world, the United States is called, above all, to fulfill its mission in the service of world peace. The very condition of the world today calls for a farsighted policy that will favor those indispensable conditions of justice and freedom, of truth and love that are the foundations of lasting peace.

Mr. President, my own greatest preoccupation is for

the peace of the world — peace in our day. In many parts of the world there are centers of acute tension. This acute tension is manifested above all in the crisis in the South Atlantic, in the war between Iran and Iraq and, now, in the grave crisis provoked by the new events in Lebanon.

This grave crisis in Lebanon likewise merits the attention of the world because of the danger it contains of further provocation in the Middle East, with immense consequences for world peace.

There are fortunately many factors in society that today positively contribute to peace. These positive factors include an increasing realization of the interdependence of all peoples, a growing solidarity with those in need, and a greater conviction of the absurdity of war as a means of resolving controversies between nations.

The duty of peace falls especially upon the leaders of the world. It is up to the representatives of governments and peoples to work to free humanity not only from wars and conflicts but from the fear that is generated by ever more sophisticated and deadly weapons. Peace is not only the absence of war; it also involves reciprocal trust between nations — a trust that is manifested and proved through constructive negotiations that aim at ending the arms race and at liberating immense resources that can be used to alleviate misery and feed millions of hungry human beings.

Pope to U.N.

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To be even more precise, current developments seem to be leading to growing interdependence among types of armaments. In the conditions, how can a balanced reduction be envisaged unless negotiations cover armaments as a whole? In this regard, pursuit of the study of the global disarmament program already undertaken by your organization could facilitate the necessary coordination between the various forums and result in more truth, equity and effectiveness.

Nuclear weapons are not the only means of warfare and destruction. The production and sale of conventional arms throughout the world are a really alarming phenomenon and would seem to be in full expansion. Disarmament negotiations could not be complete if they ignored the fact that 80 percent of armaments expenditures are for conventional weapons. Traffic in them seems to be developing at a growing rate and to be directed by preference to developing countries. Every step taken and every effort made to limit the production and trading of such arms and to subject them to ever more effective control is a significant contribution to the cause of peace.

Recent events have confirmed the destructive power of conventional arms and the regrettable conditions to which states condemn themselves when they are tempted to have recourse to them for settling their differences.

But it is not enough to consider the quantitative aspects of both nuclear and conventional weapons. Quite special attention ought to be given to efforts made to perfect them by means of the most advanced new technologies. There indeed is one of the essential features of the armaments race. To disregard it would lead to self-deception and to offering peace-loving people nothing but sham.

Research and technology should always be put to the service of man. Use and abuse of them for other ends is too frequent in our day. When addressing men of science and culture at the assembly of UNESCO June 2, 1980, I developed this theme amply. May I be permitted again today to suggest that at least a not inconsiderable percentage of funds allocated to technology and the science of weaponry be reserved for developing mechanisms and arrangements for guaranteeing the life and well-being of mankind.

In his discourse to the United Nations Oct. 4, 1965, Pope Paul VI propounded a deep truth when he declared:

"Peace is not built up only by means of politics and balance of power and interests. It is built up with the spirit, ideas, the products of culture, and the creative powers of the peoples are meant to be shared. Strategies for peace which remain on the technical and scientific plane, which determine equilibriums and verify controls, will ensure true peace only when they will have forged and reinforced links among peoples. Establish links joining the peoples to one another. Find ways that lead people to share their cultures and values. Abandon all mean interests which put one nation at the mercy of another on the economic, social and political planes."

In this same spirit the work of qualified experts concerning the relation between disarmament and development deserves to be studied and followed by action. To envisage transfer of financial resources from arms development to the development of peoples is not new, but the idea is no less relevant for all that, and the Holy See has long made it its

own. Any resolution on the part of the General Assembly along this line would everywhere meet with the approval and support of men and women of good will.

Establishment of links among peoples means rediscovery and reaffirmation of all values reinforcing peace and uniting the peoples in harmony. It likewise means renewing the best in man's heart, which seeks the good of others in brotherhood and love.

I would add one last consideration: production and possession of armaments are the result of an ethical crisis gnawing into society in all directions, political, social and economic. Peace, as I have repeated several times, is the result of respect for ethical principles. True disarmaments, which will guarantee peace among the peoples, will come only with the solution to this ethical crisis.

So if efforts at arms reduction, then total disarmament, are not accompanied and paralleled by ethical recovery, they are already destined to fail.

To try to put our world back in place by ending the mental confusion engendered by mere seeking after self-interests and privileges and defense of ideological pretensions — that is an absolutely prime task to be accomplished if we wish to manage to make progress in the struggle for disarmament. Otherwise, we remain with false appearances only.

For the real cause of our insecurity is to be found in a profound crisis of mankind. It is worth the trouble, thanks to sensitivity of consciences and the absurdity of war, to create material and spiritual conditions that will lessen, crying inequalities and give all back a minimum of room for freedom of the spirit. Cohabitation of the well-provided and the deprived may no longer be borne in a world where communications are as swift as they are generalized, without resentment arising and without it turning into violence. In any case, the spirit has prime and inalienable rights. It justly claims them in countries where room is lacking for one to live in tranquility according to one's convictions. I call upon all fighters for peace to enter into this struggle to eliminate the real causes of men's insecurity, of which the terrible arms race is an effect.

Reversing the present tendency to the arms race therefore involves a parallel struggle on two fronts. On the one hand, an immediate and urgent struggle on the part of governments to reduce armaments progressively and equitably. On the other hand, a more patient but no less necessary struggle at the level of the conscience of the peoples in order to get at the ethical cause of the insecurity which begets violence, that is to say, the material and spiritual inequalities of our world.

War is not an inevitable calamity. Peace is possible. And since it is possible, peace is a duty. A very grave duty. A supreme responsibility. Peace is difficult, certainly. It demands much good will, wisdom, tenacity, but man can and must make the power of reason prevail over the reasons of power.

My last word is therefore still a word of encouragement and exhortation: Like peace, which is entrusted to men's responsibility but is nonetheless a gift of God, my word is translated into prayer to the one who has the destinies of the peoples in his hands.

I thank you for the activity that you carry on for making cause of disarmament progress: disarmament of engines of death and disarmament of minds.

May God bless your efforts. May this assembly go down in history as a sign of comfort and hope.

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