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In this issue: There are three contributions which have a reference to the Sedos Research Seminar which opens here on 8th March 1981. They come from the Melbourne Conference in preparation for which, Tissa Balasuriya, OMI, wrote a short article on the relationship between proclamation and witness showing that there need be no contradiction between these two perspectives. We reproduce it here together with comments from participants in Asia, Latin America and Europe, all of which may be helpful to those who will spend ten days reflecting on the Future of Mission at the Sedos Research Seminar.

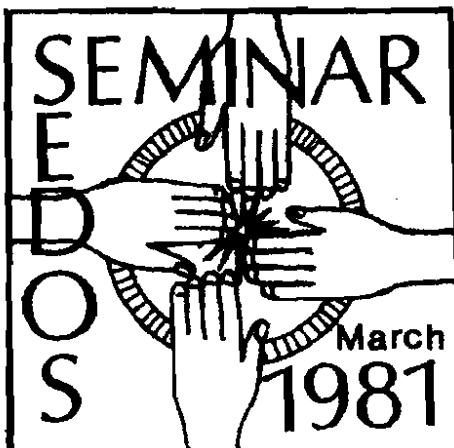
From Africa comes the second part of Jean-Marc Ela's address on the problems and opportunities encountered in a true Africanisation of the Church. The text is shortened somewhat due to pressure of space.

We are grateful to the Medical Missionary Sisters and to the Marianists for allowing us to share their reflections addressed to the members of their own Institutes, on new and experimental forms of community in which they are involved in Asia and Latin America.

The letter from a missionary in Africa is a poignant reminder of the situation in which, more and more frequently, those involved in proclaiming and witnessing to the life and message of Jesus, find themselves.

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Coming Event

Sedos Research Seminar  
on the  
Future of Mission  
8th - 19th March 1981  
at Villa Cavaletti.

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## SEDOS MISSION RESEARCH SEMINAR

MARCH, 1981

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The Sedos Research Seminar will open at Villa Cavaletti on March 8th when ninety-five men and women from around the world will gather to study, reflect and pray about the Future of Mission.

Sedos holds short bi-annual seminars and from time to time organizes these residential seminars to make a deeper analysis of mission. The present Seminar replaces the bi-annual event which would normally have been held last Christmas and is the most ambitious study session organized to date by Sedos.

SEDOS, which stands for the Italian "Servizio di Documentazione e Studi" (A Service of Study and Documentation) has, curiously, no reference to Mission in its title but it exists only because of, and in service of, the Church missionary.

It may be a happy fault that the word does not appear for it is a fact of life and a sign of our times that the word "missionary" is being continually re-defined today. For many, and those not the least concerned over the past few decades with the reality underlying the word, it connotes inferiority, dependency and absence of maturity. Applied to a local Church it is commonly understood to infer that the Church has not yet come of age; it is an immature young Church as compared to the Churches of the old "authentic" Christendom.

As applied to persons, it may be understood in a complementary way to refer to the best in human service and generosity, or in a pejorative way, which is becoming more and more commonly expressed these days to the more unpleasant human characteristics of those who came preaching salvation in the wake of colonialism. A well written doctoral thesis published under the title "Servants of God or Masters of Men" by Victor Bonilla illustrates the latter interpretation to an embarrassing but well researched degree. Its very title sums up the dichotomy.

Sedos may be unembarrassed by the word in its title, but the reality remains and it is to study this reality, to meditate and pray about it that these hundred people will spend ten days at Cavaletti. The Seminar which has been in preparation for over two years will bring together resource persons from all continents to meet with an approximately equal number of representatives of the forty-five member Institutes of Sedos most of whose General Headquarters are here in Rome. The choice of such a group of participants was a conscious one as was the choice of topics suggested for the agenda. Both are the result of research carried out among all the Sedos Institutes.

At the Seminar, the academic conceptual theological approach to the future of Mission will be in constant dialogue with the other "reality", which is people. First there are those people among whom the message of Jesus Christ is being revealed, some of them, perhaps, for the first time. Then there is the whole people of God, having responsibility for making known to the world the message of God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ. There are the people who service the day to day work of planning, organising, administering and funding the Institutes whose members are engaged in Mission. There are the people who make up the Roman Congregations having special responsibility for mission within the Church's central organization at the Vatican.

And there is the supreme reality - the Person of Jesus Christ, the heart of the mission. It is about him that the whole Seminar is called together.

The Seminar will study the Mission of the Church as it is being lived today in various local Churches of the "six continents". Already in this statement there is room for questioning and analysis, Some consider the term "local Church" tautologous while others query the notion of "six continents" and others still ask for a refinement of the word "mission". Participants will need to refine meanings and make choices.

The local Church will be the focal point of the Seminar and the problems surrounding inculturation or incarnation of the gospel message in differing cultures and societies will be one of the key issues. By its very existence the Christian community is involved in a network of relationships with other Christians, with the members of other religious traditions, with secular society. Relationships with each of these categories involve the Christian community in a dimension of both giving and receiving. How these relationships have been lived out is the story of the past from which participants may learn lessons for the mission today.

Mission in the Church is the Mission of Christ and the dynamic reality of the continuity of Christ's mission is "the event" of the Word of God. Jesus appeared as the revelation of God in the concrete historical circumstances of the Jewish people and it was within the limitations and opportunities of that culture that the kingdom of God was announced. How to make present in any given culture this "event" is the challenge of mission today. It involves not only the hearers but also the preachers and the message and calls for a continuous process of transformation, conversion and dialogue by which the Christian community enters into relation with the larger, pluralistic society.

God wishes to save all mankind. Does he then act through other religious traditions to bring about the salvation of all men and women? The Seminar must address this question and also the question of whether other world religions accept or acknowledge the Christian understanding of what salvation is with its eschatological dimension? The terminology "anonymous Christian" which appeared to be a felicitous phrase when coined by Rahner is no longer acceptable.

The Seminar will also consider structures, both present and emerging. Within the universal communion of faith how can the missionary and religious institutes foster the deeper meanings of universality and particularity as they are being lived in the Church today; new forms of inter-Church sharing; co-operation between local Churches; the growth of Regional Churches? What have the Institutes to say about the dependence of some Churches for finance and personnel?

And what will the Seminar have to say in evaluating the specialized services of mission in the Church today which the missionary religious and international institutes themselves offer?

There is much to study, to discuss, to pray and reflect about. Pray that the Word of God may be with us during these days that we spend together in Villa Cavaletti.

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## DE L'ASSISTANCE A LA LIBERATION

### LES TACHES ACTUELLES DE L'EGLISE EN MILIEU AFRICAIN

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- Jean-Marc Ela.

(This is the second part of Jean-Marc Ela's address given to the Young Christian Students at their meeting in Dar es Salaam, Sept. 1980.

The language of "Africanisation" is often ambiguous he says. The real challenge facing the Good News in Africa is that the Gospel has to be involved in the conflicts that surround the struggle for human rights, exploitation of the feeble and the little ones and the abuse of power. That this abuse is exercised by Africans in place of colonialists does not excuse involvement by the Church in Africa and by her ministers.

As a comment on his address we are taking the unusual step of printing a recent letter of an European missionary in Africa. The circumstances he describes speak the anguish which is the lot of those who attempt to serve as Jean Marc Ela proposes. Ed).

#### IV. LES PIEGES DE L'AFRICANISATION.

##### Suite

On s'est aperçu qu'une présentation individualiste des problèmes du salut laissait le chrétien africain désemparé. D'où le besoin de recréer des petites communautés au sein desquelles les chrétiens retrouvent la sécurité de la prise en charge collective de toutes les dimensions de leur être...

Après une période où les "missions" n'ont été, le plus souvent, qu'une sorte de station-service pour les besoins religieux, l'Eglise est obligée de déplacer le centre de gravité de sa vie et de son action vers des communautés de dimensions réduites où la foi peut être vécue d'une manière concrète, à travers des engagements précis.

Le mystère chrétien vécu à l'occidentale peut désorienter l'Africain dans sa relation à Dieu, à ses frères et à l'univers. Quelque chose de l'Eglise se cherche là où la foi assume les valeurs africaines de communion et de solidarité pour les vivre, avec leurs conditions et leurs implications concrètes, dans le sens d'une fraternité élargie qui a un impact sur l'état de santé des relations humaines.

"Toute action pour construire nos Eglises, déclarent les Evêques africains et malgaches, doit s'opérer en référence constante à la vie des communautés..."

"Ainsi, "l'Africanisation" n'est possible qu'en référence à la vie des communautés de base. Rappelons les limites de ce projet dans les pays où une Eglise locale ne peut compter que sur un évêque indigène travaillant avec quelques prêtres ou religieuses du pays. Comment parler d'Africanisation dans une Eglise toute blanche, où le personnel expatrié s'efforce à peine, en dépit des exceptions















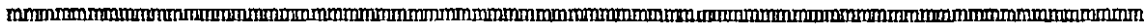
vivais un conflit intérieur. L'un me disait: "Tu es fou de rester!" Un autre: "Tu es courageux!" Moi, je pensais tout simplement que je ne pouvais pas abandonner ces gens et la mission, car il y avait tellement de misère dans le peuple, Jour et nuit, ils étaient avec moi. J'essayais de leur donner à manger et à dormir, de leur donner des médicaments. Alors, pouvais-je partir? Et puis, le travail de l'Eglise continuait aussi. Le dimanche, le chapelle était comble. Il fallait baptiser, confesser... Dans les villages qui étaient encore debouts, des activistes essayaient de faire peur aux catéchistes. Seuls quelques-uns avaient le courage de continuer. Alors, à qui laisser nos chrétiens encore si jeunes? Je ne pouvais pas partir. J'étais le seul Blanc de toute la région à rester encore là.

Puis, internats et écoles de la mission ont été nationalisés. Deux semaines plus tard, c'était toute la maison. On me prenait tout, sauf ce que j'avais dans ma chambre à coucher. Tu peux t'imaginer ce que c'est! Le temps était mûr pour partir. Mais partir où? Dans mon pays natal? Ou bien, après tout, dans un des villages où restait une chapelle avec quelques petites chambres attenantes?... sans eau, sans toilettes, sans cuisine... J'ai chargé mes affaires, je les ai mises dans cette cabane. J'ai un lit, j'ai une armoire et je continue... Les gens viennent de nouveau ici... J'ai plus de cent enfants à la catéchèse. Si j'avais quelques bons catéchistes, je pourrais aller pour quelques mois (au pays natal). Mais je crois qu'une fois là-bas, je n'aurais plus le courage de revenir ici.

J'aurais pu te parler de religion, de politique, de marxisme, de ce que ça signifie "être homme", du Christ qui se faisait homme, de nous tous, toi et moi, qui sommes des hommes brisés, et de tant d'autres choses vraies. Malgré tout, ces dernières années, j'ai médité énormément; pas dans l'église, c'est vrai! mais le soir, tard... L'espérance est une grande vertu..."

"...Nous devons continuer à ramer contre le courant et essayer de tenir le coup. Je suis convaincu que tôt ou tard nous devons nous prononcer clairement et prendre définitivement le côté des plus pauvres et des opprimés. Nous devons le faire. Peut-être alors sera-t-il trop tard! On remet à demain; chaque fois on trouve une autre angoisse, une autre peur, pour ne pas parler clairement. Et la question devient de plus en plus difficile et compliquée... Qu'est-ce que la Congrégation veut faire après le Chapitre, avec son document sur Justice et Paix? Qu'est-ce que va faire notre propre Chapitre avec ses directives? On va bien parler, on va être bien d'accord que quelque chose doit être fait, et puis on n'aura pas le courage d'envisager les conséquences d'une protestation énergique. Est-ce que la Congrégation a le courage de risquer son personnel? On a peur de s'exprimer et de dénoncer carrément. Notre Congrégation devra se prononcer sur cela pour être authentiquement missionnaire..."

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DOM HELDER CAMARA OF RECIFE; BRAZIL

"We have learnt that more important than working for the poor is working with the poor. They still ask us, "Father, Sister, what must we do?" But our answer is, "Do you think I am here to think for you, to speak for you? You have been given a mind to think and a mouth to speak." But Father, if we speak out we shall be crushed." "Yes, but only if you speak alone. Together with your entire community you are a force; a force not to trample the rights of others but to prevent others from trampling on your rights!"

Reference: INFO ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, Volume 8, Number 1 - January 1981.





















