

million worth of surplus foods, a delay that will cost the U.A.R. heavily in shipping charges effective with the new year by act of Congress for all recipients of surplus food. Certainly that legislative body now asks some hard questions of the Johnson Administration about its diplomacy in the area. Yet it would be a mistake to try to punish Nasser or bargain with him. His anger is an indicator of weakness and frustration that are independent of his personality and widespread in the Arab world. These problems stem from cultural difficulties that only time and patience, and compassion, are likely to resolve.

Over-all the U.A.R. secures revenues, loans and knowledge but little liking from the West, pressing strategic and ideological advantages within a definition of limits that both sides apparently recognize. The neutralist camp as a whole or individual nations might not obtain the benefits that Nasser's Egypt is able to get from the West. Yet his vantage point and his skills are part of his credentials as its potential leader.

The main risk Nasser and most neutralists run in their dealings with the West but also with the Com-

munist states is a decline in the *peaceful* competition of the great powers in the emerging regions. The decline might come in one of two ways. The major blocs might adjust downward their interests and concerns, refusing to participate in play-offs and disengage themselves from the uncommitted zones. On the other hand the big powers might turn to concerted military or revolutionary action in these areas, forcing the weaker neutrals to join one of the main camps. In either case the external reasons for having a preeminent neutralist leader would deteriorate. For the nonaligned community would tend to disintegrate because the chief actors no longer cared, or it would break up through their intervention. To avoid this watershed that leads in two undesirable directions, Gamel Abdel Nasser must call upon skills that are not part of Nehru's overly intellectual bequest to the in-between states. He must also have a vision of a plural, interdependent world at peace that the Indian leader did not have. President Nasser probably has the requisite skills. Does he have the vision? If he is to speak for the uncommitted world his greatest challenge is within himself.

other voices

SHOULD THE CHURCHES SPEAK ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS?

The following view of the churches' role in foreign policy was written by Kenneth Johnstone, the chairman of the Christian Frontier Council in whose publication, Frontier (September 1964), the article appeared. The Council, with offices in London, describes itself as "a fellowship of thirty to forty laymen and women who . . . have met regularly for twenty years to explore with each other the practical implications of their faith. They include members of all denominations."

The question may seem a pointless one, but the point about it is that it is asked, and not only in a hostile or negative sense. And to ask such a question administers a salutary jolt to those who, like the writer, are professionally concerned with the churches' international relations.

When the question is sincerely asked (often by Christians), there are generally two main thoughts behind it. One is that, although we may all agree that there should not be one morality for Sundays (or at least Sunday mornings) and another for week-

days, nevertheless there is a distinction to be drawn between the sacred and the profane: the Church should exert her influence in such spheres as politics through the individual action of Christians engaged in politics, and, at most, if she feels obliged to utter on political matters, should do so only on the highest moral level and should confine herself to the enunciation of principles.

The other thought behind the question is concerned with the Church's good name. It is felt that the Church, as such, has no particular expert knowledge or authority in the complicated field of politics: her judgments are bound to be amateur and are liable to be shown up by the professionals. This being so, it is more dignified not to utter at all. This argument is in part a reflection of the rule of experts under which we live. Sometimes, too, it is used by statesmen in pique when some utterance of the churches happens not to be in line with their policy at the time. On these occasions, and especially at election time, one may point out in reply that to confine judgments on international affairs to the ex-

perts is to disqualify not only the churches but also most of the electorate, who are no more expert than the churches are. The man in the pew is also the man in the polling-booth.

The answer—or an answer—to the question only begins to appear when we start to disentangle certain aspects of the Church: as an ecclesiastical institution, as the guardian of the Gospel and the sacraments and the preacher of the Word of God, and as the general community of the faithful.

From the institutional point of view there is a not very wide but highly important sector of foreign affairs in which the Church is acknowledged to have, as it were, a professional interest. This sector includes such matters as inter-Church relations, with their attendant political complications; missions overseas, their promotion and protection; freedom of worship. About the churches' right to speak on these there is no dispute and they need not detain us here.

Again, the Church's role as guardian of the moral law and of the means of grace is generally accepted; but as a keeper of the national conscience the Church is expected to confine herself to generalities. This, however, is not enough; eternal truth degenerates into perpetual platitude. Moreover, it is not the moral elevation of the Christian faith which is nowadays called in question, but whether it is practical and relevant. The statesman or public servant, hounded beyond endurance by moral criticism of a general kind, is apt, after patient explanation of the facts, to turn round and say, "Well, what would you do"? He has a right to say this, irrespective of the fact that he may be a Christian himself or a man of conscience tormented by the moral dilemmas into which his duties thrust him. And the Church, on her side, has a pastoral duty towards those who bear responsibility, and for this she must equip herself.

It is here that the aspect of the Church as the community of all believers comes in. With regard to her own members, the Church, in the person of her pastors, must be present where consciences are

distressed, to counsel, to warn, to comfort. We have already said that there are men and women professionally engaged on the problems of foreign affairs who feel the need of such care; and who shall say that the conscience of the Christian citizen and elector is not sometimes sorely troubled by these same difficulties? There is real point in what so often seems the merely pathetic cry, "Why don't the churches do (or say) something about . . ." whatever the latest international crisis may be. It is true that a well-meant desire to meet this entreaty leads to a good deal of what has been called "Resolutionary Christianity"—that is, the passing and publication of motions by ecclesiastical and other bodies which are more in the nature of pious comment than of prophetic insight or sensible advice. There is indeed a place for public utterance, as we shall see, but the prime condition of it, and still more of the pastoral care of human souls, is a full understanding of the situation as it presents itself to those who have to handle it, such as only careful study can give.

The best of such study involves a dialogue between the institutional Church, her pastors and theologians, and both the expert and the non-expert but Christianly sensitive layman. This is not a method which enables the Church to reel off a Christian commentary on the morning's headlines or to dispose in a few penetrating words of problems as complex as South Africa or the hydrogen bomb; but it is more likely to assure the individual Christian that his problem has been seen as he sees it and to convince the outside world that the Church knows what it is talking about.

When and how, then, does the Church address the outer world, having taken such counsel as she can? For the most part, no doubt, she will try as far as she can to avoid the limelight and rely on the influence of Christian men and women who are working at the center of the problem and who have discussed with other Christians its implications in the light of Christian belief. But there are times

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when the Church has to speak out, as it were, in her own person or let her public witness go by default. She must speak when some great danger or some great wrong—nuclear war, for example, or the starvation of millions—needs to be countered. She must speak when passions rise high and peace seems threatened. She must warn when the intricacies of technical argument or the pressures of expediency seem to be obscuring the consideration of right and wrong. She must sometimes dispute the rule of experts and the mysteries of government. And sometimes she must call for sacrifices from the nation, of money, of advantage, of prestige, which Governments cannot be expected to call for and can only accept if the nation they serve insists on them. These are some of the circumstances in which the churches have a right and a duty to speak on international affairs.

When they do speak what should they say? We have already said that moral generalities are not enough. At the other extreme, it is rightly felt that the formulation of detailed policies is no part of the churches' business. There is, however, an intermediate course, involving two sorts of action. The Church may point to certain ultimate goals as desirable—the promotion of some form of world order, for example, or the international control of nuclear weapons; but whenever she does this she

ought at the same time to put forward some idea of the way by which such a goal might be reached and of a possible first step along that way. This is a salutary exercise for the Church herself. It also gives a certain clear relevance to what the Church has to say, and does not leave her, like a cemetery angel, pointing vaguely heavenwards.

When the Church takes such action she must expect, even after consulting the best advisors available, to be challenged by the political experts on their own ground; and she must in humility meet such challenge as best she may, defending at all cost the principles which have led her to intervene at all and insisting that any policy which does not square with those principles will not do. No one will think the less of the Church for sometimes being wrong when she tries, as any citizen or body of citizens may, to help forward a solution of problems which concern us all.

The essence of this task is a continuous dialogue between pastors, theologians and laity. For this dialogue the laity involved are more than ready, and if the theologians are understandably shy at venturing on such unfamiliar ground and feel themselves out of their sphere, we shall still hope to persuade them to come to our aid. It is only with their help that we shall get that informed prophecy which is the Church's special contribution in a technical age.

Jagerstatter: An Enemy of the State

In Solitary Witness, by Gordon Zahn. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. \$5.95.

by *Thomas Merton*

On August 9th, 1943, the Austrian peasant Franz Jagerstatter, was beheaded by the German military authorities as an "enemy of the state" because he had repeatedly refused to take the military oath and serve in what he

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani, is author of a number of books, the most recent being *The Seeds of Destruction*. This review has previously appeared in the Jan. 29 issue of *Peace News*, an independent weekly published in London.

declared to be an "unjust war." His story has a very special importance at a time when the Catholic Church, in the Second Vatican Council, is confronting the moral problem of nuclear weaponry. This Austrian peasant was not only simultaneously a Catholic and a conscientious objector, but he was a fervent Catholic, so fervent that some who knew him believe him to have been a saint. His lucid and uncompromising refusal to fight for Germany in the second world war was the direct outcome of his religious conversion. It was the political implementation of his desire to be a perfect Christian.

Franz Jagerstatter surrendered his life rather than take the lives

of others in what he believed to be an "unjust war." He clung to this belief in the face of every possible objection not only from representatives of the army and the state but also from his fellow Catholics, the Catholic clergy and of course his own family. He had to meet practically every "Christian" argument that is advanced in favor of war. He was treated as a rebel, disobedient to lawful authority, a traitor to his country. He was accused of being selfish, self-willed, not considering his family, neglecting his duty to his children.

His Austrian Catholic friends understood that he was unwilling to fight for Hitler's Germany, yet they argued that the war was jus-