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IN THIS ISSUE

Angola celebrates this year the 500th Anniversary of its first evangelization, an event largely overshadowed as the world focuses its attention on the anniversary of Columbus' arrival in "Latin America" JOSEPH BRAGOTTI visited Angola and writes about the early history of evangelization there and the situation of the Church today. At the end of its long agony of civil war, fomented and maintained by the East-West power struggle, Angola is cautiously hopeful about the coming elections. "Too bad that the Church is not a political party!" said an Angolan Caritas worker to Fr. Bragotti. "If it were, everybody would vote for it!"

There are two pieces on Brazil. Dom PAULO EVARISTO ARNS speaking in Rome analyzed the disastrous social injustices in that country today. Dom Paulo, replying to questions hoped that this decade would form a common united project about the global social system, an ethical system supported by all the Christian Churches. Only through such a collaborative effort would there be a solution to the problem of world debt; a solution based on justice leading to peace and to help the children, the aged, the workers; a solution based on the real values of human life, for all peoples of all religions. We follow Dom Paulo's analysis with a short personal account of how Sister JANE DWYER, SND experiences, at the local personal level, the social injustice which Dom Paulo addressed.

MISSION EUROPE is the focus of contributions by PIERRE DELOOZ and ANDRIEN PEKO, SSND. Already in 1990 the imminent demise of Marxist Communism was signalling profound changes in Europe. Delooz's "plausible conclusions" were prophetic and the questions he then posed are now at the centre of the debate about mission in Europe. Sister Pekò gives a short analysis of the background to tensions in Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in Europe.

Christian-Muslim relations in Africa are a major concern of preparations for the forthcoming Synod of Bishops for

Africa. Bishop ONAIYEKAN addresses the situation in Nigeria - 'the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world.' There is no other nation where there are so many Christians living side by side with so many Muslims. Bishop TEISSIER addresses the situation in Algeria where Christians are a tiny minority but not just a silent witness. Christian-Muslim relations in these two countries will play a central role in the religious evolution of the whole of Africa and even beyond that continent.

NEWS

UNMASKING THE IDOLS.

Fr. Virgilio Elizondo, rector of S. Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Texas was the speaker at a SEDOS session in the Conference Hall of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on March 20, 1992. In his inspiring talk to a packed audience he suggested four of the great idols of the rich world - money, pleasure, beauty and power. Looking through the eyes of the poor enabled him to unmask these idols for his audience. SEDOS Bulletin of May will contain the text of his address and the lively session that followed group discussion of his presentation.

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE.

Tom Michel, SJ. concluded the series of three sessions at a well attended meeting on March 26, at the Divine Word College. He treated of fundamentalism in Islam in the context of fundamentalism in general. He alerted his audience to a number of misconceptions derived mainly from the mass media and oversimplifications. The term itself goes back to a movement among American Protestants in the years 1900-1930. He examined the six doctrines affirmed by fundamentalist theologians and compared these to what is commonly regarded as Islamic fundamentalism. SEDOS Bulletin of May will contain the text of his address and the discussion which followed.

500th ANNIVERSARY THE CHURCH IN ANGOLA

A NEW SITUATION

Joseph Bragotti, MCCJ

(We are grateful to Fr. Bragotti for this article written on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the first evangelization of Angola. The first part of the article traces the history of the Church in Angola. We give here the second part which describes the situation of the Church today. The full text is available in the SEDOS Documentation Centre).

LUANDA

...The plane circles over the bay and, through white puffs of clouds, we can see the beauty of Luanda. Its impressive line of white and pastel coloured buildings along the boardwalk, the sandy beaches, a crowded harbour, the slight green hillsides, the wide avenues, the churches, the stadium: what a great sight! Together with Maputo in Mozambique, Luanda was the pride and joy of colonial Portugal.

Urban Poverty

The approach to the airport, however, shows a different picture. Shacks and narrow alleys extend as far as the eye can see - the other Luanda, created by poor country folks, who have escaped the war hoping to find refuge in the city. The dilapidated international airport that does not even have a PA system, provides a rude awakening. The confusion, the garbage, the strong odor of stale urine in the littered alley leading out of National Arrivals, are a national disgrace. The security guards, who steal what they like from the luggage, right in front of the passengers' eyes, are another national disgrace that should soon be remedied (of course, foreign passengers - white foreign passengers, that is - are spared much of the shame).

At closer inspection one realizes that the city is very dirty, the electricity often fails, the stores are empty. People, used to country life, camp in modern buildings that have been reduced to dirty unsightly shells. Hospitals are places where one can easily catch a new disease. Horror stories abound of medicines that can only be obtained at black market prices. Slogans in praise of the Marxist revolution that has caused the country to fall apart, deface hundreds of walls. They are beginning to fade, but not fast enough! With the people displaced by the war, Luanda is now an unmanageable city of over two million people where violence and armed robbery are increasing to the point that religious and civic leaders are launching daily appeals for a solution.

"You want me to drive you to Golf? Not in a thousand years, my friend! It is midnight and I do not want to get robbed or shot." Golf is the slum seen briefly before landing. It covers miles of sandy and dusty soil and is home to hundreds of thousands of Angolans. Children, black skinny pigs, stray dogs and some goats rummage through piles of garbage. At night the alleys are deserted and the sporadic sound of gunfire makes sure that honest people stay home. During the day, Golf is teeming with people of all ages, who

walk to work, idle at the corners, buy and sell at a thousand open markets. Expensive bottles of hard liquor mix with farm produce, flour, bananas and other daily commodities. It is the parallel economy that keeps people alive.

Keeping alive, in fact, is not an easy task. On November 2 we went to say Mass in one of the four huge cemeteries that serve Luanda. A large part of the cemetery looks like a potato field, with infinite rows of unmarked little mounds. Half way through the Mass, funerals began to arrive - ten in less than a half hour. Later we talked with the manager. "We have between 35 and 40 funerals a day here. Of these, only five or six are adults." Even as he spoke, a truck was unloading a handful of mourners and a tiny white casket. The place of death reveals the condition of the living.

The People

"Bon Dia, Senhor Padre!" A 20 minute jog, to say Mass in a local chapel of Golf, easily stretches to a one hour leisurely walk as people come out of their shacks to greet the *Senhor Padre* (Mister Father), the only white person who walks freely through the alleys in dust and sand 6 inches deep. Children run up to shake hands and scurry back to their mothers, shrieking with delight. They repeat in the city slums the ritual of people working in the fields of Uije province, or leading their cattle in the southern savanna of Cunene province.

The real wealth of Angola is its people and its children. Resilient, hard working, hospitable, polite, dignified even in poverty, Angolans have proved to be survivors by choice and regal by nature. *Bantu*, people of mixed race, and *white Angolans* enjoy the newly found freedom of tending to their chores, going to work, buying, selling, socializing and surviving another day.

The *white Angolans* deserve a special mention. In a bar on a southern road to Namibia an MPLA soldier is playing cards with two farmers and a white rancher. A blond middle aged woman, poorly dressed, and her three children

stand in line with other Angolans outside the mission clinic of Munhino. School children and teens of all shades walk hand in hand down the road that leads to Lubango. In areas where early European settlers arrived hundreds of years ago, these *white Angolans* mix freely with the rest of the population. Perhaps the *white Angolans* are just "another tribe."

On the surface, races mix freely, but it is hard to tell what is under the surface. Seen from the outside, the racial picture is downright idyllic. It would be a mistake, however, to think that Angola is a racial paradise. Tribalism is not dead and shows up in unexpected ways in political parties and, sad to say, even in Church affairs. But, by and large, an elder assures: "We are learning how to live together."

THE CHURCH IN THE "NEW ANGOLA"

"The times when good will was sufficient are over. While piety and zeal are still valid, since St. Paul tells us to be "all things to all people," our dedication must be qualified. Vatican II tells us that pastoral agents must be professionally qualified in order to fulfil their mission. Today the credentials of titles and of the *grace of state* can be questioned. We need serious research teams." With this call to action Fr. André Lukamba concluded his inspiring dissertation on *The Word in African Culture and the Word of God in Education to Faith*, during the recent Symposium of the Catholic Faith.

Not all the dignitaries present at the symposium clapped when Father Lukamba ended his lecture! Yet, the Church, not unlike the country it serves, must put to good use its newly found freedom of expression. It must learn to take decisions and to chart a course that will be truly African and truly Angolan. Solutions from the outside are no longer adequate, because the joys and sorrows, the successes and failures, the strengths and weaknesses of the nation, are reflected in the Catholic Church that is celebrating the 500th anniversary of its arrival in the basin of the River Congo.

The institutional Church in Angola is divided into 16 dioceses further divided into three Provinces: Luanda, Huambo and Lubango. Fourteen out of the 16 bishops of Angola are indigenous, but three of them are white: the bishop of Benguela is a white Angolan. Card. Alexandre do Nascimento, of Luanda, heads the bishops conference. The past history and the war have not helped the Church to move forward. There is a crying need for a new catechism, for new liturgical books, for a Catholic press and radio, for an inculturated liturgy and for a religious formation that will take local cultures into account. As a group, the bishops cannot be described as being dynamic and forward looking, but the same can be said of similar groups elsewhere in Africa that have not suffered and toiled half as much. No one can question their good will and their attachment to the faith and to the Church.

Missionaries and Religious

The old mission orders, such as the Capuchins and the Spiritans, the Sisters of Mercy, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and a few others have a number of solid indigenous vocations. It is their contribution to the universal mission of the Church. The ranks of the diocesan clergy instead are not yet quite as large. At the beginning of 1990 there were only 78 diocesan priests. The diocese of Ondjiva only has three. Another diocese had three priests ordained in five years, but only one of the three is still active.

Women's religious vocations abound, but it may be a mixed blessing. In recent years dozens of religious congregations have descended on Angola. The bishops need pastoral agents and welcome anyone who wants to offer a helping hand. Many of these communities, without any missionary tradition whatsoever, have set up shop in Angola and have started by opening a house of formation (but what kind of formation?). The same can be said about some religious communities of men. More discriminating minds in Church circles are worried that these communities, threatened with extinction at home, may just be fishing for members where the

picking is good. Will this trend help the Church in Angola decide its own future?

On many occasions, the bishops have spoken about injustice and have asked for peace. Foreseeing the coming of better days, over the last year, they have written several courageous documents: *The Christian and Politics, Baptism and the Church* (Angola requires a three year catechumenate), *Happy are the Peacemakers, In Defence of Human Life, The Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World*. On October 15, 1992, at the closing of their annual meeting they stated: "Without forgiveness there is no reconciliation, there is no harmony, there is no stable and lasting peace."

A Credible Church

When the bishops speak, people listen, because in the course of many years, the Catholic Church has been the only institution that has remained credible. To say that the Church has been and remains today very close to the people, is an understatement. Pastoral agents have shared the sufferings, the hardships and the tortures of their flocks and continue to do so. When the bishops of Angola visited the Pope in the Spring of 1991, one of them was admitted to a hospital for a checkup. The doctors did not diagnose any particular illness but found that he was undernourished. The pastor, in the little mission where the bishop lives, shares the same problem, and so do the peasants who stand in line outside the Sisters' clinic.

The faith of the common people is a source of constant marvel. Father Francisco Sciallo is pastor to about 100,000 people in the Golf area. Several communities of religious women, placed in strategic spots, keep a number of small chapels operational. A Sunday morning spent at his Blessed Giovanni Calabria Church is a rare experience. Over and over, his church fills up with men, women, young people of all ages. They sing heartily and pray fervently. When Masses are over, 500 catechumens swarm into Church for a liturgy of the word, for long rounds of singing, for a little instruction. There is so much life,

celebration and joy among the poor! And solidarity, too. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary events, Luanda's parishes were twinned to the most needy and distant dioceses, the twinning consisting of prayers, representation at major events in Luanda and help. Every Sunday, the people of Fr. Francisco's parish, who themselves survive from hand to mouth on a daily basis, collect food and money "for the poor in our sister diocese of Ondjiva," as a catechist put it very simply.

Solidarity with the People

The solidarity of the Church with the people of Angola is the greatest witness to the values of the Gospel. A Russian doctor, who went to Angola as an atheist, is now a catechumen preparing for baptism. "When I saw the way the sisters and the nurses acted towards the sick, I thought to myself: there must be a reason for it. I found out it was their faith that was showing. I want to be like them!" Solidarity expresses itself in the work of the official agencies of the Church and in individual efforts. The *Obra da Divina Providencia*, a religious society from Verona, Italy, has already begun the construction of a complex that will include boarding for needy youngsters, a technical school with a built-in printing press, a religious house and a hospital. The poor of Golf will have a chance to lift themselves up.

Together with the United Nations and the IRC, the best known agency in Angola is the Caritas Angolana: food, medicines, blankets are made available to the needy, together with many small projects that will avoid the danger of dependency. In fact, if there is a danger in the charitable works of the Church, it is exactly the fear expressed by some, that missionaries will mix faith and containers to the point of spoiling, rather than uplifting their needy flocks.

The Faith of the People

In line with the about-face of the former Marxist regime of President José Eduardo dos Santos, Catholics can be found everywhere. Some were there all

the time, but did not advertise their faith, while others have been recently placed in positions of authority. Whatever their position may be, they are staunchly loyal to their faith and their Church. The Minister of Justice, Lazaro Dias, is one of them. At the closing of the Symposium of the Catholic Faith he made the following comment. "Critics of Christianity are fond of saying that, first came the soldiers, then the missionaries, and finally the merchants. This may well be true! But what would have been our sad fate if only the merchants and the soldiers had come?"

Mr. Enrique, a wise and staunch Catholic who drives trucks for Caritas in the Archdiocese of Lubango, taught me a lot about life in general and faith in particular as we spent 26 hours together in his truck. Between a pothole and a sand trap, we philosophized over Angola's future and the merits of the various factions that are now competing for power. He had no doubts: "Too bad that the Church is not a political party! If it were, everybody would vote for it!"

The very strength of the Church in Angola could well be the cause of its undoing. If ever the bishops needed the gift of discernment, this is the time. They have the respect and the allegiance of all Angolans. These people will be called to free elections in the fall of 1992. The existing government, UNITA, the other political parties, are unashamedly courting the Church's favour. Listening to UNITA officers in Damba and Maquela do Zombo, singing the praises of the missionaries' work - the same missionaries they had previously ambushed, shot and kidnapped - makes one want to laugh and cry at the same time.

The government is giving back to the Church all that it confiscated in earlier days. Many of the institutions being returned, schools and hospitals in particular, are not worth the bother. They were models of efficiency then, but the MPLA and the war have reduced most of them to mere ruins. Should the Church get back wholesale into doing what a government should do, namely,

take care of its own citizens. When does a favour run the risk of becoming bribery? Will the bishops be strong enough to resist the temptation of power?

Conclusion

The political, social and religious picture of Angola remains confused and uncertain. There are signs of hope and serious dangers to a lasting peace. Having to choose between a triumphalistic celebration of the 500th anniversary of Christianity and a celebration that would reflect the needs of the time and the hopes for the future, the Church in Angola has

chosen the latter. In a letter dated November 21, 1990, the bishops of Angola proclaimed a biblical Jubilee: "Among the Hebrews the 50 year Jubilee was a time of liberation (Lev. 25, 10). In the same way our Jubilee must be a year of liberation, to implement the plan of Jesus Christ, who came to preach the Good News to the poor." They then go on to explain that a year of liberation is also a year of conversion and forgiveness, of joy and reconciliation. "There are many ways of doing theology in the context of the concrete reality - said a theologian, picking up on the bishops' message. What Angola needs now and in the third millennium is a theology of reconciliation." AMEN!

BRAZIL

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECUMENISM

Dom. Paulo Evaristo Arns

(Text of a talk given by Dom Paolo Evaristo Arns, February 12, 1992 at the Ecumenical Centre for Unity in Rome).

1. BRAZILIAN UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS HUMAN PROSPECT

Unemployment has caught the four corners of Brazil and set it spinning like a windmill in a tornado. The economy is gyrating violently to no productive avail, threatening to implode into a depression.

In the northwestern state of Amazonas, the capital city, Manaus has reported the loss of 40 thousand jobs in 1991. To the northeast in the state of Pernambuco 10% of the active workers (250 thousand people) went unemployed in the same period. Its capital city, Recife is the "national champion" of unemployment, with a fall of 5.76% in employment. In the south, the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul have shown drastic reductions in their work forces: Santa Catarina registered an across-the-board loss of 300 thousand jobs. The contingent of gainfully employed in Rio Grande do Sul diminished by 29.5%. The greater metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, long proclaimed the locomotive of Brazilian economic development has 935 thousand out of work as we begin 1992. Nationwide, because of the lack of investment by the public sector in the area of infrastructure, 400 thousand people have been laid-off.

These figures represent only a partial reading of the unemployment problem. Unhappily 1992 promises to be even worse for the working class in particular and the population in general. In the state of Sao Paulo alone,

the Industrial Federation of Sao Paulo predicts 60 thousand more cutbacks in personnel during the first trimester.

We should keep in mind that since 1985, the salaried worker has suffered a 22.9% drop in his real income, as wealth has been transferred by inflation to an ever smaller group at the multinational center of the economy (5% of the population has 40% of the wealth). If we extend the period back to 1980 we find that the median salary of today represents half the value of the median salary of that year. Needless to say, this leaves the impoverished worker very vulnerable in even short term unemployment, with little or no social security net to succor him.

The Underpaid

There is a peculiar aspect to Brazilian joblessness that must be considered, the underemployed or better the underpaid. These are the workers whose salary is corroded so rapidly that they find themselves unable to maintain neither their own lives nor that of their families. They suffer the same misery as their unemployed brothers and sisters. Examining the period 1985-1991, we see that in 1985 25% of the work force was in this category of the underpaid. By 1991 the figure had risen to 41.3% in greater Sao Paulo alone. Certainly the situation is worse in the rest of Brazil.

The solution for many unemployed has been the informal economy, i.e., in most cases, selling anything from

hotdogs to hosiery on the streets. In 1990-91 this "ocult" work force increased by 107 thousand in the city of Sao Paulo. There has been an "informalization" of about 12% of the Brazilian economy (which may grow to as much as 50% of the Gross Internal Product in 1992). The resultant 35 to 40% tax loss is causing the breakup of society.

Unemployment has been and will be a long-term structural problem. The federal government, without any coordinated economic policy of its own, has submitted to the demands of the IMF. The Economic Ministry's most "realistic" projection for the year 2000 is for 14.2 million unemployed and 23.9% of the population in a state of poverty, consuming less than \$600 annually. But even to achieve this "miracle of realism" will require a growth rate of at least 3.5%; an investment of 19.4% of the Gross Internal Product; and a primary fiscal surplus in the public sector of 1.9% of the G.N.P. In other words the economy would have to be doing well and the people poorly.

Those sectors of the economy susceptible to rapid informatization, such as banking will never again employ large numbers of people, regardless of their profit increases. Certain professions in the transformation industries have already disappeared as companies modernize to compete in foreign markets. Those ejected from the job market have little chance of recycling themselves.

The working classes of all post-industrial societies have had a difficult time defending themselves against hyper-rational and unfeeling "modernities". But the Brazilian worker has suffered a double handicap having lost an entire generation while under military dictatorship, and having been deprived educationally by an obtuse and obstructing business leadership which refused to invest in human beings.

The Church can only work to encourage and support the workers attempts to improve their lives, increase their voice in national affairs, guarantee

their citizenship and maintain their dignity.

2. CHILDREN AND RETIRED IN BRAZIL

There are seven or eight million children on the streets of the urban centers. They are part of the 59 million Brazilians under the age of 17 years who constitute 41% of the total population. They have survived infant mortality, malnutrition, lack of decent housing with portable water and sewerage disposal. The head of the home is usually the mother who struggles to sustain a numerous family on an income of one-half to one minimum salary (minimum salary for January 1992 was equivalent to 75 dollars). More than half of them have not completed the first four years of schooling.

They go on to the streets. It is a free area where they play and beg to help sustain the family, but soon the street becomes their home where they learn to survive in the midst of the violence which surrounds them. Some will graduate from small thefts into organized crime where drugs and prostitution dominate (there are 500,000 child prostitutes). This extreme situation to which these children are subjected becomes most evident in the number of violent deaths they suffer. In 1989 some 457 were registered in the urban areas of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Recife - more than one child or adolescent assassinated each day. Local merchants, through hired killers and the cooperation of the police, are most often those responsible for the murders.

The future for these children and adolescents is disturbing. The federal "Statute for Child and Adolescent" is meant to protect their fundamental rights but the government plans to correct the social inequalities that are at the bottom of the unjust situation encounter a deep cultural barrier. The colonial division of the free and the slaves installed a social dualism that continues today in the twenty percent of the "haves" and eighty percent of the "have-nots". Having the political

and economic power in their hands, the former group isolates itself from the masses and refuses to let go of some of its privileges in order to organize a more just and participative society for all Brazilians.

At the other end of the social scale, the aged and retirees suffer also from the same unjust concentration of wealth that consigns the vast majority of the population to a status of poverty or misery. More than half the working population is not registered in Social Security and, hence, is deprived of any financial assistance in old age. Of those receiving retirement assistance, 12.000.000 receive one minimum salary and 2.500.000 more than that amount. The Public Health System, the only source of medical and hospital care for the increasing needs of this aging population, is bankrupt due to the corruption and irresponsibility of the authorities involved. Trends in the population also show that this group is increasing each year. This situation forebodes even greater problems in the future.

Recently, the government refused to give the increase due by law to retirees. As a result, they went to the courts and took to the streets in protest. For the first time, this segment of the population, which represents some 50.000.000 voters with their families, manifested a political conscience that amazed the nation. Uniting with labour unions and popular movements, they may be able to force some changes in the Brazilian social system.

3. THE BRAZILIAN FOREIGN DEBT

The problem of foreign debt is not just a Brazilian problem. It is a world problem today, part and parcel of the economic system being shaped throughout the last few centuries. It has specific capitalistic connotations, although it is not unique to the capitalistic mode of production. In the biblical world, foreign debt was already a problem. It became a headache to the incipient Jewish monarchy led by Solomon, as the Book of Kings testifies. Foreign debt became a very serious

problem at the time of the reconstruction of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. The economic re-structuring led by the Persians, forced the Jewish community into huge debts from which it never recovered. Nehemias and Esdras were the beginners of this process.

The world economic system today is very much concerned about the US foreign debt, balance of payment and commercial deficit. In the recent past England and Germany were very much troubled by their foreign debt. The Brazilian upper classes and their elite have always preferred to borrow and use other peoples and countries' savings rather than their own. Foreign borrowing has always been a major component of Brazilian economic policies, mainly after the late industrialization programme that took place in the thirties. When the military took control of the nation in 1964 foreign borrowing became a major axle of Brazilian economic development. The question of how to pay back borrowed capital has never been a major preoccupation of policy makers. It is always considered a problem for the next generation. Change in the pattern of economic development is far from becoming a priority to the economic and political elites of the country.

The state of the question stands as follows in Brazil:

1) In 1969 the Brazilian foreign debt was US \$4.4 billion. At the end of 1988 it stood at US\$ 121 billion.

2) In the last decade (1980-1989) the country paid US \$147.5 billion to the country's creditors; US \$96.8 billion in interest and US \$50.6 billion in amortization.

3. Nevertheless the debt went up from 64.2 billion dollars in 1980, to 121 billion dollars in 1990. This was a consequence of US \$76 billion being renegotiated, becoming part of the principal.

4) 1990 was a moratorium year. Nevertheless, the country paid 7 billion dollars in amortization and 8.7 billion in

interest to the international creditors. This information was given by the Brazilian Central Bank. The total amount would have been enough to build something like one hundred and thirty five thousand homes, diminishing largely the agonising housing problem in the country. Given this reality, one can understand that Brazil is today a major capital exporter. There does not seem to be any major change in the near future.

5) The present government is concluding an agreement with the World Bank by which the country will receive 2 billion dollars in eight payments for the next two years. This means that the country will receive 288 million dollars every three months.

6) One can see that the country plays an important role in the economic

restructuring going on at the present time. It is important that capital flows out of the country in order to sustain present changes in the economic field. Internally this means increasing misery, hunger, unemployment and concentration of wealth. The actual liquid transference of capital is a modern way of imposing heavy taxes and tribulation. The World Bank dictates and monitors economic policy, regardless of any social cost.

The Brazilian Conference of Bishops in its document: "Church: Communion and Mission in the Evangelization of Peoples, in the World of Labour, Politics and Culture", sees the question of foreign debt as central in the present economic situation of the poor and the underprivileged. The country cannot go on as capital exporter at the cost of increasing social tensions.



BRAZILIAN DIARY

Jane Dwyer, SND

(This is an excerpt from the diary of a Sister of Notre Dame of Namur who has been working for many years in Brazil. We offer it as a practical personal witness to the conditions in Brazil described by Dom Paulo Arns in his Conference. See previous article).

"The life-giving energy of a revolutionary movement is contained and generated in the essence and essentials of everyday living..." W. Reich.

....It is January, 1992 and Brazil is on the verge of social, political and economic collapse. Or better said, the photograph of the Brazil shown to the world is distant, and touched up. The x-ray reality we live here is misery and disaster. Even the ever manipulated government statistics are frightening.

More dramatic are these "statistics become flesh" which the still controlled local and national news finds itself compelled to portray each evening - women, children, men turned from hospital doors; doctors and nurses working without pay and necessary materials; vital life medicines (ie. diabetes, heart, etc.) out of stock due to government and bureaucratic corruption; 85% of hospitals closed while those which manage to remain open are filled to overflowing with patients bedded in corridors or on the floor; emergency rooms choked with unattended critical cases; cholera reaching epidemic proportions; meningitis, Hansenism, tuberculosis and malaria, diseases once controlled now ravishing the poor populations; AIDS rising dramatically. Hygiene is non-existent. Sewage, treated water and controlled blood banks are precious luxuries of the upper separated segment of society.

Teachers are striking for six months' back-pay. National and International

rape of the Amazon forest continues while the monstrously unjust external debt becomes evermore eternal.

In the rural area, student graduations are a memory - even eighth grade graduations which meant so much at the time and now mean so little for the future. Further schooling is out of the question for 80% of the population. Quality education is unknown. Many students graduate barely able to read. Teachers are untrained, mistreated and grossly underpaid. In our area, a teacher earns less than \$10.00 per month and has to spend \$3.00 to go to the city to receive it.

Rice and beans are long gone from the family larder. Families buy back at outrageous prices the rice they sold cheaply in June. The hard fact is that more than one third of the Brazilian population lives not in poverty but in abject misery. And it is worsening. We live among it; watch it on TV; hear it on the radio; run from it; but always it catches up with us. And the problem touches not only the poorest of the very poor. The middle class, always small and getting smaller, is in deep depression. Politicians are screaming. Bishops proclaim that the Brazilian people are without hope for the future.

What happened one asks? And we ask ourselves. Poverty is nothing new. Nor is corruption. We have been struggling with and against these for years. Hundreds of thousands of Basic Christian Communities (CEB's) have reflected and

organized around these issues since the early 70's. Popular movements, unions, national workers' organizations and popular workers' parties have been born from these struggles and organizations. Land has been fought for; died for; occupied; communalized. Small victories but important ones.

Today the landed oligarchy re-organizes; and through para-military or hired gunmen begins to implement organized vengeance campaigns, which result in land loss for small farmers. Something has changed.

The proclaimed "democracy of the people" for which the people fought and gave their lives is not the people's. It is the "old system" modernised against the people. It has managed to curb, for the moment, the power of the people's organizations, strikes, massive street demonstrations, organized land struggles and confrontations. The "system," the national and international companies, the government (servant of the two aforementioned) have taken the weapons of the people and turned them on the people. Death is the obvious result, and it is overwhelming even in a country so familiar with it.

THE FAITH AND HOPE OF THE PEOPLE

Yet, this death is not the dominating force in the lives of the people. If one looks beneath the obvious, behind the appearances; walks among the people, lives, works and spends time with them, one discovers that for these people, this death induced by the system does not mean destruction of the dream and the profound belief in a new future where there is life for all - life in abundance. The poor oppressed are NOT depressed; nor without hope. They are not without faith in the future, nor are they alienated, accommodated and uninvolved. They are living today the

learnings of the last twenty years. They are involved in constructive resistance and it is powerful.

The Brazilian poor, at the crossroads of organized misery and death, resist through celebration of life, meaning, mystery and struggle. They live daily the Resurrection for they die day in and day out. How? Through endless gestures, sharings, and exchanges they are building from beneath, with one another, sharing their hope, their learnings, their deceptions, their lives. They are building on their belief in one another.

In the next town two hundred farmers, women, men and children, are camped out in the mayor's office, literally sleeping, eating, bathing and meeting. They are from the "New Dawn," an area of unproductive land which they occupied and have occupied for two years now. It has been two years of endless struggle. The land belonged to no one. It was used by no one until the farmers occupied it to build a life for their families.

Suddenly, loggers moved in to justify ownership. Who knows why? Perhaps, it is easier to win a case against poor farmers than to justify invasion of public land for pure profit. When the farmers were run off at gunpoint last week they organized with other similarly threatened groups in the area to "camp in" until the mayor finds a solution. The mayor does not appear to be against the farmers, but violence and corruption rule the Brazilian justice system. Mayors are easily dispensable when they are NOT cooperative. The people are used to being DISPENSABLE. They remain in the mayor's office....

Ref. Courtesy of Sisters Notre Dame di
Namur

THE INFLUENCE OF PERESTROIKA ON THE CHURCH

SOME PLAUSIBLE CONCLUSIONS

Pierre Delooz

(These Conclusions are taken from the final number of P.M.V. Studies in 1990. The Contributors to this number were Gerhard Lange, Michael Bourdeaux, Michel van Parys, Jean-Yves Calvez, Gustave Thils and Jean-Marie Domenach. Pierre Delooz drew some "plausible conclusions" from these contributions and posed some questions. These are still relevant and of particular interest for "mission-Europe" today Ed.)

- 1) The Communist systems have collapsed for many reasons, but an important role was probably played by the officially maintained lie. Experience shows that an ideology can be imposed by force, and if necessary by terror, even if all the evidence is against it. There are, however, limits which cannot be exceeded. What are these limits? We do not know; but we have just reached them.
- 2) The Communist systems succumbed not to the assaults of their enemies, whether internal or external, but to their own internal contradictions.
- 3) The verdict on these Communist Parties and Communist governments has disqualified a totalitarian version of socialism, but not socialism in any form; and it does not endow liberal capitalism with undisputed virtue.
- 4) It is possible that the process of secularisation under way in European society has played its part in depriving Communism of internal value and in undermining the faith and hope which some people had sincerely invested in it. But left to itself, this process seems for the moment to be leading more than anything else towards a state of nihilism which seeks cheap consolation in consumption without succeeding in hiding the threat of the void.
- 5) Secularisation seems to have discredited in advance any totalitarian vision of humanity, including an atheist or anti-religious vision. The Communists have tried an experiment and have paid for their failure; but no alternative totalitarian vision is now in a position to take over. Or so one might reasonably hope. The future of the former Communist countries therefore seems bound to involve perplexity and dispute even in those places where religion is apparently triumphant.
- 6) The Communist systems had tried to recover and monopolise the sacred. They failed, but it is probable that the various religions have not succeeded either and are not going to succeed in the future.
- 7) The religions, freed from the oppressive constraints of these totalitarian regimes, are losing an enemy, but paradoxically are also losing a form of security. They cannot simply take over what has collapsed, nor can they act as though nothing has happened. They are emerging from these trials at once enriched and impoverished, victorious and disorientated.
- 8) The religions did not conquer the Communist systems, which as we have emphasised decayed from within, but

neither were they destroyed by them.

9) The Communist systems attempted to desacralise the world but found themselves obliged to resacralise it for their own benefit. It is probable that the religions, carried away in the process of secularisation, are subject to a comparable desacralisation-resacralisation dynamic.

10) It is possible that the religions are using secularisation to their own advantage in order at a deeper level to make a distinction between the contingent nature of their histories and the absolute transcendence to which they lay claim.

11) The end of these Communist systems has not discredited Marxism completely. What it has done is to contribute to its desacralisation and to its reintroduction in a secularised version.

12) Secularised Marxism - of which there remain only a few readily identifiable elements - is no longer a spectre of which one must at all costs beware. A liberation theology might very well derive inspiration from it without losing itself in it. The attention which Marxism pays to human alienation, exploitation and economic dependence is now part of the common heritage and Christians would be wrong not to take account of it.

13) A secularised Marxism loses its power to fascinate and allows one to pay attention to other sources of illumination as well. "The poor", for example, referred to so often in the Gospel, are not simply the exploited: they are also the victims of that violence which claims the prestige of the sacred. They are frequently scapegoats who justify those who have deliberately sought out a victim. They can also - unfortunately - be accomplices in this violence. Certain types of submissiveness - sometimes encouraged by religion - being not far short of self-destruction. The preferential option for the poor is deepened and reinforced by insights such as these. When putting Communism in the dock along with the sacrifices it has demanded on the part of the poor (note in passing the significant etymol-

ogy of the word "sacrifice"), is it tolerable simply to substitute for it a free-market capitalism which, left to itself, tends just as much to justify innumerable sacrifices in the name of so-called development?¹

14) It seems that there exists a "temptation to do good" which is difficult to resist, no doubt because it seems to be accompanied by merit of a subtle kind. Europeans have frequently desired the good of others, in the name of generous principles, whether religious or antireligious, humanist or atheist. They have sometimes failed to perceive the risk of humiliating "others", of putting them in a subservient position, of making them responsible for their benefactors' failures, sometimes to the extreme point of suppressing them so that "the good" can triumph in spite of them. Are we henceforth immune to this temptation?²

15) A certain secularisation of society, accepted for the positive benefits it brings with it, probably allows for this temptation to be warded off by discrediting all totalitarianisms, even Christian totalitarianisms, in advance, and by promoting democratic debate. Christians could benefit from this attitude. It ought not to be too difficult for them in principle since for them the will of God is not ascertainable by evidence which it is their job to adduce, but by prayer: "Our Father... thy will be done." However, supposing that the upheavals of perestroika and the economic crisis contribute to the emergence of a "strong power", how will the churches react?

16) We all saw a wall fall in Berlin. But are we sure there are no other, invisible, walls? Is there perhaps a danger that we are going to build some more? Within the Church, perhaps? While Communism held sway, all the Christian churches were persecuted in one way or another. In this sense they had a common enemy. But they did not all suffer the same treatment from this enemy, nor did they all have the same attitude towards it. The end of oppression was welcomed by all the churches as the collapse of prison walls, but is there now no wall dividing them? Is

there nothing for which they need to seek forgiveness from one another? Is there nothing they need to receive from or give to one another?

17) The collapse of these Communist systems presents new challenges to the churches, amongst which the challenges of nationalism are undoubtedly the most serious. Should the churches take over these nationalisms and inspire them with visions of peace and reconciliation?

18) Perestroika has placed face to face in Europe the heavily secularised society of the West and the forcibly secularised society of the East. Those in the East who have resisted enforced secularisation now run the risk of finding themselves helpless in the face of the West. How can we promote reconciliation without too many conflicts, without too much incomprehension, without too many misunderstandings?

19) How can we ensure that the "vic-

tory" of religion does not serve as the pretext for a "reconquest"?

20) How can we ensure that justice is done to those victims of discrimination practised against the Greek-Catholic Churches without relapsing into "uniatism-2" which is a "method of unity" incompatible with the theological vision of Sister-Churches of Vatican II?

1 See the article "Rethinking Liberation Theology" in *The Tablet* (London), 4 August 1990, p.971, and the ensuing correspondence published in the issue of 11 August, p. 1013, for reflections sparked off by a meeting in Brazil at the end of June 1990 between liberation theologians and René Girard.

2. "La tentation de faire le bien" is the title of a remarkable article by Henri Dumery in *Esprit* (Paris), January 1955.

Ref. *Pro Mundi Vita Studies*,
No. 17, October 1990.

THE CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES

TOWARDS A CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS

Andrien Pekò, SSND

(Following is the text of a talk delivered at the January, 1992 Meeting of the Sixth Commission of the Men and Women Unions of Superiors in Rome).

AN HISTORICAL NOTE

Orthodoxy

The word orthodoxy comes from the Greek and means, primarily "right belief." The church's task is to hand on what it has received from Christ; any departure from this would be a betrayal of Christ. So orthodox teaching is a traditional, apostolic, and Catholic teaching.

Due to historical circumstances, the word is most commonly used now in connection with those churches of the East that followed the Patriarch of Constantinople into schism from Rome in the 11th century. These Eastern churches claim to be orthodox in that they not only preserve true belief about God and Christ but also preserve right worship. This extension of the term orthodoxy to embrace not only right belief (ortho-dogma) but also right glory (orthodoxa) indicates the importance of the Church as a worshipping community and the fundamentally liturgical and practical approach of Eastern Christians.

These churches have a sound Christology. Theoretically the only fact which separates us is, that they do not accept the supreme authority of the Pope. They are all independent. The most well known are the churches of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, and Romania. Their number is growing as their population grows and as they spread out to different geographical areas.

Uniatism

The expression uniatism also has a long history. We need to go back in the history of Europe to understand the complex situation regarding the origins of the *uniates*. A simplified explanation of a very complex reality is as follows. Following the collapse of the Turkish empire in Europe in 1686, there was no other major ruling power in Europe to replace it. In the ensuing vacuum different parts of Europe - Transylvania, Galicia, Byelorussia, Ukraine, were absorbed by the surrounding larger and stronger powers. This process of absorption did not evolve as a rigid system but rather reflected the power of the adjoining powers.

The most dominant at that time was the ruling family of the Habsburgs. During the period of their domination of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Roman Catholic Church received large groups of people who were converting to Roman Catholicism from the Orthodox faith. The Catholic Church respected all their traditions: their priests could marry as they used to; they could keep their own language in the liturgy; they retained their own patriarchs; they could keep all their liturgical forms; they could also have the same privileges as Roman Catholics. They became the Byzantine-rite Catholics - in other words, the *uniates*.

The European Synod 1991

Last year "fraternal delegates" - Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants - were invited as non-voting delegates to

the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops of Europe held from November 28 to December 14. Only a few Orthodox churches accepted the invitation. The Orthodox churches in Russia, Romania, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria did not send representatives. While the invitation to "fraternal delegates" was a new and important step toward unity, the refusal to accept the invitation left questions and tensions and stirred up old hurts.

Orthodox Resentments

Let us look at some of the main points named as reasons for Orthodox-Catholic conflicts. These are taken from the report of the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Spyridon Papagheorghiou of Venice given at the Synod where he spoke in the name of the Orthodox churches both present and absent. The tension is heightened in his opinion:

- through the rebirth of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite, also called *uniates*, combined with the difficult question of ownership of the places of worship especially in Western Ukraine and in Romania;
- through the creation of ecclesial structures, above all by establishing new episcopates in the originally Orthodox territories of the Russian Church - Moscow, Novosibirsk and Karaganda.

In his report he spoke about the impression among the Orthodox churches that the relationship between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches is now seriously jeopardized. This is because of the fact that the territories freed from communism are being considered by the Roman Catholic Church as "mission lands". The accusation of proselytism was also mentioned as a great concern and a cause of strong feelings of resentment among the Orthodox.

Vatican Reply

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican Secretary of State, in reply, addressed the question of tension between Orthodox and Catholic. He addressed two points:

- the creation of ecclesial structures parallel to those of the Orthodox in areas where they did not formerly exist;
- the rebirth of Eastern rite Catholic churches.

Concerning the creation of ecclesial structures he maintained it was the Pope's duty, as pastor of the universal church, to care for the faithful, and as soon as possible, to set up ecclesial structures. It is well known that from 1783 until 1917 there was an ecclesial structure in Russia, the Archdiocese of Mohilev. As a result of communist persecution for 70 years, there was a great change in the demographics of the "Latin Rite" faithful because of the deportation of people in large groups from one area to another. With the new Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations and with diplomatic relations established between the Holy See and the Soviet Union the first task of the apostolic nuncio was to provide adequate spiritual aid. The Holy See is sure that in this way the Latin Catholic communities will provide more efficiently for the common good of the same civil society.

Concerning rebirth of Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, he maintained that when we talk about the rebirth of the Byzantine Rite Catholic Church we should not forget that it was brutally suppressed by the communists. In 1946 in the Ukraine, and in 1948 in Romania places of worship were confiscated and either given to the Orthodox Church or put to other uses. Now after a long persecution the Byzantine Rite churches are able to reorganize themselves. This causes tensions with the Orthodox Church.

A mutual desire of the Catholic as well as of the Orthodox to repair that injustice would have done a great deal to create a different atmosphere between the two churches. One has to remember that when the Stalinist regime suppressed the Byzantine Rite Ukrainian Church there was a minimal Orthodox presence there. The church properties now in dispute all belonged to the Catholic Church up to 1946.

The Secretary of State concluded by saying that it certainly would have been a most edifying sight if, having suffered together for the faith, Orthodox and Catholics could have come together to enjoy their regained freedom! Unfortunately, new difficulties and new causes for suffering have arisen.

Today's Situation

The above mentioned uniate movement is now re-occurring in the new republics of Ukraine and Byelorussia and in Romania. Some time ago I heard that in the Ukraine about a hundred orthodox priests with their faithful joined the Byzantine Rite Catholic Church.

In the present situation, especially in the new republics of the Ukraine and Byelorussia, there is now no clear principal power structure to rule or give leadership. This very lacuna leads the members of the Orthodox Church to an identity crisis. They are not sure how to continue, nor do they know what they can achieve in these changed circumstances. New republics and the churches in them, try to find their place, their role, and their influence in society.

In the past there were strong ties between the ruling political group and the Orthodox church leaders. As the political scene becomes less stable or a political crisis arises it has implications also for the Orthodox Church. This is true in Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, and also in the former Soviet Union. The more republics become independent, the weaker these churches feel. The changes are threats to their existence.

Another sad reality is that often nationalism or the struggle to achieve political power is hidden behind religious struggles. Events in Serbia and Croatia illustrate this. The dream of creating a *pravoslav* (true-slav) strong state is connected with the dream of building a strong and united Orthodox Church in Russia. For this reason it is important that the ecclesial structure of the Catholic Church be reestablished there.

As long as there is such serious hostility between nations; and as long as more emphasis is put on national and political interests rather than on the common search for binding ties that would unite, different religions cannot draw closer together.

Hope for the Future

Reflecting on all this one would tend to conclude that there is no hope for any dialogue. This is looking at the problems only from the human perspective and in a way the human part of me shares this opinion.

Dialogue can come about or continue only if there will be mutual respect on both sides, readiness to accept differences, belief in the good will of the other and willingness to talk to each other without fear because of common roots.

Dialogue is very important and it has to be worked at. It is the bridge which we cross over to each other. Living out our faith with an irresistible authenticity would be one of the most needed and life-giving parts of this dialogue.

It is also very important and desirable that we in the West acknowledge our ignorance about the Eastern churches. It is urgent that we try to know them better in order to understand them more. One of the nuns in a Russian monastery with whom I talked said to me "I think the East knows the West well enough but the other way around is not true." I believe her opinion holds true in general. This needs to be changed.

As followers of Christ our hope is rooted in God. We must hope against hope that with God nothing is impossible, that ecumenism will triumph.

Let me recall what the document *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council says about ecumenism:

"This most sacred Synod urgently desires that the initiatives of the members of the Catholic Church, joined with

those of the separated brethren, go forward without obstructing the ways of divine Providence and without prejudging the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Further this Synod declares its realization that the holy task of reconciling all Christians in the unity of the one and holy Church of Christ transcends human energies and abilities. It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church..."

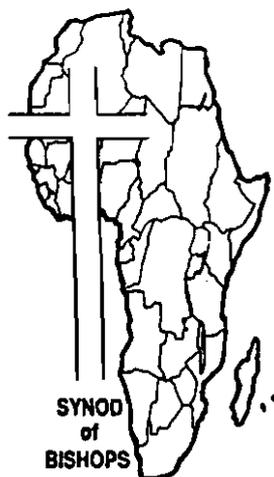
Hope does not disappoint.

Sources used:

- Declaration of the Eurosynod
 - L'Osservatore Romano
 - Origins
 - Decree of the Second Vatican Council
Unitatis Redintegratio
 - New Catholic Encyclopedia
 - SEDOS Bulletin
 - Dialogue with: sisters of a Russian monastery, with a Romanian auxiliary bishop, as well as with a number of persons well informed about Eastern European countries.
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CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA

- A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE



John Olorunfermi Onaiyekan

Meanwhile, on a world level, the World Council of Churches launched a 'Decade of Evangelization' 1991-2000, while in Catholic circles the 'Evangelization 2000' movement set itself the target of presenting to Christ a bimillennial birthday gift of 'a world more Christian than not'. The Christian churches in Africa are deeply and enthusiastically involved in these world movements.

It seems that this last decade of the second millennium is going to be very exciting indeed. In what is certainly a diplomatic understatement, the *Lineamenta* warns:

As both Christians and Muslims seek to make many converts, great prudence will be required to avoid a dangerous collision course between Islam's *Da'wah* ('the Call') and Christian evangelization.³

There is no continent in which this 'collision course' is more obvious than in Africa. The question of Christian-Muslim relations has therefore become a major issue on our problem-infested continent.

1. TRADITIONAL PATTERNS

For a long time, the classical patterns of Christian-Muslim relations were based on the assumption that a nation or people had to have its own religion. But since both Christianity and Islam each claimed to be a universal religion, rough encounters and rivalries became inevitable as each tried to 'win the whole world' to its faith. The result of the ensuing inconclusive battle is an uneasy truce by which many parts of

Introduction

In November 1989, an epoch-making international conference was held in Abuja, Nigeria's new federal capital, on 'Islam in Africa'. It was organized by the major world Islamic movements, led by the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the Islamic Council in London and the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC). It was the first of its kind. Among its lofty objectives was 'to focus the attention of the Muslim world on the enormous potential of Islam in Africa'.¹ After the conference, judged by all participants as being very successful, a permanent body called 'Islam in Africa Conference' was established to explore and exploit the 'enormous potential of Islam in Africa' which the gathering had identified.

At the end of the historical introduction to the *Lineamenta* (outline) for the forthcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, we read:

An 'hour of Africa' appears to have come, a favourable 'hour' which calls on Christ's messengers to launch out into the deep in order to win Africa for Christ.²

the world become considered as Christian lands or Muslim nations.

In Christian lands, society was expected to be run along Christian principles. Historically and culturally, a Christian identity of some sort characterizes the people. Muslims are few. They live among Christians as visitors or immigrants. If they are conveniently ignored, they do not seem to expect anything more. Nowadays, not many countries officially call themselves 'Christian'. But there are many nations in which the cultural and historical roots of their Christian past still run deep. In any case, many Muslims still tend to refer to countries of Europe and America as 'the Christian West'.

In Muslim lands, the sense of being an Islamic nation is very strong. Many such nations are officially called 'Islamic', e.g. Libya, Mauritania, Pakistan, etc. Here society is expected to be run along Islamic lines and much is made of the 'Sharia' or Islamic law. Christians may be few or quite a strong minority; they are at best tolerated. Often, they have to live under outright suppression. They are considered as second-class citizens who cannot claim equal personal and communal rights to Muslims. For their part, Christians, generally by historical tradition, accept the role and status allowed them.

2. CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN AFRICA

Looking at Africa in general, I want to draw attention to a few general observations relevant to our discussion.

(I) Acquired Religions

In Africa, both Christianity and Islam are acquired religions. If Christianity is often dismissed as a religion 'foreign' to Africa, it must also be acknowledged that Islam did not originate from our continent. From that point of view, both are strangers.

But then, for every continent, both Christianity and Islam are historical religions, each with a relatively recent

historical point of departure in the context of world history. The older of the two, Christianity, is only 2000 years old; Islam is 600 years younger still. Thus, wherever these religions exist today, they have been recently acquired. Every Christian nation *became* Christian within the last 2000 years; all Muslim lands *became* Muslim within the last 1400 years. From this point of view, all nations are in the same basic condition of 'converts' to whichever of the two religions they claim as their own.

Furthermore, we need to remind ourselves that the continent of Africa was present at the origins of both religions. The child Jesus spent some time with the Holy Family in Egypt (Matt. 2.13-23); Africans were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.8-12). When there was already a flourishing church in Alexandria (Egypt) and Carthage (Tunisia), much of present-day Europe was still pagan. Islam, too, spread to Africa within its first generation, again through Egypt. It is also significant that the 'Muslim lands' of Africa today are built on the ruins of an early Christianity which lasted many centuries, not only in Egypt, Tunis, Libya, Algeria and the Magherib lands in general, but also further south in the Sudan and Somalia where the Nubian church survived for about a thousand years *after* Islam.⁴ Christian-Muslim relations in Africa have a long history, with many phases and diverse faces.

(II) Shared Experiences

Africa has opened up to both Islam and Christianity in such a way that in many countries, Christians and Muslims find themselves living side by side, sharing common experiences of life. In most nations, they share the same traditional *culture*, and are challenged to cope with reconciling this common cultural root with the new religions they have embraced. They face the same socio-political and economic predicament and the heavy task of contributing towards building modern nations within the present-day world context.

(III) A Common Home

Thus, in most of Africa, Christians and Muslims consider their nations a common home for everyone where everyone should feel, and be made to feel, equally at home. We insist on mutual recognition and respect, as a basis for mutual collaboration in building nations that are united in their diversities.

(IV) Centrifugal forces

At the same time, there are forces tending to split our communities along Christian-Muslim lines, often with disastrous consequences to the peace and stability of our nations.

On the internal level within nations, where other centrifugal forces like tribal identity and political affiliation are reinforced by Christian-Muslim rivalries, national cohesion is put under severe strain. The Sudan is a case in point. On the international level, the influence of foreign centres of fanaticism and religious integralism create serious problems for our relations at home. Among both Christians and Muslims, there are fanatics who are tempted to aspire to making their nations such that their religion is not only dominant, but dominating. Thus, foreign models are evoked which have no possibility of a peaceful and just realization. Islam seems more particularly prone to this temptation, as the call for the Islamic state rings out from different parts of Africa, e.g. Nigeria, Senegal, etc.

(V) An Ongoing Struggle

Perhaps all this can be seen as part of the growing pains of African nations, most of which achieved political independence within the last thirty years. We are now at a critical stage in the political development of our nations. The decade ahead promises to be not only exciting, but decisive.

3. THE NIGERIAN CASE

Nigeria, with its over one hundred million inhabitants, is the greatest African nation in many respects. It was

Archbishop Teissler of Algiers who after a brief visit to Nigeria described it as 'the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world'. By this, he meant that there is no nation in the world where there are so many Christians living side by side with so many Muslims. This in itself makes Nigeria an important test-case for evolving new patterns of Muslim-Christian relations in Africa and in the world at large.

(I) The Traditional Religions

Every discussion on religions in Nigeria - and indeed in Africa in general - should begin with the religion of the traditional cultures. In general, every ethnic group had its own religion and acknowledged that others had theirs. There was no 'missionary thrust.' This has in many cases formed a good cultural basis for the acknowledgement of religious pluralism. On the other hand, each ethnic community lived in an integrated society in which politics, religion and social life in general formed one unit. This creates problems for the modern society of 'one nation, many religions', and affects Christian-Muslim relations in many ways.

Christianity and Islam, each in its own way, have served as a unifying factor, as they draw their adherents from the different tribes, who then find themselves 'brothers' and 'sisters' in the same faith.

(II) Islam

Historically, Islam arrived in Nigeria before Christianity. There is evidence of Islamic presence in the Bornu area of Nigeria as early as AD 1000, less than 400 years after Muhammad. From then until now, Islam has spread to the north and west of Nigeria largely by peaceful infiltration, especially through the ruling classes. For a long time, it would seem that in Nigeria we had an easy-going type of Islam which lived in peace with the traditional religions, and left intact the traditional political system of the different tribes. The Jihad led by Othman dan Fodio which swept most of Northern Nigeria around 1830 undertook a drastic 'purification'

of the previously existing Islam. From this religious, social and political movement emerged what has now come to be called the 'Sokoto caliphate', whose influence is still strongly felt today in the northern emirates.

Yorubaland in the south has also strong Muslim influence, but here Islam has remained integrated within the Yoruba traditional society which embraces both Christians and Muslims on an equal basis.

(iii) Christianity

Christianity made its first contact with present-day Nigeria through the Portuguese who visited Warri and Benin from São Tomé around 1550. By 1600, we hear of a devout Catholic king of Warri called Sebastian. But this enterprise was heavily dependent on the Portuguese whose historical vicissitudes it shared. By 1800, there was little left to show for it.

Christianity spread to the north from the south, slowly at first, and later more rapidly, especially during the British colonial era and afterwards. We should not forget, however, that between 1700 and 1720 an attempt had been made to establish a Catholic presence in the Bornu kingdom by Franciscans operating from Tripoli across the desert. That the enterprise failed does not detract from its significance: Christianity moved across the desert. This, by the way, challenges the Nigerian church to look northwards as it develops a missionary programme of its own.

(iv) British Colonialism

British colonialism in Nigeria effectively started in the year 1900. By that time, Christian missions had made good progress in the south of Nigeria. This disproves the general assumption that Christianity came into Nigeria through colonialism. By 1900, there was a strong Muslim presence in the north, a pretty extensive Christian presence and Christian missionary outreach in and from the south, and a large 'middle belt' uncommitted to either Christianity or Islam.

British colonialism had its own specific objectives which hardly included Christianization. Indeed, when the activities of Christian missionaries went against British colonial interests, the latter prevailed. If Christianity and Islam were rivals during the colonial era, we now see the role of Britain as one of a *partial* umpire, with sympathies for the northern Islamic establishment. Effectively, the British ruled Nigeria as two distinct entities, a Muslim north and non-Muslim south. We are still reaping today the legacy of this 'divide and rule' strategy.

(v) Post-Independence Integration

Nigeria gained political independence in 1960. Since then, it has been engaged in the tedious task of building a united nation. This process has led to many crises. Traditional political institutions have had to adjust to the all-embracing power of the national government. Thus, we have the irony of local tribal rulers enjoying more power and prestige under the colonial regime than in an independent Nigeria. This has affected the status of the Muslim rulers in the north, a situation that they find difficult to understand or accept.

(vi) Growing Pains

It is against this process of national integration that one should assess the periodic religious clashes and crises which Nigeria has been witnessing in recent years. Many Muslims who are agitating for an Islamic state in Nigeria tend to look back with nostalgia at the Sokoto caliphate, or outside with admiration at the 'model' Islamic states of the Arab world. But Nigeria is neither of these. At present, a heated debate is raging on the secular nature of the Nigerian state. It is more than a disagreement on the meaning of words. It has to do with agreeing on what place religion should have in the nation. So far, there is a general agreement, and an official government stand on two points:

- (a) That Nigeria shall not be a godless nation.
- (b) That there shall be no official state religion in Nigeria.

Despite everything, there is a *de jure* equality of all religions in the country. Every citizen has the right to protest if he or she is in any way victimized on the basis of religion. *De facto*, however, injustice exists - not only on a religious basis, but on tribal, social, political and other lines.

CONCLUSION

I believe that the struggles of Nigeria for an Islamo-Christian society have relevance not only for other African countries, but for the world at large. The classical patterns of relationship based on 'minority concessions' are no longer adequate to cope with the emerging realities in our world of today. There are no more isolated Christian lands and Muslim nations. The whole planet earth is becoming one big world community. The Gulf War has shown that whatever happens in one section of the world concerns every other part.

In the traditional Christian lands, Muslims are no longer just occasional visitors and migrants. In many places, they have become a strong and growing minority whose religious needs have to be catered for. They have been enjoying a good deal of freedom and attention. At times, it appears to some of us that too much is being done - as governments and even churches practically undertake the promotion of Islam (e.g. donating churches to Muslims for prayers!) But recently some notes of alarm have been sounded in some countries where growing Muslim influence is being gradually perceived as a threat to national identity and culture. A new pattern of relationship, therefore, is called for.

In traditional Muslim lands, there is a long history of links with Christianity. Almost all of them were lands previously under Christian influence. The memories of the historical experience of the Crusades linger on and easily float to the surface. Most of these lands have also gone through the domination of Western colonialism - which they also call 'Christian' colonialism. Today, there is the economic

and technological impact of the West, which is making inevitable inroads into the Islamic society. Despite fundamentalist eruptions here and there, Islam cannot postpone indefinitely its appointment with modernity. The long denial of the rights of Christians to exercise their religion freely in Muslim lands will become less and less tolerable. The pope's recent remarks on this issue, quoted in the *Lineamenta*, are clear and timely.⁵

Finally, the more Islam succeeds in its aspirations of being a world religion, the more its Arabic texture is challenged. There are more Muslims in Nigeria than in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait put together. The nation with the greatest number of Muslims is Indonesia. Many Muslims in non-Arab lands are asserting their cultural identity, insisting on a distinction between Islamic faith and Arabic culture in a new and vigorous way. This trend will have far-reaching effects on Christian-Muslim relations world-wide. Here, too, we must locate the significant role of Christian Arabs living in Arab lands in the formulation of a more just pattern of Christian-Muslim relations.

Christianity as a religion draws its inspiration from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, Islam, we are told, stands for peace. If the two religions are to contribute effectively to peace in the world, they must find ways of living with one another in peace and mutual respect.

Notes:

1. 'A Celebration of Unity', *Africa Events* 6.2, February 1990, 23-6.
2. Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta for the Special Assembly for Africa*, no.13.
3. *Lineamenta*, no.65.
4. On the Nubian church, see J. A. Iovbare, 'Christianity in Nubia', *Tarikh* 2.1, 53-61.
5. John Paul II, 'Address to the Diplomatic Corps' (13 January 1990), *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English), 29 January 1990, 3. See also the good quotation in *Lineamenta*, no. 66.

Ref. This is a slightly abbreviated version of the article in *Concilium*, 1992/1, SCM Press, Prins Bernhardstraat 2, 6521 AB Hijnegem, The Netherlands.
Mgr. Onafyekan is Bishop of Ibadan.

BEING THE CHURCH IN AN ISLAMIC SOCIETY

THE ALGERIAN EXPERIENCE

Henri Teissier

*(Vatican II is the theological basis of Pope John Paul II's reflections in his recent encyclical on mission, *Redemptoris Missio*. Chapter 3 of the encyclical is entitled "The Holy Spirit - The Principal Agent of Mission." In preparation for the coming African Synod Mgr. Teissier comments on the implications of this for dialogue with Islam in Algeria where Christians are a tiny minority. There is not just a silent witness. Thanks to their life together with Muslims an exchange is coming about between specifically Christian values and those to which the Spirit of God gives birth in the life of members of the Muslim community. This is an excerpt from Mgr. Teissier's article - Ed).*

Our vocation as a 'church for the Muslims' was born spontaneously out of the pastoral experience of the church of Algeria and, beyond that, of the church of North Africa. But Vatican II gave each of us all the points of reference necessary for understanding this mission. To demonstrate that, we need only take the encyclical which Pope John Paul II has just issued on mission, *Redemptoris Missio*. Vatican II is the theological basis of his reflections. But the consequences of the intuitions of the Council have been broadened and deepened by the experience of dialogue with non-Christians which the church has had since the Council.

THE HOLY SPIRIT - THE PRINCIPAL AGENT OF MISSION

Chapter 3 of *Redemptoris Missio* entitled 'The Holy Spirit - The Principal Agent of Mission', illustrates very clearly how the church's conception of its mission has been enriched. As no.28 of this document states, 'The Spirit's presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time. Nobody can respond to its highest calling' without the 'light and strength of the Spirit'.

According to Vatican II, the church from now on has the conviction that, at the heart of all human existence, the response given by each person has a place in the call of the Spirit, the freedom of the individual, the events of his or her life, and the conditions of his or her own culture. It is from this culture that individuals derive their religion, but it is only in the Spirit that they can understand their true vocation and respond to it.

This theological certainty gives a new dimension to the mission of the church and the Christian. It helps us to understand that there is a living element in every person which enables all to respond faithfully to the call of the Spirit in them. It constitutes the vast people of God, whose face we see in the face of Christ and in the life of the church, but which in every respect surpasses the church already gathered.

The Assisi Meeting

Referring to the inter-religious experience and encounter at Assisi, and the reflection which it prompted, the Pope sees this action of the Spirit in the prayer of every believer, regardless of his or her religion; 'Every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit,

who is mysteriously present in every human heart' (RM 29).

The Pope also affirms what he has just said about the personal experience of every human being in connection with their collective experience: "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey" (*Redemptoris Missio* 28). We can see the importance of these words for establishing a new Christian attitude to other religions. In the collective religious heritage of a given human community, one has to recognize, welcome and stimulate all that comes from the Holy Spirit.

These few reflections might seem to be taking us away from the theme of the African Synod. However, in fact they shed light on the plans and aims for the synod in its relationship to Islam and to Muslims.

Those who take a quick look at our communities in Algeria are sometimes led to express their views in dismissive comments like, 'Basically you're simply social.' Or, 'This is simply a silent presence in the midst of Muslims.' Such a way of looking at things is quite inadequate. Ours is not a 'silent' witness. All our Muslim partners know that we are Christians. They see us praying in our chapels. They see the springs of our religious life in our ties to the church, to Jesus and his gospel. They soon discover that service of the neighbour is the touchstone of our faithfulness. They are amazed and disconcerted at the commitment to celibacy dedicated to God, and aimed at achieving the availability which priests and religious want to offer to God and their fellow human beings.

Muslims also see the lives of Christian married couples characterized in freedom, in responsibility between the partners and the relationship of trust which they have with their children. As long as the relations with Muslims last, they ask us questions about Christian customs of prayer and fasting, and even about the dogmas

which mark the way in which we differ from their Islam. Often, moreover, it is not these questions which lead to the deepest sharing, but questions which arise out of events in life: suffering, conjugal fidelity, professional conscience, the religious law and freedom in the Spirit, and so on.

Thanks to this life together which comes from living in the same area or working in the same professional body, an exchange is coming about between specifically Christian values and those to which the Spirit of God gives birth in the life of members of the Muslim community, or which they inherit from their tradition. As John Paul II has said in *Redemptoris Missio*, (56) this communication between individuals and communities in the name of God is part of the mission of the church: "Inter-religious dialogue is part of the evangelizing mission of the church... This dialogue is based on hope and love, and it will bear fruit in the Spirit. Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church; they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of the Revelation which she has received for the good of all."

A Local Church Under the Impact of Islam

However, to evangelize the relationship to Islam and the Muslims is not only to provide a concrete possibility for Muslims to get to know Christians and, through them, the church, the gospel and Christ. It is also to be on the receiving end, in the name of the universal church, of the questions posed to us by Islam. Certainly at the beginning of mission in Algeria there was a feeling of superiority which led missionaries to be almost exclusively preoccupied with what they could bring to their Muslim partners in the name of Christ and within the framework of Christian certainties about morality, prayer, God, man, etc.

Things changed with the end of the colonial relationship. Church documents

have demonstrated this change. *Ecclesiam suam*, the documents of Vatican II, all the reflections on dialogue within the framework of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious relations, and many statements by the Pope during his encounters with Muslims, specially at Casablanca, 19 August 1985, bear witness to this.

The conviction has grown that the evangelical relationship to the other must necessarily be established in two directions. Islam exists, and so do the Muslims. They have experience of the quest for God, of life in the universal and local community of believers. They have their way of praying, of fasting, of moral fidelity, of sharing with the poor, of mutual reconciliation, of hospitality. They discuss together, as they are doing at present with great vigour, how to implement the law of God, in the lives not only of individuals but also of societies. They are asking questions about the aims they should set before their people, and about the kind of education and culture that will help believers to cope with modernity. And there are a billion people to whom to present these questions almost at the same time, even if the development of each Muslim society has its own rhythms.

Within Algeria, as Christians, we are not just spectators, but are actually taking part, through our friendships, in this spiritual history and this quest with planetary dimensions - occupying the difficult, but specific, place of the minority. We are putting all this human and spiritual history before God in prayer and in the Eucharist. It takes hold of our whole being and penetrates our personal life, and it also pervades our mutual encounters, our plans for the future, our prayer and our reading of the Bible.

Our future as a church does not depend primarily on us, but also on the direction taken by the Muslim community, and the place occupied in it by fundamentalist currents, charismatic leaders or personalities courageously engaged in reconciling modernity with fidelity to Islam. The impact of Islam is also part of our mission. God has plans for these individuals and this religious community. Its destiny, in both its

negative and its positive aspects, is part of the history of the people of God and relates to the coming of the kingdom. How we understand this adventure as Christians and explain it to the universal church is also the work of the gospel. For this is a history of human discussions with God here and now.

Evangelizing the Relationship with Islam

I have not mentioned many questions which are important for the life of a church in an Islamic society. How does one raise questions about reciprocal relations between Christian and Muslim minorities or majorities? What progress can we expect from dialogue on doctrine between Christian theologians and Muslim scholars (*ulamas* or *fugaha*)? What possibilities are there of a beginning of real sharing between Christians and Muslims in prayer?

Describing Islamic-Christian relations in Muslim Algeria could not provide answers to all these questions in the context of this prelude to the issues faced by the African Synod. One's only wish in giving the testimony of a 'church of Algeria for Muslim society' is to raise for the other local churches of Africa the question of the evangelization of their relationship to Islam and to the Muslims.

We do not claim in any way to have found the true answer to this question, either for ourselves or for others. But we would like to bear witness that for us, this question is essential. We would like to explain that we are raising it in the hope that other local churches can profit from the preparation of the African Synod to raise it as well. What riches would come to the whole church in Africa if in this way we could share our experiences in the principal spheres of our responsibilities! Relations with Islam is only one of them. The same sharing could also begin in other quite essential areas, like creating a church 'for justice and peace' or even a church which has left its Western and European strait-jacket to flourish in the cultures of Africa.



mission moments

MISSION EUROPE

(HUNGARY)

Before World War II our Institute (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary) had 88 sisters in Hungary. There were 19 Hungarian sisters in mission countries and 14 in houses of Western Europe. In spring 1944 our country was occupied by the Germans and the first laws were passed against Jews whom we worked hard to save. Our house was placed under the protection of the Apostolic Nunciature. According to documents in the archives of the Archdiocese of Esztergom, we managed to save over 1,500 persons by giving them papers guaranteeing protection by the Nunciature and by looking for safe places for them to hide.

The War reaches Budapest

In autumn 1944, the front line of battle approached the Magyar capital... On 3rd January 1945 a bomb hit our church during a bombardment. The very high, southern part collapsed, burying the superior, her assistant, and Sr. Anna Matyas.

A week later on 11th January 1945 when Pest was occupied by the Red Army, a Russian soldier came to the door of the air-raid shelter where the sisters and young girls had taken refuge. He wanted to take some young sisters away with him, but the older sisters formed an impassable barrier by standing very close together. Seeing his failure, the

soldier took the pin out of a grenade and threw it among the sisters and young girls. Two sisters and a girl died instantly; three other sisters were seriously wounded and two of them died within a few days. There were 23 wounded in all. Sr. Marie Erzebeth tried to run for help. She was shot by a Russian soldier keeping watch outside. When the war was finally over, life gradually returned to normal after the ruins had been cleared and the damage repaired. But not for long!

Forty Years of Communist Rule

The Budapest government decided to dissolve religious orders and on 13th June 1950 we had to leave our houses. At the same time, 10,000 other Hungarian religious were put out of their monasteries, convents and houses, abandoning schools, hospitals and the poor. We were suddenly left without shelter or work. Imagine our sisters whom age or illness had made even more vulnerable! Thank God, faithful Christian families now came to our aid. Those were hard days and difficult to forget.

The next station on our way of the cross was that for some time we could not find anywhere to live or any work, however humble. People were afraid. Then came harassment from the administration: unimaginable deportations and unjust proceedings. Some of us were given heavy sentences for teaching catechism to a few small boys and our teaching permits were taken away as a result.

Fortunately some of our young sisters succeeded in leaving the

country. For those who remained the harassment and humiliations continued. They even refused retirement pensions to qualified sisters who had taught for 30 or 40 years. At the time, 95 of us were dispersed in Hungary and 62 in other countries...

Adjusting to Community Life

Since 1989 a new future has opened up before us. But in all honesty we must tell the truth. For the past 40 years of solitude each sister has had to be self-sufficient and could not count on external help. Many of us formed habits which are difficult to reconcile with community life. Nevertheless most of the remaining few have returned to community after life in the desert. We got organised and were not surprised to see that we have grown old. Of the 23 survivors, 19 are now over 70.

We took a chance and began community once more in three cities. There are five sisters at Celldomok. Another three are in Esztergom and five in Budapest. Five others continue to live alone, scattered throughout the country. The rest live in homes for the elderly. 42 sisters are still abroad, including 11 in "mission" countries.

After 40 years of an inhuman regime, our land has become a mission country where the work of evangelisation will be even more difficult than in third world countries. People there always believe in something: nature, superior forces, etc. But here people no longer believe in anything except money earned quickly no matter how: instant profit and instant pleasure.

We need zealous and courageous missionaries ready for sacrifice. There are many hardships and difficulties, the first of which is to learn the Hungarian language. It is difficult for a foreigner, even with intensive methods. But it is possible for those who believe in their mission.

Ref. *Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Information Service*, Rome, March 1992.

BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

(BRAZIL)

...Pedro and Zè went to the Diocesan Assembly representing the parish. They prepared with the people here, and with representatives from other parishes having similar problems and populations. The work of the Assembly was to develop the Diocesan pastoral objectives for the next four years. The struggle of the rural and peripheral city parishes was to include as pastoral priorities the Basic Christian Communities (CEB's) and Agrarian Land Reform. Pedro and Zè communicated their struggle to the parish:

"They say the Church has an option for the poor, but every time we included our two priorities, they were removed by the writing committee, of which the Bishop was a principle member. The political center city wealthy and the charismatics dominated. We finally managed to force CEB's (Basic Christian Communities) as a priority, but lost land reform which is the principle problem we confront. Now our task is to NOT let CEB's remain a simple paper priority. We must make it happen. We will continue our struggle for land reform."

Questions:

What can this fragile constructive resistance mean in the face of organized national and international profit-making which has no thought for human and natural cost? What does the Cross mean for us as death, generated by human excess, encroaches upon and hovers over the entire planet? Are there answers to such questions? Is it through full life that answers come? I know only that there is mystery and power moving among the people. It is rooted in life, their traditions, a sharing and building communally upon these traditions; an increasing capacity to measure their strengths and weaknesses as a force; knowing when to move forward and when to penetrate more deeply into their own community experience.

They understand their history better as they live together the present, and build together the future. They analyze, organize, and act when the situation clearly calls for action and provides a reasonable space for so doing. When action is perceived as not possible, even if programmed, no one appears. An evaluation is called for. They know, express and celebrate when they feel good about what they have done, when it has had results for them. These results are rarely measurable to the outside eye...

Ref. From the diary of a SND Sister in Brazil. March 1992.

AN OPTION FOR THE POOR - ?

(SANTO DOMINGO)

Some 10,000 families from the city of Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, are being relo-

cated to areas many miles from the center of the city. The decision of President Joaquin Balaguer has been denounced by many groups, including MISEREOR, as being arbitrary and pharisaical. If the relocation were to assist the families being moved to acquire better housing, or better sanitary and educational programmes, it could be a concrete symbol of hope for the people, according to the groups speaking out on the issue.

However, as the site of the upcoming IV Plenary Session of CELAM, which includes a visit of Pope John Paul II, also serves as the stage for the commemoration of the Quincentenary observance of the arrival of Columbus, Santo Domingo wants its image improved. It is felt by many that the poor are being moved to hide them from the eyes of the many visitors to the island and to the city of Santo Domingo. No plans for alternative housing for the relocated families have been made known.

Ref. *Informacion Catolica Iberoamericana* - quoted in *Intercom*, USCMA, January 1992. 3029 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20017

HOW LONG, O LORD, HOW LONG?

(KINSHASA)

...It is difficult to find the correct tone and the precise words to explain what has been going on here in Kinshasa and what we have experienced. Sunday (February 16) there was the first great demonstration of Christians. People had only just gone on the street from the church when the first gunshots of the day in Kinshasa could be heard from afar... People did not run away. They knelt down, praying and

singing. Even watercannons and tear-gas did not, could not force them to leave the streets. Who will be able to count the dead in Kinshasa, a city where everything has come to a stand-still and nothing functions anymore? Twenty, thirty or more... nobody knows! Indescribable scenes took place there. Even children praying with palms in their hands were shot... A soldier killed his own brother. When he became aware of what he had done, he threw his gun and uniform away and rolled on the ground crying...

What kind of influence does all this have on our little Crosier Community here in Kinshasa? We are part of the struggle of the people of Zaïre. We are happy that we are here. We would not want to be at any other place just at this time. We hope and we are certain that many Crosier Communities are in prayer with our people here....

Ref. From a letter to the Crosiers in Rome.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

(MOZAMBIQUE)

Independence did not bring peace and prosperity to Mozambique. Encouraged by the apartheid governments of South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), anti-FRELIMO forces united under the name of RENAMO to undertake what soon became a full scale and devastating guerrilla war. Some estimates suggest that 90 percent of the rural population has fled the violence in the countryside to seek food and protection. They crowd the towns and cities; more than one and a half million Mozambicans are refugees in other countries. Although both FRELIMO and RENAMO are participating

in the Church-promoted peace talks which are on-again off-again since they began in Rome in 1990, the war continues. But people are hopeful; weary of war and longing for peace, almost everyone talks of going home in 1992.

During a visit to Linchinga in early February, I accompanied Bishop Luis for celebration of Sunday Mass at two mission chapels 100 miles east in the center of his diocese. We left at sunrise and returned at sunset--he drove the four hours each way, often in four wheel drive! The Government closed the parish in 1977 and imprisoned the parish priest for a month before expelling him. The priest who now serves these communities is recovering from a gunshot wound incurred in an ambush last year - his priest companion was killed. Along the road we met many people carrying personal belongings - soldiers had visited their village during the night. Some said they were RENAMO guerrillas, others said they were bandits or government soldiers. People who fled into the bush were returning with first light of day.

The Jesuits are not many in Mozambique today. They numbered 66 at the time of independence; several were expelled shortly after. Today they number about 30. Their mission is not an easy one, as the life of Bishop Luis exemplifies. In October 1985, two Jesuit priests were killed at their rural parish in Angonia District, which borders central Malawi on the west; six others have been kidnapped from their parishes. Three were taken from the Vila Ulongwe parish in 1986, but were released six weeks later in Malawi. Fr. Silva reopened the parish last year, making it the only parish in Angonia District which has a resident priest today. The Jesuits of the Mozambique Vice-province are strengthened numerically and psychologically by the arrival of six Brazilian Jesuits, two priest and four scholastics, who have responded to Fr. Kolvenbach's appeal to the Society to assist the Church

in Africa.

The Mozambican Bishops have chosen for the 1992 Lenten campaign the theme of peace and reconciliation, a theme captured in the Portuguese phrase, "A Paz: Fruto da Reconciliação."

Ref. *Jesuit Refugee Service in Africa*, P.O. Box 14877, Nairobi, Kenya.

MARCH AND PRAYERS FOR PEACE

(SUDAN)

Seven thousand Christians participated in the Peace March to Comboni Playground on Friday morning January 24th, 1992, on the occasion of the celebration of Peace Day in Khartoum Archdiocese.

Although the written permission of the Police came only two days before the Prayer meeting, seven thousand Christian people participated in the Peace March following the invitation of Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako during the Solemn Eucharistic celebration on January 1st.

Msgr. Gabriel Zubeir, the Rev. Ezechiel, Secretary of Sudan Council of Churches, representatives of different Churches, priests and religious and lay people participated in the Peace March, in silence, carrying placards with slogans about peace and justice, going through the principal streets of the capital. The Peace March was preceded by prayers and songs in the St. Matthew's Cathedral compound and ended in the Comboni Playground.

Ref. *News Bulletin*, General Secretariat, Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, No.1, Jan-Feb. 1992 P.O. Box 6011, Khartoum, Sudan.

92/128

COMING EVENTS

April 28, 1992

THE CHALLENGE TO RELIGIOUS WITNESSING TO THE GOSPEL
IN THE AMERICAS IN THE 90's

Speaker: Alejandro Angulo, SJ

9.00 - 5.30 p.m. Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane

A Justice and Peace Day. Fax or phone 662 2929

April 30, 1992

WOMENS' CONCERNS

3.30 p.m. at SEDOS Secretariat

May 4, 1992

ZAIRE UPDATE:

4.00 - 6.15 p.m. at SVD College

May 19 - 23, 1992

5TH CENTENARY - A NEW AGENDA

VILLA CAVALLETTI

FR. GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ
S. MARIA CLARA LUCCHETTI BINGEMER

(The Seminar is oversubscribed)

May 26, 1992

HAITI UPDATE:

4.00 - 6.15 p.m. at SVD College
