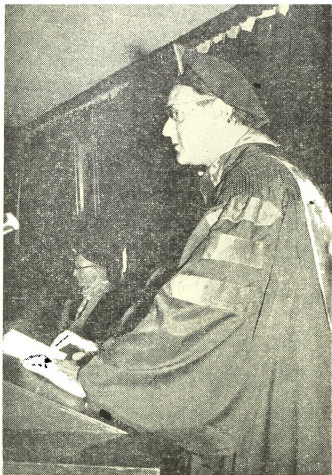


## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Helmut Reuther, 29, a German internationalist, became the 14th outstanding personality to receive the highest honor that U.S.C. can give, when on October 29, 1965, the latter conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Humanities, *honoris causa*. For more about Dr. Reuther, see *news section*. Below is his acceptance speech, which we are printing for the benefit of the "C" readers.

# ON INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING



## Acceptance Speech by Dr. Helmut Reuther

MAY I BE PERMITTED first of all to thank you, Very Reverend Father President, and you, Reverend Fathers of the Board of Trustees and of the S.V.D. Community, for your kind invitation to come here as your guest and to address these few words to you. I must thank you especially for the warm reception accorded me in this venerable university. It is for me a very high honor, Very Reverend Father President, to be chosen to receive from your hand this honorary doctorate degree and I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for this special honor.

Outstanding personalities both of this land and of other lands have already received this honor from you. I not only believe that all of them hold in highest esteem the excellent work of this university, its professors, and its students. I believe further that these men will remain forever attached as true friends to you and to your institution and to its long tradition in research and teaching.

Today you have granted me this honorary doctor's degree. I think I may be allowed to see in this not so much an honor to my own person as to the office which I hold as Secretary General of the International Academy for Intercontinental Contacts. I consider it my greatest task in this Office — a task to which I feel committed with my full strength — to strive insofar as it lies within man's power that human understanding should leap over the borders of individual states and break through the barriers of religious and racial differences to produce a global solidarity of nations with one another and for one another. The decisive factor of the fulfillment of every task, including this one, is an idea — an idea carried in the minds of men and spread abroad thru the force of personal conviction.

So it is that I receive the honor offered me today with a deep sense of my responsibility to follow through this task to its ultimate fulfillment.

Certainly this path will lead first of all to those nations bound to us by the ideal of personal freedom. For this common ideal gives us ready access to each other's minds and hearts. But at the same time it is almost painful to realize that more than half of the human beings on this earth must live in a state of unfreedom under the pressure of ideological forces. The path of duty we have entered on leads us also in this direction. For regardless of what particular regime we are dealing with, we have the obligation insofar as it is possible, to hold open or perhaps to open for the first time the portals of human intercourse.

The German people lived for twelve long years under the enforced regime of national socialism. And still today seventeen millions of my people live under the dictatorship of communism. Furthermore the Germans have twice in this century suffered the bitter experience of defeat in two world wars. Today, the nations of Europe are economically bound together in a common market. There is a possibility that tomorrow they will sit down at a common table to discuss political union. These things are possible only because Europeans have experienced in their recent history the fact that over bearing self-esteem, whether it takes place in an individual or in the whole people, can only lead to self-annihilation. The understanding of this truth, and even more its actualization in the common endeavors of the European nations in the field of economics, and as yet in an embryonic stage, in the field of politics do not signify the rise of a new and exclusive

(Continued on page 38)

# ON INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

(Continued from page 14)

club at the Intercontinental level, a continent shutting itself off from contact with other continents. A common Europe does not intend to isolate itself, and will not isolate itself from other nations. It will keep its doors wide open to share achievements and successes, to engage in reciprocal trade, to strengthen the freedom of the western world and to protect it against communism, and above all to preserve peace. This is possible however, only if all nations are prepared in the same degree to sacrifice something in order to share in the common benefits. And this in turn is possible only if human beings can enter into dialogue, can dedicate themselves to a common task in which, of course, every nation must treat with respect the specific history, and culture and mentality of every other nation.

Even when language differs it is the word that binds human beings together. You can think here on the first missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word who at the end of the nineteenth century were sent out into the world to speak the word to human beings and to experience something of their way of life. They were in the truest sense the first ambassadors of peaceful understanding from nation to nation and from continent to continent. They have freely left their homeland thousands of miles behind and have carried in their knapsack only the simple word of understanding, whether in the churches through the announcing of the Christian message or in the schools through their teaching. But beside the word stood and still stands today the deed, the act of brother love, above all in the mission stations and hospitals.

In the past year on my journey to India I have myself seen how the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word share their bitter poverty of the outcasts of leper colonies. Perhaps these are the reasons why in the history of the Society of the Divine Word there is no instance of Missionaries being persecuted by a people among whom they have been received and with whom they have lived together. It is true that the Divine Word Missionaries were imprisoned in China, brutally man-handled and driven from the country that had become their homeland. But this was not the will of the Chinese people. It was the result of an imported and brutally imposed ideology, atheistic communism, that has subjected the entire Chinese people under its yoke.

Of the many ideas that occasioned the foundation of the International Academy for Intercontinental Contacts I would like to select and dwell on two.

In Bonn, the seat of the German Federal Government, dwell the ambassadors of more than 100 states. Like all ambassadors they represent their country and seek to establish good relations between their government and the host government to whom they are accredited, between their people and the host people. But in most cases this remains, perhaps because anything closer is impossible, a mere political contact on a government to government level. A people knows of the history of its neighbor for the most part only a few important dates and facts so obvious that they can be read in any encyclopedia. The underlying cultural, social and religious values are almost unknown. But in human history it was always music, literature, research and, of course, also trade which effected a drawing to-

gether of people and paved the way for good political relations. For this reason the Academy for Intercontinental Contacts has set itself the task of inviting important personalities of various nations to speak in an atmosphere free of diplomatic pressures and niceties, to provide a deeper look into the soul of their people and above all to bring out the deeper relationships that bind people together.

The Academy then is not meant to provide opportunities for diplomats to exchange floral wreaths with each other on the occasion of state visits, although this can be very useful and can create a good atmosphere. A state visit last only a few days or a few hours. More decisive is what happens when the visit is over and the diplomats depart. On this score it is of greatest importance that teachers and students, engineers and doctors, economists and artists should spend some time in another country through an exchange program in order to be able to speak out their experiences when they return home. In this way many misunderstanding can be set aside once and for all and ungrounded sweeping condemnations done away with.

A second basic idea of the International Academy for Intercontinental Contacts is derived from the first. In Germany the most suitable place for the establishment of this Academy was the provincial house of the Divine Word Missionaries standing as it does immediately before the gates of Bonn, Germany's capital city. The SVD House was a place where these talks could take place without sentiment or resentment, for the Divine Word Missionaries have never allowed themselves to become enmeshed in the political or economic entanglements of a people among whom they were living. So it is today possible that the representatives of other nations can come to this Academy as speakers and listeners knowing that they have full freedom to speak and to listen. The lectures are published in many thousands of copies and spread throughout the world, and so the spoken word becomes a carrier of goodwill among people.

In this way the Academy is the practical implementation of an idea and of a task begun by the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word many decades ago, an idea and a task which they still pursue today among the men and women of 34 different countries on all continents. This fruitful work of an international team, as it is embodied in the Society of the Divine Word, and its visible results, and increased understanding among peoples, are the foundations upon which we want to further build our movement.

It is not sufficient, however, that only the missionary Church should possess this practical interfaithful, ecumenical aspect. In our day we are fortunate to see this ecumenical idea forcibly breaking through at the Second Vatican Council. The task of promoting international understanding, once reserved for the small bands of missionaries at the periphery of the universal Church, has now become a task for all members of the Church at large.

May I state my closing wish that this small ceremony may deepen in all of us here this evening our dedication to this task that the God of history has placed upon our shoulders. I thank you.