



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE PRESIDENT OF FEDERATIVE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA***

Monday, 29 March 1971

The visit with which you honour us today arouses particular emotions and thoughts in our mind.

We think first of all, with respect and affectionate esteem, of the Country from which Your Excellency comes and of its population, who have so many claims to our affection.

Among these claims, you will not mind if we, a priest and Pastor, recall in the very first place the Christian faith, which has illuminated so many of your peoples for centuries, and has given to history so many strong, noble figures of witnesses and saints; and allow us to mention the special cultural and spiritual bonds that link many of those populations of yours to this Apostolic See.

Peoples and lands rich in an ancient, different history, which, alongside the pages marked by glory and prosperity, has not a few saddened by ordeals and calamities. So it seems to us that your peoples, placed in Europe at the confluence of different and often contrasting civilizations, are marked out by the experiences suffered and by Providence, for a special vocation: the attempt to be a point of meeting and comprehension in order that the Continent may be spared new conflicts and that it may find in the collaboration of the Nations populating it the path to more complete progress and to a more brotherly civilization.

Yugoslavia, under the impulse and guidance of Your Excellency, seems to wish today to respond to this vocation, by extending its radius of international influence beyond the boundaries of Europe, in a world that is actually shrinking and moving towards solidarity, both in its positive and in its negative aspects.

Your Excellency knows with what attention this Apostolic See, and we personally, have followed the action that you and your Government are carrying out in this field, and with what sincerity we

wish you success in every initiative that has as its aim the defence and re-establishment of peace, or the promotion of better and more fruitful relations between the Nations of all Continents.

And we are grateful to Your Excellency for the appreciation that you, in your turn, wish to show for the efforts we make unceasingly, in favour of peace and of brotherly cooperation among all peoples, in the awareness of a duty imposed on us by our apostolic ministry itself, which is a ministry of love for all men and for all peoples. We respect everyone, we owe everyone a service of charity and of the word, a service which we do not consider ours, but that of Him from Whom our mandate is derived and Whom we represent on earth.

We are glad to recognize that just on this place, a common one from so many points of view, the plane of peace and international collaboration, a rapprochement has taken place in the last few years between the Yugoslavian State and the Holy See. Experience has shown how beneficial this is, and it promises to yield even more positive results.

We, rightly concerned for the good and the legitimate interests of the Church, are just as deeply convinced that sincere harmony between the Church and the State, based on the solid foundation of respect of each other's independence and rights, is, it is true, beneficial to the Church, but at the same time, and no less, also to civil society. And not just because religious peace is already in itself a precious contribution to the serenity of national life, but also because of the contribution of spiritual and moral values that religion is, in this way, better able to make to the human formation of citizens, and young people in particular.

Not without interest have we seen affirmed, in the foundations of your Constitutional Charter, principles such as "the humanization of the social environment", "the strengthening of solidarity and of collaboration among men", "respect for human dignity", and "the general development of man as a free person".

We think of what help, in doctrine and in practical action, the Church can offer the genuine affirmation of these and similar elevated principles, placed at the basis of society, in the individual Nations and among the people of the whole world.

For herself, the Church asks nothing but the legitimate freedom to carry on her own spiritual ministry and to offer her faithful service to man – individual and community – outside of any interest other than her religious and moral mission.

The simultaneous awareness of the nature and the limits of this mission of hers, solemnly reaffirmed by the Catholic Church recently, gives assurance that there is no justification for fear of encroachment or undue interference by the Church in the field of the sovereign and legitimate competence of the State. As, in fact, we had the opportunity to tell the representatives of the States that have relations with the Apostolic See, the action of the Church takes place on a

different and deeper plane: the plane of fundamental moral exigencies on which the whole edifice of associated life is based"; and "her desire to collaborate with the powers of this world is without ulterior temporal purposes" (Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 8-1-1966, AAS, 1966, LVIII, pages 141 ss.).

This attitude of the Catholic Church seems to us to have the comprehension of Your Excellency and of the men responsible for the country led by you, Mr. President. This comprehension, together with the commitments clearly confirmed in 1966 by the Yugoslavian State and by the Catholic Church, is at the basis of the new reciprocal relations, recently perfected with the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia. We hope that these relations will bring forth more and more ample possibilities of good understanding between the Catholic Church and the Holy See on the one hand, and the Yugoslavian civil Authorities on the other hand.

These relations will also be beneficial for continued collaboration in the examination of the problems – so grave and distressing – that Your Excellency mentioned, and in the search for adequate solutions, by means of the joint effort of men of goodwill.

Under the sign of the aspiration towards mutual agreement, true and just peace and generous understanding and international cooperation, we are happy to express to you, Mr. President, our best wishes, which we willingly extend to all those accompanying you and to all the peoples of Yugoslavia, on whom we warmly invoke the protection of the Almighty.

*ORa n.14 p.2.