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EDITORIAL

While the special Synod for Africa is entering into its second half, this May Bulletin tries to look again at different questions of mission all over the world.

M. RONCIN, studies in his article the very complex connections between world debt, misery and drugs. A universal problem where only a very broad response can help.

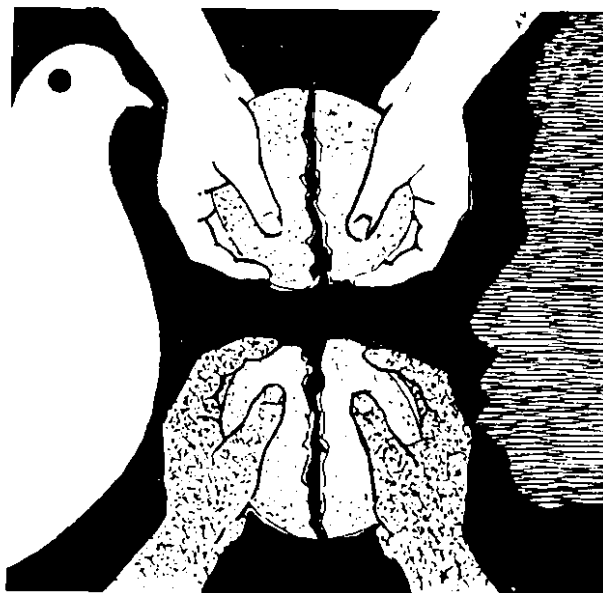
Father JOSÉ MARINS, and his team are serving already many years in the promotion of the CEBs in Latin America. In this article the team gives a revealing report on the present situation and the trends in Latin America.

The enormous suffering of the population of Tibet under the Chinese occupation is often forgotten. PAUL INGRAM gives us a sad portrait of the Via Crucis of Tibet.

Mission starts and ends at the very depth of the Pascal mystery of Christ, just celebrated at Easter. Father JOHN KROEGER, MM, shows us that our whole life and human experiences have a profound 'Pascal' character.

FELIX A. MACHADO writes from an Asian context about the ever new responsibility of the Church to pass on the message of resurrection in the various situations of people's lives. In that sense he sees the Good News as something really never "possessable".

Our MISSION MOMENTS give us missionary testimonies from South Africa, São Paulo and Mexico.



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DETTE - MISÈRE - DROGUE

M. Roncin

Voilà trois termes dont le rapprochement s'impose. La misère physique et morale est souvent la cause de l'utilisation de la drogue. Mais la misère provoquée par la dette du Tiers-Monde est l'une des causes de l'extension de la culture des plantes dont on extrait la drogue.

La culture de ces plantes, principalement le pavot, le cannabis et la coca, tend à se développer un peu partout, mais surtout dans les pays du Tiers-Monde, de l'Europe de l'Est et de la CEI, où les conditions de vie sont d'ailleurs de plus en plus semblables à celles du Tiers-Monde. Pourquoi?

La question est évidemment très complexe et nous allons voir qu'il existe différentes raisons à cela. Mais, dans cet article, nous voudrions particulièrement étudier l'une d'elles, qui a pour cause la misère, elle-même engendrée par la dette du Tiers-Monde. C'est sans doute en Amérique Latine que ce lien est le plus facile à établir; mais pas seulement en Amérique Latine.

Nous allons voir aussi que bien des petits trafiquants de drogue, qui sont ceux qui se font le plus facilement prendre, ne trafiquent pas, du moins au départ, par appât du gain, mais pour aider leur famille à survivre. C'est d'ailleurs souvent un engrenage, duquel il n'est pas facile de se libérer.

UNE DEMANDE TOUJOURS CROISSANTE

Tout d'abord il faut dire qu'une des causes de l'augmentation des superficies consacrées à ces cultures est la demande de drogue elle-même.

Cette demande est en croissance permanente dans les pays industrialisés. Aux jeunes rebutés par le manque d'idéal de ce que la société de consommation leur propose, vient de plus en plus se joindre le flot des jeunes chômeurs qui

essaient de tuer, comme ils le peuvent, leur ennui et leur dégoût envers une société aussi injuste.

Mais ce phénomène de la drogue, qui était vu jusqu'à ces dernières années comme un problème des pays riches et industrialisés, tend à devenir un phénomène mondial qui atteint toujours plus de jeunes du Tiers-Monde. C'est dire que les mêmes causes produisent un peu partout les mêmes effets, à plus ou moins longue échéance.

Car il ne faut pas s'y tromper: l'utilisation de la drogue n'est pas avant tout un délit, mais un signe de souffrance et de désespoir, une tentative, certes maladroite, de répondre à un drame humain. Avec l'augmentation du chômage un peu partout dans le monde, il est malheureusement permis de penser que la consommation de drogue a de beaux jours devant elle. Combattre le chômage, c'est donc aussi lutter contre l'utilisation de la drogue.

SEIGNEURS DE LA GUERRE, MAFIEUX ET BARONS DE LA DROGUE

Mais les cultures pour la drogue et la toxicomanie elle-même ne se développeraient pas à ce point, si le trafic n'était pas organisé et si souvent il ne jouissait pas des plus hautes complicités au niveau des États. C'est une puissante organisation, qui possède ses propres réseaux de distribution et ses propres troupes.

En Amérique latine, le cartel de Médellin (Colombie), est peut-être le plus célèbre; mais il en existe beaucoup d'autres.

Il en existe un en particulier, dont on parle beaucoup moins parce qu'il se fait plus discret et qu'il réside beaucoup plus loin des États-Unis. Il s'agit de Khum Sa, grand seigneur de la guerre et de l'héroïne, qui vit quelque part aux confins de la Chine, de la Birmanie, du Laos et de la Thaïlande. Il règne sur le célèbre

Triangle d'or, à la tête d'une armée de près de cinq mille hommes. Il est sans doute un des hommes les plus riches du monde et sa fortune lui vient entièrement de la culture du pavot, récolté principalement dans le Triangle d'or, dont on extrait l'opium et ses dérivés qui se retrouvent sur les marchés d'Europe et des Etats-Unis.

Durant la guerre froide, ces seigneurs de la guerre, barons de la drogue ou autres mafiosi ont parfois été utilisés par des chefs d'Etat, surtout des Etats-Unis et de l'ex-URSS, par services secrets interposés, pour financer des guérillas locales.

Tout le monde a encore en mémoire l'Irangaie et l'histoire du financement de la Contra au Nicaragua; ou encore le rôle étrange d'un Noriega au Panama. Et tant d'affaires qui

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ne seront jamais éclaircies à cause de la complicité directe de certains chefs d'Etat ou bien de polices secrètes ou parallèles.

C'est dire que la lutte contre le trafic de la drogue se révèle très difficile à cause de toutes sortes de complicités, aux plus hauts niveaux, c'est-à-dire chefs d'Etat, généraux (à Haïti), polices, banquiers, etc.

DRUGUE ET CONFLITS RÉGIONAUX

On ne peut passer sous silence les conflits régionaux qui tendent à se développer un peu partout et qui parfois sont financés, et même de plus en plus, par l'argent de la drogue.

La chute du mur de Berlin et des régimes répressifs d'Europe de l'Est et centrale nous a enfin permis de sortir de la guerre froide. Mais on s'aperçoit aujourd'hui que la guerre froide avait «ses bons côtés». Sans doute entretenait-elle de nombreux conflits à travers le monde. Et pour en citer quelques-uns, nous pouvons parler de l'Angola, du Mozambique, de l'Erythrée, du

Cambodge, de l'Afghanistan, du Nicaragua, etc.

Mais en même temps, la guerre froide permettait aussi de contrôler ces conflits, car les «deux grands» ne voulaient surtout pas être entraînés trop loin dans la guerre.

Par contre, aujourd'hui non seulement la plupart de ces conflits ne sont pas résolus, mais encore, comme les deux grands ne veulent plus les financer, ils sont de plus en plus financés par des trafiquants et la drogue sert souvent de «monnaie d'échange». Et d'autres conflits nés plus récemment, surtout dans la CEI mais aussi ailleurs, sont entretenus, ou, s'ils se prolongent, risquent d'être entretenus par l'argent de la drogue.

Il serait fastidieux de les énumérer tous, mais il est tout de même bon d'en citer quelques-uns: en premier lieu tous les conflits à l'intérieur de la CEI qui sont entretenus, au moins partiellement, par l'argent de la drogue; ensuite on peut citer la guerre en Birmanie (troupes gouvernementales aussi bien que guérillas), en Afghanistan, le Sentier Luminieux au Pérou, la répression à Haïti, etc.

DRUGUE POUR SURVIVRE

D'une manière générale, les cultures destinées à la drogue tendent à se développer au fur et à mesure que se développe la misère dans le monde, et justement dans les régions les plus marquées par la misère. Une des raisons principales est la baisse catastrophique du prix des produits d'exportation des pays du Tiers-Monde, comme par exemple la canne à sucre, le maïs, le café et le cacao. L'immédiat et incontournable besoin d'argent pour vivre fait que des populations entières abandonnent leurs cultures traditionnelles pour se tourner vers des cultures qui rapportent plus.

Prenons un exemple qui nous vient de Colombie. Il y a quelques années, Alfredo et Roberto n'étaient que d'obscurs planteurs de maïs. Depuis des décennies, ce département amazonien de San Martin est le grenier à maïs de Pérou tout entier. Aujourd'hui, le maïs de Roberto, attend dans l'entrepôt construit au bord du fleuve Huallaga des acheteurs qui ne viendront jamais.

En juin 1989, l'Etat garantissait aux pro-

ducteurs un prix-plancher de 250 intis par kilo de maïs, soit environ 0,12 \$US (1 \$US = 2.000 intis).

A la même époque, les narcotrafiquants colombiens, ou les petits intermédiaires du cru, offraient un million deux cent mille intis pour un kilo de pâte de coca (produit de base pour la fabrication de la cocaïne).

Roberto s'explique: «Tu sais, pour nous, la coca, la drogue, ce n'est pas une alternative réelle. Simplement un palliatif. Je suis né à Lima. C'est dur de s'en sortir en ville. Alors il y a dix ans, je suis venu ici pour m'établir comme agriculteur; je me suis marié. Je voulais vivre du maïs, mais cela ne marche plus. La coca, si».

Voilà une vingtaine d'années, le gouvernement péruvien choisit de développer l'Amazonie. Les bulldozers ouvrirent la route transversale et les gros camions Mack supplantèrent les balsas.

Pour pousser en avant le Far-East péruvien, l'État ne lésina ni sur les moyens ni sur les deniers, notamment en accordant des crédits du Banco Agrario (Banque pour l'Agriculture) en vue de favoriser la culture du maïs. Mais le grain jaune n'a pas résisté à la chute des cours et à la crise générale qui frappe le Pérou. Et aujourd'hui le Banco Agrario accorde des prêts d'un an, assortis d'intérêts s'élevant à 1.350%! Inflation oblige...

«Le maïs, c'est terminé, explique Roberto. Et les autres produits, comme le riz, ne rapportent guère plus. Si je sème des haricots, je peux espérer une récolte équivalant en ce moment à trente mille intis par hectare. Un voyage aller-retour en autobus jusqu'à Tarapoto, chef-lieu du département distant de 50 km, me coûtera environ vingt mille intis. La pâte de coca me permet de survivre et nous autres paysans sommes au bout le moins rentable de la chaîne».

En effet, Tarapoto, ville la plus importante d'une région recelant plus de quatre-vingt mille hectares de champs de coca, soit la moitié du total péruvien, vit de l'or vert.

La coca imprègne tellement la vie qu'on oublierait presque qu'elle devient une drogue. Roberto, lui, ne l'oublie pas. Il sait les ravages que fait la drogue dans les «barriadas» de Lima, les bidonvilles de la capitale. Il se tait durant de

longues minutes: «Que pouvons-nous faire? Nous n'avons qu'un seul choix: la coca ou la mort».

Il serait facile de penser que le Pérou constitue une exception à cause de ses difficultés particulières dues à sa lutte infernale contre la guérilla du Sentier Lumineux.

Il est vrai que cette lutte armée n'arrange rien, mais cela n'explique pas tout.

Le Brésil, pays le plus endetté du monde, est aussi l'un des pays où la culture des plantes base de la drogue se développe rapidement.

Mais il semble que ce soit l'ancienne URSS, c'est-à-dire les États de la CEI, qui inquiète le plus les experts de l'ONU en raison de la misère grandissante des populations et de l'état d'anarchie de l'administration qui ne permet pas un véritable contrôle de la situation; cela laisse

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pratiquement les mains libres à tous les mafiosi pour organiser le trafic de la drogue.

Aux environs de Tchernobyl s'épanouit le pavot à opium mutant, aux fleurs géantes, promettant des rendements extraordinaires. De Yalta à Alma-Ata, pavots et cannabis envahissent des centaines de milliers d'hectares, et les laboratoires synthétiques poussent comme des champignons.

La CEI est en train de devenir une nouvelle superpuissance qui va bouleverser l'ensemble du marché mondial de la drogue.

Elle est déjà aujourd'hui la première zone de production avec trois millions d'hectares de cannabis.

Autrement dit, aujourd'hui, là où la pauvreté et la misère s'installent, la menace de la drogue

s'amplifie, au point de déstabiliser des pays entiers.

DROGUE POUR REMBOURSER LA DETTE

Mais le poids de la dette extérieure met aujourd'hui un certain nombre de gouvernements de pays du Tiers-Monde face à un terrible dilemme. Ils sont écartelés, d'une part entre la misère de leur population qu'ils ne peuvent ignorer et les cris de révolte qu'ils ne peuvent qu'entendre et, d'autre part, les impitoyables exigences du FMI, des pays occidentaux et des banquiers qui ne veulent rien savoir et qui continuent à exiger le remboursement d'une dette extérieure qui a pourtant déjà été payée plusieurs fois par le jeu du paiement des intérêts. Ils sont d'autant plus ulcérés qu'ils savent bien que tout cela n'est que le résultat de la volonté des pays industrialisés de les maintenir dans un système de dépendance.

D'ailleurs, ces mêmes pays occidentaux se permettent à l'occasion d'effacer la dette de l'un ou de l'autre, mais «à la carte», en «récompense pour un service rendu». C'est ainsi que le Président Bush s'est permis d'effacer la dette de l'Égypte pour récompenser ce pays de sa participation à la guerre du Golfe aux côtés des «alliés». Quelle hypocrisie!... Et quel gâchis!...

Dans les années 80, plusieurs pays ont voulu se révolter et refuser de payer la dette. Ce fut le cas du Brésil et du Pérou en particulier. Mais cela leur a coûté cher, surtout au Pérou qui, pendant sept ans, n'a plus eu droit aux fonds du FMI. La misère du peuple s'en est trouvée accrue. Le manque de solidarité entre les pays du Tiers-Monde rend cette entreprise très risquée et plus personne aujourd'hui ne parle de la renouveler.

Alors, de plus en plus de gouvernements du Tiers-Monde, surtout en Amérique Latine, jouent un double jeu. Ils sont parfois contraints de combattre les narcotrafiquants quand ces derniers deviennent trop puissants et en viennent à menacer l'existence même de l'État, comme en Colombie, par exemple. Ce combat est d'ailleurs souvent exigé par les États-Unis. Mais en même temps, ils ferment les yeux sur toutes sortes de trafics, car l'argent de la drogue constitue parfois une véritable bouée de sauvetage pour des États surendettés qui ne peuvent rembourser la dette qu'avec le sang du

peuple. Les «perfusions» de la drogue permettent à l'État colombien de s'en tirer; mais c'est peut-être en Bolivie que l'argent de la drogue est le mieux intégré dans les circuits économiques.

On ne peut évidemment que déplorer cet état de faits, car la drogue est un terrible fléau pour l'humanité tout entière. Mais comment ne pas déplorer en même temps, et avec la même indignation, l'attitude des gouvernements occidentaux qui refusent la remise d'une dette qu'ils ont eux-mêmes tant contribué à créer!

EN CONCLUSION

C'est en pure perte que les pays industrialisés, les États-Unis en tête, pourront continuer à dépenser des millions de dollars pour détruire les champs de coca, de pavots ou de cannabis et lutter contre les trafiquants de drogue.

En effet, le combat de ces pays sera toujours un échec, tant qu'ils ne mettront pas en œuvre tous leurs moyens et toutes leurs ressources pour lutter contre le chômage et la misère grandissante, aussi bien dans les pays industrialisés que dans les pays du Tiers-Monde. Car c'est bien là que se trouve la racine du mal. La dette engendre la misère, qui à son tour engendre la drogue.

On voudrait nous faire croire qu'il s'agit d'une fatalité, alors que c'est la volonté politique qui manque. La concurrence effrénée que se livrent les entreprises et les pays engendre le chômage et la misère. La dette extérieure des pays du Tiers-Monde ne leur permet pas d'investir pour un développement équilibré de leurs pays.

Il est grand temps que tous les gouvernements du monde mettent en commun leurs ressources, leur énergie et leur intelligence pour réorganiser l'économie mondiale.

Des gouvernements seuls, aussi puissants soient-ils et avec la meilleure volonté du monde, n'y peuvent pas grand-chose. Il s'agit d'un combat à mener à l'échelle planétaire. Peut-on espérer que les égoïsmes nationaux vont enfin se taire?

Ref: *MISSIONS ÉTRANGÈRES de PARIS*
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CURRENT TRENDS IN THE CEBS IN LATIN AMERICA

(Twenty-two years ago Fr Jose Marins and his team, Sister Carolee Chanona and Theolide Trevisan, began to work with Basic Christian Communities in Latin America. They began to travel throughout Latin America encouraging the different communities and forming leaders. During the past three months these tireless missionaries have visited Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. The following interview published in Tierra Nueva (July 1993) was given in Rosario Argentina).

What can you tell us about your recent visit to the communities?

- T.: In Bolivia the CEBS are going through a variety of different experiences. However, one constant factor is that community members are living through the most difficult situation in the country. They are the truly poor: the miners, labourers, the unemployed. Our experience of this Church is that people are convinced that the proposal of the communities is a response that will bring the Church closer to people, that will motivate it to be more faithful to its current responsibility. Another important issue is that communities are articulate and, moreover, in several dioceses they have leadership teams, which are also articulate.

- C.: We were at a CEBS meeting in Santiago, Chile. For us, what stood out was the missionary strength. It was interesting to listen to a woman tell a group that she has had to move to four different cities and in each city she has promoted the work of communities. Another important thing was that there were five priests at the meeting who had discovered their vocation within the communities.

Therefore, it is possible to say that they were born from within the communities...

- C.: Yes... one of them shared the fact that he was committed to his work and the idea of a vocation had not occurred to him. It was the community that suggested to him "We feel that you have a vocation. Have you thought about it?" Another characteristic of the Church in Santiago is that it has a particular structure

aimed at fulfilling its role as a grassroots Church. They speak of Base Christian Communities as the smaller group, such groups have greater frequency in terms of sharing, reflecting and commitment. They also speak of Base Ecclesial Communities that are composed of several Christian communities, and additional people who do not participate in a community but perform different services. It is important to

Currently there is no antagonism within the Church toward communities. However there is a certain level of indifference toward CEBS. This is a propitious moment to evaluate the profound motives of those of us who continue to believe in the process.

note that this experience has not been copied from other "models" but rather seeks to respond to their particular reality.

What are the current challenges facing Chilean communities?

- C.: One important challenge being faced by the communities is the need to care for the personal aspect of community members. Because in this task, in this urgent task, there has been a great deal of wear and tear. The personal dimension has been overlooked. For example, how do you form a pastoral agent who is married with children, as a person, and

not just as an agent that does things for the Church.

- T.: In this sense, they have discovered that a work rhythm is being imposed in the Church, the working rhythm of priests and religious who do not have family responsibilities.

- M.: We also visited north-eastern Brazil, an extremely poor area where the drought marks the difference between life and death. It is impossible to harvest, and the people are hungry. Here the priority of the communities is to serve the people, to organise ways to help them move beyond this difficult reality. Another issue was "how the community is a reference point for all baptised in the area", and not reduced to a group of seven or eight families. Rather these families become the heart that convokes or takes on the responsibilities of

Another factor that helps is the living testimony of communities, martyrs and saints. Throughout present day Latin American there is a vast number of martyrs. People who were martyred for their commitment to the faith have encouraged the rest to assume a commitment.

the Church. The other concern was the articulation of the CEBs. The aim is that they are not isolated. In order to avoid isolation, coordinators meet at least once a month. For some, this involves three to four-hour journeys in order to form a network.

- T.: One of the most important concerns of the CEBs at a Latin American level is how to make the community "attractive" for the rest of the people, how to integrate neighbours, in order that they feel a part of the process. Sometimes, in neighbourhoods the people who do not participate in the communities have a mistaken image about Base Ecclesial Communities. They believe that their only role is to carry out a service for the neighbourhood, or to struggle for some local need. However, communities pray and all dimensions are lived out. Therefore, it becomes a challenge to find ways so that neighbourhood people understand the integral role, and, at the same time, feel called to form part of the community.

Challenges and Perspectives

What are the factors that have favoured the CEBs process and what factors have limited it?

- C.: I believe, due to the model of Church that we have lived with, hierarchical and priest-centred, that when this adopts an attitude of accompanying, stimulating, formulating, the community moves ahead. Because even in places where the bishops are in agreement, or at least not opposed, groups have a difficult time feeling identified with the Church if priests are opposed. People feel excluded. Priests have a place in communities. What is sometimes questioned is their way of being present and the way in which they behave. Another obstacle is the dependence of lay workers on leaders. In some cases, if they do not have the approval of the religious or pastoral agent they become stuck.

- T.: An important factor in community growth is a more permanent and global use of the Word of God. This has helped communities to have security in terms of criteria and deepening their faith. We heard of one community where no-one knows how to read. Francisco, one of the members, makes a two or three-hour journey every Sunday to memorize the Gospel in order to return and to announce it to his community. We also know some areas where the Word not only serves to help people understand God's project but rather teaches them to read with the Word of God. Moreover, it plays a role in community maturity. For people, the Bible does not just provide criteria, people pray the word, they turn it into prayer. The danger is that sometimes when people discover the importance of the word, they can limit the life of the community to a biblical circle. Those accompanying the community should help to place the word within the context of daily life within the community as a whole.

- M.: An important factor is articulation. Communities tend to organise themselves. The danger is that they could choose the same route as movements that are coordinated at a national level and have a national secretariat. However the good side is that communities visit each other, have a minimal level of organisation and send representatives and accompany them, especially in those dioceses where priests and bishops do not accompany them. This type of articulation helps to maintain and develop communities.

Another factor that helps is the living testimony of communities, martyrs and saints. Throughout present day Latin America there is a vast number of martyrs. People who were martyred for their commitment to the faith have encouraged the rest to assume a commitment. It is enough to name Archbishop Romero and even the member of a community who was martyred as a reason for belonging to a community.

The testimony of those who are still alive is also present, these community saints who give themselves to the rest, who help people to move ahead.

- T.: I believe that ecumenism also strengthened communities. To be able to share with other traditions did not lead to a loss of identity but rather enriched it.

In the face of this "reality of death" that the Santo Domingo document refers to, what current challenges do communities face?

- C.: I will refer to the example of Chile. However, the "reality of death" does not really apply now as Chile has managed to "move beyond" the status of being a developing nation. There is a general sense in Chile that things are going well, that they have achieved the famous "miracle". Many more people have food, there is not so great a need for soup kitchens, many more people have work. However, this is an illusion because underneath, subtly, other things are taking place. There are people who are a great deal poorer, and excluded from national life. Due to the neo-liberal model that is being imposed they will never have access to basic services. Moreover, the solidarity that used to exist when more people were in need has broken down. The challenge will be how to help, how to keep the "rewards" that we are receiving from numbing our consciousness. It is very subtle, it enters and suddenly one has taken on false values. One becomes more egoistic, more individualistic.

- T.: Another of the challenges that we have noted in Bolivia is cultural pluralism. Last year, with the issue of the 500 years, consciousness increased among marginalised groups. The challenge of the CEBs will be to integrate these realities, without turning the community into an agency that responds to immediate needs. How do they maintain the horizon, but at the same time remain open to the challenges presented by

poverty and survival? In particular, how do they help people who only have time to find enough to eat feel the importance of grassroots organisations? Organisations that give people the opportunity to be agents, not just in the Church, but also in society. Many organisations are in a downswing.

Why are they in a downswing?

- T.: I think the social project was clearer before. It was clearer where to place energy, where to commit ourselves. In this transition process toward democracy, with everything that is happening in the East, Latin America is being evaluated. All of this has deflated the dream of a society marked by greater participation and justice. Previously, organisations shared this project. Now, however, it is no longer very clear. Currently agreements are being made between extremely different positions, because

The final message will be that communities recall that the fertile land is the people themselves, with all their characteristics of popular expression. Therefore, they should not fall into the temptation of believing themselves to be elite, they should identify with the people of God.

there are urgent needs that can only be resolved through such agreements. I believe that another cause lies in people's weariness in terms of the struggle. Sometimes the wear and tear exacts a higher price than what is in fact gained.

- M.: Within the Church the challenge is if the CEBs become an "Interesting" option for those who wish to participate, or if they are going to become the fundamental cell of the Church. Not a cell within the old model of the parish, not a mini-parish.

- T.: Currently there is no antagonism within the Church toward communities. However there is a certain level of indifference toward CEBs. This is a propitious moment to evaluate the profound motives of those of us who continue to believe in the process. Of course we are convinced of the value of the

proposal, that still seems to respond to the needs and reality of Latin America.

Previously we were challenged by opposition to CEBs and now by indifference?

- T.: When someone shares your struggle for authenticity and establishment, indifference has a greater destructive power than hostility. This is one of the reasons. There are many others.

What message will you leave the communities for the Third National Meeting?

- M.: I want them to remember that the CEBs do not appear in parachutes, it is not that the Holy Spirit sends ready made communities. Rather the land must be tilled, planted, cared for, defended and accompanied in its development. Its development is slow, like life. Life does not appear like a bottle of coca cola. Life has a process, ups and downs. It must be accepted that a process is at stake, and it must be taken on. Another important perspective is that the communities grow in terms of their missionary role. The risk is that they turn in on themselves and never finish growing. They must be willing to be open with one another, to facilitate the creation of other communities, to open dialogue with people who are working with the people and who perhaps have very important experiences that we should know about and participate in. Therefore, it is important to have an open and missionary attitude toward reality, toward others in the Church who are working. Finally, they must continue to develop what is present in all expressions of the Church, their charism, the fundamental value that we love each other, the value that moves everything, the conviction, the faith that comes from being communities of Jesus, a special community, unique because it is created with Jesus, the Holy Spirit and others. They have their own fruitfulness that cannot be measured by computers or mathematical calculators.

Communities are a path of hope for those who are working in this area, those who plant without seeing results, but have confidence that the seed is fertile and the earth well prepared.

- T.: The most important issue is that we continue to believe that the CEBs are a sign of the Church's preferential love for ordinary people. In terms of the future of the new

evangelisation, the community is the place where lay people can take on a protagonist role, participate in the life and responsibility of the Church. It is also the place where we can mutually help each other move toward greater responsibility and faithfulness.

- C.: I hope that they are able to enjoy a wonderful moment of finding themselves with other Christian brothers and sisters, that they feel strengthened if they arrive tired, after trying a great deal and achieving little, that during the meeting they have a taste of the fruit they would like to enjoy every day. In this sense they can celebrate and share life and not so much spiritual ideas. May participants discover, that their awareness is raised, that they come in representation of other communities. Therefore, they are ambassadors, sent to share what they have lived through.

The final message will be that communities recall that the fertile land is the people themselves, with all their characteristics of popular expression. Therefore, they should not fall into the temptation of believing themselves to be elite, they should identify with the people of God. The communities, perhaps due to grace or generosity, live more intensely. The proposal is that all people be accepted.

- T.: What would be wonderful would be if, during the meeting, people did not just propose what is lacking, but rejoiced in what has been achieved. As Gustavo Gutierrez said, to "drink from their own well". May they also be fed from the memory of the steps they were capable of taking.



TIBET: CHILDREN OF DESPAIR

Paul Ingram

'Children of despair' is the most comprehensive report on coercive birth control policies in Chinese occupied Tibet, a country described by *New Internationalist*, (March 1992), as one of the last outposts of colonialism. Few people or organisations seem willing to admit that the Chinese force Tibetan women to be sterilised or to have abortions or will entertain the perspective that their policy is one of planned cultural genocide against the Tibetan people, supplemented by an enormous influx of Chinese settlers. The following is a shortened version.

Yet there is a great deal of evidence and detailed testimony, which indicates that this has been Chinese policy in Tibet for many years and, without wishing to make detailed political analogies, would there have been such reticence on the part of so many people if Whites had been sterilising and aborting Black babies in South Africa for the last 25 years so that they could perpetuate a racist State?

One somehow doubts it. Amanda Southern, director of "Optimus Women's Sections", recently asked what such people would have said if the USA had invaded and occupied Mexico in 1950 under the Monroe Doctrine and had then proceeded to flood the country with American colonists, while sterilising Mexican women of child-bearing age.

Furthermore, Tibet is a country the size of western Europe, with a population of about 5-6 million. What possible point can there be in inflicting such policies upon the hapless Tibetan people who are so small in number and whose country is so vast? The Mayor of Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, Mr Lhoga, publicly criticised the Chinese in March 1989, saying that such policies were unnecessary and misconceived. Those who deny the brutality and the violence to be found in China's birth control programme, both in Tibet and in mainland

China, might care to reflect upon the words of Deng-Xiaoping, the 'Butcher of Beijing' on the subject of birth control: "Use whatever means you can, but do it". Tibetans have felt the full impact of those words.

Various accounts speak of Chinese sterilisation gangs, paid according to a bonus system, roaming the country and indiscriminately sterilising Tibetan women and aborting their babies irrespective of whether or not they have had children. There are many harrowing accounts of the panic throughout villages when the sterilisation vans arrive and of pregnant women trying to hide in their homes or in the fields. Often they are found but if they manage to escape from the village or evade the Chinese, their houses are pulled down and their names taken.

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A recent film in the US on TV Channel 5 featured the testimony of a Tibetan lady doctor who was forced to carry out the sterilisation of her compatriots. She had to watch 50-60 forced sterilisations of Tibetan women every week before escaping to India. This film was shown to Mr Cheng Huai, Councillor at the Chinese embassy in Washington, who dumbfounded by material of this nature, broke off the interview and stated: "It's no good. I really don't know. I have to look into this". Perhaps Mr Cheng Huai should read October 1990 edition of the *Tibetan*

Review which would certainly assist his research.

"We Have No Rights, Not Even Over Our Bodies".

The words of a Tibetan woman are readily understandable. Such is the volume of testimony from so many sources, that even the most sceptical should surely entertain the possibility that something appalling is happening in Tibet which should be investigated.

Any reader, particularly if she/he is a human rights activist, is entitled to ask why it is that such widespread human rights abuses are occurring in Tibet.

What is the context within which they are taking place? Why are they still so little known, given the enormity of the crimes and the length of time (about 25 years) in which they have been perpetrated? Why is it that protest groups,

Many people are puzzled by the Chinese insistence that Tibet has been part of China since at least the 13th century when it is perfectly obvious that for most of this period Tibet was independent. Why is it that the Chinese cannot ever admit this fact?

various human rights activists and more particularly, women's organisations and networks, have generally remained silent despite having had material forwarded to them over a considerable period of time?

The Chinese Occupation of Tibet

The context within which these crimes are taking place is the Chinese occupations in recorded history. Well over one million Tibetans have perished *including nearly 100,000 Tibetans tortured to death* and massacres occurred in the late 1950's, long before the 'Cultural Revolution', comparable in scale to some of those perpetrated by the Turks in Armenia in 1915. About one in five Tibetans has perished under Chinese rule, a similar percentage to the wartime Polish dead.

Furthermore, Tibet was annexed at a time when many peoples and countries were gaining their independence. The Chinese occupation violates the terms of the UN Charter, which recognises the right of peoples to determine their own destinies.

'All available evidence suggests overwhelmingly that the Chinese are following a centrally planned policy of cultural, genocide in Tibet aimed at drastically reducing the number of Tibetans in their own country to such an extent that they cease to exist as a people'.

Many people are puzzled by the Chinese insistence that Tibet has been part of China since at least the 13th century when it is perfectly obvious that for most of this period Tibet was independent. Why is it that the Chinese cannot ever admit this fact? The answer is, if they acknowledged this to be the case, they would expose themselves to the contention that if Tibet has been independent in earlier or present times, it surely has the right to be independent once again. That is why the Chinese cannot admit that Tibet was EVER independent.

Given this fact, the Chinese have to insist that Tibet has always been part of China, because if they ever admit the contrary, they know only too well that they can be accused of imperialism in the occupation and subjugation of Tibet. They can only deflect such criticism by insisting that Tibet has always been part of China. If they admit that there have been periods of history when their control was minimal or almost non-existent, they can only rectify this position by insisting that links between Tibet and the 'motherland' were weakened by the intrigues of foreign imperialists.

All in all, this is an extremely unstable position and the Chinese know it. Unfortunately, the world of politics is replete with such dubious interpretations of history and unconvincing sleights of hand and it is not surprising that those who embrace them often display extreme irritability if their position is ever challenged since they know that it is ultimately untenable. This is certainly the case with the Chinese Government.

Over the years reports from Tibet have indicated the existence of concentration camps. In a slave labour complex in Xining (formerly the

