



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI TO THE AMBASSADOR OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE HOLY SEE*

Thursday, 12 November 1970

Mr. Ambassador,

It is a particular joy for Us to accept your Letters of Credence, and We wish to thank you heartily for the noble words you have addressed to Us on this occasion.

The event taking place at the present moment has a significance which is worth underlining. Today a State such as the new Yugoslavia is accrediting an Ambassador to the Holy See. It is permissible to see in this what Our venerated predecessor John XXIII would have called "a sign of the times" – a sign that calls for reflection because it implies a highly significant lesson.

This lesson proves that once certain fundamental principles such as the respective competencies of spiritual and temporal authorities are recognized officially or in fact, then a relationship of mutual respect can develop between the Church and the State. Henceforth, nothing prevents this situation from being strengthened by regular diplomatic ties with the Holy See.

The Church does not ask for a privileged position. She asks only that, while respecting the functions, aims and prerogatives proper to the State, she may exercise fully her religious and spiritual mission. By exercising this mission, she also can contribute to the "general development of man as a free person" – one of the principles stated in the Constitution of your country.

It is precisely to the extent to which the Church can fully exercise her mission that it becomes possible for her, as history has shown, to collaborate fruitfully with governments for the great human interests of our times: the defence of peace, disarmament, development, elimination of racial conflicts, excessive nationalism, and their replacement with fruitful international cooperation. These objectives, as Your Excellency has pointed out, engage the vigilant attention of the Catholic

Church, as well as the active interest of the people and the Government of Yugoslavia.

Your Excellency has also fittingly remarked that the establishment of these relations has been the fruit of a long effort that has matured and which carefully determined the possibilities and the limitations of an agreement that would serve as a solid and lasting basis for the establishment of these official relations. Once these relations have been established, then we can perfect them. This is Our wish and hope for the greater good of the Yugoslav people.

We are pleased to see that the very worthy person who, in his capacity as Envoy of the Yugoslav Government has contributed to this long effort of maturity, the fruit of which we enjoy today, is also the one who now receives as Ambassador the duty to watch over the exercise of these relations now established. Rest assured of Our complete support, Mr. Ambassador, for the fulfilment of your task. We ask you to please convey Our sentiments of deference to the President of your Republic, and We heartily invoke upon you, your mission and all the people of your dear country, the protection of Almighty God

*ORa n.48 p.2.