

THE CHRISTIAN-MARXIST DIALOGUE AS REFLECTED IN THE THOUGHT OF  
JOSEF L. HROMADKA AND ROGER GARAUDY

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## PREFACE

The scope of this paper is limited to an examination of the two approaches to the Christian-Marxist dialogue proposed by Roger Garaudy and Josef L. Hromádka. The first two chapters are strictly the presentations of the men's respective positions. No attempt will be made to criticize either man's viewpoint in these first chapters. The third chapter is first, a criticism of each approach separately and secondly, a comparison of the two views. The final chapter includes a brief survey of the immediate history of the dialogue, the present situation of the dialogue, and a concluding statement.

Research was limited to works available in the United States. Works available in German as well as English were utilized with regard to both Garaudy and Hromádka. The works referred to in Chapters 1 and 2 are by the respective authors except when need for another source was indicated. The final chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the dialogue but is rather an attempt to communicate in brief form the extent of the dialogue. No attempt was made to form any judgment of Marxist theory or Christian faith aside from those aspects presented by the authors, except as noted in Chapter 4.

It is well for the reader to keep in mind some basic definitions with regard to various terms of Marxism. Marxism refers to the theory or philosophical system. Socialism refers to the political reality of the Eastern political situation at present. It is however, sometimes referred to by Marxists in a utopian manner, thus taking on the aspects

of the term communism which is regarded as the ultimate in human relationships, the classless society.

I extend special thanks to Dr. Glenn Torrey for the inspiration which sparked this study and his continual encouragement during the process of its development. Special appreciation is also extended to my wife, Linda, who cooperated so graciously throughout the entire study, and also to those who have contributed in various ways to the content or the research.

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## Chapter 1

### THE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH OF JOSEF HROMÁDKA

Josef Lukl Hromádka was born in 1889 in Hodslavica (Moravia), in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. From 1907 to 1912, he studied theology in Vienna, Basel, Heidelberg, and Aberdeen (Scotland). He then studied philosophy in Prague and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1920. From then until 1939 he served as a professor of theology with the Hus theological faculty in Prague. During his exile from the Czech lands (1939-1947), he taught at Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States. Since 1947, he has served on the Hus and Comenius Theological faculties until his death in 1969.

He had been under the influence of several great men. Two of whom he encountered early in his studies were F. M. Dostoyevski and Thomas G. Masaryk. Dostoyevski increased his awareness of the depth and misery of man's being. Hromádka soon discovered the secret of Dostoyevski that was hidden among the members of the "cesspool of human society," those who had reached the bottom of the abyss of helplessness: the murderers, hoodlums, and human monsters who shared his life in a Siberian prison.<sup>1</sup> Dostoyevski wrote about those people and realized from experience

. . . the very heart of the Gospel: the majestic, loving and all powerful God coming down from His holy place and encountering man

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<sup>1</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection (Richmond, Virginia: Madrus House, 1945), p. 38.

not on the highest peaks of human achievements, moral virtues, and sublime ideas but rather in depths where human life reaches the most gruesome depravity, helplessness, misery, and sorrow.<sup>2</sup>

This understanding was of key importance to Hromádka. Thomas Masaryk, a fellow Czechoslovakian and a leading European statesman and philosopher, revealed to Hromádka the gross inadequacies of the old ecclesiastical order and political world in meeting the needs of man which arise out of the very depths of his being.<sup>3</sup> He accused the old order for its reactionary blindness and lack of genuine compassion, of responsibility, for the suffering soul of man.<sup>4</sup> However, Masaryk was also quick to point out the need for tradition which he defined as a

. . . covenant between fathers and sons, a mutual pledge of allegiance to what our conscience regards as true and just, noble and right . . . a responsible continuance of the struggle for the highest ideals and aspirations of our history, a continuous reaffirmation of our loyalty to the great cause of truth and righteousness.<sup>5</sup>

This latter emphasis is also of great importance to Hromádka's ideas. In addition to the impact of these men, he was influenced by the great turmoil of Eastern Europe in the twentieth century and especially the Czech lands, through two world wars and the advent of Marxism. Crisis Theology became popular because of Karl Barth, probably the greatest modern theologian. In many ways Hromádka's theological stance is very similar to Barth's. Dr. John A. Mackay, then President of Princeton

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 60.



Theological Seminary, described Hromádka in the introduction to Hromádka's book Doom And Resurrection as ". . . a spirit closely akin to the great Swiss theologian, and yet independent of him."<sup>6</sup>

Although Barth and Hromádka came to similar theological conclusions, Hromádka was a thinker in his own right and based much of his thought upon Czech history and Russian thinkers. As early as 1918, he was writing about the lack of significance of the Church in society.<sup>7</sup> He became so disgusted with the complacency of the Church and so frustrated with his many ineffectual attempts at sparking new vitality and life into it, that he retired into the study of Church history. However, in 1948, after the February overthrow of the democratic government by the communists, he saw his chance once again to serve as a prophet for the Church. He welcomed the loss of nominal members when persecution of the Church began. Since that time he had been highly placed within the Church of the Czech Brethren and an influential leader not only in the Church but in the government as well. Although Hromádka had often been accused of being a communist, i.e., the "Red theologian," he steadily maintained that he had freedom within the system and that he was faithful to the message of the Gospel.

His last obvious effort at bringing together East and West for discussion was the formation of the Christian Peace Conference

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., cf. Dr. Mackay's introduction to the book.

<sup>7</sup>Milan Machovec, Marxismus und dialektische Theologie (Zurich: EVZ-Verlag, 1965), p. 132.

established in Czechoslovakia in 1961.<sup>8</sup> Since that time, only three full meetings have been held--none of which has been able to accomplish much because of the misunderstanding of the cause, mistrust among participants, and disagreement even upon the meaning of words among the delegates and those they represented. Hromádka wrote prolifically--mostly in Czech, and had been actively encouraging the dialogue between Marxists and Christians in sermons and speeches. His life and actions, acknowledges Milan Machovec, a Marxist philosopher and colleague of Hromádka at Comenius, had been consistently an example of what he preached.<sup>9</sup>

In December of 1969, Dr. Hromádka resigned from the presidency of the Christian Peace Conference in protest against the forced resignation of its general secretary following the re-Stalinization of the Czech political structure. Within the next few weeks Hromádka's health suffered a rapid deterioration and he died on December 26, 1969 at the age of eighty.

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<sup>8</sup>The Christian Peace Conference was established in the hope that both East and West could find in it a means of coming together as Christian brothers. As such, it was not intended that the Peace Conference serve as a political forum but that ranking Churchmen might attend and demonstrate the power of Christ to overcome the barriers of national and cultural prejudice. However, the possibility for utilizing the Peace Conference as a political forum became an actuality as both East and West, convinced of their respective political "rightness" refused to listen to each other as brothers in Christ and instead proclaimed their respective political "gospels." Pressure from the Eastern political establishment and Western belief in "liberating" the East may have been the ultimate reasons for the failure of the Peace Conference to live up to its intended ideal.

<sup>9</sup>Machovic, Dialektische Theologie, p. 131.

## THE DILEMMA

Hromádka viewed the dialogue between Christians and Marxists as being a life or death issue.<sup>10</sup> Mankind and its future on earth are at stake. The pressure for dialogue comes most strongly from the danger of nuclear war. It has become apparent since the Russian revolution that the needs of mankind have not been met in Western society. By "Western Society" Hromádka intended that not even the so-called advanced "Christian" society met the needs of man, and that a better system was needed. Hromádka therefore noted that the rise of communism and its vitality testify to the fact that we are living in a new era and must make a new beginning.<sup>11</sup> The dilemma is that man must find answers to very personal, existential questions. He must be allowed to realize the fullness of his humanity. The present world situation of civil disorders, revolutions, wars and the threat of annihilation, has revealed Man ". . . in his bare existence, . . ." with his ". . . longing for dignity, freedom, justice, equality, love and pity. Against this, wrote Hromádka, what are all the prejudices, all the preconceived notions, mistrust, pride, and self-justification, all the historical or artificially created divisions of humanity . . . behind which man has hid, despised and declared an enemy?"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz oder ausräumbare Missverständnisse?" Partner Von Morgen? ed. Hans-Joachim Girock (Berlin: Kreuz-Verlag, 1968), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, "Gospel for Atheists," Risk, I (Spring, 1965), 16.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Hromádka stressed that both sides in the dialogue must achieve a self-understanding. Both must share the guilt of placing man where he is today--in this dilemma. Yet it is, hopefully, this very dilemma which allows men to see themselves in their naked humanity. It is out of the depths of this dilemma that Christian "man" and communist "man" can come together, not as representatives of ideological systems, but as human beings with their hearts, minds, sorrows and sins, desires and aspirations.<sup>13</sup> This self-understanding, this solidarity of humanity must be realized before a ". . . real openhearted dialogue without suspicion distrust and prejudice . . ." can take place.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE REJECTION OF LIBERAL THEOLOGY

Hromádka's theology, paralleling the line of the Crisis Theologians, is a strong and outspoken denial of "liberal" theology and its acceptance of relative truths. He especially condemned it for its failure to join the side of the Confessing church during the Nazi power days. He also blamed it for paving the way for a racial church in Germany and within her orbit. The liberal theology ". . . had made all the necessary preparation for the 'Germanization of Christianity' and for a racial Church."<sup>15</sup> Hromádka concluded that ". . . any theology which replaces the authoritative word of the Lord of the Old and New

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<sup>13</sup>Josef Hromádka, "Towards a Dialogue," Communio Viatorum, II (Winter, 1959), 310.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection, p. 102.

Covenants by abstract theories runs very easily into confusion."<sup>16</sup> Hromádka brought this experience into the dialogue with the Marxists by declaring that ". . . only a Christian believer, who grasps the Biblical message within his human existence, can lead a creative and meaningful discussion with the Marxists."<sup>17</sup> Only such a believer may have a meaningful encounter with the Marxists toward a creative end. He understood the desire of some theologians to find the existential meaning of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, he knew the Gospel to be more than existential: he found it overcoming the borders of man's existence to comprehend the objective social and cosmic world. The task of the Christian therefore becomes that of showing not only the existential but also the objective happening between the heaven and earth at the cross of Christ, and man's relationship with that.<sup>18</sup> As a result of his disappointment with liberal theology, and his encounter with Dostoyevski, Masaryk, Barth and others, Hromádka formulated his own theology of crisis which remained consistent and relevant throughout his life and remains so even at this time.

#### THE ACCEPTANCE OF CRISIS THEOLOGY

The Crisis Theology of Hromádka stems partly from that of Karl Barth and in large measure from Hromádka's own experiences. Its

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>17</sup>Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz," p. 10. All translations from the German material are my own. "Nur ein gläubiger Christ, der die biblische Botschaft mit seiner Existenz erfasst, kann ein schöpferisches und sinnvolles Gespräch mit dem Marxisten führen.

<sup>18</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, An Der Schwelle des Dialogs (Frankfort am Main: Stimme-Verlog, 1965), p. 73.

influence is everywhere apparent when one looks at his life: both words and actions. The theology of crisis emphasizes that God is encountered only when one is confronted with his own frailty and utter helplessness. The central mission of this theology is to understand the point where this confrontation takes place, where the Lord of the universe encounters mortal man.<sup>19</sup> It is at that point where man encounters God that he is found to be in a crisis:

What is going on at the precise point where the personal, vertical challenge of the Living God cuts across the very existence of our personal life? What does it mean that God, The God, and not our idea of the Prime Cause, not our idea of the Holy, not our better self, not the Spirit of Nature, not the Harmonizer of the Universe, encounters us and demands a personal, inescapable, life-and-death decision? A decision "hic et nunc," at the present moment, a decision that cannot be shirked, or delayed and postponed? These are the central question of theology.<sup>20</sup>

It is at the boundary of man's very existence, at the core of his being that he encounters God: at the line of death, ". . . the meaning of God . . . begins to shine at the point where we see ourselves without security, without firm ground under our feet, where all we have relied upon proves to be unreliable, collapsible and fragile."<sup>21</sup> Because the advent of the Marxist is seen to produce such a crisis (or to be the result of such a crisis, it is better said) the dialogue takes on a life and death significance. Yet, this is the very point that is so hard to communicate to those who believe that they can meet God on

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<sup>19</sup>Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

their own terms. It is in Crisis theology that God meets man on His own terms, where He will, and on His own presuppositions.<sup>22</sup>

Crisis theology is integrally related with history, for it is in history that we meet God, that man is faced with decisions. This theology deals ". . . with realities and facts of the divine majesty and grace, hidden behind our rational faculties, . . ." yet ". . . present, in an unequivocal way, to everybody who encounters God at the point of His intervention."<sup>23</sup> Again Hromádka stressed the point that God cannot be found, that the point of contact cannot be located by human strivings --it is only

. . . in the moment God has spoken, and man has been overwhelmed by His word, his conscience, his reason, his will and his emotional compassion for other people become such a powerful instrument in God's hands that the world of our civilization, of our accepted values and conventions, begins to tremble, and all we have taken for granted has got to be re-examined, scrutinized, and re-fortified.<sup>24</sup>

It is in communism that Hromádka saw the judgment of God, that he heard God's voice. From the depths of despair and an ". . . awful 'no' between God and man, . . ." the theologians of crisis have been ". . . overwhelmed by the divine 'yes.'"<sup>25</sup> Because of the injustice, immorality, and insensitiveness of the old society God crushed it in judgment, yet in the midst of the crisis Hromádka could see the plan of God just as the Old Testament prophets in their day. The divine "yes"

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

pointed in the direction of repentance and change. Wrote Hromádka, "We cannot go back. We cannot save civilization by conservative caution or by reactionary devices."<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to go back because God's judgment is against the old society and because behind the current events of history stands the Risen Lord. He was a companion in the judgment, He is the Lord of the resurrection.<sup>27</sup> Hromádka pointed out that without the Cross, there can be no resurrection, that is, without the judgment of communism the old society could not be changed. Yet, of supreme importance is the fact that without the resurrection, the Cross is ". . . a bleak monument of death and despair, . . ." that is, without a reconstruction of a new society in repentance of the old society, mankind will be left in despair and crushed at the bottom of the abyss of helplessness. In other words, Hromádka's point is that to resist the formation of a new society is to fight against the will of God and the Lord of History; it is to blindly grope when light is all around. He called not for a sell out, but for a dialogue which he believed has been commanded as a prerequisite for a resurrection of a society acceptable to God. The material below will more fully explain Hromádka's theology of crisis.

#### THE HISTORICAL CRISIS

Of first significance to Hromádka in viewing the old order is the realization that ". . . there has been, is, and will be no Christian

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 122.



society."<sup>28</sup> Further, he adds that "Christian civilization is an illusion."<sup>29</sup> He also notes that it is just as much an illusion to assume that there is an atheist state.<sup>30</sup> Without this understanding, no dialogue can take place. It is in Hromádka's Crisis theology that this point is most readily seen. In his theology all social and political ideas and legal norms are ". . . subordinate to the authority of Christ."<sup>31</sup> For Hromádka, the Gospel is not to be attached to any political or social order but to be free to move within and criticize all. It is common knowledge that in the West, especially within the United States, there is a close tie between patriotism and Christianity. Such a fact has given many American missionaries difficulty in various other countries. Of more importance to Hromádka, however, was the fact that many Western Christians were also anti-communist, as were many of his own countrymen. This tie between politics and faith has been traditional for several centuries. As such, it has been taken for granted. Many other concepts have as well been taken for granted. For this reason, Hromádka stated that we shall be forced ". . . to re-examine substantially the concepts of right and justice, of the State and liberty."<sup>32</sup> But, this re-examination can only come when Western society has seen

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<sup>28</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, The Church and Theology In Today's Troubled Times (Prague: Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia, 1956), p. 81.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>30</sup>Hromádka, Gospel for Atheists, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup>Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup>Hromádka, The Church and Theology, p. 83.

itself to be in ". . . the bottom of the abyss . . . only then, our heart sets itself free from all miserable self-interest and cowardly fear."<sup>33</sup>

The bottom of the abyss is, according to Hromádka, the utter corruption and weakness of Western society, its lack of compassion for man and inability to meet his needs. During the period of his stay in the United States, he observed the conditions of life in that country and drew this unique conclusion:

What we euphemistically called an absolute honesty and frankness, or a total absence of hypocrisy on the part of the American youth, may in fact be an indication that the essential foundations of our moral life have disintegrated, that our people have ceased to be interested in the eternally valid criteria of faith, thought and morality. They are frank and honest in a negative way; not only do they not believe in traditional and conventional standards of life, but they do not even think any absolute norm of our conduct and thought matters or exists. Is this a manifestation of youth and virile strength or of weariness and decay?<sup>34</sup>

Hromádka, thus, believed the indications were that even American society was nearing the bottom of the abyss. He realized that no civilization can survive without universally valid moral and social patterns. The disintegration of the old European society since the turn of the century had shown him that a new basis for validity had to be found, as the old was exhausted and corrupt. It is in the confrontation of this new basis to be found in communism with the old that Hromádka believed would leave the old devastated. Therefore it is necessary that Christians early attempt to influence the formation of the expanding new

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<sup>33</sup>Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

social order. Again, looking at the old social order still existing in Western society, Hromádka described it as a ". . . macabre dance of men without bones, without sense of rhythm and melody, without order and discipline, without beauty and joy. A macabre dance at the edge of the abyss."<sup>35</sup> In 1961, Hromádka wrote that we ". . . have actually descended into the deepest abyss . . . we have pushed modern man into the abyss of doubt and hopelessness; we have forced modern man--worker and proletarian--to take his life into his own hands, to throw out the old moral, social and political order."<sup>36</sup> In the face of present "Black power" and "Chicano power" movements in the United States, one must search deeply about the truth of this statement. Hromádka found the alliance of faith and "Weltanschauung" to be the cause of much of humanity's problems. Because of this alliance many political crimes were committed in the name of Christ, and the corruption of the system has crept into the church to create an exhausted Christianity.<sup>37</sup> With respect to the present situation,

. . . what must absolutely be considered is the danger that the sick, exhausted but externally still functioning Christianity will be used as the defender, ideologist and instrument against the so-called Atheistic world.<sup>38</sup>

Hromádka recognized the upsurge in biblical theology in the Western world which has occurred since the failure of liberal theology to

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>36</sup>Hromádka, Gospel For Atheists, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

provide any viable answers to man's problems. Yet, he believed this movement to be only the last kick before the old order went under, because it would not be able to penetrate far enough to affect the masses of alienated men. Thus, Western society is too late in discovering its emptiness and hypocrisy and too late in finding the usefulness of biblical wisdom and truth to save it. The structures of the old society are too unconcerned with man's needs. Even the Ecumenical movement, he predicted, would fail to penetrate into the congregations, so that ultimately the so-called Christian countries would remain untouched by the message of the Gospel.<sup>39</sup>

Hromádka believed that once the fact of Western weakness and its exhausted Christianity were realized, then the fact of their solidarity with the rest of mankind would also be known. However, he noted that until ". . . we grasp and experience our inner solidarity, in spite of all our outward differences, we cannot make a new start."<sup>40</sup> What is this solidarity that Hromádka spoke about? It is found in the common human experiences of sin, suffering, guilt and sorrow; in hope, love and brotherhood.<sup>41</sup> Even the Church, so often thought of as the last bastion against the "world" carries within it solidarity with the rest of mankind because of its human members. It too, must recognize this solidarity with the world and its diseases and pains.<sup>42</sup> Until this

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Hromádka, The Church And Theology, p. 88.

solidarity is recognized by all, the dialogue is impossible. It is this solidarity which will overcome ideological positions and "Weltanschauungs." It is this solidarity that Hromádka viewed as so important in allowing each man to see the other not as an 'enemy' but as another human being.

#### THE GROUNDS FOR DIALOGUE

Hromádka's first question in the dialogue is "Was aber ist der Mensch?"<sup>43</sup> What is man? What is his essence? What is his very being and his destination? What is the essence of man in his relation with the objective world and in his personal life? Where is the starting point?

A view of Marxism. From the Marxist side the basic foundation for dialogue with Christianity, and indeed for all men, is found not in atheism, but in Marxism's character as a radical humanism.<sup>44</sup> Within Marxism are nearly all the ethical and social elements from the living biblical Christianity of the Middle Ages and the Reformation times.<sup>45</sup> Hromádka stressed that this radical humanism is a result of the struggle against the form of religion. Thus, it was Hromádka's contention that ". . . the God whom the Marxists deny is human fiction, self-deception, an effort to lead one away from the true recognition of human reality."<sup>46</sup> Further, the atheism of the Marxists is not the negative atheism of

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<sup>43</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 57.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Hromádka, The Church And Theology, p. 92.

skeptics, cynics, and nihilists, but a positive atheism which has allied itself with the Marxist struggle. It is a case of the revolutionary finding the dignity of man and seeing in God an ally of the rich, the mighty, and the ruling class. Hromádka believed this atheism to be merely a secondary characteristic of communism, something that was in the early social and political movement but not necessarily a part of the new order.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, he questioned ". . . whether this kind of atheism is in a position to give creative help in establishing a socialist society or if it will finally create a fatal vacuum in the soul of the communist people."<sup>48</sup> The Marxist society is in need of guidance with respect to how man will live as ". . . neither the theory nor the building of the new order of society is an end in itself."<sup>49</sup> After decades of socialist rule, even the atheistic Marxist has been forced to see that man is more than a product of nature, history, and economic circumstances.<sup>50</sup> Rather, man is seen to be ". . . a working, forming, creating person, whose new meaning for existence, through his work, through his thought, and his responsibility, stamps and guides history."<sup>51</sup> The Marxist, however he interprets man, is interested in

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<sup>47</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 49.

<sup>48</sup>Hromádka, Gospel for Atheists, p. 23.

<sup>49</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup>Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz," p. 14.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 15. "Aber als solche ist er nicht nur ein passives Rad im Mechanismus der Welt, sondern er ist eine arbeitende, gestaltende, schaffende Person, die neue Lebensbedingungen durch ihre Arbeit, durch ihr Denken und ihre Verantwortung prägt und die Geschichte lenkt."

helping him. Man and humanity are at the center of the Marxist's thought and action. Hromádka did not see Marxism as another "Weltanschauung." He saw it rather as a searching movement in quest of the security of non-exploitation, man's freedom to be guaranteed against exploitation and the guarantee of his right to dwell decently.<sup>52</sup>

Hromádka wrote in 1945 that the ". . . problem is to find what the supreme criterion of justice is and who is the ultimate guarantor that truth will prevail against untruth."<sup>53</sup> In 1956, he wrote that the ". . . classless society, which is the goal of human activity founded upon realistic knowledge and exact understanding of history and of society, is a guarantee of full human rights and of full freedom."<sup>54</sup> The classless society is therefore one of the goals of Marxism which Hromádka found compatible with the Gospel. In the face of criticism over the obvious imbalance of the communist system and tactics, he commented:

One has often marked and stamped this fact with the word "Totalitarianism." But if there are also certainly totalitarian tendencies held therein, stronger in the past than in the present, so one must not forget that it is a question of psychological and sociological necessity, to keep the revolutionary process and the beginning of the new social political structure from political chaos or spiritual anarchy.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, the Marxist may at times be rough and ready but it is only for the sake of the new society and to help man. Ideology is also a

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<sup>52</sup>Hromádka, The Church and Theology, p. 91.

<sup>53</sup>Hromádka, Doom and Resurrection, p. 104.

<sup>54</sup>Hromádka, The Church and Theology, p. 92.

<sup>55</sup>Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz," p. 13.

necessity until the new order can be fully established. Until then, however, the ideology must be a forward looking weapon whose impact cannot be broken or diminished in the present struggle.<sup>56</sup> The socialistic East finds itself in the exhaustive task of building the new foundations of society as the old ones were forsaken. It is the tenseness of this work which causes those appearances characterized as totalitarian. In essence, however, ideology and rough tactics are nothing more than tools for the external and internal integration of the socialist principles and views of the new society, which must be protected against disintegration.<sup>57</sup>

A Christian viewpoint. The Church, in its answer to the Marxist interpretations of man must first of all hold to the principles of its reformation heritage. Hromádka stipulated six main points stemming from this heritage which must be held:

1. A practical interpretation of the Word of God--dealing with the active relation from man to man.
2. Jesus Christ is the supreme Lord of life and of the soul.
3. The Church is a communion of pilgrims--it is not an institution.
4. The Church is close to the common, poor, humiliated people--it does not become a tool of the rich.
5. There is an opposition to narrow confessionalism and a goal of Unitas Fratrum!

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<sup>56</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 81.

<sup>57</sup>Hromádka, Gospel for Atheists, p. 36.



## 6. The final victory of Jesus Christ.<sup>58</sup>

The question must be asked of where one should start in his thinking: with the individual or society? This is indeed a question for which East and West have found varying answers. For Hromádka, Jesus Christ is the center in which the society and the individual are valid ". . . at one and the same time."<sup>59</sup> In Jesus Christ one knows that he has no claims and that he is obliged to put everything he has at the service of his neighbor. The influence of the cross of Christ had been very profound in Hromádka's life and thinking. The fact that Christ gave up all claims to his rightful position in order to come to earth and even to be despised and killed by men and yet in doing so to provide them with a way out of the abyss, has shown to Hromádka that the Church can do no less:

But how can the sinner be brought to real repentance if one does not go directly to him, and in serving love take the burden of disbelief, doubt, and helplessness upon oneself? We must not wait until the sinner repents in order to embrace him. That is exactly what is perverted with our "Christian" action; we declare our readiness to communicate with the sinful atheist, but we stand above the sinful world and self-righteously wait until it repents and changes. This is a real contradiction of the position of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man and the Word which became flesh.<sup>60</sup>

In dealing with the first point from the reformation heritage, that of a practical interpretation of the Word of God, he found that it is impossible to comprehend the Word of God unless it is focused on man,

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<sup>58</sup>Hromádka, The Church and Theology, a summary of points found on pages 18-20.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>60</sup>Hromádka, Gospel for Atheists, p. 28.

as its essence is concerned with man. Milan Machovec wrote that Hromádka's understanding of the Gospel is as it applies to man.<sup>61</sup> In fact, Machovec recognized Hromádka's God to be not above the atheists as in other theologies, but specifically for the atheists.<sup>62</sup> The Gospel, as a counterpart to Marxism, constantly ". . . seeks man, fights beside him and liberates him, . . ." wrote Hromádka.<sup>63</sup>

The new order will be incapable of viewing man in as deep or as penetrating a way as does the Gospel. For this reason, the Gospel message is needed. The Gospel shows man in the depth of his heart and consciousness and in his guilt and sin. Indeed, Hromádka wrote that there can be ". . . no illusion about man as if the change of the social circumstances automatically presuppose the destruction of human sin and guilt."<sup>64</sup> The fact is that the deepest identity of man reaches over everything that knowledge and technology and social political changes can erect.<sup>65</sup> The new order may be able to create specific forms of human relationships, but it cannot deal with the individual's struggle within himself. With the help of the Gospel message, the new order can, in Hromádka's opinion, become acceptable in the man to man relationship; however, only the Gospel can deal with man's inner struggles against himself. Still, the mission of the Church is greater than just the

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<sup>61</sup>Machovec, Dialektische Theologie, p. 134.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>63</sup>Hromádka, The Church and Theology, p. 28.

<sup>64</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 77.

<sup>65</sup>Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz," p. 16.

inner struggle. "The socialistic and communistic society," wrote Hromádka, "needs cohesion of mind, secure principles, ethical discipline and clear future perspectives without which it could not exist and could not create something new and special--even with all its science and technology, with all its administrative order and external forcefulness."<sup>66</sup> If the new order is to succeed therefore, the Church must provide these assets which the new order will not automatically possess. It is also the purpose of the Church to help the communists to come to true self-understanding. This is the purpose of the dialogue: that both sides achieve a deeper and fuller self-understanding.<sup>67</sup> In more specific terms, the Church's mission is to place

. . . before the atheist the reality of faith and to demonstrate that what we understand from the Gospel and living Church, transcends by far the traditional and frequently worn out conceptions of religion; and that the genuine faith in the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth is very different from what the Marxistic atheist conceives of as being religion. This Gospel is free and open to all scientific and critical attempts to discover man, history and nature. It is free towards all social and political--also revolutionary--upheavals and reforms.<sup>68</sup>

Further, Hromádka stated that it is the task of the Church to lead humanity in love and faithful hope through the storms, misunderstanding, and nervousness of the situation and prepare him for the new structure of society as well as for the spiritual struggle.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the very foundation--that which will insure the success and continuance--of the

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<sup>66</sup>Hromádka, Gospel for Atheists, p. 35.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

new society must be supplied through the work of the Church and its knowledge of man and his essential being and needs.

The Church cannot, however, expect to have the full support and backing of the civil government of the new order. That would be too much to hope for anyway, as it has always ended with the Church's decreased ability to function. Never more should it expect to operate from the position of power. The Church must, on the other hand, make an appeal to the humanity of the new order, in love, and be willing with its witness and responsibility to warn of any inner faults or points of decomposition.<sup>70</sup> It is worthy of note that Hromádka welcomed the persecution of the Church in Czechoslovakia for its immense help in ridding the Church of the comfortable, stagnant, and faithless members. The use of the word "appeal" shows plainly the position the Church is to occupy in the new order, as ". . . poverty is more than wealth, humility more than pride, pain more than a full stomach, death in the service of love more than the triumph of falsehood, power and of the wealthy."<sup>71</sup>

In concluding this chapter on Hromádka's thought, it is important to consider the point that he did not propose any synthesis of Marxism and Christianity. He recognized plainly the deep cleft between the two: "Between the faith in the Gospel and the ideology of the new society (dialectical and historical materialism) no connection in the sense of a synthesis can be given."<sup>72</sup> Instead, the dialogue must be

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<sup>70</sup>Hromádka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz," p. 17.

<sup>71</sup>Hromádka, An Der Schwelle, p. 75.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 83. "Zwischen dem Glauben an das Evangelium und der Ideologie der neuen Gesellschaft (dem dialektischen und historischen Materialismus) kann es keine Verbindung im Sinne einer Synthese geben."

recognized as taking place on two planes. The message of the Gospel cannot concur with any earthly philosophy.<sup>73</sup> When this fact is understood, the dialogue may take place freely. The Church is to remain free to criticize and to warn. The Western Christians, Hromádka believed, would not be so afraid of the dialogue if they could but free themselves from their peculiar "Weltanschauung" and thereby remain true to the message of the Gospel which cannot be tied down by such, except in distorted form.

It must be stressed again that Hromádka's approach to Marxism was not a decision of convenience. He was convinced of the legitimacy of the new society as a government instituted by God. From his own historical perspective, he could say that ". . . the social and economic transformation of our life along the lines of socialism cannot be 'contained' and halted."<sup>74</sup> Faced with the decision of what to do when confronted with a socialistic government, he concluded that ". . . my faith does not allow me to withdraw into the holy of holies of my innermost inwardness. I do believe that my place is, precisely at the present moment, on the spot of the most essential changes of my country."<sup>75</sup> He recognized the tightrope upon which he was walking and at any moment may drop him. Yet, he believed that he had no choice but to proceed:

The Communist-controlled regime may, with a sinister inner logic, drive our life into the straight-jacket of a police state

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>74</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," Christianity and Crisis, VIII (May 24, 1948), 69.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

and a totalitarian system. However, I believe in the possibility of another alternative that the Christian heritage and witness may prove to be a transforming power and keep the new socialistic or communistic order free from spiritual stagnation and impotence.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

## Chapter 2

### THE MARXIST APPROACH OF ROGER GARAUDY

Roger Garaudy has been a fervent Marxist since 1933 when he joined the communist party at the age of twenty. He became a member of the Political Bureau soon after his membership in the Central Committee in 1945. He was elected a senator in 1959, and served as a deputy for two periods prior to that election (1945-51, and 1956-58). He has been a leading polemicist for the French Marxists throughout his career. An intellectual himself, he has always urged fellow communist intellectuals to use their abilities within their own areas of specialization, i.e., science, politics, theater, etc., for the spreading of Marxist theory.

The dialogue with the Christian Churches is not a totally new idea to Garaudy. He was courting the Church in France as far back as 1945, when he described the Soviet system of tax relief for large families to the French Catholics. Later in 1949, he acknowledged that although the party would pursue an all-out ideological battle against religious belief, it would not resort to force.<sup>1</sup> As the party's leading polemicist, Garaudy has never been reluctant to dialogue, with the Christian community, or even with fellow Marxists. In fact, Garaudy has been known to seek dialogue with fellow Marxists in the attempt to keep them on the right track in their political ideas. One such case was

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<sup>1</sup>David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 164.

that of his own mentor, Henri Lefebvre, who quickly lost both face and power before the ". . . philosophical gendarme and heresy-hunter."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most embarrassing confrontation in Garaudy's career, occurred with Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre had been a strong Marxist, but became disillusioned with the movement. Garaudy became his ". . . persistent adversary and denigrater."<sup>3</sup> In one particular debate, "Sartre asked him whether atheism was not an a priori assumption, . . ." when Garaudy denied all knowledge but scientific knowledge. Sartre concluded that: ". . . he did not regard himself as being any less metaphysical in denying god than Leibniz had been in discovering him."<sup>4</sup>

In 1962, Garaudy was appointed to a chair at Clermont Ferrand over the protests of the faculty. Presently he is the director of the Center for Marxist Study and Research in Paris and professor of philosophy at the University Institute of Potiers. With regard to the Marxist-Christian dialogue, he has been lecturing frequently, engaging in actual dialogue, and writing about it as well. In 1966, Garaudy toured the United States and participated in several dialogues with such persons as Leslie Dewart, Harvey Cox and Paul Van Buren. He has also delivered a series of lectures at Harvard Divinity School and the John LaFarge Institute in New York. He has, in addition, co-authored books with Catholics in a dialogue form, i.e., A Christian-Communist Dialogue, with Quentin Lauer, S. J.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



On February 8, 1970, Garaudy was ousted from the French Communist Party's Central Committee. The move was the climax of a furious debate in which Garaudy condemned the Czechoslovakian invasion by Russia and insisted that the Soviet model should not be applied in France.<sup>5</sup> It has become apparent that the more "orthodox" party members now hold the real power. On May 20, 1970, Garaudy was also dropped from the list of French Communist Party members.

#### THE RETURN TO MARXIST BASICS

Garaudy believes the dialogue of Christians and Marxists to be an ". . . objective necessity."<sup>6</sup> Two reasons spark this statement:

First, in this second half of the twentieth century the presently existing stocks of atomic and thermonuclear bombs have made it technically possible to destroy every trace of life on earth.

The second fact is that on this earth, this vessel floating in space with three billion men aboard, which a dissension in the crew could scuttle at any moment, there are two great conceptions of the world: Hundreds of millions of human beings find in a religious belief the meaning of their life and of their death . . . for hundreds of millions of others it is Communism.<sup>7</sup>

These reasons have given the Marxists cause to reflect upon their movement, to examine its direction and means. This reflection has, according to Garaudy, directed them toward a return to the basics of Marxism. The problem in Marxism is that with the publication of Stalin's works, which ". . . summed up materialism in three principles,

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<sup>5</sup>New York Times, February 9, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Roger Garaudy, "The Marxist-Christian Dialogue: Possibilities, Problems, Necessity," Continuum, III (Winter, 1966), 403.

<sup>7</sup>Roger Garaudy, "Communists and Christians in Dialogue," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXII (March, 1967), 205.

dialectic in four laws and historical materialism in five stages, . . ."

the movement fell asleep.<sup>8</sup> What has caused this reawakening? Garaudy lists three major events in our time which have led the Marxists to examine the very foundation of their movement: the amazingly rapid development of science and technology, the building of socialism in one-third of the globe, and the growth of national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>9</sup> The conclusion of this self-investigation as Garaudy sees it, is the realization that ". . . we do not have an exclusive hold on the truth."<sup>10</sup> Such a statement implies a change of thought from the traditional view of the Marxist. Garaudy clarifies his position by showing that ". . . to be faithful to Marx means to be faithful not to the texts, as if these were sacred texts, but to use his method, which is a method of always going beyond."<sup>11</sup> Garaudy is thus freeing the movement from the "theory." In fact, being faithful to Marx's method implies that Communism is not the theory of the texts but the movement itself. Such allows for change and divergence and for the discovering of the truth which is not fully possessed.

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<sup>8</sup>Roger Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," The Christian Marxist Dialogue, ed. Paul Oestreicher (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969), p. 140.

<sup>9</sup>Roger Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), p. 79.

<sup>10</sup>Initiative in History: A Christian-Marxist Exchange, The Church Society For College Work (May, 1967), 18, An Occasional Paper.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

## BASIC MARXIST CONCEPTS

The concept of knowledge. The concepts of knowledge, models, projects and reflection, are vague and closely related. Garaudy's own explanations of them do not alleviate the difficulty of communicating their meanings. Knowledge is known as both project and reflection.<sup>12</sup> It is both active and passive: before being a pure reflection of things, knowledge is a construction of things.<sup>13</sup> The meaning of this latter statement is that man acquires knowledge by trial and error: man constructs his models according to the way things resist.<sup>14</sup> When there is conflict, a model must be reconstructed. Knowledge determines the representation we have of reality.<sup>15</sup> One does not experience the truth of reality, only one's own knowledge of that reality which should be growing progressively closer to that truth. The method for discovering more of the bits and pieces of the truth is through the concept of models.

The use of models. The model is ". . . a reconstruction of the real according to a human plan. It makes evident 'the active side' of knowledge, the project's role in it."<sup>16</sup> Model is thus, an approach to reality. For example, there are varying socialistic models both in chronology and location. Engels himself explained that "Marxism would

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<sup>12</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Initiative in History, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 81.

have to take a new form with each new development in science."<sup>17</sup> That is the essence of Marxism "going beyond" itself. Besides the changing of models as the result of time, there is a plurality of socialistic models among various countries, i.e., because of location. This plurality has grown out of the one original model in the Soviet Union. Because of the new conditions that model created, others are now possible.<sup>18</sup>

Another form of model is that of myth. Garaudy acknowledges that beyond science there are questions to which science has no answers and these are delegated, for the time being, to the realm of myth and philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Myth is a pre-rational model--not verified by the experimental method.<sup>20</sup> As such, it provides man with a means of acting and a manner of being and it bestows meaning.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, it must be acknowledged that every model is part myth.<sup>22</sup> Every model involves points that do not coincide in a one-to-one correspondence with the reality of things. That is why "going beyond" is so important. Between the model and the real is a dialectic involving project and reflection, testing to discover the mythical and to replace it with the scientific. The beginning of every human project is therefore, myth. Both myth and science are attempts at answering questions concerning man, his origin,

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<sup>17</sup>Initiative in History, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>19</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 145.

<sup>20</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 80.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 141.

and his destiny. Between myth and science is thus, a similarity of function.<sup>23</sup> Myth is a first science.

The concept of project. Project involves the human capacity and practice of reaching out to test for what is real. It is the active side of knowledge. Thus the behavior of the institutional church with respect to its social role and the behavior of a socialist state in its social role are two human projects. Project is that which first asserts itself and thereby allows man to attain knowledge by reflecting upon the results. The notion of project preserves the continuity between myth and science. Project is the means by which myth is conquered by science.<sup>24</sup> Religion is itself a human project as it is man's way of ". . . transcending the given, of anticipating the real."<sup>25</sup> The place of religion as project in Marxist thought will be dealt with more fully in a later section.

#### THE CASE FOR HUMAN CREATIVITY

The issue of Base and Superstructure. Another concept in Marxist thought which has caused much difficulty for non-Marxists is the interaction of base and superstructure. Largely at fault in the popularization of the incorrect viewpoint was Josef Stalin who stagnated the Marxist movement as such. The difficulty arises in the area of freedom.

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<sup>23</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

Is man free to work and create or is he bound and governed by the social and economic base? (Base refers to the material (economic) conditions within which man is forced to make his living.) Are superstructures, those secondary structures in society and built upon the primary base, i.e., slavery in Roman times, wholly and entirely dependent upon it? Garaudy, in returning to the basics of Marx and Engels, writes ". . . what is the case in Marx, and this appears again in the later writings of Engels himself, is that there is a relative independence of the superstructure."<sup>26</sup> In another place, Garaudy clarifies the point even further: Marx and Engels emphasized ". . . the dialectical character of this relation: base engenders superstructure, superstructure acquires a 'relative independence' in relation to base, and finally exerts an action in return upon the base."<sup>27</sup> The relative independence of superstructure increases in inverse proportion to the time society spends in satisfying its material needs.<sup>28</sup> Thus the superstructure in Biblical times was more dependent upon the economic base than is true today.

Engels presents a good clarification of how base and superstructure interrelate:

. . . Every ideology, however, once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would cease to be ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws. That the material conditions of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on, in the last resort determine the course of this process,

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<sup>26</sup>Initiative in History, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup>Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerback (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1941), p. 53.

remains of necessity unknown to these persons, for otherwise there would be an end to all ideology.<sup>29</sup>

Although the ultimate course of ideology (thought) is determined, the ideology does exert an independent force of its own with respect to how the course will be fulfilled. Therein lies man's responsibility: to attempt to best pattern ideology after the reality of the changing conditions of the base and so encourage and quicken the change. Thus in Roman times the movement of the material basis was toward a universal nature, e.g., world trade. There thus arose a need for a universal religion and Christianity became that religion which complemented this need, although Christianity had no concept of its genuine origin in the material needs of the Empire. The need for such relative freedom of the superstructure in Marxist theory becomes clearer in understanding Garaudy's argument for man's creative abilities. In fact, Garaudy extends Engels' definition of freedom in order to eliminate the ". . . phantom of mechanistic materialism."<sup>30</sup>

The issue of structure and creation. Garaudy insists along with Marxist humanism on the special development of humanity through creation. Humanity does not move along lines set down by unseen forces, but contributes that which is continually new in the world: ". . . the emergence of the new--without which there would be no history at all, properly speaking--implies that activity is something other than and

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>30</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema To Dialogue, p. 74.

more than the sum total of its conditions."<sup>31</sup> Creation is for the Marxist, the whole meaning of existence. The world itself is seen as an evolving globe, changing into the new. But it is man who rather than adapting to nature decides to transform it.<sup>32</sup> Whereas the eighteenth century humanism was concerned with the essence of man, Marxism is concerned with his creation.<sup>33</sup> What man is, is defined by

. . . the power to create, a power to inaugurate a new future. At each stage of history it is this creation by work, this transformation of nature and through it the transformation of man, the constant creation of man by man, which basically distinguishes man from all the other species of animals.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, however, although man produces his own history, although he creates, he cannot do so apart from the conditions in which he finds himself.<sup>35</sup> Herein is the dialectic of structure, that ". . . we must hang on to both ends of the chain, the moment of structure and the moment of action or production."<sup>36</sup>

The necessity of the question with regard to base and super-structure centers around the question of man's nature. Is he merely a product of material circumstances or is he a created being (Is his origin ultimately of matter or of spirit)? Garaudy leaves a foot in the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>32</sup>Roger Garaudy and Questin Lauer, A Christian-Communist Dialogue (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 90.

<sup>33</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 74.

<sup>34</sup>Garaudy, A Christian-Communist Dialogue, p. 90.

<sup>35</sup>Initiative in History, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.



door by saying Man is both. He is originally of matter only, however, he has historically been self-creating because of the power of his mind to be

. . . relatively independent of the material base and so to create, in fact, new aspects to that base. Man is thus, with each gain in knowledge overcoming his servitude to his material conditions, and is becoming more and more a self-creating being.

Garaudy thus avoids a strict determinism and generally places Marxist theory on an acceptable plane for interaction with "contemporary" theologies as will be demonstrated below.

#### THE GROUNDS FOR DIALOGUE

The basic issue. After a return to Marxist fundamentals, there is yet the requirement of discovering a basic meeting ground for the two dialogue partners. How do the Marxists view the dialogue? Garaudy divides the actual dialogue into two areas: institution and ideology. A discussion of the institution is concerned with such as the social role of the Church and party, and is discussed on the political and historical level, while ideology is discussed on a scientific and philosophical level. On both levels, Garaudy writes that the situation concerns the meeting of two human projects, which are capable of enriching one another.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, in dialogue, neither the Christian nor the Communist is assumed to have the higher truth; both are merely equally human projects.

The beginning and core of the dialogue must be concerned with the idea of man's creative abilities, since the active aspect of history

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<sup>37</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 112.

is essential to humanistic Marxism.<sup>38</sup> There is one condition, however, for a true dialogue. Garaudy makes the point clear that the dialogue is to be between Marxism and the Christian faith, not between Marxism and Western culturalized Christianity: ". . . the Christian cannot be a champion of the established order."<sup>39</sup>

A very brief but important point is also mentioned by Garaudy as grounds for dialogue:

. . . When a Christian says to us: "Capitalism, with its crises, its wars, the threats by which it burdens the country's freedoms, capitalism is an inhuman regime and the enemy of the human person," our answer is: Now we have a solid basis for agreement within the religious or philosophical perspectives of each of us.<sup>40</sup>

Such a dialogue requires of the Christians also a return to the basics of their faith, so that cultural impediments do not bar the door to a true dialogue. So conceived, the dialogue demands its source deep within its participants so that what is absolutely essential is pinpointed.<sup>41</sup>

The question of transcendence. In further distinguishing the levels of the dialogue, Garaudy also agrees with a statement by Father Gonzalez Ruiz that the discussion is concerned with both politics and the concept of man (both agree with Garaudy's terms of institution and ideology).<sup>42</sup> In dealing with the concept of man, Garaudy finds the fact

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<sup>38</sup>Initiative in History, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 122.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>42</sup>Garaudy, "Possibilities, Problems, Necessity," p. 405.

of man's transcendence to be good grounds for a discussion of value. Christianity has contributed much even to Marxist thought but in a ciphered form. Marx, however, set up the principles for the decoding of the Christian ideas. Garaudy notes that the Christian faith is one way that man has of expressing his feeling of transcendence. Although in the past it has been placed alongside the supernatural, belief in a world beyond, and irrationality, it is primarily that actual experience of man who senses that though he is part of nature, he is yet different from the things and animals.<sup>43</sup> Garaudy explains in more complete form that

Man belongs to nature. But out of him, with culture, a superior level of nature appears. Such is the real human substance of this nation of transcendency: Transcendence is the alienated expression of nature outgrowing itself into culture. That he who crossed the threshold, man himself, should have been so filled with wonder that he conceived another order of reality from nature, a super-nature, a beyond full of promise and menace--this is the typical process of alienation. To elaborate a conception of transcendency that is not alienated is, therefore, to show--and dialectic materialism allows it--that this possibility of initiative and creation is not the attribute of a God but, on the contrary, the specific attribute of man that differentiates him from all other animal species.<sup>44</sup>

Closely following this contribution of the faith to Marxist thought is the idea of subjectivity. Christianity opened the world's thinking to the subjective side of man's life, or, as Garaudy puts it, man's possibility of starting a new future.<sup>45</sup> Subjectivity is another word for man's self-consciousness which encompasses various levels:

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<sup>43</sup>Garaudy, "Communists and Christians in Dialogue," p. 208.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

". . . anguish, and effort, search and dream, hope and love, risk and decision."<sup>46</sup> Garaudy acknowledges that the Christian concept of man is in his relationship with God. God is not a concept but a person, ". . . a hidden God that no knowledge is able to convey to us and to whom only faith can give us access, though always in agony and doubt."<sup>47</sup> It is again, the Marxist task to unveil the mythical and reveal the scientific to the Christian. One cannot continue without mentioning the contribution of the Christian faith to the idea of love. It too, is another ground which the dialogue may utilize. The concept of agape love, love for the other, is of great benefit for the future of mankind. It is the love shown by Christ to the world, which gave absolute value to the "other." Yet, it is doubted that such love which does give absolute value to the other can be accepted by Marxism which has no theoretical base for the absolute value of the human person.<sup>48</sup>

The ends of the dialogue. The highest level to which the dialogue may proceed is as Garaudy visualizes it, in recognizing creation as freedom, to share in the common desire and task of making ". . . a man of every man, . . ." making him ". . . a creative being."<sup>49</sup> Among the participants of the dialogue, this highest level is reached when ". . . each integrates within himself that which the other bears within

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Roger Garaudy, "Christian-Marxist Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, IV (Spring, 1967), 211.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>49</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 163.

himself."<sup>50</sup> That is not to suggest a synthesis, for the meaning is that the Christian grows stronger in his faith as he grows stronger in his atheism--of other gods; and the Marxist's humanism grows stronger with the added strength of faith--in his own task.<sup>51</sup>

Garaudy recognizes that the new society will not automatically cause new human relationships to develop. Human relationships are not mechanistically determined.<sup>52</sup> Such an area of development in the future needs the cooperation of the Christians and Marxists. Garaudy knows the difficulties:

. . . when we face the problem of combining forces for the building of the future, co-operation in mutual trust is going to be possible only if the measures taken and the institutions created--in a word, the means adopted--take on meaning and value in terms of conscious ends which, even though not identical, at least are acceptable to both parties.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, the guideline to be followed in the dialogue is to insure that ". . . completely human faith in our task does not mutilate man of any of the dimensions which have been won because of faith in God, and that faith in a transcendent God never limits or curbs faith in the human task."<sup>54</sup>

#### THE CHRISTIAN BASIS FOR DIALOGUE

The return to basics. The following discussion concerns

Garaudy's view of the essential basics of Christianity. He believes the

<sup>50</sup>Garaudy, "Christian-Communist Dialogue," p. 222.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

same three events which awakened Marxists (cf. Chapter 2, Section 1.) have also inspired Christians to more closely distinguish between those essential elements of faith and those elements that arose out of historical conditions.<sup>55</sup> Garaudy finds three major currents in Christian theology today: it is critical--aware that what we say about God is said by men; it is centered on man; and it distinguishes between religion as linked with institutional structures and faith as experience.<sup>56</sup> Garaudy is most absorbed with the process theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard set forth three conditions for contemporary theology to be contemporary:

1. The elimination from theology of all that is still linked to an archaic conception of the world. Revelation occurred at a time when the cosmos was thought of as a finite and static whole.
2. The definition of the relationship possible between God and the world in a world which is conceived as a living organic totality, in ceaseless evolution and creation.
3. The elaboration of a theology which fully recognizes the value of work and of human effort, of scientific research as well as technical invention.<sup>57</sup>

Teilhard's theology as with all process theology fits very nicely into the Marxist system for the only real obstacle between process philosophy or theology and Marxism is the belief that God, a

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>56</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 153.

<sup>57</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 49.

transcendent being, guided the process. In simple terms and great brevity, process theology may be summarized as an attempt to explain the present world as an evolutionary process of nature's development. Teilhard adopts the position that all matter possesses a psychic nature as well as a physical nature. With the all powerful force of love as the motivating factor, all nature strives toward self-improvement in an evolutionary process:

As it moves forward through the biosphere, the proliferation of types and the divergence from the unicellular base decreases. Concentration takes place around the vertebrate stem of the tree of life with more complex cerebralization and unification of a central nervous system. When the primates are reached, an evolutionary ferment occurs in the area from central Africa across to Indonesia where the physical conditions for a major change are possible . . . Life began to transform itself in depth, as another point of supersaturation was reached. The appearance of man was, indeed, "an explosion of consciousness." . . . Consciousness was folded back upon itself to become self-consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

The process of this evolutionary movement today is toward increasing socialization and collectivization of individual humanity. However, because men have become self-conscious the situation has become critical. The process, thus, has become conscious of itself: "Man is free to cooperate with or to oppose the forces that operate upon him and that would move him forward. Men must face their responsibility toward "evolution" and confront the issue of their destiny."<sup>59</sup> But men have become afraid of the social movement and refuse to cooperate which could result in their destruction, when their continued existence is guaranteed

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<sup>58</sup>Eric C. Rust, Evolutionary Philosophies And Contemporary Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 161.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

if they but move with the force which has made them. Teilhard demonstrates his Christian intention by postulating a Prime Mover called Omega. He gives it four attributes: it must be both loving and lovable at this very moment; it must be autonomous; it must be irreversible; and it must be transcendent.<sup>60</sup> The Omega is Christ. Why Garaudy appreciates process philosophy should now be obvious. He comments that Teilhard ". . . has released the Christian message from the fixed view of the universe, and replaced it with a form of evolutionism which gives a cosmic dimension to Darwin's transformism."<sup>61</sup>

Another man who has helped in forming the change in Christianity is Rudolf Bultmann. It is Bultmann who purposes to give an existential interpretation to myth.<sup>62</sup> Bultmann also gives a definition of faith quite in keeping with Garaudy's own belief: ". . . to open ourselves freely to the future."<sup>63</sup> Garaudy has himself defined faith as a particular way of standing up before the world.<sup>64</sup> The question of transcendence, raised earlier, also has received some changes in the contemporary theological arena. Teilhard pictures transcendence of humanity as a traversing, a ". . . going beyond by going through."<sup>65</sup> Transcendence

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<sup>60</sup>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), cf. the discussion on pages 268-272.

<sup>61</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 139.

<sup>62</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 41.

<sup>63</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth A Theological Debate, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 19.

<sup>64</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 115.

<sup>65</sup>Garaudy, "Communists and Christians in Dialogue," p. 211.



for man becomes obeying the evolutionary forces to enable the continued progress of the world toward its Omega. The Anglican Bishop James Robinson, in his book Honest to God, receives Garaudy's approval when he writes that ". . . the finite world is self-transcendent."<sup>66</sup> Garaudy points out that what faith presents for the benefit of atheism is not a transcendent God but rather ". . . the transcendence of man whose full development demands that he never limit himself to what the past has made of him."<sup>67</sup> That Christianity which is acceptable to Garaudy as a partner in dialogue is thus more of a humanism than faith in a supernatural being.

Garaudy also believes Marxism to be essentially humanistic. Rather than being a resounding "No" toward faith in God, it is a resounding "Yes" for the autonomy of man. Garaudy states that Marx himself set down this emphasis that "Atheism . . . is man's positive self-consciousness."<sup>68</sup> What Marxism does not do, therefore, is deny with belligerency the existence of God. It cannot, for science does not provide enough answers as yet. That Titov said he did not find God in space is insufficient in the face of such deep issues as the meaning of life and death.<sup>69</sup> This fact does not mean that the question of the existence of God is left with a possible affirmative answer. It merely

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<sup>66</sup>Roger Garaudy, "As Marxists, We Are Struggling on Behalf of Man," Background Information For Church and Society (December, 1965), p. 9.

<sup>67</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 163.

<sup>68</sup>Garaudy, "Christian-Marxist Dialogue," p. 209.

<sup>69</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 144.

means that Marxists place some value upon religion. Marxists look at religion and faith from the historical and materialistic viewpoints. For instance, Garaudy remarks that the claim ". . . religion is the opium of the people . . ." corresponds to historical reality. However, to make the claim that ". . . religion always is the opium of the people . . ." contradicts reality.<sup>70</sup> Marxism finds within the history of the Christian faith both opium and leaven, both ideological support of the existing harmful structures and religious protest of such structures.<sup>71</sup>

Obstacles to Dialogue. Wherein lie the difficulties in the Christian-Marxist dialogue? The greatest point of conflict is also the first. The idea of God subtracts man's autonomy from himself. Garaudy writes that "God is alienating insofar as he is regarded a Moral law existing before the creation of Man."<sup>72</sup> From another angle, it may be said that religions are an answer to a real need. Christianity above all others has tried to answer the need or exigency that all men experience by transforming the ". . . exigency into a promise--and even into a presence: from the exigency of mediation, they passed to the presence of a mediator."<sup>73</sup> The issue as seen by Garaudy centers not on the need, but on man's attempts at answering that need. Atheism rejects illusory answers but not the ". . . authentic aspiration which aroused them . . .

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<sup>70</sup>Garaudy, "Communists and Christians in Dialogue," p. 206.

<sup>71</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 100.

<sup>72</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 144.

<sup>73</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 90.

alienation is in the answers but not in the questions."<sup>74</sup> Atheism, thus, has a task of purification. What Marxism can accept is the exigency, and it can act out the exigency, but ". . . we cannot conceive it, name it or expect it."<sup>75</sup> Marxism has the duty to protest against ". . . all the gross images of the Creation, of the Last Judgement, of Hell, of Paradise, or of the miracles, against all the caricatures of the Infinite which are the crime against the spirit par excellence."<sup>76</sup> Garaudy admits to a further divergence between the "Promethean conception of freedom as creation, and the Christian conception of freedom as grace and assent."<sup>77</sup>

There is no question about the historical basis of the Christian faith, according to Garaudy. That Christ really existed is no problem to the Marxists. Indeed, Christ is the supreme example for Marxists in that he conceived of an unlimited human community in which freedom and love, and an infinite destiny, though masked in historical images, were of the highest importance. He was even prepared to die for this totality because of his feeling of personal responsibility.<sup>78</sup> Dogmatic Christianity, however strips Christ of his identification with man by making him more than man:

His birth is no longer natural: he ceases to be a model for me because as the son of a Virgin he has been torn away from the human

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>76</sup>Garaudy, "We Are Struggling," p. 7.

<sup>77</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 92.

<sup>78</sup>Garaudy, "We Are Struggling," p. 8.

condition. His life also breaks away from mankind when he is given the attributes of a miracle-working magician, such as one finds in the primitive religions. Even his death is stolen from us: this splendid death of the man who feels responsible for the destiny of all and who gives his life its meaning and its beauty by sacrificing it on behalf of all mankind,--this is not a real death because he is made to rise again. Thus one of the greatest awakeners of liberty and love was separated from us as an example by being removed from the real history of men and made something other than a man: a myth like other myths.<sup>79</sup>

Garaudy also rejects a universalism which claims all men are already redeemed. If such were so, then all the struggles of human history for freedom and unity are ". . . nothing but a trumped up story."<sup>80</sup> The principle value of religion is therefore to keep raising questions, for such keeps Marxists from going to sleep. Yet, the perversion of religion is in trying to answer those questions.<sup>81</sup>

Christians have often spoken of the immorality of the Marxists. The actual issue concerns what truth and morality really are. Garaudy denies Christian morality is universally binding upon all mankind. Its morality is based upon an illusory answer to an exigency. Rather, he proposes the Marxist morality of practice as the criterion for behavior and truth, for ". . . there is no criterion of truth internal to thought itself . . . the only possible moral truth is the truth of our actions."<sup>82</sup> Garaudy explains that the criterion for morality must be, as the guideline set up for dialogue, whether or not by that particular

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 146.

<sup>82</sup>Garaudy, A Christian-Communist Dialogue, p. 92.

action, method or structure man is made more fully man, more responsibly creative.<sup>83</sup> He recognizes the inevitability of questions, but such is to be expected when old values are dropped and new ones are born. In the future, Garaudy predicts that Marxist morality may be summed up by the term "aesthetics."<sup>84</sup>

The future society. Garaudy believes the dialogue to be of utmost importance to the establishment of the future society. According to his interpretation of Marx ". . . historical necessity goes through the consciousness of Men."<sup>85</sup> The dialogue, being on the conscious level is a necessary part of establishing the new society. Quite naturally, only socialism fills the need in a future society. For it alone provides man with the circumstances to guarantee his freedom as creator. The dialogue is necessary, however, to liberate men of their alienation from nature, since the transformation of the earth will also involve a ". . . profound spiritual metamorphosis of man."<sup>86</sup> The Christian fear of the new society is unfounded for it is communism alone which will create the conditions of society in which love will reign.<sup>87</sup> What of an atheistic state? Garaudy quite frankly states that atheism is the role of the party not the state. Although the party may push for the elimination of religion, the state will not.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>84</sup>Initiative in History, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>86</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 93.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>88</sup>Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," p. 147.

Such a dialogue is a bold step for Christians. Garaudy points out that the dialogue will only be successful insofar as all of us, in ". . . common defense of man's basic values, are rendered capable of integrating to ourselves the truth borne by our partner in dialogue."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Garaudy, "Communists and Christians in Dialogue," p. 212.

## Chapter 3

### A CRITIQUE OF HROMÁDKA AND GARAUDY

Josef Hromádka and Roger Garaudy represent two different positions within the Christian-Marxist dialogue. Hromádka spoke as a Christian who held to the reformation heritage of the Church which is to say that he was basically an evangelical Christian. He also spoke as one who was living within a Communist-controlled country. Roger Garaudy, on the other hand, is a Marxist, pictured today as a revisionist when measured up against the "orthodox" of the party. He also speaks as one who lives within a Western democratic country. Thus, both East and West is represented, yet they are represented by the "disfranchised" in each society.

#### HROMÁDKA'S APPROACH

Hromádka's approach to dialogue between Christians and Marxists has been widely criticized in the West. He has been pictured as both naive and deliberately deceitful. In a recent letter to The Christian Century, one man wrote of him as an ". . . erastian and compromising figure, . . ." without whom the Czech Church is much better off.<sup>1</sup> Such strong statements notwithstanding, Hromádka was a man of great vision and possessed an immense amount of love and concern for his fellow men

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Enrico S. Molnar in "Letters," The Christian Century, LXXXVII (April 15, 1970), p. 451.

long before Marxism became powerful in his country. He had been attempting to change the uncaring atmosphere in Czechoslovakia toward the poor in the society throughout the democracies of Masaryk and Benes.<sup>2</sup> Too many people, however, resisted peaceful change, and Marxism became the result.<sup>3</sup> Hromádka lived through many strenuous times. His experiences shaped his approach to the Marxists, which Charles C. West notes

. . . is both contemporary--it has not lost its influence under the pressure of historical events as have most of the more liberal pro-Communist theologians of twenty years ago--and it is theological: consisting in an encounter between Christian revelation and the reality of Communism, and not in an attempt to accomodate one to the other.<sup>4</sup>

Even though Milan Machovec was originally suspicious of Hromádka's idea to dialogue with Christians, he too became a fervent supporter of the dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

Hromádka's assessment of man's dilemma cannot be denied. Mankind is indeed in a perilous position and placed there as a direct result of his own actions. Although Hromádka believed this dilemma to

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<sup>2</sup>Jan Lochman, Church in a Marxist Society A Czechoslovak View (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, "The Church of the Reformation Faces Today's Challenges," Theology Today, VII (January, 1950), 456. Masaryk and Benes tried to break up the forms of the old way of national thinking, pointed to the outmoded provincialism and the weaknesses of the old liberalism; they widened the bases of the national life by bringing into its fold new groups of people; they tried to remove the empty pomp and thoughtlessness of bourgeois politics, to bring the Republic into the new international framework; and they attempted to find a place for her among the leading pioneers of the world of that time. All that was too much for the groups of people and political parties who lived in the past and fought against the new forms and orders.

<sup>4</sup>Charles C. West, Communism and the Theologians (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 51.

<sup>5</sup>Lochman, Marxist Society, p. 181.



be severe enough to cause man to cast aside all their prejudices, pride, mistrust and self-justification, it remains evident that most people do not yet see man "in his bare existence" as a fellow human being, rather than the enemy. Ideological systems today, just as tribal identification of the past, provide men with an inner security, home and purpose in life. They yet remain an "inner cloak" to hide men, in their "naked humanity," from one another. Although Hromádka issued the appeal of the Reformation Church, that Christians free themselves from such ideological security, such cannot be done in its entirety. Such labels as "conservative, liberal, radical and moderate," in addition to "white, black, Communist and Christian," all serve to demonstrate man's inability to separate himself from his systems of thought. Such is indeed part of being a man. Hromádka's call to the Western Christian to leave "Weltanschauung" behind in order to dialogue is not to face this reality. It is just as impossible for the Marxist to enter into dialogue without his ideology. However, such a plea may be easily understood in Hromádka's situation. He was attempting to dialogue without political or ideological foundation other than his faith. In such a situation as in Eastern Europe, the dialogue can only take place in the manner he described. To try to carry a capitalistic ideology, or any ideology differing from the Communist viewpoint politically, into the dialogue would sabotage the talks from the beginning. Still, Hromádka was right in viewing the dialogue he proposed as being in the purest form a dialogue between the Christian faith and Marxism even though no other alternative form was possible. It is quite a different story to attempt dialogue between two sides "safe" in their own territory.

Hromádka's approach to the dialogue and view of Czech society through crisis theology has a high appeal to Marxists as it provides some common grounds for the question of man. It first of all makes man responsible for his history. Even though Communism is viewed as a judgment of God upon the old system, the Marxists visualize the point that capitalistic man has thus been declared guilty even in theology for his lack of compassion toward his fellow man. Secondly, his point that the Lord of the Resurrection stands behind the judgment provides confidence for the Marxists that his theology is not about to subvert their power since they have been placed in power by "God" and to fight them is to fight the Lord of history. Thirdly, Hromádka wrote of the faith providing the insurance that the new society would not collapse as the biblical perspective of man could fill the vacuum that atheism produces. With such an acceptance of the system through Crisis Theology, the Marxists have nothing to lose and much to gain by discussion. In the same sense, the faith has nothing to lose either. All that has already been lost was not essential to the faith. It is here that Hromádka displayed his passionate faith in the ultimate victory of Christ. He was unafraid to give himself completely to the system as long as his faith was not called into question. He had the confidence of his faith in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Yet, he was emphatic that should Communism call him to denounce his faith, he would suffer the most extreme of penalties rather than do so. The ideological situation in Czechoslovakia became basic to his theology in that it provided the grounds for a society that would possibly become pleasing to God in its care for all men. Hromádka foresaw the inevitability of the Marxist takeover of the country, and

that the country could not go back to the old ways ever again. He wrote that he found himself ". . . where the communist parties are carrying on their historical mission. The path of my faith and the path of the communistic activity intersect one another, but they are not identical, they are of an essentially different nature."<sup>6</sup> He, consequently believed the mission of the Church to be that of witnessing to the new order, and his own mission to be that of softening the attack of the new regime upon the Church.

Hromádka's estimate of the historical crisis was highly personal, rather than being a careful, all encompassing study of the world situation. In spite of his plea for the West to look at the East without benefit of anti-communist prejudices, he too, suffered from similar (though opposite) distortions of view. That is not to say that he held prejudices, but that information passed from West to East and vice versa is often distorted by the time it reaches each side simply through misuse of language, etc. Hromádka, having lived in the United States in the 1940's, continued to base much of his estimation of the Western situation in the 1960's upon his earlier experiences.<sup>7</sup> His estimation of American youth in 1945, for example, was based on the generation after the war who ". . . didn't care about anything. Now, American youth care about nearly everything."<sup>8</sup> Such appears to be universally

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<sup>6</sup>Hromádka, "Between Yesterday And Tomorrow," p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>West, Theologians, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup>Dr. James Daane, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, pursued his doctoral studies under Dr. Hromádka at Princeton. Reference to him is made from conversations the writer has had with Dr. Daane during 1970.

true. He may have underestimated Western society in its flexibility and social mobility, yet, he did also give credit to her historical position when referring to the system in Czechoslovakia by saying that the new society ". . . will work in Czechoslovakia, but it would never work here (in America)."<sup>9</sup> Yet, that Western society was in an abyss was evident to Hromádka. Change was necessary. But of more importance, change was necessary in the attitude of the West toward the East. He believed that the West should learn to help the new reconstruction of society by trying to understand its plans and help to purify them of human faults--through dialogue.<sup>10</sup>

That the dialogue should be centered on the question of man, shows Hromádka's earnestness in achieving true dialogue, for the essence of man is the heart of any Christian-Marxist dialogue. The movement of Czechoslovakia toward socialism "with a human face," and greater respect for individual desires and hopes and aspirations was in large measure, the result of the dialogue.<sup>11</sup> Hromádka's view of the secondary characteristic of atheism in Marxism is probably incorrect. Even Garaudy, who is a revisionist Marxist, cannot accept the idea of God. Although both Garaudy and Hromádka agree as to the "radical humanism" of Marxism rather than a belligerent atheism, the fact remains that there will

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<sup>9</sup>cf. footnote 8.

<sup>10</sup>Hromádka, "Today's Challenge," p. 458. We should penetrate through the haze of all kinds of unpleasant and unfortunate events that accompany the changes in order to be able to appreciate the reconstruction plan in a positive way, to help the new aspirations and purify them of human faults.

<sup>11</sup>Lochman, Marxist Society, p. 193.

always be in Marxism the belief that religion is unscientific and therefore ultimately harmful to man as a creative being. Hromádka must have realized this point for he did emphasize the temporality of his agreement with Marxism. Ultimately one would have to proceed without the other. The Marxist views religion as temporary, existing only while man does not yet trust in science. Hromádka saw Communism as unfulfilled, a half-way measure, something to serve as a platform for the work of the Gospel, and that when Communism was complete, the Gospel would still be at work in the classless society.<sup>12</sup>

The difficulty of Hromádka's approach was demonstrated in August of 1968, when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia. The socialism with which Hromádka had to deal was not the spokesman for the real power which operates presently within the Soviet Union. After 20 years of working and debating with the local power base in Czechoslovakia, the hard shell of the Marxist system softened. Hromádka's approach helped to ease the Marxist's fears of the Church serving as a source for counter-revolution and so aided in bringing about the relaxation in governmental rule. The Soviet intervention crushed that momentary spark of light. Jan Lochman, a former colleague of Hromádka's at Comenius and presently at the University of Basel, remarked concerning the Czech tragedy: "Dazzled by the inspiring vision of a new type of socialism and by the general support of our population which this model evidently received, we underestimated the international context of our effort."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>West, Theologians, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup>Lochman, Marxist Society, p. 198.

Robert Tobias, in his book Communist Christian Encounter in East Europe, has some keen observations concerning the position of the Church in East Europe which accent what Hromádka tried to say. Of primary interest is the fact that

Eastern Christians sense acutely that there is no position they can take which frees them from guilt. If they are silent, they are guilty; if they acquiesce, they are guilty; if they simply oppose social changes, they are guilty.<sup>14</sup>

Western Christians often see the situation in East Europe as a simple matter of a clear and definite right and wrong stand. Tobias agrees with Hromádka that the situation is far more complex, as already indicated, and that the Church as such has not one stand but rather, many witnesses to the same truth taking several forms.<sup>15</sup> To say that the Church has a particular stand to take, confuses it with a political or military power. It assumes the Church must defend certain values including self-preservation and that a certain style of life is necessary for its perpetuation.<sup>16</sup> Tobias, therefore, agrees with Hromádka's approach after making careful study of the East European situation. One further observation of his is especially noteworthy. Concerning how the Church should operate within the Marxist system he writes:

We have spoken of fundamentals, of the essence of faith. At that level the believer "must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). We come now to the tools and methods which the believer, in community with others, creates and employs to manifest the fundamental affirmation given him. At this level, he is "in subjection to the

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<sup>14</sup>Robert Tobias, Communist Christian Encounter in East Europe (Indianapolis, Indiana: School of Religion Press, 1956), p. 191.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

higher powers" as ordained of God (Romans 13:1). If at the deeper level, his purposes are determined by God, at this level his acts are circumscribed by his social and political environment. This existential framework, with its limitations, restrictions and opportunities in the framework is determined by governments, often on the basis of physical strength, not by the Church. To act and to witness in it, the Church must accept the fact of government. But the use which is made of opportunities in the framework is determined by the Church, which neither demands nor accepts such opportunities as being granted by governments, and therefore, simply and quickly, must claim every real opportunity for preaching, teaching and witnessing within its existential situation. At this level of overt witness, flexibility, adaption and opportunity are the Christian's watchwords.<sup>17</sup>

#### GARAUDY'S APPROACH

Roger Garaudy, as has already been noted, is no longer acceptable to the French Marxists as representative of their Party. Many of the ideas which led to his departure from the Party have been presented in this paper. Garaudy called for a return to the Marxist basics and pointed out what those basics were. The first issue was to find the real Marx, and to use his method in plotting the future course of mankind, that method of "going beyond," because the Marxists do not yet possess the truth in a textbook or scientifically accurate form. It should be noted, however, as Robert L. Shinn, Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, points out that Garaudy's Marxism is neither Stalinist nor Marxist, rather it is revisionist.<sup>18</sup> Shinn proceeds to clarify his point by showing that Garaudy has merely decided to choose one type of Marx over several kinds in existence. He

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>18</sup>Robert L. Shinn, "Discussion: Communist Christian Dialogue," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXII (March, 1967), 214-15.

might possibly have chosen ". . . the ruthless polemecist who discards all moral inhibitions in his attack against class enemies."<sup>19</sup> Although it is true that Garaudy's choice of a Marxian model is the best for dialogue, it is also true that his choice is least acceptable in Marxist circles. The reality of the Czech tragedy, and the French Communist Party action in condemning Garaudy and his protest against the Czech invasion and the Soviet model, serve to demonstrate the lack of acceptance of Garaudy's ideas to the more orthodox Marxists. The method of Marx which Garaudy called "going beyond" has been rejected by the majority of French Marxists now for the Soviet model of socialism and its interpretation of Marx.

Garaudy noted approvingly as well, the plurality of models of Marxism within the various socialistic countries. Obviously, plurality of models is also a concept being called into question. Soviet Marxism has taken on a far more militant stance since the end of the Khrushchev era, and therefore, also within those socialist countries within the Soviet orbit, with the exception of Yugoslavia and Rumania. That Marxism within Western countries also reflects the growing dogmatism and "orthodoxy" is a noticeable change of direction. The whole issue of base and superstructure is once again called into question. Does the change in trend of party policy signify the end of the "relative independence" of the superstructures? Is man to be viewed with an eye toward determinism again? Is morality to be the practice of Stalin's era? There is some question as to the success of the dialogue even with

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



Garaudy's concept of morality. The Christian has no real assurance of the truth of his partner's position. The difficulty concerns the difference between a relative and absolute morality. The Christian is confronted by a morality of practice based upon what will supposedly be best for man as a creative being, what will make him more fully man. The Christian must hold two reservations about this definition. First, he must question the Marxist concept of man. To be made more fully a "Marxist" man may not coincide with being made more fully a "Christian" man. Secondly, the Marxist denies any truth ". . . internal to thought itself." The Christian cannot but question the dependability and stability of a morality which is vague and subject to various interpretations according to how the particular leader believes humanity can be made more fully human. Under such a morality, Stalin could be excused for his deeds of torture and death. The Marxist position contains several events which may be immoral to an absolute Christian position, yet which are perfectly acceptable to the Marxist through his own system of relative moral truth.

Garaudy makes his choice for the type of Christianity which he believes is best suited for the dialogue with Marxists. In deciding on the "contemporary" theological systems, he has made a logical decision, as they are closest to his own system. However, in doing so he has preempted the participation of Christians of traditional beliefs and has therefore, rejected the "grass roots" of Christianity. A dialogue with such a limited number of men representing such a small number of Christians, is certain to meet with limited success. Garaudy's choice of process theology and the demythologizing of Bultmann restricts the

participation of more orthodox Christians who represent the vast majority of the faith. Process theology, built upon the thought of Alfred North Whitehead is really a metaphysical philosophy. It may very well be filling a void where Christian philosophy is concerned, yet it remains extra-Biblical in nature, having synthesized modern scientific beliefs and traditional Christian beliefs. The resulting system is neither Biblical nor scientific, especially in the case of Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>20</sup> Eric Rust writes concerning the scientific nature of Chardin's theology:

Because of this emphasis on man as a thinking being, Teilhard also moves beyond the accepted scientific approach in his emphasis on the "within" of things. He moves beyond the exterior to the interior aspect of the elements of the universe, contending that account must be taken of a mental as well as a material aspect. This would clash with the strict scientific viewpoint which would hold that a rigid scientific empiricism should deal only with the observable.<sup>21</sup>

Garaudy specifically rejects traditional Christian beliefs. He finds Christianity's method of answering man's needs to be astonishingly unscientific, although he recognizes the exigency which aroused the "illusory answers." As long as such a negative viewpoint of traditional Christian beliefs is held, the dialogue will move slowly. However, that the Marxists reject Biblical Christianity as a viable faith is not an insurmountable barrier to dialogue. Rather such a difficulty only shows the more urgent need of speaking intelligently with one another.

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<sup>20</sup>cf. Christianity Today (March, 1969). Carl Henry's articles in the two March issues for a more complete discussion of the Biblical vs. non-Biblical character of Process Theology.

<sup>21</sup>Rust, Evolutionary Philosophies, p. 152.

Garaudy picks out the Biblical expectation of an "unlimited human community" in which freedom and love are of the utmost importance. Yet, he refuses to recognize that this expectation is nowhere separated from the concepts of sin and grace, and a relationship with a living Lord. To say that the latter concepts are images whereas the former are reality is to confuse the issue with one's own prejudices. It becomes the task of traditional Christianity to demonstrate the viability and truthfulness of its beliefs to the unbeliever as has always been the case. To reject this opportunity because the partners are Marxists is to deny the commission to ". . . go into all the world."

The grounds for dialogue which Garaudy suggests rest mainly on transcendence, subjectivity, and love. However, the type of transcendence which Garaudy recognizes is not that of traditional Catholic or Reformation thought. Garaudy's transcendence is of a finite nature as with Bishop J. A. T. Robinson. It is a transcendence limited to this historical world: ". . . nature outgrowing itself into culture." Transcendence bears within it the concept of alienation. Garaudy points out that wonder is the fruit of man's alienation from nature, and it is wonder which causes man to postulate transcendence as the existence of a super-nature. Paul Lehmann confronts Garaudy's point and counters it by writing that the Christian concept of alienation shows wonder as the root instead of the fruit of alienation. "Transcendence," writes Lehmann, "refers to the possibility and the power of initiative and creation, not as the specific attribute of man, but as the specific gift to man."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Paul Lehmann, "Discussion: Communist-Christian Dialogue," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXII (March, 1967), 221.

The other points for dialogue of subjectivity and love, also suffer a similar difference in meaning between Christian and Marxist. How much of either concept can Marxism accept? As Garaudy pointed out, Marxism cannot go as far as Christianity in giving absolute value to love. Even more significant is a point raised by Harvey G. Cox, that the reason Garaudy must speak to Christians concerning transcendence, subjectivity and love, is that very few Marxists wish to ". . . waste even a moment thinking about such things."<sup>23</sup> In the light of the events of early 1970, within French Marxism, Cox's statement made in 1967, takes on added significance. A second level of dialogue that is not so extensively dealt with by Garaudy, but is rather merely acknowledged concerns the political or institutional level. Any Christian who agrees politically with Marxism has a ready ground for dialogue. It is understandable why Garaudy chooses to underemphasize this area and concentrate upon the ideological level. He is conducting dialogues in an important political atmosphere. It is in France, especially, that the dialogue with Catholics takes on immense political meaning. Yet, Garaudy has ignored that basic question which must be central to any Christian-Marxist dialogue: the question of the nature of man. It is upon this concept of man that the dialogue will live or die. Subjectivity, love and transcendence--especially as Garaudy describes them, are shallow side issues more for appeal to theologians than really to be discussed. Garaudy has the right idea, however, when he speaks of "mutual interpellation." It is

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<sup>23</sup>Harvey G. Cox, "Discussion: Communist-Christian Dialogue," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXII (March, 1967), 224.

with this concept that genuine dialogue begins. Each partner is to firmly grasp his own position and also to come to a similar comprehension of the other's position. The Christian position and the Marxist position with regard to man's essence will then be understood by each partner. From this point on is when the dialogue begins. All before will be merely preliminary steps. It is at this point when each side can become mutually enriched, for it is at this time that all prejudices have been laid aside and the real work begins.

Some questions still remain and will remain, at least until some future time. Garaudy's point concerning a state atheism is very easily passed over in the light of historical events. As long as the party is in control of the government, state atheism as a national policy is inevitable. Garaudy has obviously been thinking of the political significance of his position. His contention that religion's task is to ask questions rather than answer them is also glibly handled. The whole point of religion is to answer questions which are in existence in spite of religion. It is for this reason that Hromadka mentions the void of Communism, and that Garaudy himself mentions the need for help in the great spiritual metamorphoses of the future. To eliminate all answers to this exigency and merely live with it unnamed and unconceived, is to declare, in effect, the insignificance and end of religion, not to delegate to it the task of asking questions. Again, Christianity has the task of answering questions which exist because of the very nature of man. What Garaudy has done is to propose a new task for the Church, one which is in keeping with his own atheism and not at all too different from Bishop Robinson's Christianity. He recognizes that traditional

Christian beliefs cannot exist compatibly with traditional Marxist atheism or even his own revisionist Marxism. By emphasizing the radical humanism of Marxism, the focus is shifted from the former point and remains hidden. Only genuine dialogue will reveal this latter point. Both Garaudy and Hromádka recognize that there will be a struggle to the death between atheism and traditional Christianity. Garaudy tends to smooth over this reality for the moment. Garaudy has set forth a framework for the dialogue which would put it on an "elite" and highly limited scale. To be entirely open to the future and honest with all men, the dialogue must have the participation of traditional Christians, who hold to those very doctrines that Marxism cannot accept. Only then will the dialogue be truly fruitful. Only then will there be real significance to the term "mutual interpellation."

#### POSSIBILITIES FOR DIALOGUE

Both Hromádka and Garaudy have expressed similar feelings about the world situation and the urgency of the Christian-Marxist dialogue. It is Hromádka, however, among these two patriarchs of the dialogue, who truly sensed the depth to which the dialogue must delve. Hromádka, living in the situation of a Christian in a Communist controlled country and finding the members of his faith subjected to persecution, was forced to examine himself and his position in the deepest manner possible. Garaudy has not had that kind of experience, yet perhaps the events in French party politics will force him now to re-examine himself and his position also. His choice of an acceptable Christianity almost guarantees a shallow dialogue. Hromádka would have had nothing to do

with such an existential interpretation of the faith. Hromádka's grounds for dialogue stipulated that the Christian have a firm hold on the Reformation tradition of the Church. He had seen the failure of liberalism in the late 30's and feared the same would always be true. Hromádka rested his position within the Biblical tradition, and he believed himself fully armed and thereby capable to tackle the atheism of Marxism. Garaudy's approach, on the other hand, is one of an encounter between Revisionist Marxism and a "contemporary" Christianity just as revisionist in its own realm. Between these two, he finds adequate grounds for dialogue. Yet, one must conclude that of the two approaches, Hromádka's has the most far reaching effects for his has been between Stalinist Communists and "orthodox" Christians. However, it must also be acknowledged that Garaudy is attempting to make the dialogue appealing in the West, which Hromádka could not do. Orthodox Christians in the West tend to dismiss any thought of dialogue with Marxism be it Stalinist or Revisionist. Garaudy's approach attempts to overcome the difficulty by appealing to those who might be more inclined to accept dialogue.

The dialogue between Marxists and Christians is not a luxury item. It is a burning necessity. Admittedly, the dialogue will be between two mutually exclusive systems of thought, if Hromádka's model is to be followed, or Garaudy's. Christianity cannot accept the atheism of Marxism nor its interpretation of man. Marxism cannot accept the Christian's "illusory answers" to man's exigencies. Appeals to the radical humanism of Marxism or to finite transcendence in Christianity cannot resolve their essentially contradictory natures. Yet, the

dialogue must take place, for people must be on speaking terms in order to accomplish the task of living together. Dialogue in the East can only occur within Hromádka's framework. Yet, neither his nor Garaudy's framework appears suitable in the West. The dialogue already begun in the East under forced circumstances may have beneficial effects for the Western dialogue if the new brand of Marxism can weather the heavy conservative thrust for power presently under way. Jan Lochman notes that Milan Prucha, a Czech marxist, rejected traditional materialism at a recent conference in his approach to the concept of being (as through the concept of matter). Prucha concluded that a new answer must be sought, yet he also denied the concept of God as the source of being.<sup>24</sup> However, this fact demonstrates the softening of Marxist viewpoints, or, at least did until the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Frederick J. Adelman, S. J., writes that Marxists and Christians cannot dialogue until Marxism tolerates theism as a valid stance. Father Adelman finds hope for the dialogue in the revisionist side of Marxism: "I believe that Marxism can intrinsically be revised so as to tolerate theism without ceasing to be a philosophy or a metaphysics and yet retain its essential insight into human life on this planet."<sup>25</sup> He also notes that "Revisionism is, then, a part of the dialectic. This is probably the best insight that the Marxists have had in some time. Marxism in theory cannot stand pat; it must evolve."<sup>26</sup> With a

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<sup>24</sup>Lochman, Marxist Society, p. 189.

<sup>25</sup>Frederick J. Adelman, S. J., From Dialogue to Epilogue (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 68.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 69.



revisionist Marxism that tolerates theism as a viable stance, Father Adelman can foresee possible co-existence.

Each partner certainly has room to be enriched by the other as Garaudy indicates--including those whom he excludes from the dialogue. The Marxist understanding of man as a social being shaped by historical events and conditions can certainly broaden the views of individualistic Christians. Harvey Cox clarifies this point that Christians often simply do not see that many of their attitudes are shaped by social determinants rather than clear logic and wisdom: ". . . theological cerebration that is not conscious of its social base cannot be critical of it and therefore becomes a captive of unconscious social determinants."<sup>27</sup> As well, the Christian concept of man's individual significance and transcendence can surely enrich the Marxist viewpoint. However, the dialogue between traditional materialistic Marxism and traditional orthodox Christianity cannot exist meaningfully unless under forced circumstances. If Father Adelman is correct in his assessment of Marxism, Western dialogue between Revisionist Marxism and orthodox Christians would soon be possible and such would be the best form of dialogue as it would have the greatest effect and significance. It is entirely possible that some form of co-existence could take place with such a revisionist Marxism.

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<sup>27</sup>Harvey Cox, "Discussion: Communist-Christian Dialogue," p. 226.

## Chapter 4

### THE DIALOGUE: PAST AND PRESENT

The dialogue between Christians and Marxists has been in existence in one form or another since the two systems came into contact with one another. Christians have traditionally looked upon Marxists as materialistic atheists who should be fought and in all ways opposed rather than to be dialogued with as fellow human beings. By the same token, Marxists have a poor record in their dealings with Christians, especially in those countries which they control. The Marxists initial attempts at the elimination of religion resulted in suffering and death for thousands who refused to forsake their faith. It is hoped that both of these cowardly attitudes will remain in the past and not reoccur, although it is true that many today still hold these opinions. Let us hope that the ones who hold such extreme opinions (that the other side is somehow subhuman and therefore worthy of elimination) will never find the opportunity to exercise these opinions in power. What of the persecution presently taking place within Communist controlled countries? Such a situation is not to be denied. Yet, the Western Christian is in no position to accurately assess that situation. It is true also, however, that the situation is not as difficult as it once was. Hopefully the situation will continue to loosen, and the dialogue may help to speed such on the way.

## ITS IMMEDIATE HISTORY

The dialogue between Christians and Marxists had its beginnings in the latter 50's. The earliest attempts at genuine dialogue had several years of preparation. Hromádka, from the inception of Communism in Czechoslovakia, had attempted to prepare both Christians and Marxists for dialogue. Jan Lochman recalls that the way ". . . from 'anathema to dialogue' was long and difficult."<sup>1</sup> He mentions two main tasks that Christians in Czechoslovakia had to perform in order to progress along the road to dialogue: first, de-ideologizing both sides and second, building a new reality of Christian life and thought. The first step was begun in the early 50's by the Comenius faculty in Prague through an examination of the young Karl Marx and a de-Stalinization of Marxist theory to discover its "human face." Along the second point, two issues had to be resolved. Needed was a new critical theology and an acceptance of socialism as a permanent society. With this task accomplished, the invitation was extended for the Marxists toward dialogue. The Marxists were suspicious of this "new tactic" as they had not yet accepted the new role of the Church, and only engaged in dialogue in spite of the fact that Hromádka and others were Christians. The Marxists were still suspicious of the motives of the Christians. In the latter 50's, Marxists took an increased interest in the question of man, a central issue in the dialogue, since the structural change of society had already occurred, and there was little immediate danger of

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<sup>1</sup>Lochman, Marxist Society, p. 12.

revolution. Sparked by the Comenius study, the Marxists also began a search for the young Marx's authentic man. In addition, Milan Opocensky of the Comenius faculty states that it was in 1956 or 1957, that Marxists discovered that the Church did not correspond with their preconceived notions about it. They became interested in it and began a creative study of the Czech Church. Thus began a new relationship between the Church and prominent Marxists.<sup>2</sup> In 1958, the first meeting of the Christian Peace Conference was held. It was in that same year that Hromádka received the Lenin Peace Prize. The first conference was small and had little impact. Although the Christian Peace Conference never has made a large contribution to world peace, it was a move forward in that such a Christian assembly was being held in Prague. The Christian Peace Conference was the attempt to bring Eastern and Western Christians together despite their political differences. It has had little success in this role. Since 1958, there have been three All Christian Peace Assemblies, the last in March and April, 1968.

Milton Mayer vividly presented one reason for the failure of the Christian Peace Conference in his review of its third assembly. While he was listening to the radio with a group of Czechs--". . . two journalists, a student leader in the present libertarian renaissance and a church-connected student in the same movement, . . ." a newscaster began reading the resolutions of the Christian Peace Conference. The Czechs broke into laughter: "The words were those we have heard here for

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<sup>2</sup>Dean Peerman, "Deepening The Christian-Marxist Dialogue," The Christian Century, LXXXII (December 22, 1965), 1567.

twenty years . . ." one of them explained.<sup>3</sup> The Eastern powers have thus utilized the Christian Peace Conference for their own propaganda purposes. More important for the dialogue of Christians and Marxists have been the dialogues conducted among the university and theology students and faculty at Comenius University, although without governmental approval which was never asked. In the fall of 1964, Milan Machovec began a conference attended by five Marxists and five Christian theologians along with ten students. Since that time the group had grown to as many as 100, meeting every Monday afternoon. In addition to the Czechs, such men as Erich Fromm, Gustav Wetter, and Charles C. West have spoken at the seminar. Czechoslovakia remains the only Eastern country which has welcomed dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

In the West, the dialogue has made tremendous inroads into both the Catholics and Marxist camps. Pope John XXIII, in his encyclicals "Mater et Magistra" and "Pacem in Terris," opened the door to dialogue by giving tacit recognition to communism as a humanistic movement and encouraging Catholics to talk with communists. Vatican II followed the Pope's lead by recognizing the failure of the Church in regard to social action and its intention to align itself with those who fight for human rights. Vatican II also set up a special Secretariate for Non-believers which Paul Oestreicher points out ". . . is already immersed in discussion with those who call themselves atheists, communists foremost among

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<sup>3</sup>Milton Mayer, "Prague: A New Earth and a New Heaven?" The Christian Century, LXXXV (May 15, 1968), 646.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert Aptheker, The Urgency of Marxist-Christian Dialogue (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 8.

them."<sup>5</sup> The Paulus-Gesellschaft (Society of St. Paul) has conducted three important dialogues between Marxists and Christians in Salzburg (1965), Chiemsee (1966), and Marienbad (1967). At Salzburg, the first real confrontation on a large scale between Christians and Marxists, many key Western Marxists and Christians presented papers and engaged in debate. The key question was the necessity of atheism to Marxism. Marcel Reding presented a paper which held the Law of History as basic to Marxism with atheism unessential. Father Girardi, of Italy, agreed that the Law of History was not atheistic but disagreed that it was central to Marxism. He expressed the opinion that the key issue should be man's freedom and that atheism was of secondary importance to that issue. Gustav Wetter presented the ideas that peaceful ideological co-existence of contradictory ideas was impossible, but that men holding to contradictory ideas must peacefully co-exist, and that resolution of these ideas must be by spiritual means rather than force with the power agencies of the state remaining neutral. By the time of the Salzburg conference, Garaudy had just come into enough prominence in the French Communist Party that he could casually speak of two models of Communism: Stalinism and his own newly arrived Garaudyism.<sup>6</sup> The most significant discussion took place in Marienbad, where the dialogue for the first time occurred in the East, and with a sizeable representation from Eastern Marxism. Lochman's report about Milan Prucha (Chapter 3) stems

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<sup>5</sup>Paul Oestreicher, "Christians and Communists in Search of Man," Theology, LXX (December, 1967), 538.

<sup>6</sup>Donald L. MacLean, "An Opening Attempt," America, CXIII (July 31, 1965), 116. The article is a brief description of the Salzburg meetings.

from this particular conference arranged in conjunction with the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

In June of 1967, a Communist-Catholic discussion was held in the Liverpool University chaplaincy with an audience of over 300 people, probably equally divided between Catholics and Communists.<sup>7</sup> The Marxist-Christian dialogue is gaining momentum in Britain, Spain, France and Italy. In Britain during 1967, nearly every month witnessed a major dialogue. Slant magazine, published by a Catholic group, is dedicated to ". . . the exploration of the idea that Christian commitment at the moment carries with it an obligation to be Socialist."<sup>8</sup> Supporting this contention, Terence Eagleton, a member of the Slant group has also written The New Left Church.<sup>9</sup> Yet, participation in discussions has been largely restricted to Catholics of the left or intellectuals, in Britain. In April of 1968, the World Council of Churches sponsored a Christian-Marxist dialogue in Geneva. The dialogue is broadening and increasing. Many more meetings have been held than may be mentioned in this paper. Suffice it to say that Catholic, and Protestant are confronting Marxists in dialogue. Primarily the dialogue is confined to the liberal and left leaning sections of Christendom and to the liberal side of Marxism.

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<sup>7</sup>James Klugmann, "The Pattern of Encounter in Britain," The Christian-Marxist Dialogue, ed. Paul Oestreicher (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969), p. 180.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>9</sup>Terrence Eagleton, The New Left Church (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966).

## ITS PRESENT COURSE

Michael Bourdeaux an expert on Christianity in contemporary Russia expressed some misgivings about the dialogue in 1966, which are still applicable. His first point was that the dialogue is primarily Western in nature. Except for some Eastern Europeans, primarily Czechoslovakians, the East is yet uninterested in the dialogue. The Soviet Union is notably absent from any such discussion. At the same time that the East looks fearfully at the dialogue as a Western plot against socialism, the West remains unconvinced of the Communists sincerity in dialogue. Moreover, each side questions the authority and representative ability of the participants.<sup>10</sup> As the dialogue is presently proceeding in the West, it is largely confined to liberal (Revisionist) Marxists, and those Christians who are either liberal theologically or who incline to the left politically. Garaudy, in fact, points with pride to those militant Christians who feel the need of Marxist ". . . methods of thought action and organization to achieve a real and effective insertion of their faith into history."<sup>11</sup> That the dialogue is in such a situation of involving three liberal movements unfortunately makes it appear as a political tool of the left.

At the heart of the issue of dialogue for the Christian is whether atheism is a necessary part of Marxism. Hromádka continually emphasized that atheism was only a secondary characteristic of the

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<sup>10</sup>Michael Bourdeaux, "Opening Dialogue," Frontier, IX (Autumn, 1966), 205.

<sup>11</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 117.



Marxist movement, necessary only in the early stages in order to fight against the institution of religion which was too closely aligned with the power structure. Is the question of religion as faith (not institution) really an open question for dialogue? Marcel Reding, Professor of Catholic Theology at the Free University of Berlin has declared:

Atheism follows unequivocally from the essence of Marxism from the law of base and superstructure, only if it is definitively proved that all forms of superstructure--law, ethics, art, religion--are exclusively the product of that base. But this is neither proved, nor does it follow from the critical commentaries of the founders of Marxism on the problem of base and superstructure. And this means that the problem of religion and atheism necessarily remains open. To refuse to recognize this denotes a strange dogmatism, altogether alien to Marxism.<sup>12</sup>

Reding supports his contention by questioning how such a primitive Greek society could have such magnificent art and how Roman law could have achieved its strong hold on the Western legal mind for such a long time, if all forms of superstructure are indeed determined by the base. Herbert Aptheker, the director of the American Institute for Marxist Studies, also indicates a possible open question by saying that ". . . when individuals have reached positions wherein God is altogether unnecessary and when the social order reaches the stage where religious concepts will no longer be necessary, religion will evaporate if Marxism is correct."<sup>13</sup> The Czech Marxists who once thought religion would disappear in a few years, have delayed the time table to a few hundred years. Although faith is seen by Reding as an open question and Aptheker inserts the phrase ". . . if Marxism is correct, . . ." Marxism remains,

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<sup>12</sup>Marcel Reding, "Marxism Without Atheism," Commonweal, LXXXII (May 7, 1955), 218.

<sup>13</sup>Aptheker, Urgency, p. 7.

in Aptheker's words, ". . . radically opposed to religion . . ." which is manifested by a belief in a supernatural God.<sup>14</sup> It is at this point that a Christian who holds to the Biblical authority must question the possibility of a successful dialogue. Genuine free dialogue cannot be engaged if there is radical opposition of one side by the other, if the question of religion is in reality a closed issue. Such may be true under forced circumstances as in Hromádka's case, however the possibility of meaningful results to such a dialogue in the West remains the responsibility of the Marxist. In spite of Garaudy's assurance that ". . . dialogue with Christians implies, on their part, no religious concession whatever, . . ." the question must remain as to how seriously the Marxist will listen in his radical opposition to Biblical faith.<sup>15</sup> A second point in question concerning Marxism is its essentially theoretical basis of militant humanism as opposed to atheism. This argument notwithstanding, the atheistic emphasis is too obvious to ignore. Its humanism seems based upon its atheism. Man is regarded by Garaudy and Aptheker as well as by Marx and Engels, to be free only when he is no longer confined by either the idea or person of God. Only when men recognize that they have created God and not the other way around, will they be free according to Marxism. Only a truly revisionist Marxism (that seen as possible by Father Adelman) could change this impasse in the dialogue.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 122.

Obviously, the central point concerning the question of atheism's necessity is to discover the core of Marxism. As was determined at Salzburg in 1965, the philosophical basis is very difficult to uncover. Louis Duprè, Professor at Georgetown, finds that ". . . religious beliefs are totally incompatible with the philosophy of Marx."<sup>16</sup> Basic to Marxism, Duprè points out, is the concept of "praxis," man's relationship between himself and nature as determined by interaction. In this case, it is man's creative working, interacting with nature which determines who and what he is. No questions can be asked "beyond" the "praxis" notes Duprè. That is to mean that aside from what can be known through man's interaction with objective reality, nothing can be known and therefore nothing can sensibly be asked. The implication is thus that questions about non-scientific matters are useless nonsense, because they cannot be answered. Moving this line of argument to the religious question, one would conclude that both theism and atheism are nonsensical positions even though by accident the atheist is closer to the truth. Because a theistic position has no reality (no objective, scientific basis) so the atheistic position is just as unacceptable. Atheism has therefore in Marxism lost its primary position to the concept of "praxis," which moves beyond atheism by excluding any transcendent principle of action. "Marx's communism," notes Peter Ehlen, a Catholic specialist in Marxist theory, "presupposes atheism and includes it. But it goes farther because it not only states man's true being

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<sup>16</sup>Louis Duprè, "Marx and Religion: An Impossible Marriage," Commonweal, LXXXVIII (April 26, 1968), 175.

theoretically by the abolition of the religious self-alienation, it also puts man's self-realization into action and in this sense it supersedes atheism."<sup>17</sup> Duprè and Ehlen are in agreement that in theory, Communism not only includes atheism but also surpasses it in a deeper more meaningful relationship with reality, through "praxis." Duprè, further, unites base and superstructure within Marxist theory in opposition to Reding's contention. He believes both Marx and Engels claimed that ". . . all states of consciousness are 'intrinsically determined' (which is quite different from 'conditioned') by the economic production process."<sup>18</sup> In quoting Engels, Duprè writes

. . . there is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which 'ultimately' always asserts itself. This implies that the ultimate explanation of all ideal values is to be found in economic processes . . . To religion it strikes a death blow, for it excludes the existence of any reality independent of the material production.<sup>19</sup>

Marxism is therefore, finally incompatible with religion because of the concept of "praxis," in its economic nature and autonomy. The question of the centrality of atheism involves the much deeper concept of "praxis" which is essential to Marxism. Reding's insight is partly correct; however, his mistake is to assume that the theory of Marxism matches reality. That Greek art developed from a primitive base merely points out the weakness of Marxist theory, not that atheism is unnecessary.

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<sup>17</sup>Peter Ehlen, "Prospects for a Dialogue," America, CXIII (July 31, 1965), 114.

<sup>18</sup>Duprè, "An Impossible Marriage," p. 176.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

Jack Dunman, a Marxist, finds two major reasons for Christians becoming interested in the dialogue. Although the "Fatherhood of God" has always been a stumbling block for Marxists, Dunman sees the movement of Christians toward the realization that this concept can only be actualized through the "brotherhood of man." The second change in Christian thought involves the concept of Christ. Some Christians find thus two aspects to Christ: ". . . a link between God and man and a demonstration of man's perfectibility. But in the new thinking, the first of these aspects diminishes in importance because man is already merging in God."<sup>20</sup> The Christian doctrine of original sin and man's essentially self-centered nature are abhorrant to Marxists who believe in man's continual ability to improve, if not perfect, himself. Thus both belief in a God and in original sin make dialogue difficult with Marxists. Here again it is the Marxist who must be open to the Christian if any dialogue is to take place. The one who has forsaken Biblical Christianity for the sake of being scientific and modern betrays the very title of the dialogue. For the dialogue then becomes a Marxist-Humanist dialogue as the essentially Christian aspect of faith--the apostolic message--is abandoned. One task of the Marxist is thus to be willing to listen to Biblical Christianity and it is therefore the Christian's task to present the apostolic message: that which is found in the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds.

Garaudy's interpretation of religion as a dialectic between question and answer, and between protest and opium is also inadequate.

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<sup>20</sup>Jack Dunman, "The Marxist And Christian Concept of Man," Science & Society, XXXII (Summer, 1968), 283.

Duprè demonstrates, according to Marxist theory, that religion even in asking questions is alienating. Garaudy's soft-soaping of the issue becomes obvious when one realizes that logically the reason for its answer being wrong is that the way of questioning is wrong.

For the religious way of questioning man's situation implies a wrong answer. The right answer cannot be given as long as the protest remains religious . . . The first step toward a solution, therefore, would be to abandon a way of posing the problem which makes a solution impossible, . . .

writes Duprè.<sup>21</sup> The problem with religion is that it is the symptom of the disease--alienation, which can only be cured by Communism. Herein lies the whole religious issue: religion is the symptom of alienation, atheism only treats the symptom, whereas Communism surpasses atheism and all symptomatic treatments, and cures the disease, after which all symptoms disappear.

Where, then, is the Christian to have any hope (humanly speaking) in a dialogue with Marxism? Duprè suggests that Marxism will have to change in spite of its fear of revisionism. He believes that the time has ". . . come to incorporate into its theory the changes which are taking place in its own living 'praxis' . . ." because the present theory ". . . is rapidly proving too narrow to interpret the fullness of human action."<sup>22</sup> With such a stance, Duprè is in agreement with Father Adelman. However, to abandon the authority of Marx, to open the question of religion by allowing questions and/or answers not determined by "praxis"--which is a greater obstacle to dialogue than simple atheism--

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<sup>21</sup>Duprè, "An Impossible Marriage," p. 173.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

is that not to destroy Marxism, as such? Could Marxism exist as Marxism, if the theory of "praxis" as interaction with the economic base and possession of absolute autonomy, were to be changed? As yet, no Marxist, to this writer's knowledge, has attempted such an extensive revision of Marxism and the future prospect of such is very dim. The sudden course of events in Czechoslovakia between January and August, 1968, testify both to the possibilities of socialism and to its difficulties while under Soviet domination. Milan Machovec presented a startling appeal addressed "To my friends" after the Russian invasion:

. . . humanistic socialism has lost a battle, but not the final victory. For to the ABC's of Leninism belongs also this: Socialism can be an affair only of the free man of free nations. If it is confused with the exported tank-socialism for enslaved, vassal-countries, then everything is distorted and compromised.<sup>23</sup>

He also challenged the Russians to ". . . learn at home how to live communistically, and that means to open up all the values and depths of human life for every human being!"<sup>24</sup>

Western Christians have reacted in two distinct manners to the dialogue. The first way grew out of the Cold War atmosphere in which atheistic Marxism was seen as a world organization. The dialogue was (and is still) seen as ". . . a carefully calculated strategy to further Communist influence in the world."<sup>25</sup> The second view is to recognize the usefulness of dialogue for all men. With this position there is

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<sup>23</sup>Milan Machovec, "Readers Response," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, V (Fall, 1968), 737.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"The Danger of Christian-Marxist Dialogue," Christianity Today, XII (October 27, 1967), 27.

an understanding that the two systems converge at various points:

". . . the common desire for a better world, the concern with man's alienation, the recognition of God's concern with the material, and man's irrepressible desire to seek for and move toward the Transcendent."<sup>26</sup> Hromádka passionately presented this latter view:

It is the great mission of Christians in all countries to keep the rival fronts in close touch with each other, and not allow a petrification of the international blocs that would make further discussion and debate impossible. So long as the two "sides" speak to one another, so long as they revile each other, the situation is not beyond repair. Let us talk together! Do not let us give up! Do not let us abdicate!<sup>27</sup>

#### CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In conclusion, the dialogue between Marxists and Christians is a necessity. For the Christian, there exists always the hope that Marxism can be modified and made more open to the greatness of humanity. In spite of its claims to be a higher philosophy because of man's autonomy from a God who curtails man's liberty, Marxism, as noted by Duprè, possesses a greatly limited view of man because of his lack of transcendence and because he is limited by material production. At present, the contradiction between Marxism--even Revisionist Marxism--and Biblical Christianity cannot be bridged. There can be no co-existence between the two as they now exist. The only hope is that one side or the other

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<sup>26</sup>Harold B. Kuhn, "Conversations with Marxists," Christianity Today, XIV (July 31, 1970), 39.

<sup>27</sup>Josef L. Hromádka, "Our Responsibility In The Post-War World," in Man's Disorder And God's Design, ed. World Council of Churches (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 121.



will be willing to change its very basis: Marxism to depart from its prophet or Christianity to depart from its Biblical foundation. Such a reality should encourage the dialogue rather than discourage it however; for each side must therefore work for the conversion of the other, not through force, but through understanding and concern for the benefit of all men. Although most writers favoring the dialogue avoid mentioning the goal of conversion, it is not to be denied. If each side firmly believes in the Truth of their respective positions, to ignore or soft-pedal the attempt at conversion for the vague idea of mutual interpellation, is deceiving. These are merely the means not the ends of the dialogue, although conversion is not the primary end of dialogue either. It is merely a hope of dialogue.

It must be remembered that the dialogue is not between democracy and Marxism. The attempt at playing up the importance of a Christian-Marxist dialogue by the threat of nuclear war often disguises the fact that the dialogue is, in fact, between the Marxist theory and the Christian faith. The Christian is not attempting to support Western democracy or the Western style of life. The Marxist, likewise, is not attempting to defend socialism as found in Eastern countries. Any time the dialogue violates one of these principles, it has degenerated into a political discussion. Contrary to Garaudy and Hromádka, the Marxist "Weltanschauung" is just as inadmissible in Western dialogue as is the Christian "Weltanschauung."

There is some discontent that the dialogue is limited to Europeans with Asians and other religions excluded. Yet, in answer to this problem one must reflect upon the tremendous difficulty of engaging

in dialogue between merely two opposing systems. One must begin somewhere; there must be a solid foundation under any structure. To include the Christian faith with its claim to exclusive Truth with other religions would doom the dialogue at the outset to eternal confusion and uselessness. At the same time, however, the reason for choosing Christianity is that the two systems do converge in the areas mentioned previously, thus providing ground for dialogue. Any contention that the dialogue does not represent all men, although legitimate, is to try to force a political form upon the whole purpose and end of the dialogue. The dialogue would then be between Communism and democracy, which may indeed be a result of the present dialogue. Hromádka's plea remains significant: the dialogue can serve to keep the nuclear powers in touch with one another on an informal, non-political, human level. If only for that reason, if all other ends fail, the dialogue will have achieved a success. Yet, it may still be hoped that in the face of the realization that the rigid Marxism of the Soviet model is ". . . too narrow to account for the fullness of human action, . . ." a new Marxism will emerge which because of dialogue with Biblical Christianity will tolerate theism and enable co-existence. Hopefully also, Christians who so dreadfully fear Marxism will learn to live by their faith in the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ and through the freedom allowed by such faith also learn the positive values which Marxism possesses.

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**APPENDIX**



APPENDIX

AN OPEN LETTER OF PROF. HROMÁDKA TO THE  
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN PRAHA

August 22, 1968

His Excellency Mr. Chervonenko  
Soviet Ambassador in Prague

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

In 1953 I was honored to be awarded the Lenin Prize for International Friendship and Peace in the Sverdlovsk Hall of the Kremlin in Moscow. There are in our country few men who have been so genuinely devoted to the people of the Soviet Union as I have been. On countless occasions I have stayed in your country, together with my wife, at the invitation of our Soviet friends. I have a long line of friends in the Peace Movement and in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union.

In recent years I have been daily troubled by the feeling that the old (i.e. pre-January) regime in our land was killing off the love that our people have for the Soviet Union, that the Communist Party was losing its authority, and that the structure of our socialist society was disintegrating as a consequence of our party's incapacity in matters of statesmanship, economics and culture.

The process of renewal which was begun in January signified a powerful attempt to strengthen the authority of the Communist Party, to awaken in our people a responsibility for the building up of socialism, to renew their love for the Soviet people, and to make the cause of socialism into a dynamic force in international life.

I was aware that this process of ours was not rightly understood in the Soviet Union. During my travels abroad I was asked time and again whether I did not fear Soviet intervention. My firm answer, however, was that I regarded that as out of the question, as I had too high an esteem for the wise statesmanship of the Soviet political leaders.

For this very reason the occupation on the part of the five allies amongst our socialist neighbors has been all the more painful an experience for me. My deepest feeling is of disillusionment, sorrow and shame. In my lifetime there has been no greater tragedy than this event. In this respect I have been shattered in much the same way as Alexander Dubček, who has suffered such deep wounds at the hands of his dearest friends, his Soviet comrades. I am afraid that among our people something has happened which cannot be rectified: a loss of love and

respect for the Soviet people which will not be overcome for many decades. The bond of friendship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union has been destroyed. The danger exists that our people's love will turn to hatred and that our nearest friends will appear as our enemies.

The Soviet government could not have committed a more tragic error. It is an immeasurable misfortune. The moral weight of socialism and communism has been shattered for a long time to come. Only an immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces could, at least in part, moderate our common misfortune.

With genuine respect, I remain Dr. J. L. Hromádka, Professor of the Comenius Faculty in Prague, President of the Christian Peace Conference.