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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. Christianity and the Tanzanian Revolution. Mgr. J. Lebulu.	243
2. The Agony of the Church in South Africa. Elizabeth Schmidt.	252
3. "Option for the Poor". Paul Evaristo Cardinal Arns.	254
4. In Memoriam: Bishop Leo Nanayakkara: Living Symbol of Christian Unity. Marianne Katoppo.	258
5. Book Notes.	261

Coming Events:IV CONGRESSO NAZIONALE MISSIONARIO

sul tema

"Crescere Insieme per la Chiesa Missionaria in Italia"  
nella ricorrenza del XXV Anniversario della  
promulgazione dell'Enciclica Fidei Donum di Pio XII

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## CHRISTIANITY AND THE TANZANIAN REVOLUTION

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Mgr. J. Lebulu

*(Texte d'une conférence donnée par Mgr. G. Lebulu, évêque de Samé en Tanzanie, au cours du Congrès sur le thème "Chrétiens et Marxistes en Amérique Latine et en Afrique" (Madrid, 5-12 décembre 1981). Certains des participants venaient du Cuba, de Tanzanie, du Mozambique, de l'Angola, du Nicaragua et du Zimbabwe, pays où l'Eglise doit apprendre à vivre dans des sociétés fortement marquées par une idéologie et une économie socialistes ou marxistes. Mgr. Lebulu réfléchit sur trois questions qui se posent à l'Eglise dans son pays, dont la principale est: "Quelle est la place, le rôle et l'efficacité d'une foi chrétienne vivante dans le processus révolutionnaire, en Tanzanie"? N.d.l.R).*

### INTRODUCTION

Thinking of, and studying, the relationship between Christianity and revolution in the Tanzanian social formation brings to the fore the following questions:

1. What type of a revolutionary process is the Tanzanian social formation experiencing at the present moment?
2. What would be the place, role and effect of a living Christian faith on the revolutionary process in Tanzania?
3. What practical conclusions would such an analysis contribute to the endeavours of those committed to the duty of struggling for a just social order in the world?

Hopefully, some answers to these questions will emerge during this presentation. But the main answer to this kind of question must await further papers and discussions, although minor details may be touched on in this paper. We therefore look forward to the honest discussions of this conference.

Even the longest journey starts with the first step.

So we from Tanzania welcome the initiative of the Institute of Political Studies for Latin America and Africa in enabling the beginning of this journey together searching more deeply for solidarity in the struggle against imperialist created dependency, oppression and injustice. Many of us in our journey to Madrid flew over the land of the peasant farms. When viewed from the air the land looks much like a patch-work quilt. There are hundreds of textures and shapes. All these little and big squares form a unity - it is all land. This same land of the peasant when viewed from afar has the magic of smooth green and brown velvet but when on the ground one feels the thorns, rocks and ruts.

This meeting is like the same patchwork quilt, the fabric being the colors and shapes of a people. All the various textures of the people here form a single fabric - a search for solidarity. As with the land, on closer inspection we touch ideologies, systems and beliefs which are the thorns and chains which tear and rend the fabric of humanity. Our solidarity is clearly in the struggle against the shackles of imperialism and injustice.

As the organizers of this meeting have clearly seen, we are in the midst of new historical situations that are opening up fresh horizons for both Christianity and socialism. (Marxist socialism). It is in this knowledge and expectation that we share with you the Tanzanian struggle, a struggle with the consciousness that the village is the place where the nation is built.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AFRICAN SOCIALISM

We have said that we are in a new historical situation. The Sixties brought a new age with the advent of juridical independence for the African colonies. The same decade characterized the West as an age of development. The task of African leaders lay in formulating their own model of development or adapting the available ones, capitalism or socialism, both products of the West. There were a few serious attempts to analyze the nature of the capitalist system: Kwame Nkrumah, Amílcar Cabral and Julius Nyerere. Theirs was a systemic analysis which was political rather than economical. Already we can identify the inroads of fear of an antagonism to socialism and communism. African nations were fully engulfed by the Cold War of the 1960's. "Africans represented the new political and ideological souls to be converted into either capitalism or communism. The infused fear of communism created confusion and hesitancy with regard to the precise nature of socialism suitable to African conditions."

Tanzanian Socialism: There were several schools of thought in the early sixties. One position, Marxist in theory, maintained that there cannot be socialism without a revolution and the subsequent capture of the State by force. With political and military power secure radical economic changes in society would be initiated. Nationalization of the basic means of production, distribution and exchange would constitute the first basic steps. There were marked differences in the reaction among African leaders. Nyerere preferred an essentially political revolution to the military option. The most important socialist revolutionary measures or actions which took place in Tanzania are the following:

1. Nationalization of financial institutions - banks and insurance companies;
2. Nationalization of commerce: large import-export trade and one state organization was created.
3. Nationalization of industries: National Development Corporation a state organization which coordinates all industrial companies was created.
4. The transformation of the education system from that of a pure preparation for secondary school to preparation for village life in 'Education for Self-Reliance Policy'.

5. State acquisition of houses, lodgings of greater value (Tsh 100,000.)
6. Nationalization of large agricultural estates.
7. Decentralization of government from the Capital into the Regions and ultimately to the people - the first step towards villagization.
8. Villagization program - later, villages became registered cooperative societies in their own right.
9. Private retail trade discouraged and village-owned shops were instituted.
10. Insurance of whole village(s).

The Arusha Declaration: The Arusha Declaration on socialism and self-reliance promulgated in 1967 put a new emphasis on the fight against class society whether caused by poverty, ignorance or disease or whether caused by straight-forward exploitation of man by man. The will to fight poverty, ignorance and disease had existed within the TANU philosophy well before the independence of Tanzania. TANU insisted that man would not understand his liberty while these ills were still haunting him and contended that these ills were the catalysts for inequality, oppression and discrimination. On socialism, the Arusha Declaration of 1967 declared an end to exploitation, oppression and inequality. It depicted the true socialist Tanzania as a country where man has complete freedom of expression: it emphasized the deliberate use of institutions in which true democracy would prevail. It depicted a Tanzania in which there would be no exploitation of man by man. "Everyone will work, and everyone that works will receive a fair share of (for) his sweat". It made a particular point on the care of those who cannot work: the invalids, the infants and the aged. It went on further to point out the exploitation of the rural poor by the towns, even in Tanzania, and of the womenfolk by the menfolk. It described the equitable distribution of the natural resources without discouraging personal initiative.

But quite plainly operative in the philosophy of the Arusha Declaration was its admittance that Tanzania is NOT a socialist country yet: "it has inherited characteristics which are feudalistic and capitalistic which, if not checked, will revivify".

However, whereas our socialist ideals as promulgated in the Arusha Declaration are as near perfect as possible the implementation of several programs which would move Tanzania a step nearer its socialist goals has often gone astray. But the evidence before us shows that these acts of socialist mismanagement are more a result of the zeal of ignorant implementors than of deliberate saboteurs.

Villagization program: One good example of this is our villagization program. The policy of rural development was discussed and passed by the Party as early as October 1967. For the rural poor there was good logic and good hope for "living together and working together for the benefit of all". But living together can be a problem if not properly organized. Do you group the lazy together with the hard-working, the quarrelsome with the weak, the pious with the heathen? People like to live together, but these are some of the facts of life that made man live on his own somewhere in search of his own peace.

In implementing the Party resolution of 1967, the government had to move people to the villages in 1974 and 1975. The purpose was admirable. Government had to give to the rural population the services of water, health and education, and could not do this if the population was scattered in the bush. It could not wait until all the people had picked their partners before helping the rural poor out of their "poverty, ignorance and disease". So the people were moved, sometimes totally against their will, to alien places miles away. The purpose is obviously very good, but in the meantime man's liberty has been shaken badly, and his will to work, even for his own benefit, became non-existent.

But this is the Tanzanian revolution. It must take its toll. And the displacement of an entire population into a new environment could not go without complaint.

The villagization program has been cited as an example whereby its innocent implementation may have retarded the zeal of the rural poor from moving nearer to socialist goals. There are some notable successes, but in quite a few cases there is no will to live together or work together for the benefit of all, even among the rural poor. There must be other examples. In a few places, particularly where most of those moving are of one faith, the Church has moved with the people. Sometimes the parish has put up a Church building in the new village and employed a catechist or even a priest. In some places the priest himself has taken the lead, to help explain the aims of the new policy.

Almost always where this type of leadership has taken place the socialist spirit has remained or has been enhanced. The Arusha Declaration has yet another promulgation, and that is self-reliance. It emphasizes the need for Tanzanians to use their own efforts and their resources for their own development without closing their doors to foreign aid. Here, too, we have a good example of policy implementation which appears, at least for the moment, to be against the benefit of at least some of the rural poor. This appears in regard to schools and dispensaries. (This will be discussed more fully later in the paper under Christianity in the Revolutionary Process of Tanzania).

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS IN TANZANIA

Tanzania achieved its political independence in 1961. Since then the Tanzanian political leadership has been preoccupied with the maintenance of its political, economic and cultural independence. In order to achieve these ends Tanzania opted for a socialistic mode of society with a centralized state apparatus, promulgated in 1967 in the Arusha Declaration. It was realized that the building up of a socialistic mode of society would not be possible without an insistence on the foundation of an egalitarian society. The strategy adopted by Tanzania to this end was and still is, the policy of self-reliance so as to satisfy the needs of all the people. The social revolutionary measures or activities taken to date have been noted in the introduction and can be seen to have had an impact on the structure and functioning of the political, economic and cultural systems of the Tanzanian social formation.

What then is the effect of this impact on the structuration of the egalitarian society which Tanzania has insisted upon and towards which it is eagerly working?

The impact on the political system: Taking into account the manner in which politics is handled, its organization and functioning, one realizes that there is a one party political system with a socialistic policy in Tanzania. Obviously, such a political set-up gears the governing power to a group of those who, at least externally, profess their faith in socialism as the best policy to achieve the social goals of the country. The danger arising thereof is the possible, gradual institution of a 'state bourgeoisie' (at national, regional and district levels) which would tend to consolidate their power, abuse their authority and fall back to exploitation (either through corruption, smuggling or negligence), - the very evils supposed to be fought by them. The decentralization of power down to the village level is supposed to work in favour of the initial goal - equal distribution to the people of political as well as economic power in the means of production. Thus "Ujamaa Villages" came as a measure to combat these dangers.

However, this political set-up (centralized and decentralized at the same time) is apt to breed quite a number of contradictions. The economic interests of the 'state bourgeoisie' and those of the workers and peasants come into conflict and can create contradictions. Since the Party and government workers have greater access to power and to the limited resources than the workers and peasants have, the danger of exploitation follows and hence a gap way may be made between them. This would definitely render the task of building an egalitarian society difficult if not impossible.

Yet an advantage that has been built into the system is the possibility of recourse to juridical and political measures to redress injustices and to right wrongs done. Some of these measures for safe-guarding justice are:

- the Constitution of the Government and Party
- the judiciary
- the committee for enforcement of the leadership code
- anti-corruption squads
- ombudsmen

But how many are aware of such possibilities? How many are able to utilize them? How many are aware of them, but are afraid to face the responsible persons? Are not ignorance and fear the great enemies against political conscientization, against liberation and hence against the realization of an egalitarian society? Who is to free man and groups of men from this fear and involve them in the process of liberation?

The impact on the economic system: The Tanzanian economic system is not free from the influence of the international monetary system. However, the major means of production were nationalized in various sectors, for example in finance, industry, commerce (import/export companies), distributive trade and agriculture. The resulting public ownership of production and exchange attempted to curb exploitation at all levels. It also enabled Tanzania to determine its own economic priorities which would be more geared to serve the needs of the people. This resulted in the setting up of new industries which depended on local raw materials, for example, the textile industry, sisal related industries, oilseeds gineries, hide factories, farm implements, fertilizers, tyres, bicycles, radios, batteries, etc.

However, the volume of production has not yet been able to satisfy the demands of the people. Because of these shortages, legal and commercial measures have been taken to ensure the equitable distribution of these scarce goods through the state Regional Trading Cooperation. Despite these measures smuggling and blackmarketeering are rampant.

Agricultural development is a priority of the government as 90% of the population are subsistent peasant farmers. The efforts of the government towards this development include subsidization of agricultural inputs e.g. seeds, fertilizers and making credit available to the farmers through the Tanzania Rural Development Bank. The Ministry of Agriculture provides extension services dealing with, for example, irrigation, soil conservation and farming methods. Despite all this input results have been disappointing, agricultural outputs have been falling off and the country is not self-sufficient in providing food for its people. This is in part due to the government pricing policy. The contribution of the agricultural population to the national income is 76% of the total but this is not matched by a return government investment in the infrastructure of the rural area, such as roads, grain-storage facilities, etc. This inequitable distribution of the national income does not favour the formation of the egalitarian society.

The impact on the cultural system: The impact of the revolutionary process on the cultural system has an effect on the manner in which the people react in their relationships to each other and to the forces of nature around them. With the introduction of socialism the hitherto existing capitalistic values have been undermined.

There has been a movement from a self-centered individualistic way of thinking, feeling and acting towards a collective way of thinking, feeling and acting; from economic competition as the rule of achievement towards cooperation as the main possibility of progress; from the accumulation of wealth as a key to social position towards the communal redistribution of goods for the general improvement of the people.

Such changes lead to the greater values of solidarity and mutual interdependence which work toward the establishment of a more just society. The most important revolutionary measures taken to achieve these goals were education for self-reliance and the villagization program. Education for self-reliance concentrated on attitudinal change, knowledge and skills applicable to village life and production.

The villagization program exposed the people to the values, norms and patterns of the socialistic mode of living in communal efforts and achievements. Opening of village shops and the abolition of middlemen eased the communal redistribution of goods.

#### CHRISTIANITY IN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF TANZANIA

Christianity was introduced to Tanzania alongside the colonial regimes in the 1860's. Because many denominations were introduced simultaneously and by various nationalities, no particular denomination had a special relationship with the colonial government. Consequently there was no State-Church in Tanzania which could have placed obstacles to the revolutionary process. Nevertheless, the Christian beliefs, values, norms, patterns and

models as presented by an outdated, feudalistic, colonial Christianity may be acting, though unintentionally, against the revolutionary aspirations and the building of the just society.

However, the Churches had been in the forefront, for a long time, in providing education, health services and vocational training for the rural poor. Mission schools and dispensaries were placed in the most rural areas of Tanzania. At that time they were giving these services using their own funds and their own manpower. Everyone in authority hails the work of the Church in these fields. Yet, for the sake of spreading equality to all the rural poor and not only to some, a policy was proclaimed which removed the control of these services from the Church.

The "missions", however, are not yet self-reliant and depend on funds and donations from overseas. These donors (wrongly) stopped their grants to the dispensaries and schools over which they had no control so those schools and dispensaries are no more. Instead the State has made known its need for other more advanced services in these two fields and the Churches have been asked to provide them. Consultant hospitals have been built (Bugando and KCMC Moshi) and more have been requested. Requests have been made for technical schools and vocational schools as well as universities, but, as expected, the response has been slow. The Churches themselves are dependant upon overseas donations for funds. These are slow in coming because the overseas donors feel that, because their people have no control over the funds and/or the institutions, therefore they do not want to continue to contribute.

Challenge to Tanzanian Christianity: The Tanzanian Government has challenged social injustice and has set up long and short term plans to combat it at all levels. What are the strategies and tactics of the Tanzanian Churches to effect a just social order in Tanzania? If Christians would be led to critically examine the existing social order in the light of the Gospel Message of love, justice and peace, one would easily understand that the basic cause of misery (poverty, oppression, wars, etc.) is social injustice. How then would one cling to a Christianity which has no concern for remedying such a state of injustice?

This means that any Church, if it is to be Christian at all, has to question society and its system of values at its roots and investigate whether these are in conformity with the Gospel Message of love, justice and peace. Taking into account the Tanzanian revolutionary process in which Christianity has to function one sees quite an opportunity for the Christian Churches to contribute to the realization of forming an egalitarian society. In order to be able to realize this, each of the Christian Churches has to pinpoint the root causes of injustice within its own structure and function and see a possible alternative model for itself.

The root causes of injustice in the Church: Any denominational Church is a product of its history. Most of the Churches have the tendency to maintain the status quo. Their unwillingness to change renders difficult the possibility of considering the positive elements in the secular revolutionary process. The unwillingness to change may, and usually does, maintain the feudalistic and capitalistic values attached to the former Church structures. We can identify three areas.



1. Structures: The historical origin and maintenance of a church structure with a feudalistic and capitalistic nature:
  - The privileged position of clergy and religious in the Church.
  - Non-participation of the laity in decision making, for example in liturgy, election of leaders, administration of funds, etc.
  - A lack of creative planning in both seminary and sisters' training programs which tend to be divorced from the people and their culture.
  - No accountability of church leaders to the people.
  - Clerical paternalism (knowing all the theological answers) that sustains inertia and passivity among the people.
  - Parish structures that are not conducive to building community.
  - Male dominated church institutions and hierarchical structures.
  - Dependency on foreign sources for economic support.
  - Excessive centralization of the Catholic Church.
  
2. Theology which is meant to justify the hierarchical, feudalistic and capitalistic nature of the Church structures (poor ecclesiology).
  - Theology of the Church
  - Theology of authority coming from God
  - Usual theology of the ministries (more from God than from the people)
  - The pyramidal vision of the Church with laity at the bottom - a single receiver at the top.
  - Theology of suffering, solving problems with prayer; division of body and soul; theology of obedience; heaven used as a reward.
  
3. Culture: The Churches' failure in practice to respect peoples' culture.
  - Foreign culture values in the liturgy, in 'life-style', and in priests' and sisters' formation.
  - Sunday relationship (only) to God, centered in the priest that leads to a passive role for the laity.
  - Translation of liturgical texts into local language ignoring relevant cultural ways of relating to God, prayer and the traditional ways of expressing them.

#### ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR THE CHURCH

Some practical conclusions indicating the contribution of those committed to the duty of struggling for a just social order:

#### Institutional:

- Village training for pastors, sisters and brothers; Sharing of power and responsibilities with the people at the grass-roots level; Creation of pressure groups within the church/parish.
- Promotion of justice and peace groups within the Church at the grass-roots level.

- Phase out foreign dominance in the church structure, personnel, ideas and finance. Promote accountability to the people at all levels and in everything concerning the Church. Form basic christian communities not dependent on the clergy. Self-reliance in the Church.

Cultural:

- Missionaries adapt to the culture of the people; appreciation of cultural values and adaptation of Church rituals, sacraments and attitudes to prayer, in ways more suitable and familiar to the people. Explore a more social concept of sin.

Theological:

- African theology should be encouraged and have a bigger share in the formation of priests and church leaders.
- The Bible should be read and made meaningful to the people, taking into account the signs of the times in our social reality today.
- Sin should be deprivatized and understood in a more social prospective.
- Servant model of the Church rather than an authority model.
- Theology should be based on the life experiences and expectations of the people at the grass-roots level, at the level of the disadvantaged.
- Move from the present dualism of body and soul into the more integrated vision of the human person, his/her values, aspirations and struggles.

Some options:

- More involvement in concrete issues of justice.
- ↳ Towards a classless Church, accommodating, flexible and welcoming.
- Promotion of cultural values.
- Struggle for the poor and disadvantaged.
- Reorientation of Church services;
- Move from purely formal education to conscientization.
- Move from purely curative to preventive medicine.
- Found small scale industries in villages through vocational training schools.

- end -

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## THE AGONY OF THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Elizabeth Schmidt

South Africa claims to be a Christian country. Although the African majority has been deprived of citizenship and land and has no political power, the white rulers consider their system God-given. Many whites, particularly those of the Dutch Reformed Church, believe that God created whites to rule over and dominate blacks. They insist that the liberalization of society would lead to racial mixing which, they charge, opposes the Will of God.

Two views: The majority of white Christians support the present government in South Africa and its policies of political repression. They regard black dissent as "communist-inspired" and, as Christians, they justify using any means necessary to smother it. In the words of Prime Minister P.W. Botha, the battle of white South Africa is "a struggle of the Christian Western Civilization against the powers of darkness and Marxism and not just a black/white struggle". Most of the all-white electorate would agree.

Black South Africans hold a very different view of Christianity. Bishop Desmond Tutu, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, has called the South African system of apartheid "the vilest system since Nazism." Because this system of enforced racial separation has deprived the black population of all political, economic, and human rights, Tutu has demanded that "the perpetrators of apartheid" be excommunicated from the Christian Church.

Militant blacks have used the Bible to justify their struggle for liberation. Rejecting the notion that white South Africans are God's "chosen people;" they have declared that God has "no color consciousness." In May, 1981, a trade unionist in Port Elizabeth addressed a rally of 5,000 people, opening with a statement from the Scriptures: "Genesis 1, verse 27 says that God created people in his own image. This is not a white image, and this is not a black image. God is not governed by distinctions of color. God created one person that no one should feel superior to another." As the crowd applauded, the trade unionist shouted, "God knows no apartheid. Apartheid is a challenge to God himself. I declare that apartheid is a sin!"

Leaders and people: On the surface, South Africa seems ripe for the teachings of liberation theology. However, there are many obstacles to adoption of such a course. While 90 percent of the Roman Catholics and 80 percent of the Anglicans and Methodists in South Africa are black, the leadership of these churches is predominantly white. Even black clergy tend to be drawn from the more conservative elements of the black population. The variety of sects, denominations, and languages makes communication and the building of an ecumenical movement extremely difficult. While workers and young people are attempting to radicalize the church and raise its level of awareness, they continue to be marginal forces within the church. The church hierarchy grants them little support.

Apart from the few thousand involved in activist groups such as the Young Christian Students and the Young Christian Workers, most young blacks have moved away from the church. They tend to regard the church and its members as part of the oppressive system. Even the liberal churches, they feel, make endless declarations of intent, without taking positive action in the liberation struggle.

Few blacks express surprise at the inaction of the white-dominated churches. According to a young Roman Catholic priest from the black township of Soweto: "Ordinary white Christians are preoccupied with security, riches, and land. They are worried about the communists on the border. They are concerned about a strong government that will protect their material possessions." They are not likely to endorse anti-government actions or disruption of the economy by protesting students or striking workers.

Even the South African Council of Churches (SACC), headed by the outspoken apartheid critic, Bishop Desmond Tutu, has fallen short of a militant stance. While Bishop Tutu and many of his staff would like the Council to openly align itself with the oppressed masses, they cannot act without the support of their member churches. Many church people claim that Tutu doesn't have the support of the leaders of the mainline churches. In fact, their financial backing is so limited that 95 percent of the Council's funding comes from overseas sources.

Not surprisingly, the member churches of the SACC are affluent white churches that are firmly entrenched in the political and economic system. While they may be willing to support self-help projects and disaster relief, they are not as eager to see a massive restructuring of society. The establishment of a democratic, egalitarian society, however, is contingent upon such a restructuring.

Some Christians fear that the church in South Africa will not move fast enough. They worry that once liberation has been achieved, the church will be regarded as a "collaborator with apartheid" and rejected in the new society. Others have concluded that there is little hope for the church as a whole, but that individuals and organizations, who have drawn their inspiration from Christian doctrine, will continue to play a leading role in the liberation struggle. Increasingly, priests, nuns, ministers, and lay people have taken a stand against the government and the apartheid system. They are risking ostracism from their communities, the loss of friends, family, careers, and possibly even their lives to stand on the side of the Gospel.

Polarized church: There is no neutrality in South Africa. The church cannot avoid the issue by claiming to reject involvement in "politics." As one minister phrased it, "The church is on the side of the oppressor or on the side of the oppressed." There is tremendous strain in the South African church. It is becoming increasingly polarized as its members choose sides. In the spring of 1981, Prime Minister Botha warned the churches that they should "keep themselves busy preaching the Gospel," adding that if forces within them "interfere in political affairs and support radical elements who want it to destabilize South Africa, they will be fought with all the instruments at our disposal."

Meanwhile, Bishop Tutu declared that "the churches have got to be like their Lord and Master. They must be on the side of the voiceless, the oppressed, the poor." Thrusting aside the prime minister's charges, Tutu asserted that "our passion for liberation comes from what we have received from the church.... It is not my political creed that determines how I behave and what I say. It is my encounter with Jesus Christ."

Reference: CENTER FOCUS, News from the CENTER OF CONCERN, Issue 45, September 1981.

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### "OPTION FOR THE POOR"

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Paul Evaristo Cardinal Arns

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*(Le Cardinal ARNS, archevêque de Sao Paulo explique pourquoi l'Eglise du Brésil a opté pour les pauvres. Ce choix a été inspiré par pure nécessité: 85% de la population est opprimée et cette oppression a clairement démontré que les gens vivaient dans un système social et économique injuste. Ce choix conduisit à une transformation de l'Eglise au Brésil. Il a abouti aussi à nombre de persécutions et de souffrances. "Pendant des années vous nous avez envoyé des missionnaires, dit-il, maintenant laissez-nous être vos missionnaires". Cette conférence a été donnée à Washington, lors du 10ème anniversaire du "Center of Concern", 1981. N.d.l.R.)*

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I am very happy to be with you all in Washington tonight in the shadow of the White House and the Capitol and reflect with you on the meaning of an option for the poor!

Option for the Poor: Ever since Medelin, the Church in Latin America has tried to read the Gospel from the perspective of our social reality. One thing has become clear to us: the presence of the Church in the world is a very concrete challenge to us because we live in a world in conflict, a world where the great majority are marginalized. It would be clearer to say that we speak of a church that lives in the underworld of the poor and the marginalized.

We are not a church of geniuses who suddenly decided to opt for the poor--the option came from pure necessity: 85% of our population is oppressed and its oppression clearly showed us that we live in a social and economic system of injustice. In Medelin we verbalized our conviction that this injustice is not occasional but that it is institutionalized

in what we call Social Sin. Once we recognized that, we faced an ethical demand: justice and political charity led us to see that total liberation meant economic and social change. Personal conversion would not be an answer to Social Sin - the conversion has to be collective. Puebla added that this option should be understood in a fourfold way:

- it is preferential
- it is clear
- it is solidarity
- it is prophetic

Word of God: The root of our option is the Word of God. God's project in the Bible shows us that he formed an egalitarian and democratic community in the desert. All through the history of Israel this project remained the corrective impulse in the collective life of the people. The legitimization of the State was the defence of the poor, the widow and the orphan. And the Messiah of this State was seen as the poor King of Zacariah 9 who led the community of the poor.

Let us look at the New Testament for a moment, in particular the Gospel of Matthew that we are reading in the liturgy this year.

Matthew presents Jesus as Emmanuel, God who is with us:

- Mt 21 speaks of the poor king of Zacariah who enters this city on a donkey;
- Mt 12 shows him questioning the powerful of his time;
- Mt 5 and the Beatitudes show that the poor are the center of his Gospel because the Kingdom is theirs;
- Mt 11 is a meditation on the poor as chosen by God to be the only ones to understand him truly and Jesus himself as poor and humble of heart;
- Mt 25 shows us that the judgment of all history will be fulfilled on the basis of having understood that God always reveals himself through the poor.

This option has two different types of consequences: persecution and the transformation of the church.

persecution: I would like to share with you the experience of the church of Sao Paulo in the decade 1970 to 1981. I think that what we suffered could very easily happen to any church that followed the same path.

The first rights of the poor that we defended can be called the liberal rights; Habeas Corpus, defence against torture, imprisonment for years without trial. In this struggle many worked together with the church.

In the struggle for political rights--elections, the right of criticism in Congress, etc - many others struggled with us and even praised us.

But when it came to the rights that only affect the poor - strikes, agrarian reform, humanizing slums, etc. - with rare exceptions, only the poor remained united in this struggle.

The option for the poor touches the very heart of the social system and incites the anger of all those who have benefited from an unjust economy. The poor are exploited in all aspects of this system from the little fisherman who sells his shrimp for two cents a pound to the factory worker in the transnational industry. The Indian loses his land and the small landowner loses his livelihood or his very life. The defence of the poor is a threat to the whole system which reacts with all the virulence of its being. Those who are not part of the system are called subversive, communists, political opportunists.

Our politicians and the owners of our most important newspapers have become "theologians" and are constantly preaching sermons to the church - for our own good, of course!

They want us to bless their banks and their factories, to approve their unjust wage laws, to celebrate the days they were victorious over the poor. And mind you, none of this would be political, it would be neutral, it would mean recognizing reality--the rich and the powerful have conquered and all should rejoice!

The option for the poor is not a class option in the marxist sense of the word. The Gospel is indeed universal, but the powerful will only see the newness of the Word of God through the eyes of the poor and through the rejection of profit as the center and the only absolute of social organization.

The Document of Puebla emphasized that this opposition and pressure would occur (see numbers: 79; 83; 147; 160; 1139).

Transformation: Another consequence of this option for the poor is the transformation of the Church. We have often said in the history of the Church that the blood of its martyrs is the seed of Christians. Certainly much blood has been shed in the Latin American Church in the past decades and this blood has indeed become the seedbed of a new church.

The first consequence of the option for the poor is that conversion of the Church in its totality. If you ask me what has changed, I have to say: everything! Our pastoral planning is different, decisions are made in assemblies of all the members of the Church. Our religious education has changed, the way of preaching the Gospel has changed. Our liturgy is renewed - it is deeper, it comes from the heart of the people, it celebrates their victories and their defeats. Our theology has been renewed, our seminaries are different. And yes, our bishops tell wonderful stories of how they were before they made their options for the poor!

Church in North America: I would like to end reflecting with you what all this means for the Church in North America.

You are part of one of the most generous peoples in the world. But as a people, this generosity has to pass from "feeling badly" about the hungry and the oppressed of the world to understanding why they are hungry.

We have to learn to think globally and act locally, to learn to love our country and criticize it and transform it at the same time. An option for the poor is not an option against the middle class. It is for the salvation of the middle class. When we denounce the failings of the Americans who are not poor we must always do it in the context of announcing the Good News of salvation for all.

It is easy for the "converted" members of the middle class, the progressives, the liberationists to have mixed feelings, to feel good because we are different. We are more sensitive than our families and neighbours, more critical than others in our parish. But at the same time we feel guilty. A guilt that often leads us to despise ourselves and our country; to despair over the future; to naively accept the criticism of anyone who wants to abuse us.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the Father loves us so very much. The poor are the sacraments of his choice, but they are a sacrament for us all. A despairing North American cannot be sister to a Latin America in birthpains to be born anew in courage and hope! You have sent us missionaries for years--let us mission to you.

I hope that the option for the poor will make the Church in the South and in the North of America a sign of unity and of hope for all of our peoples in whom there are great reserves of humanity and the vision of the horizons of a new world.

Reference: Taken from Center Focus - a newsletter of Center of Concern, 3700 13th St. N.E. Washington, D.C. 20017).

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#### NEW FORMS OF MEMBERSHIP IN MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

The Bethlehem Missionaries are responding to decreasing numbers of "life members" through the enthusiastic acceptance of lay fellow workers. Fr. Elsener, the new Superior General, states: "Laity' and 'clergy' members and lay fellow-workers are no contrasts for me. We shall, of course, always need a core of life members to ensure the continuity and authenticity of our missionary task. Our Society cannot give up these lifetime engagements. But I am certain that this core will remain available."

The 1974 General Chapter agreed that priests and laity who are not members of the Society should have the opportunity of mission work within the organization of the Society. All single men, priests, or lay, who commit themselves to at least five years of mission work can be offered the choice of having the same rights and duties as full members of the Bethlehem Missionary Society. This new overall policy was approved last year, and is binding for the next seven years. The Society is currently seeking to increase the number of lay fellow-workers it has.

Reference: MISSION INTERCOM, No. 114, April 1982.

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IN MEMORIAM  
LEO NANAYAKKARA: LIVING SYMBOL OF  
CHRISTIAN UNITY

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Marianne Katoppo

*(Protestante, Marianne Katoppo ne connaissait pas beaucoup d'evêques catholiques. Pour elle, Mgr. Leo Nanayakkara du Sri Lanka était un vivant symbole de l'unité chrétienne. Sa mort subite, en mai 1982, a été une grande perte pour elle et pour ses nombreux amis. La brève notice nécrologique composée par Marianne Katoppo relève la délicatesse et la droiture, la foi profonde, la joyeuse bonne humeur et la charité d'un homme qui était un évêque mais surtout un ami fidèle envers un grand nombre. N.d.l.R.)*

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It was a quiet June morning. We were eating lunch at Vidya Jyoti, the Jesuit theologiate in Delhi, where I was visiting on my way back from Europe. One of the Jesuits who had just returned from Sri Lanka told us, casually, that Bishop Leo Nanayakkara had died a week ago.

I remember that at first I kept right on eating. I was just too stunned. My senses refused to accept the news. How could Leo be dead? Just a fortnight ago, I had been in Rome, and mutual friends had told me that I had just missed Leo by a day. "Oh, I'll go to Sri Lanka and see him there," I said cheerfully. The last time I had seen him was but a few months ago, in Bangalore, at the IAMS Conference. He was, as always, exuberant. It was such a joy to be with him.

When we had parted then, he had made me promise to come and see him the next time I was in Sri Lanka. "I want to show you some of the work I am doing," he said, "and to meet some people."

Now there was to be no next time. It was, as Emily Dickinson's poem put it: "*so huge, so hopeless to conceive.*" Indeed, "*parting is all we know of heaven, and all we need to know of hell.*"

Being a Protestant, I did not know that many Catholic bishops. To me, Leo was and is a living symbol of Christian unity. There is a Secretariat for Christian Unity. There are units, commissions, committees, and work groups for Christian unity. But ultimately it is the people, not the hierarchies nor institutions, who live Christian unity.

In his person, Leo lived and expressed the love, courage and concern which is the essence of Christian unity.

He was not a pompous church prelate. Far from it. How well I remember the twinkle in his eye when I told him the following story:

"Last year, I happened to be waiting for someone in a convent parlour in Kandy. There was a large framed photograph hanging over the piano. It showed an extremely handsome young man with curly hair. Somehow, the face was familiar, but I couldn't quite place it. Finally, I got up to read the inscription underneath. It said: 'Leo Nanayakkara, OSB, Bishop of Kandy!'"

When I teased him: "Leo, wherever did all that hair go?" he laughed and replied: "That photograph was taken 23 years ago. As I gained in wisdom, I lost my hair!"

He was not a dogmatic diehard. On the contrary, he displayed a rare sensitivity and genuine concern for other people.

At the time I came to Bangalore for the IAMS Conference, I had had a rather painful experience with regard to celebrating the eucharist together, or inter-communion. I had been at a meeting which ironically enough was concerned with "dialogue with other faiths", held by a well-known world-wide ecumenical organization. The participants were mainly Protestant, but there were two Catholics: a lay woman (member of a lay order) and a priest who was the official representative of the Vatican. The priest, who was a personal friend, invited me to come also. The woman - when the priest was out of earshot - flew into a fury, and told me that she objected to my participating in the Mass, since she did not believe in inter-communion. Needless to say, my interest in the "ecumenical" Mass waned considerably. Not only was I hurt by the woman's intolerant attitude, I also felt that the priest could have given me some more support, rather than lamely remarking that this was unfortunate, but not everybody had the same wide ecumenical experience as I had.

I told Leo this story, and I told him also that it would be some time before I would even consider going to a Catholic Mass again, even when invited by the priest.

"I know how you feel," he said. "It also hurts me deeply to see how some of us turn the eucharist into some kind of magic, or a selfish rite of exclusion. But I do hope you will come to Mass tomorrow morning, for believe me: being there and doing what you think is right is the only way to make people understand. No matter how much it hurts."

I did not go the next morning. Leo did not say anything, and I thought he had forgotten. Two days later, I did go, had communion and when the Mass was over, Leo came to me, his face beaming with happiness. He embraced me, and said: "I am very happy that you came, Mariana, it is the only way, you know!"

To me that was one great moment of Christian unity: to know that my being at Mass was not only tolerated, but even made one of my brothers very happy. No documents, statements or declarations - in which the ecumenical circles abound - will ever capture the essence of Christian unity the way Leo was able to with a word, a smile, a gesture.

In the Asian world of hierarchy and seniority, it was delightful to see how Leo did not let his position or his age create any distance between himself and others. His sense of humour was most refreshing. On an

excursion in Bangalore, while waiting for the bus, Dr. D. Preman Niles and myself found that the only place where one could sit in the shade was the edge of a ditch. Leo thought that was marvelous. "Let me join the ditched theologians!" he said happily. And there we were, the three of us sitting in the ditch, while the more conventional participants stood and fretted in the noonday glare!

He told me that he had refused to wear his episcopal robes since the day, 15 years ago, a high ranking church functionary had stormed at him: "Nanayakkara, you are a disgrace to the Church!" because he had turned up at an ordination wearing only his cassock.

"Is it the robes that determine our state of grace?" he asked. We were walking through one of the slums of Bangalore. "Look around you: how could I ever hope to do anything for these people, or even come close to them, if I were dressed up in those cumbersome robes?"

The people who lived in the slum all belonged to the so-called scheduled castes, or "untouchables." They were crowding around us, and my face must have shown my discomfort, for Leo said to me gently: "Don't look like that, Mariana. These people never have any visitors, let alone foreigners. They are always made to feel that they are despicable, untouchable. Other people always shout at them, chase them away, beat them, frown at them, reject them. Now that you have come to visit them, you must show them the happiness of one among friends."

There was so much that I have learned from Leo. I had hoped to meet him again, and to learn more. "Another two years," he said, "and then I think my work is done, and I can retire."

Perhaps in our limited view, God called him before his work was done. Our little hands want to clutch him, to hold on to the great man that was Leo Nanayakkara. Why should he leave us so soon?

But even as I write this, I can almost see the twinkle in his eye, the warm smile lighting up his face, and hear him say: "be there - and do what the Spirit tells you is right. It is the only way!"

More than ever he is with us. His love, courage and concern sustain us not to lose sight of God's own horizon, nor to lose hope when the night is dark and the road is long.

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 BOOK NOTES
 

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*Hirmer, Oswald.*

MARX - MONEY - CHRIST.

Gwelo, Zimbabwe: MAMBO PRESS, 1981, Pp. 139. Paperback. No price indicated. This is an illustrated introduction to capitalism, marxism and African socialism examined in the light of the Gospel. A useful study guide (30C) is also available from the publishers. This little book has a special interest for Sedos members in their present study of mission in 'marxist' situations.

*Gheddo, Piero.*

I POPOLI DELLA FAME.

Bologna: E.M.I., 1982. Pp. 173. Paperback, Lit. 4,000.

*Moret, Giampiero.*

NICARAGUA: UNA CHIESA NELLA RIVOLUZIONE.

Bologna: E.M.I., 1982. Pp. 230. Paperback, Lit. 5,000.

*Pecorari, Giorgio.*

SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA - QUALE LIBERAZIONE.

Bologna: E.M.I., 1982. Pp. 204. Paperback, Lit. 5,000.

*Follereau, Raoul.*

PER UN MONDO MENO LEBBROSO. (Titolo originale: Raoul Follereau ou le baiser aux lépreux; Traduzione italiana di Enzo Demarchi).

Bologna: E.M.I., 1981. Pp. 185. Paperback, Lit. 5,000.

*Betto, Frei.*

IL LIEVITO NELLA MASSA: Comunità Ecclesiali di Base e Politica in Brasile. (Titolo originale: O Fermento Na Massa, Ed. VOZES, Petrópolis, RJ, Brasil. Traduzione dall'originale portoghese: Enzo Demarchi),

Bologna: E.M.I., 1982. Pp. 135. Paperback, Lit. 3,600.

*Samartha, Stanley J.*

COURAGE FOR DIALOGUE.

Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS BOOKS, 1982. Pp. 157. Paperback, US\$8.95.

*Tonna, Benjamin.*

GOSPEL FOR THE CITIES. (Translated from the Italian by William E. Jerman).

Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS BOOKS, 1982. Pp. 203. Paperback, US\$10.95.

*Song, Choan-Seng.*

THE COMPASSIONATE GOD.

Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS BOOKS, 1982. Pp. 284. Paperback, US\$12.95.

*Foubert, Charles H.*

THE IDOC DOCUMENTATION HANDBOOK, A Guide to Appropriate Technology and Information Systems.

Rome: IDOC International, 1982. Pp. 97. Paperback, no price indicated.

A practical guide with concise useful information on and analysis of the kind of technology and documentation facilities suitable for many Sedos Members.

*Tierra, Pedro.*

CANTI DEL POPOLO DELLA NOTTE.

(Titolo originale dell'opera: *Poemas do Povo da Noite*, Editorial Livramento, Sao Paulo 1979. Traduzione italiana di David Turolde).

Bologna: E.M.I., 1981. Pp. 127. Paperback, Lit. 3,500.

*Grumelli, Antonio.*

EVANGELIZZAZIONE PROMOZIONE UMANA E CULTURE EMERGENTI: Atti del Simposio Internazionale Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Roma 2-4 dicembre, 1980.

Roma: Urbaniana University Press., 1982. Pp. 159. Paperback, no price indicated.

*Toton, Suzanne C.*

WORLD HUNGER - THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS BOOKS, 1982. Pp. 210. Paperback, US\$7.95.

*Song, C.S.*

THE TEARS OF LADY MENG. A parable of people's political theology.

Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS BOOKS, 1982. Pp. 69. Paperback, US\$4.95.

*Lazzarotto, Angelo S.*

LA CHIESA CATTOLICA IN CINA: La "politica di libertà religiosa" dopo Mao. Milano: Jaca Book, 1982. Pp. 271. Paperback, Lit. 10,000. The first part of this study of the Catholic Church in China from 1977 to 1980 was presented at the Seminar on the Future of Mission, organized by Sedos in Rome, March 1981. Father Lazzarotto has added a second part bringing the study up to the moment with an analysis of the most recent developments in China. This is a very well informed and objective analysis of what is taking place today in the Church in China.

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"CRESCERE INSIEME PER LA CHIESA MISSIONARIA IN ITALIA"

Nei giorni 21 - 24 settembre 1982 si terrà a Siena il IV<sup>o</sup> CONGRESSO NAZIONALE MISSIONARIO sul tema "Crescere Insieme per la Chiesa Missionaria in Italia" patrocinato e promosso dalle PONTIFICIE OPERE MISSIONARIE, organizzato d'intesa con la Sacra Congregazione per la Evangelizzazione dei Popoli e la Conferenza Episcopale Italiana in occasione del XXV<sup>o</sup> anniversario della promulgazione della Lettera Enciclica "Fidei Donum".

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