

The month of January is now distinguished in two ways at least. In the first place, it has with an ever-increasing momentum become the month of unity. And part of this momentum has been to push the underlying idea of dialogue both outwards more widely and downwards more deeply. The push outwards has meant that from the Roman Catholic point of view we can now think of dialogue in terms of a series of concentric circles—with non-Roman Christians, with non-Christian believers, and finally with non-believers. And this pattern has received even institutional expression in the form of corresponding secretariats and commissions. The push downwards has meant a quite new sense of self-identity on the part of the Church: the usual clichés about the post-Constantinian, the post-Hildebrandine or the post-triumphalist Church are merely negative ways of expressing the simple but painfully rediscovered truth that learning to live is a two-way process. The Church can take its specific part in man's travail only from within and in terms of what man is already trying to do and to say. Listening, in fact, involves a way of life, a mode of being. 'Dialogue' is one translation and popularization of the key contemporary philosophical insight that the way we relate is the way we are. And the practical correlative of this particular insight about language as a 'form of life' is that it is by working together towards some common objective that we can grow together: *C'est en forgeant qu'on devient forgeron.*

Which brings us to the second distinguishing feature of the month of January: peace. For two years ago the Pope declared 1st January to be a universal Day of Peace: and this would surely seem to be a logical follow-through from his previous re-definition in dynamic terms of the apparently static traditional notion of peace: 'Development is the new name for peace.'

Such, then, are the master-ideas which give coherence to the series of articles we publish this month. We start from an account of two important attempts to provide an intellectually respectable but truly theological context and vocabulary for dialogue with the contemporary world. We then move on to three instances of the aspiration towards true dialogue and the Church's new mode of being with others, each of which displays in its own way the risks as well as the promise with which such a vast and newly humble enterprise is almost inevitably fraught. And we conclude with a powerful plea to make race-relationships one of *the* major fields of urgent common action and truly human development. P.L.