

## STATEMENT OF THE LENINGRAD MEETING

Following the meeting of Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox experts at the Leningrad Theological Academy, December 9-13, 1967, the following statement was issued:

From December 9th to December 13th, 1967, a series of conversations between Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox experts took place at the Leningrad Theological Academy. Their meetings were the result of a proposal made by His Excellency, Most Reverend John Willebrands, titular Bishop of Mauriana, Secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, in reaction to the report by His Eminence Nikodim, metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, President of the Department for External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate, at the Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva in July 1966, on " Dialogue with Roman Catholics concerning contemporary Christian social thought "

The general theme of the conversations was the social thought of the Roman Catholic Church both in its historical context since the end of the 19th century and especially in its most recent expression in the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI and in the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. The conversations took place in the Theological Academy of Leningrad at the invitation of His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim. They were held with the approval of the higher authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

Presiding over them were His Excellency Bishop Willebrands, and His Excellency Bishop Juvenaly of Zaisk, Vice-President of the Department for

External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchats. The other participants *from the Russian Orthodox Church* were: Prof. Archpriest Livery Voronov, of the Leningrad Theological Academy; Prof. Emityr Ogitsky, of the Moscow Theological Academy; Prof. Nikolas Zabolotsky, of the Leningrad Academy; Mr. Alexy Bouevsky, Secretary of the Department for External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate; *from the Roman Catholic Church*: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Pietro Pavan, Professor of the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome; Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Higgins, Director of the Department of Social Action, United States Catholic Conference; Very Rev. Jean Calvez, Provincial of the Jesuits of France; Rev. John Long, S. J., Assistant to the Secretary, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

On various occasions, His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim and His Excellency Bishop Michael of Tikhvin, Rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy, took part in the conversations.

The opening of the conversations took place in the Assembly Hall of the Theological Academy in the presence of the entire faculty and students. After an address of greeting by the Most Reverend Rector Bishop Michael, His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim and His Excellency Bishop Willebrands, pronounced introductory addresses explaining the character of the conversations which were to take place, and their significance.

The discussions were based on a series of expositions prepared on the following themes: 1) Social thought from Pope Leo XIII to Pope John XXIII (Prof. Ogitsky and Father Calvez); 2) social thought of the encyclicals *Mater et magistra*, *Pacem in terris*, *Populorum progressio*. (Monsignor Pavan, Prof. Zabolotsky and Mr. Bouevsky); 3) social thought of the Second Vatican Council (Archpriest Voronov and Monsignor Higgins). After each exposition there was a cordial and frank exchange of opinions covering a wide range of topics. In these discussions, particular attention was given to the following points: the competence of the Church in the social field, the relationship between the person — with his rights and duties — and society, the development of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on property, the experience of Christian service in diverse social systems, the interior peace and the spiritual richness of the human person in relation to social justice and peace between men and between nations.

The conversations took place in a fraternal ecumenical atmosphere. All the participants felt the close spiritual bonds existing among them which were emphasized by their daily prayer together, by their prayerful assistance at various liturgical services, and by the clearer understanding of each others religious traditions which was thus made possible.

On Sunday, December 10th, the Roman Catholic delegation was present in the cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Leningrad at the consecration of His Excellency Bishop Nicholas of Tokio, head of the Orthodox Religious Mission in Japan. At the invitation of Metropolitan Nikodim, Bishop Willebrands preached the sermon to the congregation during the Liturgy. The members of the delegation then participated at the reception offered by Metropolitan Nikodim in their honour and in honour of the new bishop of Tokyo.

On the same day, His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim, His Excellency Bishop Michael and all of the Orthodox participants, assisted at the Holy Mass

concelebrated by Bishop Willebrands and the other Catholic participants in the Roman Catholic Church of Leningrad dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. Afterwards, they were all guests of the pastor of the Church, Reverend Joseph Pavilonis, in the parish house.

On Wednesday evening, December 13 th, the Roman Catholic delegation, led by Bishop Willebrands, concelebrated Holy Mass in the Church of the Leningrad Theological Academy, in the presence of Metropolitan Nikodim, Bishop Michael and the members of the Orthodox delegation, as well as of the professors and students of the Academy and of the Seminary.

On December 14th, the Roman Catholic delegation travelled to Moscow. After a formal visit to the department of External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate, where the delegates were received by Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, President of the Department, they were guests at an official reception offered in their honour by His Eminence.

The same evening, in the Patriarchal residence of the Trinity-Sergeevskiy Monastery at Zagorsk, they were received in audience by His Holiness Alexis, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia. Bishop Willebrands presented to His Holiness a personal letter from His Holiness Pope Paul VI. The audience was marked by an extremely cordial atmosphere. Following upon this, at the invitation of His Excellency Bishop Filaret of Dimitrov, Rector of the Moscow Theological Academy, they assisted at the assembly commemorating the renowned Russian ecclesiastic of the 19th century, Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow. The members of the delegation were then guests of His Holiness, Patriarch Alexis, at supper.

On December 15th, Msgr. Pietro Pavan, Msgr. George Higgins and Father Jean Calvez left Moscow for Rome. His Excellency Bishop Willebrands and Father John Long remained for a few days as guests of the Moscow Patriarchate in order to visit the cities of Moscow, Tula and Jaroslavl to become better acquainted with local Church life.

In the course of the entire visit, the Roman Catholic delegation, in addition to its contacts with the religious life of the Orthodox Church, was able to become better acquainted with the history and cultural life of various places of the Soviet Union.

All the participants in the conversations are convinced that these first contacts between experts of the two Churches were extremely useful for obtaining a deeper understanding of their respective religious traditions and life, which can contribute towards finding new possibilities for cooperation among Christians in the service in the world of today.

Both groups were unanimous in feeling that similar meetings for discussing problems of mutual interest will be useful in the future.

Most Reverend John Willebrands  
Tit. Bishop of Mauriana  
Secretary of the Secretariat  
for Promoting Christian Unity

Most Reverend Juvenali  
Bishop of Zaraisk  
Vice President of the Department  
of External Church Affairs, Patriarchate of Moscow

Moscow, December, 15, 1967.