

## INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

### Catholics and the International Agencies

**G**ONE is the time when Catholics lived in their ghetto, but have our eyes quite attained their full field of vision? Readers of *BLACKFRIARS*, it may be hoped, have doubtless long ago discarded their myopic tendencies, but there are always new readers who may be glad of a short reminder of the various international organizations, and of the part Catholics have in them.

Pius XII, in his address to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, told us who listened that Catholics must take a greater part in international organizations, and speaking to the eleventh plenary assembly of Pax Romana in 1957 he said 'the co-operation of Catholics is desirable in all institutions which in theory respect and practise the tenets of the natural law; indeed they should try to keep them on the straight road, and play a beneficial role through their active participation, which our Divine Master has compared to salt and leaven'.

There is no need to dwell here on the existence and functions of the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.), and its analogous and specialized organizations, United Nations Educational, Social and Economic Organization (U.N.E.S.C.O.), the World Health Organization (W.H.O.), the Food and Agricultural Organization (F.A.O.) and the rest, all co-ordinated by the control exercised by the Social and Economic Council (E.C.O.S.O.C.). Besides these branches, of which there are a dozen or so, U.N.O. directs certain services established for emergency needs, for example, the High Commission for Refugees (H.C.R.), a service for children, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (U.N.C.E.F.) and so on. These organizations all have comparatively modest budgets to work on. If we had a really internationally-minded public all over the world, governments could be pressed to increase their subsidies to these works, affecting as they truly do the health and material happiness of millions. Despite the paucity of their resources, these organizations initiate all sorts of valuable projects. The W.H.O. committee of experts have done great work for world problems of sanitation, U.N.E.S.C.O.'s experts have launched pilot projects against illiteracy, and those of F.A.O. are conducting important enquiries into the cultivation of waste lands. Here, one would emphasize the great importance Catholics should attach to the findings of F.A.O., in view of the constant discussion of the problems of world population. It is through the facts and figures acquired by these scientists that a positive contribution can be made to any discussion on this subject. Otherwise, we can perhaps with justification be accused of a negative and complacent attitude, seeming to be willing to let people starve for a principle, whilst shutting our eyes to what is a real and terrible problem to all men of good will.

The Technical Assistance programmes of the United Nations are also of great importance to Catholics, for it is here that technical experts have a

chance to help the rapidly developing countries in the spirit of the Pope's directives. Catholic doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers have this opportunity if sent as experts, even if it does mean a temporary loss of prospects in this country. U.N.O. also has a service in Europe for 'short-term experts', which is a very interesting one.

Even this sketchy account of the activities of the United Nations will show that we cannot write it off as a mere talking shop, moving towards the fate of the old League of Nations. We may well say, with Professor Toynbee, that for the first time in history mankind has dared to believe that it is possible to make the benefits of civilization accessible to all members of the human family.

Catholics have yet another opportunity to find a place in the world framework, namely through the non-governmental organizations of U.N.O. on which about fifteen of the forty or so Catholic international bodies have consultative status. This means that they are called in as advisers and work regularly with U.N.O. Of the Catholic international bodies having this status, to mention a few only, are Pax Romana, the International Union of Catholic Social Service (I.U.C.S.S.), the International Catholic Nurses, and the Youth Organization. The forty Catholic organizations are co-ordinated by the Conference of International Catholic Organizations (I.C.O.). This has a permanent secretariat at Fribourg, and is generously supported by the Holy See, which always sends an observer to its meetings. It also has an information centre at Geneva, where its members can obtain all sorts of information about the sessions of U.N.O., which is of enormous use to the people who act as observers for us wherever the sessions are taking place. It may be imagined how vital this is when questions such as the rights of man and kindred questions are up. It is a most efficient body, with Fr Henri de Riedmatten, O.P., as ecclesiastical adviser, and it issues a reliable bulletin to its members.

A few details of specific international organizations may be of interest. For instance, the International Union of Catholic Social Service (I.U.C.S.S.) links a vast body of social workers and professors of social science in the five continents, and is represented in this country by the Guild of Catholic Professional Social Workers. Its founder and President has just died—Mlle Maria Baers, a remarkable Belgian woman, whose life work it was to make the Catholic voice in social service heard all over the world, fighting to obtain consultative status in the world organizations. She received her early training in the Christian Trade Union movement, being one of the first women to enter a very masculine stronghold. In 1925, with Victoire Cappe, she started the Catholic International Union of Social Service, with its headquarters in Brussels. The Union makes frequent oral and written interventions at the United Nations, always intervening when social questions are discussed. It has permanent observers in New York and Geneva, and works in close collaboration with the National Catholic Welfare Council of America. 1959 saw an interesting development in the seminar for Afro-Asian students who were going back to their respective countries to administer social services. They asked if this study week could

be held, so that they might learn about the papal social teaching, and about social work as done by Catholics. Again, some members of the Guild of Catholic Professional Social Workers of Great Britain last year gave papers at a seminar on 'supervision' held in Italy, and another member is the president of the Social Workers' Section of the Union.

A less specialized body holding consultative status is the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (U.M.O.F.) grouping thirty-six million women all over the world, including the Catholic Women's League and the Union of Catholic Mothers, and this country has a representative on the executive board. From these few illustrations, and many more could be given, it will be seen that Catholics in this country have every opportunity to be internationally minded, and to join in the world apostolate on the lines of the Pope's directives.

Men seem to have received little attention in this article, but their international bodies are well known; perhaps one might touch on a work in which they are joining in this country, that of the International Catholic Girls' Society, a constituent body of U.M.O.F., working here under the auspices of the National Board of Catholic Women, in order to help the crowds of foreign girls coming over here to work. The Knights of St Columba are on the committee, in order to advise on business matters relating to the hostel near Victoria Station, which was recently blessed by Cardinal Godfrey. Through this work, this country is also associated with the Catholic Commission for migration and emigration, with its headquarters in Geneva, also doing a work inspired by the Holy See.

It may be added that those who belong to no special professional or cultural association in this country are, as Catholics, committed to an international outlook by virtue of their Catholicism. Day by day the liturgy encourages us to pray for 'all nations', and certainly at the offertory of the Mass, when we offer the chalice with the priest '*pro nostra et totius mundi salute*'.

EVELYN WHITE

## ITALIAN OPINION

### Left or Right?

OFFICIAL reports on the Italian economic situation are more cheerful than at any time since the war. Industrial production is up by 6 per cent compared with 1958, and the average national income is rising. Italy as a whole, with its intelligent hard-working population, is becoming increasingly industrialized. This development, however, brings special problems and difficulties, and of these *The Economist* has recently made a useful analysis which was reprinted by the Catholic 'leftish' fortnightly *Adesso* (Milan) in its issue of June 15. Though enormous sums have been invested to develop the South, the results, for reasons which need not detain us here, are so far