Marxist-Leninist doctrines have worked they appear true to their proponents. In other words, if we do not stop Communist aggression in, e.g., Vietnam, we discourage Pope John’s “nature reassertion” by offering the Communists further vindication of their doctrinal position. Thus in every Vietnam, every Korea, every Berlin, we are obliged to act and to blunt the thrust of Communist aggrandizement, be it Soviet, Chinese, or any other. If this can be done, it will in time incline the Communists to reassess their position and begin to act in a more human manner.

But simultaneously, we must seize every opportunity to broaden relationships with Communist countries, and look for signs of substantial change in the character of the Communist regimes. In this regard, our position is a paradoxical one. It took us thirty years to recognize communism for what it was: a monolithic force, seeking internal proletarianization and external universalization. Now we stand in danger of being trapped in our own perception, which may have been transformed into a stereotype rather than a reflection of reality. The monolith is broken—the advent of a second “infallible” interpreter of Marxism-Leninism achieved this. But what of change within the Communist systems? This is the crucial question.

If we admit the possibility of change even within the systems, then our coexistence policy must have a further dimension: we need to devote a great deal of attention to determining the kinds of change we would have to observe in order to conclude that the character of communism had been substantially altered. Clearly, Communist protestations of change will be insufficient, for we have received those before, e.g., the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. We could be moderately encouraged by any increased attentiveness of the regime to the needs of its people. We could be more encouraged by consistent evidence of a reduced aggressiveness and expansionism in foreign policy. We could be most encouraged by serious signs of burgeoning areas of freedom among the people under the regimes. These are only suggestions, but the point is clear: part of our policy should be the identification of changes which, if seen in the future, would indicate a transformation in communism and demand an alteration in our own policy.

Above all, we must not permit ourselves to freeze the melancholy conditions of the present, for the supreme irony would be if world ruination were to come from our inability to perceive the possibility of change.

**DIALOGUE: A MORAL IMPERATIVE**

*What Are the Alternatives that Face Us?*

*Peter J. Riga*

There can be little doubt that the omission on the part of John XXIII to speak of communism in either of the two greatest encyclicals of our time, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, has caused grave consternation in various Catholic circles.

This consternation has gone as far as Vatican II. The Council from the beginning was born on a note of positive confrontation with the modern world in the open spirit of John XXIII. It was taken for granted that from the opening words of John to the Council Fathers, there would be no anathemas and condemnations. In spite of the clear intention of John XXIII to avoid sterile pronouncements, a certain number of the Fathers attempted to introduce a decree on anti-communism. An expressly stated recommendation by two bishops of Brazil, Archbishop Proenca-Sigand and Bishop de Castro-Mayer, consequently signed by two hundred bishops, was sent to Paul VI. “It is a question,” said the statement, “of the greatest and most dangerous heresy of our times. The faithful will be deceived if the Council does not treat of it.”

The origin of the statement was an article by Correa de Oliveira, professor at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo, originally published in the diocesan newspaper *Catholicismo*, and later distributed to the Fathers of the Council.

His central idea is that Communist governments have been “painfully clear and coherent not only
with regard to the Church, but also with regard to all religions. . . . Today there are dangerous illusions among Catholics in this regard. We must therefore react energetically and swiftly, we must denounce strongly every Communist manoeuvre, and realize the impossibility of any coexistence between the Church and a Communist regime.

Then he continues on the subject of nuclear war. "It may well happen that one or many nations of the West might be obliged to choose between two evils, that is, between a modern war, internal or external, conventional or thermonuclear, with all of its horrors or the acceptance of a Communist regime. If we react energetically and swiftly, we must denounce both evils. . . . The loss of faith is a greater evil than even possible extermination by atomic war." The author of that statement is willing, as a Christian, to permit a nation or nations to actively commit an evil (lesser) to prevent a greater evil. Christianity is to be preserved by perpetrating evil. This indeed is one of the most blatant forms of anti-Christian thinking that this author has seen in recent times under Catholic auspices.

Among the many dramatic innovations of Pope John XXIII, his "opening to the left" held out the hope of dialogue between the Church and communism. His willingness in Pascm in Terris (the plural use of the word is not without meaning; peace to all nations, East and West) to recognize the impact of historical change on Communist ideology and practice; his studious avoidance of inflammatory language when alluding to communism in all of his talks and encyclicals; his personal meeting with Khrushchev's son-in-law—all of these things represented a healthy departure from the earlier practice of the Church.

Many Catholics were not at all happy at this turn of events and a few even saw evidence that the "international left" had made its impact on the Vatican itself. The National Review through the voice of Will Herberg was very disturbed at finding nothing in Pascm or in Mater et Magistra, on communism. Pope John's silence on this aspect of today's world is significant. In reality, the answer is to be found in the texts of both encyclicals themselves. In Pascm, the order of peace is not an absence of war, as many think; it is not "complete victory" over communism, for the order of peace is founded on the basis which he exposes in the first two sections of the encyclical, an order of truth, social justice, love and liberty. You cannot suppress war or communism—which are only names and not reality—unless you attack the causes of war and communism, which alone are reality. In paragraph 159 of Pascm he explicitly recognizes that all is not black and white in either West or East. As a matter of fact, the origins of "false philosophical theories" may be just, while these same theories can change in the course of history.

In paragraph 159 of Pascm he says that it is not necessary to identify the flesh and bone men with whom we come in contact with the abstract logic of the ideologies that they profess. Every Christian knows that the Christianity that inspires him is worth more than the practical translation which he give it, because of weakness or egoism in his daily life. He must realize that the opposite is also true: it happens that one may join and cooperate in social efforts emanating from those whose principles, for one reason or another, one cannot accept.

Pope John here invites us to go forward to the discovery of men beyond the ideologies which oppose them one to another. And what is true for men is also true for nations. The latter also cannot be identified with the political systems in which they exist. A limitless field of discovery opens before us. Today we know ourselves better than fifty years ago because of vastly improved communications of all kinds. Yet we are, as an international community, still far from the grouping together of people, further yet from a real communion and human friendship on an international plane. We do not seek to know what constitutes the profound soul of each people. We do not know the hidden treasures of culture and noble tradition which could become, in the exchange, the common patrimony for man and an enrichment for all. A real revolution will be made if men learn simply to speak to each other, East and West, Socialist, Capitalist and Communist. And not simply to coexist side by side with a sword of Damocles over each of our heads.

Pope John simply recognizes the old scholastic adage: take away the causes, you take away the effect. With the causes changed by social justice, communism of necessity will have to change during the course of history. The professional anti-Communist would have us believe that this is impossible. These, the Pope says, are not true students of history, for history shows that men change, and that men are never as good or as evil as the doctrine they
profess. If this is correct, then there is hope for a true dialogue between Christianity and communism. If not, the only alternative is to "drop the bomb" which, in reality, solves nothing and, moreover, there is eminent danger of destroying all. It solves nothing because the destruction of communism by thermonuclear war—besides being un-Christian—cannot kill the idea; it succeeds only in eliminating people while the essential vice—social injustice—remains the same. The eminent danger of the insane annihilation of the human race is too real to need any commentary. Thus, as the Pope put it, our only hope for peace is the program of Mater et Magistra, an all-out attack on the causes of inequality and social injustice, which alone is the order of peace. Hence, the only way open is a positive program of human betterment for all men and an opening and a possibility for dialogue on both sides. To shut this off by sterile anti-communism is, in reality, to give up hope in God's grace and human freedom. Such an attitude is basically inhuman and un-Christian.

It is here that we meet total incomprenhension. It seems that any honest attempt to view this problem of dialogue between communism and Christianity is immediately tagged as "soft" on communism, treason, "being duped," etc. But communism and Christianity do not exist except insofar as they are believed and practised by actual human beings; and these human beings are capable of change, as history proves. A real human being is never as good or as bad as the doctrine he preaches and there is always hope as long as the channels of communication are kept open.

This, of course, was the idea of Pope John XXIII in Pacem in Terris and that is the principal reason why this particular encyclical came as a profound shock to many Catholics of the right. There can be little doubt that in paragraph 159 of Pacem the Pope is speaking about communism. In it he makes a clear distinction between error and those who commit error. He attempts in this way to open the door directly to human beings, to real people instead of rejecting en bloc a whole sector of the human race by appeal to a cover-all ideology, and then proceeding to anathematize it in toto, as do so many professional anti-Communists.

He begins his outline in paragraph 158 by an appeal to one of the main criteria of peace, which is that of truth. Every man has a right to truth as outlined so clearly in the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. In this paragraph the Pope shows how unjust it would be, by a total condemnation and impossibility of dialogue, to cut off any party from the benefit of truth. Thus, logically speaking, the right of a man in error creates the corresponding correlative obligation of "dialogueuing" on those who possess the truth and to communicate it to them. Dialogue is a moral imperative.

Then, in paragraph 159 the Pope carefully distinguishes between theories and movements. The Pope is emphatically against any spirit of crusade, for the essential postulate of any crusade is the identification of an adversary, man or nation, with his religion or his ideology. Such an identification would be disastrous and has been at the origin of many schisms and wars in history.

We can take a cue here from President Kennedy and from Pope John. Both men knew that the future of the world would rest, not just on a superiority of nuclear firepower, but on what we said to the majority of the world's peoples, and what we did after we said it. If we could use our wealth and resources with responsibility and compassion; if we could give help to the United Nations and its agencies in safeguarding and improving the human condition; if we could make it clear that the idea of freedom had to do not just with the way a nation ran its commercial enterprises, but also with the way a man grew and thought and raised a family—then we could face the true meaning of dialogue.

They never minimized the extent of the ideological challenge. They knew that the Communist world was itself in a condition of upheaval. They knew how important it was to make a correct assessment of these changes, for the wrong decisions would help create a conjunction of Communist forces—and this with a readiness likely to lead to nuclear war. The dialogue between East and West simply had to continue if the future was to be faced with any hope of peace on earth.

Wisdom begins with the ability to make distinctions, and they made distinctions not just between one part of the ideological camp and the other, but within each camp itself. This they both attempted to do in their own way; Kennedy and the Pope attempted to face new realities. They tried to cut through the insanity of mounting nuclear stockpiles and mounting antagonisms. They tried to apply a human perspective to grave international problems. They tried to speak directly to the Russian people, not lecturing or scolding, but giving full weight to their ordeals and difficulties and recognizing that common hopes can dissolve even the oldest enmities. History proves that men change when historical situations change, no matter what name we give these realities. Both men were great students of history and of human nature. These qualities are an absolute qualification for world leaders.