



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI
TO H.E. U THANT, SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESUMPTION IN GENEVA
OF THE WORK OF THE "COMMITTEE OF EIGHTEEN FOR DISARMAMENT"****

You are aware with what attention we have been following the efforts of the United Nations in favour of peace.

At this moment when the "Committee of Eighteen for Disarmament" is resuming its activities in Geneva, we wish to convey to you an urgent appeal, motivated by the desire to see the work of this Committee attain a positive, concrete result and thus mark a new stage in the realization of disarmament, the hope and desire of all mankind.

We feel encouraged in this step by the recent position taken by more than two thousand Catholic bishops, meeting for the Ecumenical Council, in Rome. We are also encouraged by the echo which our appeal from Bombay found among the Members the Disarmament Commission. and the favorable reception by world opinion of our speech at the United Nations.

In raising our voice in favor of the great cause of disarmament, we are aware of faithfully following the path delineated by our predecessors. To cite only the most recent ones, we know how clearly Pius XII immediately recognized the problem during the first wartime Christmas of his pontificate. Calling for order in conformity with justice which should succeed the ruins of war, he said:

"For order thus established to have the tranquillity and duration which are the foundation of real peace, nations must be liberated from the oppressive servitude of the arms race and from the danger that physical force instead of serving as a guarantee of justice may on the contrary become a tyrannic instrument for violation of justice. Peace treaties, which do not attribute basic importance to mutually agreed, organic, progressive disarmament, in the practical and spiritual order, and which would not work to realize it faithfully, would sooner or later reveal their precarious and inconsistent nature." (Discorsi e Radiomessaggi, I, 441). "Justice, wisdom, and a sense of

humanity," proclaimed by John XXIII in the memorable encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, "demand the halt of the arms race; they require disarmament duly obtained by joint agreement and effective controls."

In intervening in this area now, we do not intend to ignore the complexity of the problem or to overlook the enormous difficulties which the relevant organizations of the United Nations have faced since their foundation with a consistency and competence to which in all fairness we render homage.

But it cannot be denied: that every passing day shows more clearly that no stable peace can be established among men until there is effective, general, controlled armament reduction. Every passing day also establishes more painfully and dramatically the contrast between the enormous sums invested in the production of ammunitions and the immense, ever increasing material distress of more than half of mankind, which is waiting to witness the satisfaction of its most elementary needs.

We are indeed confident, Secretary-General, that you will accept this intervention from us as a testimony of the esteem in which we hold the authority of the United Nations and the great capability of the members of the Committee of Eighteen for Disarmament.

We trust you will also herein discern an echo of the ardent hope of mankind, at this time when, in the name of the Ecumenical Council, recently held in Rome, We have thought it opportune and obligatory in fact to approach your kind self.

It is in this sentiment that we extend our most ardent wishes for the complete success of the coming deliberations in Geneva, and We invoke for them and for all participants the blessing of the Almighty God.

**Paths to Peace*, p.158-159.