

'Reagan is for war, Andropov for peace'

Rev. Vitaly Borovoi. Assembly delegate, representing the Russian Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchate. Key-note speaker and candidate for next General Secretary of the WCC.

At a press conference held July 28 under WCC auspices, Rev. Borovoi responded to questions pertaining to a bogus letter circulated at the Assembly ostensibly written by the Russian Orthodox Church. The letter was a statement of categorical ROC support for Soviet government military and foreign policy. Denying that his Church had authored the letter, Rev. Borovoi nevertheless did concede the fact that:

"... In the fight for the spiritual salvation of our people, we [of the ROC] must simultaneously co-exist with the temporal reality of our government. Like many other churches, we support the foreign policy of our government. . . not only because it is our government, but because in truth it is the policy of peace. Only the nuclear freeze, which our Soviet government and Party General Secretary Yuri Andropov support, can bring peace to mankind." The Vancouver *Globe and Mail* the following day reported: "Rev. Borovoi said the letter was written by someone who was 'not a very clever or wise man.' He said he found the letter strange because he could in fact agree with much of it although he would not have used the same phrases. . . ."

Questioned on the Russian Orthodox's Church's position on disarmament, Borovoi responded: "Our position is very known. We have had two conferences on this. . . . The first question to ask is what is the opinion of our American brothers. We must find common solutions. In the cold war, when our governments—the U.S. and Russian, I mean Soviet governments—were apart, we in the Church never ceased to seek close cooperation with the American Churches. And we pushed our own government. Our effort was there in the détente push. Our position is to find solutions, the best solutions, for all sides."

A second question was: "You said that Orthodoxy could succeed even in the midst of a secularized socialist society. What lessons have you learned from this?" Borovoi's re-

sponse: "At first we had a very difficult time. This contributed to the raising and spreading of all kinds of apocalyptic hopes and visions, and therefore to a refusal to recognize this new [communist] society and to participate in its ongoing life. This was profitable for atheism.

"It cost us real suffering to come to the conclusion that regardless of the change in the [political] situation, the Church should witness, work and be ready for everything in order to serve, save and regain this [Soviet] society. This process is not finished, but slowly we are becoming part of this society. We reject Marxism as an ideology. But we accept the political, social, economic system. We contribute to it. We are millions and millions [of Orthodox Christians in the U.S.S.R.], and this society could not exist without these millions.

"Political attitudes change, psychological changes are occurring. We have growing numbers of members from among the youth—although it is not true that we control them yet. Among these youth, we have members from the Kom-somol [Soviet party youth organization]. When they undergo crises, they come to the Church. Not all, but the *majority* are coming to the Church. These 'converts' will be the next generation who will take my place. They will be better than me."

Metropolitan Kirill. Delegate from the Russian Orthodox Church.

"The Soviets don't want war. Look what we lost in World War II. . . . Look at the arms buildup. . . . and now we have this new, terrible laser weapon. . . . Ronald Reagan is a war monger. . . . Andropov wants peace. . . ."

Anezka Ebertova. Professor of Social Ethics at Czechoslovakia's Hus University. Active in the Prague Peace Conference since 1958.

"Through my voice you can hear thousands of Christians in socialist countries who, together with their fellow citizens experienced the hell of war. . . . Therefore, after the war [World War II], all activities in our countries [Eastern Europe] were concentrated on the creation of peace, formation

of a socialist society. . . . The matter of our concern was the progress of a socialist society since the previous structures proved to be a catastrophic source of exploitation, social injustice and conflicts.

“However, the atmosphere of the cold war soon blocked these efforts, and with it the possibility for fruitful, peaceful cooperation. . . . We have no choice but to oppose the destructive powers and threats coming from unjust and inhuman social structures. . . . In our countries, we [Christians] make this effort together with our citizens, some of whom are not Christians, because we feel united by the awareness of the value and dignity of every human life. From many of them we learned to think more about concrete material as well as spiritual conditions of life. We also learned to understand the impact of social structures on the life of human beings in order to preach in correlation to reality. . . .”

“With our prayers, with our social activity and with the hope of our faith, *we support the initiatives of our countries’* leaders for cooperation and peace. There are a number of propositions for a nuclear freeze and disarmament which envisage peace perspectives for Europe and the rest of the world. . . .”

Metropolitan Emilianos. Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (one of the original founders of the World Council of Churches). Emilianos gave a seminar on “The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches.”

“The presence of Orthodoxy in the ecumenical movement is important because it has brought Orthodoxy into the West. . . . Western culture protects itself again Orthodoxy by presenting it as a quaint cult, with icons. . . . What is lacking is a sense of witness, of outreach. Most Orthodox see religion as a private concern. Orthodoxy has to emerge from its native ghetto and culture. . . .”

Emilianos then addressed the importance of appealing to non-rational elements of the population. He gave as an example the method by which the Ecumenical Patriarchate had, many centuries earlier, converted the Russians to Orthodoxy. “The beauty of the [Orthodox] liturgy was key in Christianizing the Russians. Today theology is too rational and less liturgical. . . .”

“Until now our [Orthodox] practice has been to take small hesitant steps, instead of full involvement with the World Council of Churches. We want more representatives in the active bodies of the Council. . . . The Patriarchate was ecumenical before there was an ecumenical movement. . . .”

“Most of the problematic begins with the Reformation. Theologians act as if Christianity began in the 16th century. . . . We are orientals. We use a different kind of language. Our theologians don’t know enough of the conflicts of the 16th century onwards, how Luther et al. introduced a new era. If the Roman Catholic Church were a World Council of Churches member, you [of the WCC] would be more competent to deal with some of these things than we. We never experienced a Reformation.”

Liberation theology vs. ‘urban culture’

Report of the Moderator, Archbishop Ted Scott Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

“I have become sharply aware of the seriousness of the global issues and of the very great need to take action—often radical action in light of this new knowledge. . . . The ’60s saw the zenith of the postwar prosperity boom as the reconstruction of Europe and Japan progressed. It was a decade marked by optimism. . . . [Now] we are, I believe, at the end of an era.

“It was an era dominated by what, for brevity, I would call urban industrial culture. This culture grew out of the discovery of the scientific method and the technological development which followed. Science and technology were seen by very many to be the source of the ultimate answers to human aspirations.

“This culture came to be expressed in two major competing ideologies—capitalism and communism. There are many differences between them but there are also some very great similarities. Both, in practice if not in theory, are materialistic, and both tend to limit their focus of achievement to what happens in space and time, focus attention on people and things. Both are very much concerned about the production and delivery of goods and services, and both tend to measure progress, in a country or in the world, in terms of the Gross National Product. . . .”

“It is my conviction, however, that neither of these present ideological expressions of this culture is adequately responding to the challenges of our day. These ideologies are no longer satisfying the deepest human aspirations . . . I believe that both of these ideologies, although they remain powerful, are no longer adequately responding to the challenges which confront us. An era is ending.

“The Churches . . . have . . . accommodated themselves to the cultural values of the world. If they had remained truly faithful, they would have affirmed much more positively that human beings are not mere units of production or consumption, but relationship beings. . . .”

“[W]e must say ‘yes’ to all that conforms to the love of Christ, to all who seek for justice, to the peace-makers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man (humanity), to all who—even without knowing it—look for new heavens