

Vatican by Augustinus

The quest for a lasting peace

The Pope rejects the policies of crisis-management and realpolitik, which only maintain the world in a state of "permanent conflict."

Pope John Paul II's message for the 19th World Day of Peace was a demand for a global transformation of "ethical and juridical relations"—encompassing economic as well as strategic policy—as the indispensable prerequisite for "a just and lasting peace."

The Pontiff's principal message was that the absence of global war does not imply the existence of true peace. Thus he calls for the establishment of a new world order, grounded in a "new international system" of economic relations.

The speech attacked the policy of crisis-management as a method, the primary one practiced today, for running world affairs. He targeted the promoters of the "permanent conflict" doctrine—whose most infamous spokesman is, of course, Henry Kissinger.

"There are those," the Pope said, "who say that the present situation is natural and inevitable. They say that relations among individuals and states are characterized by permanent conflicts. This doctrinary and political vision is translated into a model of society and into a system of international relations which are dominated by competition and antagonism in which the strongest prevails.

"Peace deriving from such an approach can only be an 'arrangement' suggested by the principle of *realpolitik*, and as an 'arrangement,' it seeks not so much to resolve tensions through justice and equity as to maintain a kind

of balance that will preserve whatever is in the interests of the dominating party. . . . Such a 'peace' cannot deal with the substantial causes of the world's tensions or give to the world the kind of vision and values which can resolve the divisions represented by the poles of North-South and East-West."

But since world leaders have an "ethical and juridical duty" to found a lasting peace, he continued, they have the obligation of tackling the "unforeseeable and fluctuating financial situation, with its direct impact on countries with large debts who are fighting to reach some positive development. In this situation, peace as a universal value is in great danger. Even if there were no armed conflicts, there exists de facto a cause and potential factor of conflict," inherent in this Third World indebtedness.

Since "underdevelopment remains an ever growing threat to world peace," what the Pope endorses is a new international system: "If we study the evolution of society in recent years we can see . . . signs of a determination on the part of many of our contemporaries and of peoples to overcome the present obstacles in order to bring into being a new international system. This is the path that humanity must take if it is to enter into an age of universal peace and integral development."

This, he says, is the only possible viewpoint of "sound realism." All other approaches, ostensibly more

pragmatic, will not work.

The Pope continued: "Armed conflict is not the only thing for which the poor bear an unjust part of the weight. . . . In its several dimensions, underdevelopment remains an always growing threat to world peace. The fullness of order is lost because of the social and economic exploitation by special interest groups operating internationally, or acting as 'elites' inside the developing countries.

"Peace . . . is lost when economic exploitation and the tensions inside the social fabric leave the people undefended, disillusioned, ready prey for the destructive forces of violence."

But this exploitation is not some sort of sociological phenomenon. "As a value, peace is continuously jeopardized by consolidated interests. . . ."

The developing sector, the Pope added, requires relief from indebtedness, technology transfers, and the training and education of its labor force in order to ease unemployment.

In order to ensure that his words could not be misunderstood, the Pope had his spokesman underline three principal issues, in presenting the speech to the international press.

Speaking in Rome on behalf of the Pontiff on Dec. 13, 1985, Roger Cardinal Etchegaray told the press that the Pope had asked him to emphasize three aspects of the World Day of Peace message. First, he said, "the Holy Father rejects all the theories that try to justify the status quo or tensions, by considering them normal or inevitable. He rejects Social Darwinism and the ideology of the strong."

Second, Cardinal Etchegaray reported that Pope John Paul's economic references were meant to be a "rejection of economic liberalism." Third, "The Pope . . . proposes tenacity in searching for new models of society."