

73/7

Rome, 23rd February 1973

To all Superiors General
To all their delegates for SEDOS
To all members of the SEDOS Group

This week :

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Delegates, please note : CONVOCATION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF GENERALS on March 6th

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COMING EVENTS :

- ASSEMBLY OF GENERALS - March 6th - 4.00 pm - RSC Generalate, via Nomentana 118
- Int. Communications - " 20th - 4.00 pm - OMI " via Aurelia 290

Yours Sincerely,

P. Leonzio BANO, fscj

SEDOS received an invitation from the WCC, (through the Vatican) to send a representative to its Conference on Salvation Today. The Executive Committee asked Fr. Linssen to delegate for SEDOS. The following is his report.

The C.W.M.E. Conference and Third Assembly in Bangkok on SALVATION TODAY

The Bangkok Conference on "Salvation Today" (Dec. 29, 1972 - Jan. 8, 1973) followed by the CWME Assembly (Jan. 9-12-), will almost certainly be seen as the international missionary event marking the end of an era. Its purpose was to find new ways of expression for the old message, an understanding of Christ's mission for today's world.

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism is one of the main Commissions of the World Council of Churches. The last meeting of the Commission was held in Mexico City on 1963. The total number of people participating in this Bangkok meeting was 326. A hundred of them came from Europe and North America, 56 from Asia, 22 from Africa, 16 from Latin America, 6 from the Middle East and 5 from the Caribbean.

-- The main theme of the conference was: "Salvation Today and contemporary experience". It had already been debated in a number of meetings during the last three years. Three major issues had emerged. In the booklet "Salvation Today" they are described as follows. "First, salvation is at the centre of the biblical witness and therefore at the centre of the missionary proclamation of the Church. But in proclaiming salvation today the Church cannot limit itself to a mere re-statement of the Biblical witness. For salvation in the Bible presents itself as an on-going event, a history in which God moves to achieve His purpose for man and the world.

"Second, the contemporary quest for liberation, whether political, economic, cultural or personal, has for many christians become the context for the Church's mission and its proclamation of salvation. The biblical story, too, especially in the Old Testament is to a large extent a story of liberation.

Third, there is a growing recognition, not least on the basis of biblical studies, that the religious fellowship within the Church, and the human fellowship in secular society, are both created by the Gospel and are within the reality of Christ and the history of salvation in the world, that the boundaries of salvation may not coincide with the boundaries of the church."

Introductory papers

Only three papers were read. Dr. Th. WIESER reported on the study of the theme. "The response to the theme, he said, has been considerable and is still growing. The choice of the theme was welcomed as a return to the essentials of the christian faith and of mission". He then analyzed the results of the worldwide study. Is there a continuous history of salvation, with the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection as just one stage in the whole sequence of events, or is there a qualitative difference between the biblical story and the rest of history? What is the role of the church? There was a growing insight that God's savingwork transcends the walls of the church, because it is the completion of his work of creation.

This, however, would not mean a blanket endorsement of any political movement or ideological trend. "The task of identifying God's saving purpose in the midst of historical events requires solid theological criteria". Besides, since salvation completes creation, "we must seek to relate eschatological faith to the concrete historical realities in a way that the societal involvement of human existence becomes evident". It seems, therefore, that the actual situation, the daily experience, in no small measure influences our approach to the questions of salvation today. The emphasis of our discussions therefore will be on our experience and the situation in which we are living. They will be the starting point. Guided by theological reflection we shall try to understand what it means today to proclaim the Gospel of salvation.

Dr. M.M. THOMAS from India emphasized what he called "the salvation of human spirituality". He meant man's liberation from old and new idols, from false opinions about sacredness and from a technological progress that enslaves him". "Every creativity in turning to false realm of meaning and sacredness, becomes self-destructive and betrays the human liberation which it seeks and which is promised by Christ within it". He then pointed to the dangers of modern civilization. "Secularisation, which delivers men from superstitions and oppressive religious institutions and dogmatism, succumbs to the institutionalism and dogmatism of self-sufficient secularism and self-redemptive historicism. Alienated from God in the structure of our spirit and in the resultant fear of ultimate disintegration, we make frantic efforts to achieve self-redemption by creating new religions and salvationist ideologies, only to see our idealism crumbling to the ground, leaving in its wake frustration and disintegration". To enter into the real meaning of salvation we must appeal to the cross. "It is precisely at this point that the victory of the Cross is relevant. The mission of the Church in this context is to be present within the creative liberation movements of our time when the Gospel of Christ itself has helped to take shape, and so participate in them as to be able to communicate the genuine gospel of liberation- from the vicious circle of sin and alienation, law and self-righteousness, and frustration and death into the new realm of Christ's New Humanity where there is forgiveness and reconciliation, grace and justification, and renewal and eternal life. It is this message that will liberate the liberation movements from worship of schemes of self-redemption, and thus redeem their creative impulses from self-destructive tendencies, enabling them to achieve their inner rationale of human emancipation."

The last of the three formal presentations was given by Dr. Philip POTTER, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches and outgoing director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. He described the Church in the paradoxical situation of today's humanity which, more than ever, strives for unity but is still terribly divided, living in a world with a highly developed technology to which it is in imminent danger of becoming victim. The Church is there in a position of minority. It is very clear that "the Constantinian era is over". Mission now has to become an integral part of the whole life of the Church and of the ecumenical movement. This demands theological reflection, and a new approach where especially dialogue and cooperation will be needed. In this connection he spoke about partnership and joint action, since long a part of the vision of the C.W.M.E.

Dr. Potter finished with this words: "Our reflection on salvation in Christ have led us to discern that it is concerned with the liberation of persons and societies from all that prevents them from living an authentic existence in justice and a shared community, and with openness to others and to God's future. Salvation is hope in action - the action of suffering love for and with others that they may share in this free life in Christ. When we compare the context in which our mission takes place and our actual practice of mission and evangelism, we may be tempted to despair. But God's saving act in Christ liberates us from fears, and enables us to be free to experiment, to be mobile and contextual in our approaches to sustain each other in love and prayer, and to leave the issue in his hands".

After the formal addresses were over the participants divided into twelve groups (seven for Bible study, one for meditation, three for music and arts, two for health and healing), started studying the main theme. Relevant texts of the Bible were discussed in the Bible groups. It appeared that the element of liberation as part of salvation, was strongly attested to by Exodus and Deutero Isaiah. The Gospel of Luke provided us with deeper insights in the paradox of the powerful who will be dethroned and the poor and oppressed for whom salvation is waiting. The Book of Revelation showed us how salvation will be fully celebrated at the end of times.

An intriguing question kept on arising from the very beginning of the Conference. It was the question about the true nature of mission. Prof. Peter BEYERHAUS from Tübingen University proved himself a staunch defender of the "Declarations of Frankfurt" (March, 4, 1970), of which he was a signer. One of its statements reads: "We oppose the assertion that mission today is no longer so concerned with the disclosure of God as with the manifestations of a new man and the extension of a new humanity into all social realms. Humanization is not the primary goal of mission. It is rather a product of our new birth through God's saving activity in Christ within us, or an indirect result of the Christian proclamation in its power to perform a leavening activity in the course of world history. A one-sided outreach of missionary interest toward man and his society leads to atheism". Prof. Beyerhaus and those of his way of thinking saw in the Salvation-Today theme a danger of sliding down toward a pure horizontalism. But at the end of the Conference he honestly admitted that his expectations had been greatly met. In fact, salvation has been broadly considered in all its aspects, although especially the representatives of the Third World insisted on a salvation that begins where man's needs are most felt.

In his evaluation of the Conference Dr. Jacques ROSSEL said: "The Conference constantly struggled to relate salvation as the gift of God to situations of salvation today. The answer the Conference has given both by its insights, its experience, especially in worship and in celebration is, first, that salvation and salvations cannot be separated. They have to belong to one another, and, second, they have to be integrated. The consensus of the Conference is that we cannot separate the saving faith from response through obedience in concrete situations". There was a general agreement that the gift of salvation has a personal and a corporate dimension. But, "where the implications of the personal dimension of salvation are well known, because they belong to Christian tradition, the implications of the corporate dimension of salvation need to be further explored".

Dr. Rossel also concluded from most of the documents of the Conference that, according to these reports, God is both the source and the goal of salvation. "If to the great majority of the members of the Conference the transcendence is no problem, so that secular, horizontal language about salvation appears to be almost obsolete, we should not forget that for millions in the West and the socialist world transcendence is a problem and that the message of salvation can hardly be conveyed to them in traditional transcendental language. We are facing here a particular missionary problem".

The discussions in the three main sections started on January 2 and lasted till the 6th. Reports were submitted to the plenary assemblies on the 7th and 8th of January. The meetings in sections and sub-sections were most important, because they gave an opportunity for a wide exchange of views in which everyone could participate. Although attendance was naturally limited to only one group we could at least share the fruits of the discussions of the others in the reports given to the plenary assemblies.

The suggestions and recommendations of the sections were submitted to the Assembly (the official meeting of the CWME-) which took place from 9th to 14th January. After having been discussed therein 6 Committees they were recommended to the directors of the WCC for final action.

In the following pages I shall try to give a picture of the many suggestions and recommendations that came forth from the discussions in Sections (of the Conference) and Committees (of the Assembly), as they appeared in the reports. It should be noticed that these reports are not yet official. My main purpose is to show the ideas that were most prevalent in this ecumenical meeting and also the ideas that might be more interesting to the group that I represented in Bangkok.

Section I (with three sub)sections: Dialogue with People of Living Faith, Christian Identity and Racial Identity; Cultural Change and Conversion) dealt with Culture and Identity. Questions arose like these: Can I be black and Christian? Can I become a Christian and keep my identity? How can Jesus who dies keep on having power to save the living? On whose side is God?

In the report of section I, we find a few very interesting statements.

On personal identity. Salvation in Jesus Christ presupposes the existence of at least two persons who meet: Jesus and the person who receives salvation. "Where there is no human being one cannot even speak of "Salvation Today". White racism has deprived many people in Africa and in other parts of the world of their identity as human beings. The deepest essence of their being is threatened with annihilation. Wherever Christians acquiesce in such situations they betray the full Gospel of Salvation as they force it to be conceived in terms of mere existence and survival".

On cultural identity. "The problem of personal identity is closely related to the problem of cultural identity. Many Christians who have received the Gospel through Western agents ask the question: "Is it really I who answers Christ? Is it not another person instead of me?" This points to the problem of so-called missionary alienation. Too often, in the history of Western missions, the culture of those who received the Gospel was either ignored or condemned. At best, it was studied as a subject of missiology. However, the problem is, how can we ourselves be fully responsible when receiving salvation from Christ? How can we responsibly answer the voice of Christ instead of copying foreign models of conversion, imposed, not truly accepted? We refuse to be merely raw materials used by other people to achieve their own salvation".

"The One faith must be made at home in every context and yet it can never be completely identical with it. Therefore there will be a rich diversity".

On conversion and cultural change. "The Christian conversion relates to God and especially to his Son Jesus Christ. It introduces people into the Christian community, the structure of which may differ greatly from one culture to another. Personal conversion always leads to social action, but the forms will greatly differ".

On dialogue with people of living faith. "The call to dialogue arises out of our faith: the affirmation of Salvation in Jesus Christ in all its aspects of forgiveness, liberation from injustice and oppression, fulfilment in personal and community life and the development of an inner spiritual life, is our starting point".

The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ are central.

"We are conscious of God's movement towards men both as Creator and Saviour, bringing man to wholeness and leading him to wider community. We see in the Bible the record of his saving acts among the people of the Sinai covenant, in the incarnate life of our Lord and in the world mission given to the Church. Our eyes will be keenly open to discover what He is doing among people of other faiths and ideologies.

"Reciprocally, in dialogue adherents of other living faiths speak out of their own experience. We are called to listen carefully to the insights by which they live and the effects in character, daily living and community spirit of these insights. This implies that they, too, have a mission.

"We are involved in dialogue as we share common human aspirations and responsibilities with our fellowmen. In dialogue with people of living faiths we meet persons who are formed by specific religious and cultural traditions and claim an authentic relationship with the Ultimate, which they acknowledge. We must recognize our partners as they perceive and experience their existence in the world as religious persons committed to a definite faith. They share in dialogue from this starting point as we are called from our commitment to Christ.

"We would be as eager to listen as to speak. Indeed we know that we shall not be able to communicate effectively unless we listen.

"As the interdependence between people and nations is increasing there is a manifest need for world community. As people of different living faiths and ideological persuasions we are all confronted with this need. It is in this light that all are challenged to understand afresh the universal significance of their faith. Christians can gladly work with others to meet human needs, relieve human suffering, establish social justice, work for wider community and struggle for peace. In this connection it may be worth noting that the theme of world community has appeared again and again in dialogue with people of living faiths. This common search needs to be pursued".

Section II, on Salvation and Social Justice was divided into four sub-sections (about violent revolutionary change, economic exploitation, national planning and local struggle).

It was first remarked that the personal, social, individual and corporate aspects of salvation are so inter-related that they are inseparable. The purpose of this section was to see salvation in relation to social justice.

The report opens with theological reflections, partly due, as it seems, to the direct influence of Prof. Jurgen Moltmann. As this text expresses the opinion of the majority of the participants of the Conference I quote it entirely.

THE MISSION OF GOD.

"In the power of the Spirit Christ is sent from God, the Father, into this divided world "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind" (Luke 4, 18). Through Christ men and women are liberated and empowered with all their energies and possibilities to participate in His Messianic work. Through His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead, hope of salvation becomes realistic and reality hopeful. He liberates from the prison of guilt. He takes the inevitability out of history. In Him the Kingdom of God and of free people is at hand. Faith in Christ releases in man creative freedom for the salvation of the world. He who separates himself from the mission of God separates himself from salvation.

"The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life. We understand salvation as newness of life - the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col. 2,9). It is salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and the society, mankind and "the groaning creation" (Rom.8,19). As evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in political and social justice. As guilt is both persons and structures. We have to overcome the dichotomies in our thinking between soul and body, person and society, human kind and creation. Therefore we see the struggles for economic justice, political freedom and cultural renewal, as elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of God. The liberation is really fulfilled when "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15, 55).

This comprehensive notion of salvation demands of the whole of the people of God a matching comprehensive approach to their participation in salvation.

SALVATION AND LIBERATION OF CHURCHES AND CHRISTIANS

"Many Christians who for Christ's sake are involved in economic and political struggles against injustice and oppression ask themselves and the churches what it means today to be a Christian and a true Church. Without the salvation of the churches from their captivity in the interests of dominating classes, races and classes, there can be no saving church. Without liberation of the Churches and Christians from their complicity with structural injustice and violence, there can be no liberating church for mankind. Every church, all Christians face the question whether they serve Christ and his saving work alone, or at the same time also the powers of inhumanity.

"No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon" (Matt. 6, 24).

We must confess our misuse of the name of Christ by the accommodation of the churches to oppressive powers, by our self-interested apathy, lovelessness, and fear. We are seeking the true community of Christ which works and suffers for His Kingdom. We seek the charismatic church which activates energies for salvation (1 Cor. 12). We seek the church which initiates actions for liberation and supports the work of other liberating groups without calculating self-interest.

We seek a church which is the catalyst of God's saving work in the world, a church which is not merely the refuge of the saved but a community serving the world in the love of Christ.

SALVATION IN FOUR DIMENSIONS

"Within the comprehensive notion of salvation, we see the saving work for four social dimensions:

1. Salvation works in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people.
2. Salvation works in the struggle for human dignity against political oppression of human beings by their fellow men.
3. Salvation works in the struggle for solidarity against the alienation of person from person.
4. Salvation works in the struggle of hope against despair in personal life.

In the process of salvation, we must relate these four dimensions to each other. There is no economic justice without political freedom, no political freedom without economic justice. There is no social justice without solidarity, no solidarity without social justice. There is no justice, no human dignity, no solidarity without hope, no hope without justice, dignity and solidarity. But there are historical priorities according to which salvation is anticipated in one dimension first, be it the personal, the political or the economic dimension. These points of entry differ from situation to situation in which we work and suffer. We should know that such anticipations are not the whole of salvation, and must keep in mind the other dimensions while we work. Forgetting this denies the wholeness of salvation. Nobody can do in any particular situation everything at the same time. There are various gifts and tasks, but there is one spirit and one goal. In this sense, it can be said, for example, that salvation is the peace of the people in Vietnam, independence in Angola, justice and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and release from the captivity of power in the North Atlantic community, or personal conversion in the release of a submerged society into hope, or of new life styles amidst corporate self-interest and lovelessness.

MEANS AND CRITERIA OF SAVING WORK

"Speaking of salvation realistically, we cannot avoid the question of proper means. The means are different in the four dimensions referred to. We will produce no economic justice without participation in, and use of, economic power. We will win no political freedom without participation, and discriminating use of, political power. We cannot overcome cultural alienation without use of cultural influence. In this framework we discussed the physical use of Liberating violence against oppressive violence. The Christian tradition is ambiguous on this question because it provides no justification of violence and no rejection of political power. Jesus' commandment to love one's enemy, presupposes enmity. One should not become the enemy of one's enemy, but should liberate him from his enmity (MT. 5, 43-48). This commandment warns against the brutality of violence and reckless disregard of life. But in the case of institutionalized violence, structural injustice and legalized immorality, love also involves the right of resistance and the duty "to repress tyranny" (Scottish Confession) with responsible choice among the possibilities we have. One then may become guilty for love's sake, but can trust in the forgiveness of guilt. Realistic work for salvation proceeds through confrontation, but depends, everywhere and always, on reconciliation with God".

Withdraw from an unjust situation ?

Some practical questions were discussed. One of them was whether a foreign mission agency should withdraw from an unjust situation where the majority is being dominated by a powerful minority. The White Fathers withdrawal from Mozambique was taken as an example and a model. The following criteria were proposed as possible guidelines:

1. Each case is unique and complex, and requires special concrete consideration. There is no universal formula.
2. A Commitment to justice as a top priority on the part of the mission agency working in such situation is seen as essential.
3. Mission under these conditions should be conceived of particularly in terms of what is required in obedience to Christ the liberator. This means an assessment of the political significance of remaining or withdrawing, and the likely impact of either course of action on issues of human dignity and freedom.
4. Is the position of the mission agency regarding the oppressive forces clearly stated and known by the authorities ? And is the local indigenous church agreeable that this be done?
5. Are the local indigenous church and the colleague mission agency working with the oppressed people, or with the oppressive groups, as for example in the southern African scene, with the oppressed black majorities, or with white church groups primarily?
6. Is the mission agency's presence part of the oppressive structure, as was the case of the White Fathers in Mozambique where they were seen to be part of the Roman Catholic official support for the Portuguese status quo?

7. If the mission agency is to remain in the situation, or withdraw, is it in either case actively using its resources (money, personnel, leverage, education) and its freedom of action in its own country in such a way as to seek consciously to undermine oppression and foster liberation in the oppressive situation? The investment issue, political action, economic strategies, conscientizing of church and country in a variety of ways, come in here if there is to be validation of mission to an oppressed people.
8. What is the size of the involvement of the mission agency with the Church and people in the oppressive situation? Is it so large as to give comfort to the oppressive regime by seeming to be a vote of confidence? Is it small enough to avoid this impression, yet able to give visible solidarity to an oppressed people under constant harassment, who may feel abandoned by the outside world?
9. Vitally important is the attitude of the national church in the situation to the overseas presence in its midst, and/or to other forms of support. Insofar as consultation is possible - does the church plead to keep overseas colleagues with them, or if their presence draws even greater repression from the authorities, that collegiality and support should be withdrawn? (In Angola, for example, the church there has continually urged that the few missionaries present be allowed to continue to serve).
10. What is the nature or role of the indigenous church in the situation? Is it reform-minded, people-oriented, and seeking to relate to the masses, or is it tending to be elitist and buttressing the status quo?
11. How does the presence of missionaries relate to the total human situation of the oppressed people? Are they able to serve to whole community, or just the Christians? Are they providing to all the people of the area in the name of the church (medical, educational, community development) which would be eliminated if they left (as in Angola), thus depriving people of some elements of a fully human life which inheres in the church's liberating mission?
12. In each concrete situation, are the policies and forms of presence and collegiality with the indigenous church and people continually under review, since conditions can change or worsen rapidly, and a policy for 1972 may be inappropriate in 1973?
13. What is the attitude of liberation movements where they exist, as in relation to Southern African countries? Has there been consultation with them, concerning a total strategy for the welfare of the oppressed people in the country? And what is likely to be the consequence of a decision to remain or withdraw, for the long-range future of the church following independence? And are agencies committed to political liberation?
14. Is there a policy of careful selection and orientation of missionaries working in situations of great injustice, so that they can understand the complexities involved and be committed with integrity and sensitivity to Christ's liberating mission, and in such a way as not to bring further suffering upon Church and people?

15. Is sufficient opportunity being seized as created to view such grave situations in the light of the broad experience of the ecumenical fellowship, without which policies of mission boards and colleague churches in unjust situations may lack needed correction and/or encouragement? Yet even here it must be recognized that we speak to such situations from outside only with humility, since the terrors of oppression can be known only from within, and many have had no personal experience of this reality".

Economic exploitation. In the discussion it was often asserted that mission expansion was closely related to the exploitative nature of the capitalist system. Even today many of our missionary and evangelistic efforts are exclusively concerned about individual salvation and remain unwilling to deal with the causes of social injustice. It was therefore recommended "to expose the negative influence of the "donor mentality" manifested in development-aid ('help-syndrom') thus perpetuating existing economic and political systems". Also, "to promote new patterns of investment relations which serve the political and social liberation of the poor and oppressed" and, "to urge the churches to focus their attention for development on the poorest people of any society and to influence their governments to do the same".

Section III dealt with the question of churches that find new growth in and through missionary activity. It was divided into three sub-sections: Churches in relationship; Growing churches and renewal; The local mission of each church.

The emphasis was on the missionary responsibility of each church and on the need for Joint action.

The local Mission of each church. By local church was meant "the whole people of God in a limited area, whose gathered-ness may be expressed in a number of congregations and smaller groups". Their missionary action should be the expression of the mission-consciousness of the whole church.

"A local congregation that exposes itself to share the needs and aspirations of its neighbourhood and to join with others in relevant action is an instrument of God's salvation, enabling men and women to find in Jesus Christ ultimate meaning and sacredness for their lives."

"To equip the local churches for mission God has provided the means of grace: the Sacraments, the Scriptures and prayer in the name of Christ. Through granting the gifts of the Spirit to his people he has made possible the participation of all in ministry and mission".

But many Christians are not sufficiently convinced of the relevance of Christ to the life of the world. "This calls for nothing less than a conversion from parochial self-absorption to an awareness of what God is doing for the salvation of men in the life of the world". Conscientization of local congregations is therefore much needed.

The pastor should be able to animate his people and to co-ordinate their potential for mission.

"Congregations of various denominations in a specific local area should act together whenever, and as far as possible, and must have freedom to determine together the form of their response in mission to the local situation. This may mean the transfer of some degree of sovereignty and of control of funds from the top levels of denominational authority to the local churches."

The local churches should beware from becoming ghettos. Therefore, it would be beneficial for them to have "agents of catholicity", as for instance ministers (whose task is church-wide) and Christians from outside (like new immigrants, foreign students, men and women temporarily employed in the country).

Churches in partnership. The report complains that partnership in mission is still remaining an empty slogan. "Even where autonomy and equal partnership have been reached in a formal sense, the actual dynamics are such as to perpetuate relationships of domination and dependence".

"The power relationships between mission agencies in Europe, North America and Australia, and the churches in other areas to which they relate, reflect the economic inequalities between the nations concerned. This is one reason - though not the primary one - why mission agencies must see the struggle for international economic justice as one of their urgent tasks today".

We must seek a mature relationship between churches, consisting first of all in a mutual agreement to participate in Christ's mission in the world. Mature relationship, however, presupposes that each church be aware of its own identity within the big family of the one People of God.

"No particular church can claim full autonomy, for we must all acknowledge our interdependence within the world Christian fellowship. But each church must be free to be itself within its own national or cultural milieu and to respond fully to the movement of the Holy Spirit within that milieu. Any structure or pattern of relationship which hinders this must be seen as impeding rather than helping the mission of Christ".

A Church which is the bearer of the Gospel of liberation to others must first be liberated from all that hinders its true self expression or robs it of a true sense of its own responsibility. Salvation Today in this context means the liberation of churches to be their own authentic selves in mission in their own milieu".

Both the "sending" and the "receiving" churches are in need of such a liberation.

It is a hopeful sign that some mission agencies are making provision on their governing bodies for representation from the churches to which they relate. This should grow towards genuine reciprocity.

The idea of moratorium was also discussed. We shall come back to this point later on.

As already noted before, the recommendations of the sections were studied by the committees of the Assembly, which, in their turn, reported their conclusions to the Plenary Sessions of the Assembly. Here follow some of the more important conclusions.

Committee A.

On education and renewal. "The aim of education should be empowering, giving voice to the voiceless, so that people may become aware of their own problems, resources and potentials, weigh possibilities that are open to them and choose their own course of action with regard to their duty to society.

Education is for developing full human beings and integrated persons and must go on throughout the whole of life". In view of this general principle several recommendations are made, v.g. that a village or a community should be considered as community of leaders and teachers in an imaginative way of education; that all have much to learn and much to teach. Education must not be conditioned by the needs of society and the availability of jobs. However, the value structures and wage structure of society must be so ordered that educated persons may find fulfilment in serving the needs of society rather than in obtaining prestigious employment.

On combating racism. Colonial domination is anti-Christian, because it denies to each person the inalienable rights to personhood. It was therefore recommended:

- to investigate the possibility of sending an ecumenical delegation to visit the liberated areas (of oppressed people in Africa) at the invitation of the people there;
- to give maximum publicity to the true state of affairs in the Portuguese colonies;
- to launch a campaign to increase aid through the World Council of Churches for the educational, social and medical work of the liberation movements and to provide the means for delivering such aid to the liberated areas;
- to mobilize public opinion in favor of the legitimacy of the struggle of oppressed people for their liberation.

Committee B (Evangelism Today)

It reaffirmed several recommendations of the Sections. A more original one was on relationship with Roman Catholics, ~~conservative Evangelicals~~, Pentecostals and United Bible Societies. The recommendation with regard to the Roman Catholics reads as follows:

"The Committee notes with approval the development of relationships between CWME and the Roman Catholic Church since Mexico City and would encourage the CWME to continue this direction.

The Committee also took note of the variety of situations that exist in different countries. Cooperation is growing at an encouraging pace in some areas, while in other earlier expectations have been disappointed".

Committee C (Partnership)

It strongly advocated joint action. "Unless people are committed to work together personnel and funds, both foreign and local, will be ineffective. The committee sees unity in action rather than in structures, a situational approach rather than an institutional one".

It therefore recommended preparation of surveys of local needs and that Christians and non-Christians should be involved in liberating and nation-building activities. It also recommended that the mission agencies should reconstruct themselves in such a way as to provide mature relationships with their partner churches.

On education for mission. The committee considers "a mission-oriented education on all levels - congregational, seminary, national and regional - essential to lead all Christians to participating in God's mission. It listed the following elements: this education should be world oriented. It should be based on a renewed understanding of the Bible from the viewpoint of the community of the oppressed. An important aspect of the program is to sensitize the people to world situations - economic, political, cultural and spiritual. Missionaries need to be trained for mobility, moving on when their particular task in one place is completed. Missionaries also need to become open and flexible and able to learn through dialogue in different situations. Education must be by involvement and participation. Dialogue is an integral part of education".

On moratorium. After having recommended new ways for more mature partnership among churches so that the "mission" churches may have a stronger vote in decision-making concerning policies and funds, the committee talked about the "more radical proposal" of a moratorium, which means a temporary stopping of sending funds and personnel to particular churches. "The intention is that churches requesting such a moratorium might have an opportunity to work with own resources to find their own selfhood and identity". The committee recommended that study papers be provided for discussions of this moratorium proposal as a possible strategy of mission in certain situations as well as information on case studies.

Worthwhile is also the recommendation that "missionary agencies should evaluate critically to what ways their pattern of missionary engagement reflect cultural imperialism or involve indiscriminating cultural imposition in churches with which they are related, and what are the consequences for the selfhood, identity and mission of these churches.

Committee D (Studies and publications)

It insisted on continuing studies on Salvation Today, which will lead toward a better understanding of how the critical identification with one's own culture is based not only on theological judgment but also on the best understanding of these cultures. These studies should analyze critically and from a biblical point of view the liberating and oppressive elements which are often deeply interwoven in the fabric of culture. Such studies should preferably be carried out by the churches in their own cultures. Special attention should be given:

- to the problem of power and powerlessness, to man's need for power and the redemptibility of power;
- to the forms and consequences of conversion, both individual and corporate, and the form and structure of the community of the converted;
- to appropriate structures of mission by which the integrity of cultural identity might be maintained and the whole fellowship enriched;
- to dialogue with people of other ideologies, particularly Marxism.

Committee E (Specialized program and related agencies).

First of all the committee tried to discover the common issues that have emerged and identify areas of specific concern and new directions especially in the light of the Salvation Today Conference. It expressed its findings this way:

"The basic concern which runs through all our considerations is that the message of liberation is to be heard among the disadvantaged, the oppressed, the exploited, the weak, the poor and the disabled in places where they are, and Christians can best do this by identification with and sharing in the sufferings of those with whom the Good News is proclaimed."

"Such identification means participation in the struggle against powers and structures that prevent man from realising himself fully. We cannot presume to have led or initiated this struggle. We can only be servants of the struggle for liberation, recognizing and promoting it, while criticizing deviations, providing pastoral care and support as well as continuing inspiration and affirmation of the saving freedom".

Guiding principles. According to this committee, the following principles should guide our proclamation of the Gospel:

- Self-determination: let us heed people's own choices and preferences.
- Local action: the people concerned should participate.
- Liberation from oppression and suppression: joining the struggle for liberation; only so can the Church and Christians be liberated from their own captivity.
- Theological reflection in liberation process: to bring out God's own concern.
- Leadership training.
- Program evaluation: institutions like schools, hospitals, welfare centres, seminaries etc. and programs should constantly examine their usefulness and relevance in relation to current priorities and not seek their self-perpetuation.
- International interdependence.
- Resources: the primary resources - both human and material - for liberation struggle should arise out of the local situation, but should be strategically deployed, as need arises, to where they are needed most.
- Relation with national and local church bodies.

The Urban-Industrial Mission and the Rural Agricultural Mission were commended for having placed priority on community organization for self-determination of the powerless and repressed.

It was hoped that ways might be found of communicating with the people at all levels and enabling them to communicate.

Support was given to the appeal, made by the Christian Medical Commission to both the local churches and to funding agencies, to move beyond established institutions, such as hospitals, to the development of community-based agencies involving all people, together with the church people, to meet the health needs. The committee recommended the development of the team approach to the provision of health care, which would include non-professional workers in close collaboration with professionals whose training is relevant to the current health needs of the locality where the team is at work.

Committee F

Dealt exclusively with organizational matters.

REMARKS.

Before finishing this report in which I tried to pass on the main ideas of the Bangkok Conference I would like to make a few short remarks:

1. This Conference was very well organized. The main theme, Salvation Today, has been a matter of study for more than two years. It has been discussed by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism both on the higher and lower levels. Several booklets were published, as "Salvation Today and Contemporary Experience", "Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals", "Biblical Perspectives on Salvation".
2. It was representative. Not only did the delegates come from the different parts of the world, but the mission work itself was well represented, because all the participants were in one way or another directly involved in mission work, be it in mission agencies, committees, boards, university faculties of missiology or in the mission field itself. Women were present as well as young people. It was a group of most capable men and women, very mission-minded and well informed.
3. There was much openness. Very striking was the sincere and sometimes even emotional way in which delegates from the Third World expressed themselves, especially when they complained about the still too dominating role of the Western churches in the mission work (through their finances and structures) and the complicity of the Christians of the West in dominating (economically) and oppressing other peoples and races. The "Westerners" equanimously underwent this "flagellation", knowing how true the accusations were, at least objectively. I sometimes wondered what our catholic lay people of the "mission countries" would tell us, if they had an equal chance to express themselves so openly.
4. Another striking fact was the emphasis on helping the man in need, the oppressed and the poor, as an integral element of Christian salvation and as a most urgent element of salvation today. The presence of Third World people certainly helped us to become more conscious of this urgency. The Christians from the West had to admit that they also are objects of Salvation as well as subjects. They had to ask themselves earnestly whether their first mission task should not be to conscientize their people and governments about the unjust role they play towards the poor and oppressed peoples.
5. Regular worship, in several styles and traditions (including Roman Catholic and Orthodox) was available to all. It promoted a spirit of reflection and made us aware of the needed inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Murray Rogers, an Anglican priest, led a group on meditation and each morning at 6.30 he met with a group of interested Conference members in a silent Prayer meeting.
6. Many of the problems we dealt with are identical to ours in the Catholic Mission movement. We also have to heed the request which was made in Bangkok that more study will have to be spent on these problems. We need an organization to lead and inspire us. Could not the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples play a role similar to that of the dynamic commission on World Mission and Evangelism?

(G. LINSSEN, CICM)

AVEC LE CONSEIL MONDIAL DES EGLISES A BANGKOK

Des circonstances fortuites - la maladie du P. Théo Van Asten, supérieur général des Pères Blancs et président de SEDOS - m'ont permis, à titre de représentant de SEDOS, d'assister à la conférence et à la réunion générale de la section "Mission Mondiale et Evangélisation", du Conseil Mondial des Eglises, du 29 Décembre 1972 au 13 Janvier 1973, à Bangkok. Il n'est pas aisé de donner, dans un espace restreint, une image complète de cet événement. Car ce fut un "événement" et, pour moi, une expérience enrichissante.

Trois cents personnes, de 69 pays différents, étaient présentes, dont la moitié venait d'Asie, d'Afrique et d'Amérique Latine. Il y avait aussi des personnes de Russie et d'autres pays communistes. Cinq personnes représentaient officiellement l'Eglise Catholique. Le P. Spae y était pour SODEPAX.

Le thème de cette rencontre: "Le Salut aujourd'hui." (Salvation Today).

Le but principal, à partir d'une réflexion sur les Saintes Ecritures et d'une ouverture sur les problèmes de ce temps, était d'établir comment nous devons comprendre, maintenant, le message de salut du Christ, et l'appliquer intégralement à l'homme qui tend vers la libération et le bonheur.

Les premiers jours passèrent à l'étude, en groupes, des textes les mieux connus de l'Ecriture concernant le salut. L'Ancien Testament fournit bon nombre de pensées intéressantes au sujet de la libération de toutes sortes d'oppressions.

Les jours suivants et la majeure partie de la réunion générale, les participants les consacrèrent à la question: "Comment appliquer l'idée de salut aux différentes situations actuelles de l'humanité?" Il s'agissait surtout de libération politique et économique de pays et de races, de libération de gens étouffant dans leur richesse et leur abondance, de l'adaptation du Christianisme au caractère propre de chaque pays et de sa culture, sur la fin de la domination missionnaire des pays atlantiques, sur le mal de la puissance effrénée et sur la force qui se dégage de l'impuissance. Et de bien d'autres points encore... Toute la mission, avec tous ses aspects, subit une analyse serrée. La conviction était qu'à la base doit se trouver la conversion personnelle, mais que cette dernière ne peut se comprendre qu'en relation avec nos semblables. Les Orthodoxes, qui sont membres du Conseil Mondial des Eglises, rappelèrent toujours à temps à la réunion qu'on ne pouvait oublier l'élément spirituel. Mais l'accent se trouvait manifestement sur la libération de l'homme de ses besoins les plus urgents. Cela, du fait que la représentation du Tiers-Monde était imposante et qu'elle faisait clairement entendre sa voix.

L'élément le plus frappant de cette conférence fut la voix prédominante des représentants du Tiers-Monde. Nous, Occidentaux, avons dû explicitement entendre que cette fois nous devons être à l'écoute. C'est ce que nous avons fait. Ce fut d'ailleurs une excellente chose que finalement nous ayons pu entendre nettement ce que "nos convertis" d'Afrique et d'Asie avaient à dire à leurs Eglises missionnaires d'Europe et d'Amérique. Les plus vifs reproches s'adressaient au racisme et aux formes encore existantes de colonialisme, à la prédominance économique de l'Occident, aux structures de puissance de nos sociétés missionnaires qui disposent de beaucoup d'argent, et à l'aliénation de la culture propre que le passage au christianisme comporte encore dans de nombreux cas.

On s'est demandé si le système missionnaire tel que nous l'avons connu jusqu'à présent a encore une raison d'être. On a cité l'exemple des Kibanguistes. Leur église se développe bien, sans aucun missionnaire étranger et sans aucun appui financier du dehors. La question fut posée: "N'allons-nous pas vers une nouvelle période de mission, une période où l'accent portera surtout sur une relation équivalente entre les Eglises et sur le fait que chaque Eglise est responsable de sa propre mission? "Chaque église est missionnaire, n'importe où dans le monde. Et mission signifie "apporter l'évangile de la libération", la bonne nouvelle qui libère l'homme de tout ce qui l'empêche d'être davantage homme; qui libère pour que l'homme soit plus complètement homme, à l'image du Christ ressuscité.

Ces idées constituent en fait le noyau de ce qu'on a exprimé de différentes manières.

Le culte constituait avec les discussions une unité harmonieuse. Généralement, on éclairait et on célébrait un thème déterminé, concernant le sujet principal de la journée. Les organisateurs avaient prévu un oratoire où il était possible de se recueillir dans le calme pour une méditation personnelle.

Parfois, l'exposé portait sur des sujets bien définis, comme le Vietnam, la Chine, le dialogue avec les Bouddhistes. Au sujet du Vietnam, où les bombardements étaient en cours, on proposa qu'un grand nombre de volontaires aillent au Vietnam du Nord pour partager avec la population les dangers des bombardements et pour constituer en même temps un signe manifeste de protestation. On accepta la proposition, mais toutes sortes d'amendements lui firent perdre sa force originelle.

Les occasions de dialogue avec les Bouddhistes furent nombreuses, car à proximité du Centre de la Croix-Rouge où se tenait la Conférence, se trouvait un couvent de Bouddhistes. Le groupe qui s'occupait spécialement du dialogue y allait régulièrement pour converser avec les moines et méditer avec eux. Par ailleurs, l'abbé du couvent, avec deux autres éminents Bouddhistes, a participé à une réunion plénière. Il y a parlé des caractères principaux du Bouddhisme et de la possibilité de dialogue avec le Christianisme. Pendant cette conférence, je me suis souvent demandé si nous, catholiques, sommes capables d'organiser un jour un congrès mondial du genre de celui du Conseil Mondial. Préparation soignée (durant trois ans, des discussions eurent lieu au plan local, sur le thème "Salvation Today"), ouverture totale (on n'y mâcha pas les mots), universalité complète (avec une large participation de laïcs, de gens du monde entier, hommes et femmes, jeunes et vieux), et actualité parfaite (on y a vraiment traité des problèmes d'aujourd'hui et l'on n'a pas dévié vers un dogmatisme inutile). L'organisation actuelle de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples ne nous permet pas d'espérer grand'chose dans ce domaine, comme me l'assurait mon compagnon de chambre, lui-même membre de la Propagande. Mais on peut sans doute arriver à de grandes réalisations au plan régional et national.

J'ai pensé parfois aussi à nos Chapitres, parce que je me suis demandé si, dans nos discussions préparatoires, nous ne devons pas être plus à l'écoute de ce que les gens sur place (et je ne pense pas en premier lieu aux Evêques) ont à dire à notre sujet et sur notre travail missionnaire. S'ils ont le courage de parler aussi franchement que les gens du Tiers-Monde à Bangkok, nous pourrions encore apprendre l'une ou l'autre chose. Peut-être bien plus que nous le pensons.

NEWS FROM AND FOR THE GENERALATES

- I. CICM - NTIETE Denis, Etudiant Africain à Rome, 4ème Année de Médecine, marié, 5 enfants à charge, cherche travail à mi-temps ou de week-end: par ex: Portineria ou chauffeur. Parle le Français et l'Italien, un peu l'Anglais.
Contacter le Père Goossens, Superior General CICM. Tel. 6220317
- II. FMM - SEDOS received the gift of the FMM "Documentation for the General Chapter of 1972". The available documents, in multicolored paper with plenty of diagrams, are all in French, some also in English, a few in Spanish. We begin with a thick volume (178 pp.): "Les FMM: Qui sont-elles? Que font-elles?", followed by 6 documents on the activities of the FMM in Africa, Latin America, North America, Asia, Europe, Oceania. Then the common chapter studies on formation, etc., some of which deserve being mentioned in particular: "Justice and poverty", "Eucharistic adoration", "Fraternities", "Le monde nous interpelle", "Mission today".
- III. We have received the annual report for 1971 and 1972 of the Maryknoll Sisters. Any Generalate interested in drawing up similar reports may usefully consult at the SEDOS Secretariat "THE CENTRAL BOARD COMMUNIQUE", especially no.6, which includes both 1972 report and "DIRECTIONS FOR 1973".
- IV. Also available for consultation the following documents in Spanish, together with other material of the same kind:
ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LA CLAR, Medellin, Enero 17-27 de 1973: "LA VIDA SEGUN EL ESPIRITU EN LAS COMUNIDADES RELIGIOSAS DE AMERICA LATINA" (31 pp. typescript) "Texto de trabajo para la Asamblea", and 30 more pp. of re-elaboration of the same theme.
Also from CLAR: "RESPUESTAS DE CONFERENCIAS DE RELIGIOSOS DE AMERICA LATINA AL TEMARIO PROPUESTO POR LA SAGRADA CONGREGACION DE RELIGIOSOS", Roma, Octubre del 1972.

LISTS OF BOOKS RECEIVED DURING JANUARY

Compiled by Sister Agnetta, SSpS

I. INTERNAL:

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Institute</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>
3.63	SM	Tableau du Personnel et des Etablissements 1972-1973. (130)

II. EXTERNAL:

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Author or Publisher</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>
6.302	Haring and McNeill	New Horizons for the Church in the Modern World. (104)
6.303	Collins, London	A Book of Australia, edited by T. Inglis Moore. (320)
6.304	CLAR	Estudio Sociografico de los Religiosos y las Religiosas en América Latina. (120)
6.305	Antonio Alonso	Comunidades eclesiales de base. (265)
6.306	CELAM (Departamento de Pastoral)	Comunidad de Base y Prospectiva Pastoral en America Latina. (117)
6.307	Savoir et Agir, Belgium	Sacrum Poloniae Millennium 966-1966. (164)
6.308	Editions Scientifiques de Pologne, Warsaw, Poland	Pologne: Réalités et Problèmes. (441)
6.309	Union des Supérieures Majeures du Zaire	Réunion Plénière 6-13 avril 1972. Rapport Général. (153)

ASSEMBLY OF GENERALS - MARCH 1973

The 38th Assembly of Superiors General associated in SEDOS will meet on

TUESDAY 6th March 1973 at 4 pm
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at the Generalate of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, via Nomentana 118, Rome with
the following AGENDA :

Study Session 4 pm

- Fr. G. Linssen cism, Sedos delegate to the 'Salvation Today' Conference, Bangkok, reports to the Assembly
- Fr. B. Meeking of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and Mgr P.M. Rossano, of the Secretariat for non-Christians both present at the Conference will react.
- Questions from the floor.

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Clarifications

Coffee Break 5.30 pm

Business Session 6.00 pm

1. Minutes of the 37th Assembly of Generals
2. Application for membership of the Missionaries of the Holy Family and the Salvatorians.
3. Budget 1973

Sedos 72/784-86

to be circulated
later

Sincerely yours,

B. TONNA

N.B. Simultaneous translation into French and English will be provided.
