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NOTES AND COMMENTS

ON MEANINGFUL ANTI-COMMUNISM

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In the May, 1966, issue of a leading Lithuanian cultural magazine Aidai (published in New York, indexed by the Indiana University Russian and East European bibliographical service), its editor Dr. Juozas Girnius published a commentary on anti-Communism that we think deserves wider attention. The commentary grew out of discussions of the attitudes or emigrees toward Soviet ruled Lithuania.

Dr. Girnius is a philosopher, author of Man Without God (1964), among others, and at present serves as president of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation Ateitis.

The following is a complete translation of Girnius' commentary.

Essentially the same principle applies to anti-Communism as to all positions that are "anti," positions that are directed against something: they are not primary, but only secondary positions. *For what* is always more important than *against what*, for the first determines the second. As Christians, we are against Communism, because we are for God, whereas Communists seek to root out faith in Him by means of terror. We are against Communism as Lithuanians, because it threatens the freedom of all peoples, at the same time that it declares "the fraternity of nations" while pursuing a policy of Russian imperialism. We are against Communism in the name of man and freedom, for Communism means the enslavement of man and the suppression of freedom. Assuredly, we know why we are against Communism. Yet there remains the danger of absolutizing our anti-Communism, as though our first concern were the struggle *against* Communism, and not the struggle *for* God, Lithuania, and human freedom as such.

This distinction between *against* and *for* is not merely a matter of words; it reflects the difference between fanaticism and idealism. Whereas idealism is sustained by love of some ideal, fanaticism burns with hate for this or that enemy. Wherever the "against" smothers the "for" (even if unconsciously and without open acknowledgment), there fanaticism inevitably begins to taint idealism, and fanaticism is always harmful to the individual, for it distorts clear thinking and represses the sensitiveness of one's conscience. Therefore, it is important to be on guard that our anti-Communism not turn into fanaticism. This must be said, even at the risk of being reproached for "giving up" the struggle against Communism. Such an ungrounded suspicion would demonstrate precisely that not even anti-Communism should go the length of fanaticism.

Fanatical anti-Communism considers itself the purest and truest anti-Communism. But this monopolistic claim raises grave doubts. Especially doubtful is the claim that such fanatically "pure and true" anti-Communism allows the most effective fight against Communism.

When Communism is the only thing held in sight, one begins to see its shadows everywhere. This distorts a clear view: enemies are sought where they do not exist while evils that prepare the ground for Communism are overlooked. It is enough that Communists, from their own motives (whether sincere or not), should come out in support of some policy to have such policy labeled "Communist." The fear of Communism leads unconsciously to social reaction. Communists need not fear such anti-Communism, based on social reaction, because it paves rather than obstructs the road to Communism. Doubtless, neither socialism in general, nor Marxism, nor Soviet Communism was sparked out of nothing. But it is in vain to expect enthusiasm for social progress where this progress is undertaken only as a last and therefore constantly postponed means to stop Communism. Of course, social progress can contribute much to the struggle against Communism. Yet true consciousness of social responsibility is rooted not in the fear of Communism, but in the love of men. Therefore, with this in mind, it would be wrong in the name of anti Communism not to care with whom one associates, or to devaluate everything which does not directly serve the effort against Communism. On the contrary, it is not from anti-Communism that everything derives its value; anti-Communism itself is valuable because of its dedication to and struggle for positive ideals — for the freedom of the individual and of nations, for social progress, for a better world in general.

Most important, even where it is necessary to fight directly against Communism or any other position, greater success will attend a patient openness which respects individuals than a ruthless "fighting spirit" which closes the way to

communication with people. Even Communism will finally be conquered, when the destructiveness of Communist ideas will be realized not only abroad (outside the Communist orbit), but also in the countries themselves, where Communism has prevailed. Therefore, as much as possible, it is necessary to sustain and encourage those, who in one way or another have fallen under the influence of Communism. In this sense we must distinguish between "coexistence," advanced by those who are inclined to yield to Communism by their silence, and the "dialogue," undertaken by those who want to influence Communists. Communists can be influenced more by speaking with them than by running from them. There is no need to fear talks with Communists, provided one does not get lost himself, that is, provided one does not forget the reason for speaking with them so that a real exchange of views takes place, in which the basic questions are not avoided, but raised openly. A dialogue is needed, absolutely needed, but a dialogue that is real; not one that is ingratiating, but one that is without fear. Instead of being concerned or scandalized by certain efforts in the Roman Catholic Church to extend dialogue to the Communists, we should rather reexamine ourselves, whether we have not frozen our anti-Communism into fanaticism, everywhere passionate, but nowhere fruitful.