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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	124
DETTE - MISÈRE - DROGUE M. Roncin	125
CURRENT TRENDS IN THE CEBs IN LATIN AMERICA	129
TIBET: CHILDREN OF DESPAIR Paul Ingram	133
CONDUITS PAR L'ESPRIT A L'INTÉRIEUR DU MYSTÈRE PASCAL James H. Kroeger, MM	139
THE "UNPOSSESSABLE" GOOD NEWS Felix A. Machado	143
CHALLENGES TO OUR MISSION IN THE FIRST WORLD Timothy Radcliffe, OP	148
MISSION MOMENTS An Unexpected Apostolate - South Africa • Campaign Fights Hunger - São Paulo My "Second Novitiate" With Maya Q'Eqchi Indians - Coban	151
COMING EVENTS	154

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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.

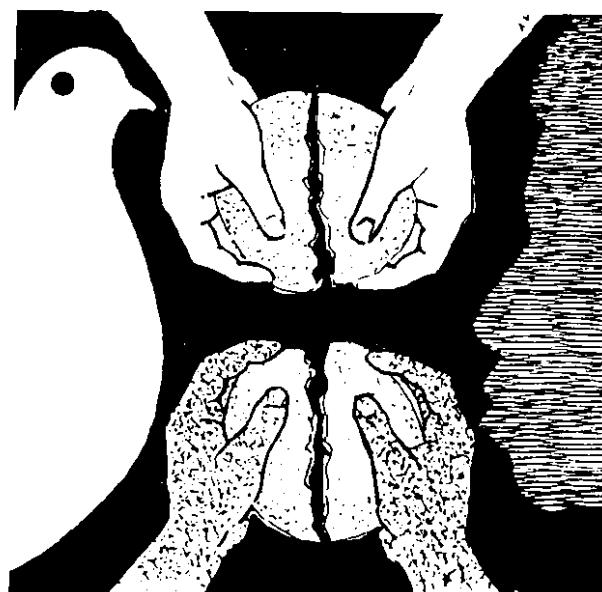
Father JOSÉ MARINS, and his team are serving already many years in the promotion of the CEBs in Latin America. In this article the team gives a revealing report on the present situation and the trends in Latin America.

The enormous suffering of the population of Tibet under the Chines 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

DROGUE POUR SURVIE

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 sera souvent dé «monnaie d’échange». Et d’autres conflits nes aussi bien entretenus, ou, si l’ils se prolongent, plus récemment, surtout dans la Cei mais aussi dans d’autres conflits nes qui ont dû être entretenus, ou, si l’ils se prolongent, plus récemment, surtout dans la Cei qui sont entretenus, au moins partiellement, par l’argent de la drogue; ensuite on peut citer la guerre en Birmanie (trois fois gouvernementales aussi bien que qu’elles), en Afghanistan, le Sénat Lumineux au Pérou, la guerre entre le Sénat Lumineux et le Sénat de l’Afghanistan, 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.

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 révoltes répressives d'Europe de l'Est et centrale nous a enfin permis de sortir de la guerre froide. Mais on s'apergoit aujourd'hui que la guerre froide avait «ses bons côtés». Sans doute entretient-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

DROGUE ET CONFLITS REGIONAUX

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

Car il ne faut pas s'y tromper : l'utilisation de la drogue n'est pas avantage tout un délit, mais un signe de souffrance et de désespoir, une tendance, certes maladive, de réponde à un drame humain.

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

Triangle d'or, à la tête d'une arme 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.

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'Egypte 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 oeuvre 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?

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

Amdo Province of E. Tibet) which is the most densely populated gulag in the world and may have over 10 million inmates, major human rights abuses including systematic use of torture, racial discrimination against Tibetans bordering on apartheid, the gunning down of independence demonstrators in Lhasa and the extraction of blood from Tibetan prisoners many of whom are women weakened by hunger, cold, torture and long beatings. Some have reportedly died as a result of forced blood extractions and a considerable amount of material about these abuses has been sent by *Optimus* to *Amnesty International* for several years.

For about the last 25 years many thousands of reports have reached India and the West concerning the forced sterilisation of Tibetan men and women and abortions carried out by the Chinese upon Tibetan women. Many of these reports are detailed giving times, dates, names of hospitals and even the names of doctors and medical personnel.

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. This policy is being assisted by the transfer of at least six million Chinese settlers to Tibet (Tibetans call them colonists) with catastrophic ecological consequences. The Chinese leadership has spoken of moving some 200 million of its people into 'western frontier regions'. This bodes ill for the Tibetan people, presaging their effective annihilation.

The Racist Connection

Why is it that large numbers of Tibetan women are undergoing forced sterilisation and abortion when the Tibetan population is so small constituting less than one percent of the population of mainland China and when Tibet is so vast in size? If the programme is voluntary, as the Chinese say it is, why do they not give Tibetan women the option of limiting their families simply by extending to them a *humane programme of contraception* which is cheap and effective? Such contraceptives as are available in Tibet seem to be dangerous and inefficient. It might perhaps be that considerable numbers of Tibetan women would participate in such a programme but instead they are subjected to insidious butchery and pain.

Nobody can dispute the fact that the mainland China Government has a critical population problem. It has a population of over one billion people and a new baby is born approximately every second. Clearly, drastic population control is required though few would condone the brutality with which it is enforced.

The Indian population control programme with all its undoubted defects at least allows some media scrutiny. It is more human and does not possess the racist element so typical of the Chinese.

The issue of Tibetan independence underpins coercive birth control measures in Tibet and as Martin Moss points out, "they are the coercive policies by a colonial power upon the subject people of a nation under military occupation".

However, no understanding of exactly why the Chinese are following these policies will be gained unless some effort is made to understand the nature of Chinese racism and how deeply it is embedded in the Chinese consciousness. It is only racism which helps to explain the manic element to Chinese rule in Tibet.

Chinese civilisation is thousands of years old, and as it evolved, the Chinese were aware of no cultural rivals and came to look upon themselves as the centre of world civilisation

The Indian population control programme with all its undoubted defects at least allows some media scrutiny. It is more human and does not possess the racist element so typical of the Chinese.

with the mandate of Heaven! Non-Chinese peoples were regarded with utter contempt and it would not be overstating the case to say that in a very real sense, a certain kind of cultural imperialism became inseparable from the Chinese national character.

Century after century, stealthily, implacably, often warily, the Chinese advance to the north and to west in what an African delegate at the UN Human Rights Commission referred to as a 'new *Lebensraum*'. Allied to this is the fixed conviction that ALL people should adopt Chinese style civilisation together with the

Why is this? The point has to be made that women in mainland China are suffering as a

Free Tibet", but nothing substantive has emerged. Free Optimus and Jeffrey Bone of "Campaigns Network and Change have been sent material received. More recently the National Women's received. Tibetan groups have been sent information about Tibetan women's organisations including

sisters in Tibet. Various Tibetan women's organisations have sought to publicise the plight of their Tibet. Various Tibetan women's organisations have displayed a capacity for analysis, organisation was virtually impossible. Time and again creation of an atmosphere where silence and collaboration and mainland China would have swiftly networks against coercive population measures in Tibet and mainland China have been admitted that a forthright and vigorous campaign by women's organisations and admitted anti-racist movements, it has to be where, shortcomings of sections of the Anti-human rights activists both in Britain and elsewhere, shorthandedly passivity of some with China, the relative passivity of some non-Chinese population experts who cooperate whatever the failures and the culpabilities of

The Silence of Women Activists

50 % in one generation. Tibetan population could be reduced by 20- Region of Tibet, and it seems likely that the for sterilisation in the truncated, Autonomous Region of Tibet, and it seems likely that in the new province of Gansu which contains former Tibetan territory, 63,000 men and women had been sterilised in a two month campaign. The Chinese also announced (29.5.90) that 18,000 women had "voluntarily admitted anti-racist movements, it has to be where, shorthandedly passivity of some with China, the relative passivity of some non-Chinese population experts who cooperate whatever the failures and the culpabilities of

Tibetan people, an objective assisted by an enormous influx of Chinese settlers. The main policies in Tibet spell cultural genocide for the Tibetan, which violates the terms of the UN Charter, The Chinese coercive birth control own country as a result of the military occupied

The Tibetan people are prisoners in their most Tibetans to receive proper education. Chinese policies make it almost impossible for university education, but neglected to add that intelligent since fewer of them receive a also claimed that "minority peoples" are less regulated Tibetan agriculture. Deng Bihai has wrecked the delicate ecological balance which death because the Chinese stole their food and 60's in which over 300,000 Tibetans starved to effects of the great famines of the 1950's and

Deng Bihai has also claimed that "minority peoples" are less intelligent since fewer of them receive a university education, but neglected to add that Chinese policies make it almost impossible for most Tibetans to receive proper education.

Any deficiencies found in the Tibetan people are likely to be principally attributable to the

ing "angels" of the medical apartheid. at the forthcoming onslaught of the "extremist births"? No wonder that Tibetans are trembling be improved "with fewer but higher quality births" that the quality of the nation should to make of a Chinese Government statement to this sounds ominously familiar and what is one article in the Chinese press claimed that three insane" or in some way handicapped are 100,000 handicapped people in Tibet. All mentally retarded, short of stature, dwarfs or "mentally retarded, short of stature, dwarfs or for people of minority populations, to be Deng Bihai claims that it is far more common the racist nature of their policies. For example, unconvincing rationalisations, which confirm and they attempt to counter such criticism with increasing racism that this policy in Tibet is provoking increasing criticism that this policy in Tibet is aware of the adverse publicity and

believe that if Chinese forces have ever occupied a particular area or country or even sent forces into it for a brief period of time, then it auto-

result of the policies of the Chinese Government and they surely deserve the compassion and support of concerned activists everywhere. But this introduction is principally concerned with the plight of Tibetan women.

Their silence exposes them to the charges of indifference to the terrible suffering inflicted upon women in Tibet. However, unlike some population 'experts' these women's organisations are not actively colluding with the Chinese Government. Why then have they so far remained generally silent in the face of such atrocities?

The answer would seem to be that the issue of *abortion* is an extraordinarily fraught one. Until recent times the horror of 'back-street abortions' prevailed in many countries and still does in various parts of the world. The struggle for legalised abortion was a long and protracted process and there are many indications that such legislation may be revoked in the USA or elsewhere, partly as a result of pressure from Christian Fundamentalist organisations.

Many women's liberation activists seem to fear that to ever be seen to condemn abortion would expose them to the concentrated fire of the anti-abortion lobby, and weaken their position at a time when abolitionists are clearly gaining strength.

However there is an inner rift in the constitution of their logic and their refusal to condemn forced abortion further widens the gap. Central to their argument is an insistence that women have rights over their own bodies, and the right to have an abortion is an important expression of it. A denial of this right constitutes a grave injustice and is a violation of the above tenet. So far so good.

However, if women are entitled to have control over their own bodies and this includes and implies the right to have an abortion, any woman who insists on such control *also has the right to refuse to have an abortion*, particularly when this is forced upon her by the agents of an occupying power in a planned policy of cultural genocide. If such an abortion proceeds against the wishes of the woman in question, then her right to exercise control over her own body has been violated.

There is no exit from this impasse for women's liberation theoreticians and activists since this is the other side of the coin, the right to have or not to have an abortion. By their

silence they are violating the canons of their own logic and such reticence on their part exposes them to withering fire from the anti-abortionist lobby.

This is because those who reject the eminently reasonable argument that women should have control over their own bodies and believe that society should annex to itself this right, can ask women's organisations all over the world why it is that they have not protested against forced abortion and sterilisation in Tibet. After all such abhorrent practices are clearly a violation of their apparent belief that women must have the ultimate right over their own bodies.

Time of Action

'Children of Despair' leaves no room for doubt that the Chinese Government is implementing a planned policy of cultural genocide in Tibet despite official Chinese Government utterances to the contrary. Those

Tibetans have, on many occasions in the past, attempted to bring to the notice of a wide international public truth about what the Chinese are doing in Tibet. H.H. the Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Prize for Peace, has frequently denounced coercive Chinese birth control in formerly Buddhist Tibet.

who have had the misfortune to deal with the Chinese Government in almost any capacity whatever, will know that most of its members are little more than professional liars and this is particularly the case with those in charge of coercive birth control policies in Tibet.

The Chinese Government has almost no hesitation in violating with impunity and total lack of conscience almost any treaty signed and the airwaves positively vibrate with glib and flippant deceptions designed to conceal its genocidal policies in Tibet. The "New China News Agency" (Xinhua) ably disseminates such systematic disinformation throughout the world, and the Tibetans with their meagre resources find it difficult to combat this immensely powerful and worldwide propaganda machine.

It is to be hoped that non-Chinese birth control 'experts' may be asked to explain their support for the Chinese racism and a series of carefully planned and escalated campaigns are necessary on the part of Tibetans and their supporters. It is to be hoped that those who oppose Apartheid and racism in whatever form, will assist with this process. However, it does seem reasonable to expect and to believe that women's liberation organisations throughout the world will take the lead.

Their silence has been a political act with devastating consequences for women in Tibet. It seems that very recently some of them have entered into a dialogue with *Amnesty International* in the hope that this organisation will investigate such abuses. However, it is not clear whether activity in this particular area lies fully within *Amnesty International*'s mandate, at least at the present time as it is principally concerned with the investigation of human rights abuses in prisons or in detention of various forms. There

is some evidence, however, that a number of Tibetan women may have been sterilised in a prison hospital, but this report has not yet been confirmed.

Hopefully this introduction has acquainted the readers with perspectives about Tibet which will enhance their understanding of 'Children of Despair'. Given the nature of Chinese rule over subject people and the artful way in which they seek to deceive international opinion, one can be certain that forced abortion and sterilisation will only stop *when the Chinese get out of Tibet*. But media and publicity campaigns may cause them to begin rethinking such policies, or at least slow them down. The appearance of 'Children of Despair' is both apt and timely, and it is above all a call to ACTION on behalf of a people in whose land laughter has died.

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CONDUITS PAR L'ESPRIT A L'INTÉRIEUR DU MYSTÈRE PASCAL

James H. Kroeger, MM

(Dans cette présentation fort suggestive, faite lors d'un forum au VIIIème Congrès de l'IAMS (cf. Panorama Inter Eglises 1992-1993), James H. Kroeger invite tous les missionnaires et personnes de dialogue à reconfigurer leur vie sur le mystère pascal - paradigme universel avant d'être reconnu comme décisivement chrétien.

Mission et Dialogue ont occupé une place centrale dans les cercles catholiques, ces dernières années: il y a un renouveau de la conscience évangélique dans l'Eglise. La Mission, qui a été pendant des décennies une parente pauvre, est de nouveau reconnue comme centrale dans la communauté des disciples de Jésus.

Deux sources missionnaires ont aidé à retrouver un nouvel intérêt pour l'évangélisation. Ce sont l'encyclique missionnaire *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) et le document *Dialogue et Annonce* (DA). Les deux ont été publiés au début de 1991. L'encyclique présente un exposé global de la pensée et de la pratique missionnaires catholiques. Le second document traite spécialement du rôle du dialogue inter-religieux dans la mission d'évangélisation de l'Eglise.

Ce bref exposé cherche à éclairer un thème particulier de ces documents: en fait, il se focalise sur une citation unique. On y lit que, comme croyants chrétiens: *nous devons tenir que le Saint Esprit offre à tous, d'une façon que Dieu connaît, la possibilité d'être associé au Mystère pascal.*

Ceci est l'unique citation qui revient plus d'une fois dans l'encyclique missionnaire (RM 6, 10, 28). Son origine est le document de Vatican II sur *L'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps* (GS 22). Le pape Jean Paul II s'y est référé à plusieurs reprises (RH 8, 13, 18; DV 53; Assise 4; CA 47). Deux documents clés du "Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue inter-religieux" le citent avec insistance (DM 24, 37;

DA 15, 28, 68). Les conférences épiscopales asiatiques aussi bien que latinoaméricaines l'utilisent dans leurs documents (FABC I: 28; FABC V: 1.4, 6.4; FABC-CE: 49; CELAM: Puebla 1117).

Etant donné le panorama et la fréquence avec lesquels ce passage de Vatican II est couramment employé, on peut valablement soutenir qu'il exprime une importante intuition

Les missionnaires ne cessent de reconnaître dans les peuples, les cultures et les traditions religieuses, de nombreux effets bénéfiques, dus à la grâce et à l'amour du Saint Esprit (RM 28-29).

missiologique. C'est probablement l'un des principes théologiques directeurs de la pensée des adeptes de fois vivantes dans le monde. Il demande une exégèse attentive pour être utile à la théorie (orthodoxie) et à la pratique (orthopraxie) de la mission contemporaine.

A. ROLE DU SAINT ESPRIT

Aucune théologie missionnaire aujourd'hui n'est complète sans une compréhension adéquate de la Pneumatologie (Théologie du Saint Esprit). L'Esprit est présent et actif, à la fois dans et hors des Eglises (RH 6).

Les missionnaires ne cessent de reconnaître dans les peuples, les cultures et les traditions religieuses, de nombreux effets bénéfiques, dus à la grâce et à l'amour du Saint Esprit (RM 28-29). Le dessein de salut du Dieu d'amour inclut certainement ces manifestations positives des dons de l'Esprit.

On doit aussi noter que le Saint Esprit n'est pas une force impersonnelle inconnue. L'Esprit de Dieu est aussi l'Esprit de Jésus-Christ crucifié et ressuscité - réalité qui ne doit pas être négligée lorsque l'on examine la façon particulière dont l'Esprit est actif au sein du monde, dans la vie des personnes.

Dans le mystère chrétien, les deux perspectives (christologique et pneumatologique) sont présentes conjointement; il serait erroné de les opposer. Quand le chrétien accompagne les croyants d'autres traditions religieuses dans un

Ou encore, la vie a une dynamique interne réglée sur le mouvement de la mort à la vie, dans toutes ses dimensions: du mensonge à la vérité, de l'apathie à la responsabilité, de la marginalisation à la participation, de la solitude et de l'isolement à la communion universelle, du péché à la grâce.

dialogue de vie, il discerne la présence active et l'influence vivifiante du Saint Esprit de Jésus. En termes techniques de missiologie, les chrétiens agissent toujours à partir de la perspective d'une "christologie de l'Esprit", d'un "christocentrisme pneumatologique".

B. L'ACTION UNIVERSELLE DE L'ESPRIT

Le bref texte en considération note que *le Saint Esprit offre à tous ses dons remplis de grâce*. Ceux-ci touchent toutes les personnes, tous les peuples, toutes les situations socio-culturelles et chaque aspect de la vie humaine (RM 10). La mission ne doit jamais confiner sa quête du souffle de l'Esprit de Jésus à des réalités d'Eglise au sens étroit du terme, quelles qu'elles soient. La Mission est universelle ou n'est pas (He 2,9).

A la base de l'action universelle de l'Esprit, se trouve une profonde vérité anthropologique: l'unité fondamentale de toute l'humanité. La famille humaine tout entière et chacun de ses membres ont la même origine divine, reflétée dans l'image divine dont tous sont porteurs. Le dessein de salut du Dieu d'amour est un et universel; il comprend tout être humain qui vient en ce monde (I Tim 2,4). Le Saint Esprit, *qui est mystérieusement présent dans le cœur de tout être humain* (Assise 11), n'opère pas chictement, d'une manière sélective; l'Esprit offre à tous ses dons gratuits (RM 29).

C'est dans ce cadre général de notre unité humaine radicale, aussi bien que de l'universalité du dessein de Dieu, que les chrétiens doivent apprécier d'autres religions et les valeurs authentiques qu'elles contiennent. L'ultime vocation de toute l'humanité est en fait une et divine; l'évangélisation intégrale ne perd jamais de vue le plan universel de Dieu, comme la présence et l'action universelle de l'Esprit.

C. PARTICIPATION AU MYSTÈRE PASCAL

Au cours de l'action rédemptrice du Christ, dans le dessein d'amour du Père, se dresse l'Événement pascal. Les documents de l'Eglise autant que les théologiens contemporains, emploient le terme *Mystère pascal* pour condenser le mystère total de la Pâque de Jésus: sa passion, sa résurrection, son ascension et l'envoi de son Esprit à la Pentecôte. Tout dans la vie chrétienne est estimé d'ordre pascal; les chrétiens continuellement participent à la mort et à la résurrection du Christ dans leurs vies quotidiennes; l'Eucharistie est leur repas pascal.

Dans ce contexte, le mot "mystère" doit être pris dans son sens technique théologique et biblique: le "*mysterion*" se focalise sur le plan de salut de Dieu d'amour pour tous les peuples; il est centré dans le Christ et reflète la sagesse de Dieu. A travers lui, le sens de toute l'histoire du monde est manifesté; son modèle est toujours "pascal", allant par la mort à la vie renouvelée.

La vie elle-même a une configuration pasciale: tous les peuples luttent pour aller des ténèbres à la lumière, de la captivité à la liberté, de la stérilité à la fertilité, de la séparation à l'union. Ou encore, la vie a une dynamique interne réglée sur le mouvement de la mort à la vie, dans toutes ses dimensions: du mensonge à

la vérité, de l'apathie à la responsabilité, de la marginalisation à la participation, de la solitude et de l'isolement à la communion universelle, du péché à la grâce.

Le paradigme pascal de la vie (universellement partagé par tous les peuples, quelle que puisse être la terminologie employée) offre aux adeptes de toutes les traditions religieuses une occasion très fructueuse d'entrer en dialogue. Il fait fond sur notre humanité et notre expérience communes. Ce paradigme est gros de possibilités pour répondre aux besoins humains les plus profonds et forger des liens authentiques de solidarité, de respect et de sympathie mutuelle.

Le caractère pascal de toute vie et de toute expérience humaines offre continuellement des ouvertures à une profonde rencontre humano-divine. Il permet à l'expérience humano-divine d'une personne (chrétien, bouddhiste ?), de rejoindre l'expérience humano-divine d'une autre individualité (musulman, hindou ?). Il y a là tout un potentiel pour sonder les profondeurs d'un authentique dialogue interpersonnel et interreligieux.

Cette rencontre cœur-à-coeur est un effet direct de l'action du Saint Esprit amenant tous les humains au partage du mystère pascal. L'Esprit constamment pénètre les vies et les histoires concrètes des peuples, de l'intérieur, et leur offre une réelle participation commune au Mystère pascal. Certes, pour le chrétien elle sera explicitement christologique. Cependant une expérience identique, quoique souvent dans une forme incomplète, est continuellement vécue par tous les peuples: quelle que soit leur affiliation religieuse particulière.

Malheureusement, et même de façon scandaleuse, les exemples vécus de mystère pascal et de "passion de l'humanité" abondent dans notre monde aujourd'hui: guerre, famine, oppression, pauvreté, maladie, haine, mort; la souffrance humaine est massive et même universelle. Cette souffrance ne doit jamais être dépersonnalisée; elle a toujours un visage! Et c'est précisément dans ces contextes où Dieu semble absent ou caché (*deus absconditus*) qu'une missiologie de la *theologia crucis* est éminemment réaliste; mission et dialogue sont toujours "cruciformes".

C'est dans les situations d'apparent "abandon de Dieu" que le Mystère pascal explicitement chrétien doit être intimement relié au mystère pascal de toute l'humanité. Le monde ne con-

naît que trop bien la passion actuelle continue de l'humanité; la souffrance des peuples, en tous temps et en tous lieux. Le paradigme pascal a le pouvoir d'illuminer la vérité de la souffrance qui est omniprésente dans la création et l'histoire, aussi bien que la vérité de Dieu en relation avec cette souffrance. Ceci ne veut pas minimiser la dure réalité de la souffrance, ni dire qu'il y a des solutions faciles. La passion de l'humanité présente aux croyants de toutes religions un "Kairos" (moment favorable) permanent pour un dialogue et une solidarité humaine authentiques.

D. LES VOIES CONNUES DE DIEU

On souligne une importante vérité sur la mission quand on la comprend comme appartenant à Dieu: c'est le "projet de Dieu". Celle-ci libère les chrétiens de croire que c'est grâce à leurs propres forces que la mission progresse ou porte du fruit. Le principal agent de la mission est toujours le Saint Esprit (RM 21,30).

Ces affirmations ne font que renforcer le fait que la mission reste le "projet de Dieu". Nous ne pouvons pas accomplir le Mystère pascal par nous-mêmes; en tant que mystère salvifique de mort et résurrection, de par sa nature même, il ne peut qu'être reçu.

Quand le paradigme pascal de l'expérience de tout un chacun rencontre fructueusement la forme christique de pascalité, c'est précisément dû à l'action de l'Esprit. C'est la mission du Saint Esprit de réaliser dans les chrétiens - et d'en procurer la possibilité à tous les autres - la rédemption accomplie pour tous dans l'événement unique du Mystère pascal du Christ. En d'autres termes, c'est le Saint Esprit qui communique une participation personnelle à cette rédemption objective du Mystère pascal du Christ.

Quand l'Eglise enseigne explicitement que ce don salvifique (*le Mystère pascal*) est universellement valable (*offre à tous*), elle affirme clairement le dessein de Dieu pour le salut de tout homme. Ceci est réalisé par l'action de Dieu seul (*le Saint Esprit*).

En même temps que l'Eglise atteste vigoureusement la réalité du don, elle note que les autres voies par lesquelles on participe au Mystère pascal sont *connues de Dieu*. En bref, les voies de Dieu dépassent de loin ce que nous en comprenons; cependant, nous avons toute raison de faire confiance à la générosité infinie de Dieu qui offre à tous - *sans aucune exception* (RH 14) - la possibilité d'être incorporé au Mystère pascal.

Ces affirmations ne font que renforcer le fait que la mission reste le "projet de Dieu". Nous ne pouvons pas accomplir le Mystère pascal par nous-mêmes; en tant que mystère salvifique de mort et résurrection, de par sa nature même, il ne peut qu'être reçu. Quand, comment, qui, de quelle manière? - autant de questions confiées à la patience et à l'amour de Dieu.

E. IMPLICATIONS POUR LA MISSION

Le bref commentaire qui précède, d'une citation courante mais profonde, employée dans la pensée catholique contemporaine, ouvre sur un monde de perspectives créatives dans la mission et le dialogue. Les perspectives qu'il confirme sont nombreuses:

- 1) le rôle actif de l'Esprit en toute activité missionnaire;
- 2) l'universalité de la grâce et du salut offerts;
- 3) l'expérience pascale commune à toute l'humanité (mourir et ressusciter), comme voie reliant tous les croyants;
- 4) la participation au mystère pascal comme base *existentielle* de solidarité humaine et de dialogue interreligieux;
- 5) la mission pensée théologiquement à l'intérieur d'un "christocentrisme-pneumatologique";
- 6) toute mission conçue comme "projet de Dieu";
- 7) une relation explicite entre orthodoxie et orthopraxie;
- 8) la nécessité pour les missionnaires de méditer l'amour et la patience de Dieu, d'enraciner leurs approches de la mission au cœur même du message pascal de

l'Evangile et d'imiter personnellement l'implication souffrante de Dieu avec toute l'humanité.

Tout lecteur attentif remarquera très vite que cette présentation laisse beaucoup de riches idées non développées; plus de profondeur et de nuances demanderait un sérieux développement. Cependant de clairs repères ont été donnés pour de fructueuses approches de la mission et du dialogue, basées sur la pneumatologie et la spiritualité. Evangélisateurs et missionnaires sont invités à re-configurer leurs vies afin qu'ils puissent vraiment devenir des "missionnaires pascals".



THE "UNPOSSESSABLE" GOOD NEWS

Fr Felix A. Machado

In a reflection on the place of proclamation in Christian life Fr Machado, Professor of Theology and Indology at the St Pius College (Aarey Road, Goregaon East, Bombay 400063), suggests that the one who preaches must never "possess" the Good News as something belonging to him or his community. The Good News is not a doctrine but a Life, and its form must rather be discovered in a dialogue with those to whom it is addressed. From this dialogue its uniqueness will emerge.

Every Christian has an obligation to proclaim the Good News, i.e., the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The much discussed "evangelisation" needs to be understood on the threshold of the twenty-first century in the light of the Church's new experience of dialogue. In recent times, the Church emphasised two aspects with regard to her mission: evangelisation and dialogue. Dialogue does not replace evangelisation but neither can evangelisation do away with dialogue.

The Good News is not a possession to be manipulated. It is not anyone's private property. God alone is its author. Anyone who believes in it, is the proclaimers of the Good News. In other words, one does not chronologically first possess or own the Good News and then proclaim it, but the proclamation is done precisely by not possessing it, not owning it. Let us not forget that the act of believing itself is a paradoxical reality: we know things by not knowing them; we have by abandoning, we find ourselves by losing ourselves. In this paradoxical sense I speak of the proclamation of the Good News as "unpossessable". One cannot give what one does not have. But when it comes to the Good news, "having" it is something quite different.

It is clear that the Good News is not a meticulously written message in a human language, a well-bound book to be handed over to

someone. The Good News is inseparable from its proclamation and the proclamation is inseparable from the fact that no one can ever possess it or own it. The Good News is synonymous with life itself, and like life it is a dynamic, unpossessable reality that cannot be manipulated. One can only be at the service of

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the Good News, proclaimed in season and out of season, proclaimed by the entire creation, proclaimed from the four corners of the world. All proclaim the Good News who serve it, not those who master it.

At the Service of the Good News

The terminology used by the New Testament in describing the Church leaders has something to teach us. Besides avoiding the term *hiereus* (a cultic term), it also avoids the Greek words for office then current (it does not use words that relate to the concept of head or honour). The terms most used are rather:

- a. *shepherding*: 1 Pet 5:1ff; Acts 20:28ff; Jn 21:15ff.
- b. *serving*: Mk 10:45ff; Mt 20:28; Lk 22:27; Jn 13:12
- c. *stewarding* (a word which stresses dependence on the Master): 1 Cor 9:17; Col 1:25; Tit 1:7.

Over the years the West narrowed down the content of the Good News to its *logos* aspect.

comes under dispute. For people of other religions, the Christian God seems to be so well-defined and categorised in doctrinal expressions, that He seems to have lost His primordial and fundamental freedom as God. To this, of course, people react strongly. History effectively shows us how the "possession of God by some people" has made them oppressors. This is what happened in many religions, if not in all. Since the West and the Church have been perceived as synonymous, the God of the Westerners is looked upon as the God of the colonisers. People react negatively to the proclamation of such a God.

The proclamation of this God who was the exclusive possession of the Westerners rarely ran parallel with the experience of God that people had in their respective religions. It even went contrary to it. Christians need to pay close attention to this problem because it is clear that

The aggressive attitude in the proclamation of the Good News is, according to me, a result of consciously or unconsciously trying to possess, own, master or manipulate the Good News. I endorse dialogue as a solution to the problem.

the God presented in the Gospel is far more universal and free, a God basically "unpossessable". The God of the Gospel is not and cannot be limited within a territory or be one's private possession. Jesus refuses to present any doctrine of God. He rather focuses his mission on the relationship that should exist between God and the person. He does not allow God to be owned and mastered by anyone. In fact he lashes out with strong criticism against those who try to own God.

The God of the Good News is characteristically and irrevocably committed to creation. As "incarnate", i.e., God become Man, the God of the Good News is inseparably united to every creature. He is not exhaustively expressed in every being, but neither is He exclusively united to any particular creature. He is unbound and without exclusive attachment. He is Supreme Freedom, a God who can be "all things to all people" when they are open to Him. The God of the Good News is all-

encompassing and all-embracing. He is an elusive God. No one can reduce Him to his/her petty idea or narrow world. We proclaim such a God worthily and in the best way when we allow ourselves to be fully possessed by Him, without possessing Him.

Conclusion

I have been critical of the aggressive attitude in proclaiming the Good News. I do believe that proclamation is an obligation for every committed Christian. The aggressive attitude in the proclamation of the Good News is, according to me, a result of consciously or unconsciously trying to possess, own, master or manipulate the Good News. I endorse dialogue as a solution to the problem. I invite my Christian brothers and sisters to listen to the proclamation in the multi-religious and pluralistic context of our world today. The attitude of "possessive proclamation of the Good News" not only provokes an adverse reaction in the people to whom it is preached but also limits the Good News for the one who proclaims it. It is contrary to the evangelical spirit itself.

The plurality of religions is not a threat to the proclamation of the Good News. Perhaps it is a threat to the way in which we were used to proclaim the Good News: with a domineering and aggressive attitude. This attitude made our proclamation futile. The proclamation did not become life of the people in the real sense of the word and it met with negative reactions.

It must be frankly admitted that often our proclamation turned into a meticulously calculated move, suggestive of fear within us. There seemed to be the basic lack of confidence in the Good News itself. It was forgotten or ignored that, like all spiritual realities, the proclamation of the Good News is first and foremost a risk undertaken in total confidence, an "Abrahamic leap" in faith.

As I conclude, I would like to express my vision as to how I see a non-possessive proclamation of the Good News in a religiously pluralistic world could be effective:

1. Our own understanding of the Good News would radically change. Faith is prior to and distinct from any human expression. Accordingly, our concern would shift from the expression (ideology) to the Good News itself -- which can never be fully expressed in any one

particular way. We would remain docile to the Spirit. The lopsided emphasis on the rationalistic reading and listening to the Good News would be counter-balanced. The literal interpretation of the Good News which often breeds fundamentalism, communalism and a ghetto mentality, would not survive.

2. When the Good News is proclaimed in a non-possessive manner, other religions will not be for us objects of curiosity; they will no longer be simply tolerated, but loved. One must not lose sight of the fact that every religion is a religion *of someone*. In other words, behind a religion, there are living people whose lives are inseparably identified with the religion they profess. Together with the proclamation, dialogue with such persons is imperative. One cannot put one's religion in brackets when dialoguing. In this way, our own understanding of the Good News will basically depend upon our openness to other religions.

3. The Good News must be relevant to our lives. The more the Good News becomes

universal (though not "international" in the sense of the multinationals), the more relevant will it become even for Christians. For it is the Christians who need to re-discover the freshness of the proclamation. The Good News can become authentically universal when those who hold on to it in a possessive way decide to let it go. The Good News is proclaimed not simply for the sake of proclamation, but because it brings life, and life in abundance. The proclamation of the Good News today cannot be divorced from the problems of today's world -- factionalism, hunger, injustice, ecology, to name just a few.

4. Finally, we will learn to be always servants of Truth. God alone is Supreme Master and Lord. The more we become dis-possessed in the proclamation of the Good News, the more able will we become to proclaim it; for, "when we are weak then we are strong".

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CHALLENGES TO OUR MISSION IN THE FIRST WORLD

Timothy Radcliffe, OP

With just ten minutes to speak, I have not the time to develop an analysis, just share with you a picture, an image that represents some of the challenges in our mission in the West. What image symbolizes the challenges of our culture? What is its most typical story? I would say that one could take the story of "Jurassic Park". If you have not yet seen it, do so. It will be, by now, the most popular film ever made. It has been declared a threat to the French national identity by the French Minister of culture, and

Our role is surely to work with people in the recovery of their dignity as those who can make sense of the world, and so draw near to the God who is the source of all meaning.

it is showing in one in three Italian cinemas. In England the children even eat Tyrannosaurus Rex biscuits! This is our world!

The story is simple. A millionaire uses experiments on DNA to bring the dinosaurs back to life. He creates a great Park on an island where they can run free. They go around killing the visitors, and finally it is all too much, and the humans desert the island and fly away. This is the narrative of our times, and it is fruitful to ask how it can be contrasted with the typical story of Christianity, the Last Supper. I might just add that if the picture I will present is rather gloomy it is not because I am pessimistic about modern culture. I am not. I think that it incarnates some wonderful values - a cherishing of the individual, human rights, a tolerance of those who are different, etc. But in the time I have I can just focus on the challenges.

1. A Violent World

The World of Jurassic Park is a world ruled by violence. The dinosaurs kill each other and the human beings, and the human beings kill the dinosaurs. The other day I asked a group of Dominican brothers and sisters from the United States, who work together as itinerant preachers, what they considered to be the principle challenge to our preaching, and without a hesitation the answer was "violence". It is not just the violence of the wars that afflict much of the world, as in Bosnia or Georgia; it is the daily violence of our cities, the ordinary routine violence that women and children especially suffer; the racist violence against immigrants, it is the verbal violence of daily life; the environmental violence of the modern city.

In contrast to Jurassic Park, our founding story is of a man who endured violence, but did not pass it on, of a man who let himself be a victim so that the violence would stop there, on the cross, "like a sheep that is led to the slaughter, he did not open his mouth" (Is 53:7). Perhaps the first challenge that we face as religious is to be people who live non-violently. I do not mean only that one might hope that the brethren might refrain, usually, from attacking each other with hatchets or pistols, though that is good. One thinks of the battle between Irish and English Franciscans in 1221 that led to 16 of the friars being slaughtered! More profoundly we are called to live as people of peace, who face and root out the seeds of violence and anger in our lives, who have the courage to find ourselves with the victims. At the heart of religious is an option for vulnerability.

2. The Jungle

It is worth noting that this is a story about a jungle, a jungle in which dinosaurs and humans

compete to survive. It is a picture of the Darwinian world of the survival of the fittest. The weak fall by the wayside and become extinct. This was the fate of the dinosaurs. What I wish to stress is that this has been one of the dominant images of Western culture for almost two hundred years. It is not only at the basis of a scientific understanding of evolution, but also of contemporary economics and politics. Economics have adopted a Darwinian theory of competition, and politics is just a function of economics. It is only with the growth of ecology that there has been a shift of our perception of "the jungle" from competition to complementarity, with consequences we cannot yet see.

In this competitive consumerist jungle that is western culture, we religious surely have the mission to live out an alternative vision of reality, and to embody another narrative. This is not the competitive jungle of the market place but a world of gift. In Darwin's and Keynes' jungles there are no gifts. And it is my belief that it is impossible for us to have any perception of God, the giver all good things, unless we are able to see and feel the world and ourselves as gift and grace. Our story climaxes with a man who says: "This is my Body, which is given to you". I believe that we cannot really see the world as grace and gift unless we radically distance ourselves from the dominant consumerist culture. And that means becoming poor, really and visibly poor. We talk much about the "option for the poor" but we tend to live a far more middle class form of life.

A World of Silence

One of the reasons why "Jurassic Park" is so popular all over the world is that it is a story which hardly depends upon words. Even without translation a Russian could get almost as much from it as an English speaker. It is a world within which words hardly matter. And it is, alas, true that we belong to a society which has largely lost confidence in language as a tool to build society, to seek truth, to achieve understanding. As Vaclav Havel once said, "You in the West have largely forgotten the power of the Word". It is a world which is deeply suspicious of any claims to truth. This makes Christianity, which depends upon the proclamations of truths, hard to understand for many people.

One of the fundamental challenges for us religious is to create communities in which people

learn to love words, to delight in the power of truthful language to build community, to overcome divisions, to make a human home. The first question I always put to any community that I must visitate is: is this a community in which people speak to each other? Do the brothers share truthful words? Does our formation encourage our students to love language and to delight in truth. In our society debate is seen as a version of the jungle; the victor is the one who crushes his opponent. We do have, in the Church, a different tradition, represented by people like Thomas Aquinas. As a Dominican I must mention Aquinas at least once! And for Aquinas disputation was always a process by which one learns from the other person, discovers the sense in which the other is always, in a sense, right. Disputation is always part of the building of human community. Alas, within the Church itself there is often a fear of debate and a reluctance to learn from the other. Often, in the name of the defence of orthodoxy, we have adopted an intolerance of difference and a fear of debate that is contrary to our deepest traditions.

In the face of disaster, he makes a gesture of extraordinary freedom. He takes bread and offers it to his Disciples saying: "Take and eat, this is my Body". Faced with the collapse of community, he was free to make a future. He believed that this mediocre bunch of Disciples could build the Kingdom. Do we live such a freedom?

Our society is afflicted by a crisis of meaninglessness, indifference, which is linked to this retreat from language. There is little popular culture, as in Central America, for example. A deep fear haunts our cities, that nothing has meaning at all. Hence the temptation of fundamentalist religions which give you a meaning on a plate. Our role is surely to work with people in the recovery of their dignity as those who can make sense of the world, and so draw near to the God who is the source of all meaning.

Fate

Finally, I would point out that the world of "Jurassic Park" is one of fatalism. The

dinosaurs were doomed to extinction. And in the face of this failed experiment the humans can do nothing except to run away. Of course this is convenient since it means that we can see "Jurassic Park II", but it is also symbolical of a deep fatalism of our society.

Faced with growing economic and social problems there is often a fatalism, a belief that

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we can do nothing. Galbraith, the American economist, has argued that this passivity is central to our civilisation. If you believe in the laws of the market then they will provide the answer. There is nothing that we can or need do.

In our contrasting story of the Last Supper we see a man who is doomed, fated to death. In the face of disaster, he makes a gesture of extraordinary freedom. He takes bread and offers it to his Disciples saying: "Take and eat, this is my Body". Faced with the collapse of community, he was free to make a future. He believed that this mediocre bunch of Disciples could build the Kingdom. Do we live such a freedom? Many of us find ourselves trapped by diminishing vocations and commitments we can no longer honour. Are we doomed to have no freedom, to be prisoners? Do we dare to be free to make something new? Do we dare trust the young to make something new and unexpected? If not we will join the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park!

Our World thinks of itself as "The Free World", but it is often just the freedom to choose in the market place. We need to embody a new and more radical freedom in religious life, which is the freedom of the Last Supper, the freedom to give our lives away, saying to our brothers, "This is my life and I give it to you, I dispose of it". This is not obedience as a flight from responsibility but God's own freedom and vulnerability.

Ref: *International Dominican Information*
No. 318, March 1994





mission moments

AN UNEXPECTED APOSTOLATE (SOUTH AFRICA)

For some months, either with Fr Arthur, the parish priest, or alone, I had been visiting our local prison to pray or hold a service for the men and women detained there. Then one day I received a phone call asking me to come to the prison, not for the prisoners but for a group of refugees. Somehow they had found out I spoke French.

Among the group of refugees were Zimbabweans and French-speaking men and women from Burundi, Zaire and the Sudan. How happy they were to be able to speak to someone who understood them! They poured out their stories. They had been in prison a year, and no one seemed to take any interest or show any concern for them -- neither the Botswana Government nor the United Nations, nor, least of all, their own embassies because they had entered Botswana illegally and were without any legal documents.

I got in touch with Sr Zora (a Slovenian Ursuline missionary also in Botswana) who works in the capital, Gabarone, and has many contacts with people and agencies that perhaps could give help. Sr Zora discovered that the previous year the Botswana Government had passed a law that it would accept as refugees only those persons who came from countries bordering on Botswana -- though few people seemed to know of this regulation. Moreover, the Government does not have transit facilities, so the only place for these refugees was in prison. Finally,

immigration officers claimed that they did not have the funds to repatriate these persons. Sr Zora spoke to Government officials, representatives of the United Nations, the Red Cross and the Botswana Council of Churches. Although the United Nations was not strictly speaking responsible since these were considered economic, not political, refugees, the Protection Officer of the United Nations took an interest and began to move the wheels of bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, I continued to visit the prison, trying to offer encouragement and at the same time to urge patience. I was always accompanied by personnel from the prison authorities. These latter insisted that everything be translated but, of course, I used my discretion in doing this. Let me give you an example. At one particular time, several prisoners tried to escape. As a punishment, they were placed in solitary confinement and beaten by several of the guards. It would not go well with them if the authorities knew the refugees were telling me about these things, so I evaded the issue when I was translating -- but they knew I was not translating everything! Perhaps the authorities thought I was instigating the refugees to protest against their illegal confinement over such a long period because the guards became more intolerant of my presence, forgetting it was they who had asked me to come in the first place.

One day, several officials came to our house with letters to be translated -- letters between husband and wife who were kept separate in prison. The officials apparently thought that the letters might contain plans for escape but they turned out to be quite the opposite -- very

touching and faith-filled expressions of love between the two.

Eventually, through Sr Zora's efforts, a representative from the United Nations visited the prison and gave new hope to the group. A very assertive woman, she also made clear to the authorities that I had every right to visit and speak to the refugees. At this time, Mother Bernadette-Josèphe was visiting us and had an opportunity to speak to the group. We used her position to speed up the negotiations and bring an end to the long and uncertain wait of these poor refugees.

Finally, in April, those who wished to return to their own countries were released. The Protection Officer paid another visit. To each person she gave P300, mentioning each time that this money to cover their transport home was contributed by the Catholic Church. True, our Church had contributed, but the Botswana Council of Churches had also made a significant offering. We sisters bought shoes, toiletries and other items they needed. With thanks to God and promises to write and tell us of their safe arrival, they left packed tight in a pick-up truck for the Botswana border, from there to find their way home. A group still remain who have been accepted to settle in Botswana or possibly to find a future in some country abroad.

This interlude brought home to us the terrible plight of so many million refugees in our world today.

Emmanuel Aangeveld, OSU
Mahalapye, Botswana

(Two months later, Sr Jeanette Essey, Provincial, who had accompanied Mother Bernadette-Josèphe on her visit to the prison,

received the following letter from one of the refugees).

Dear Sister,

I would like to thank you for the service you have done to us when you came to visit us in Mahalapye prison during our hard time. Please receive all my greetings with pleasure. Now we are out of prison and we are staying in Dukwe refugee camp. The life we are facing here is very difficult. There is nothing we can do, but we thank God for sending you to visit us in our time of suffering. It was the will of God that we could know each other. I believe that there is a true God in heaven. Thank you.

I am from Sudan were people are dying of hunger, where people do not know where their parents are and where parents do not know where their children are. Everywhere, we are fatherless and homeless. The only father I am left with is God. Therefore, dear Sister, I would like to receive encouragement from you and I shall always pray for you that God many give you many days to live.

I ask you to be kind enough to reply to my letter.

*Yours faithfully,
(signed) Michael Jan-Kang*

Ref. *Inter-Ursuline*
Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1993, No.5
Via Nomentana 236
I-00162 Roma

CAMPAIGN FIGHTS HUNGER

(SAO PAULO)

"Citizen Action against hunger and misery and for Life" is awakening the conscience of Brazilian society through its efforts to end hunger and misery in Brazil.

Started four months ago, the movement is encouraging Brazilians to create projects to construct housing, organise soup kitchens and

build medical centres to aid the 35 million Brazilians living in absolute poverty, the most needy of Brazil's 60 million poor.

Citizen Action, which was started by non-governmental organisations, has the support of President Itamar Franco, his ministers, Parliament, and many of Brazil's most powerful unions, Churches and business groups.

"We are appealing to people's solidarity, hoping that it will provide the transforming energy that can design and carry out a plan to guarantee the production of enough food for every table, accompanied by an income distribution and a wage policy that give all Brazilians access to their daily bread", Bishop Mauro Morelli said.

If the hunger crisis is not dealt with, "no power structure or Government repression will be able to contain the explosion by those in misery that is rapidly brewing. The social fabric is breaking down day by day", said Bishop Morelli, President of the National Council of Food Security, the Governmental organisation promoting the campaign.

He said the key to Citizen Action's success at minimising the misery in Brazil is solidarity.

"Those who accept the human condition and who enjoy human life should not just sit with their arms folded or their hands raised to heaven. Action begins with the battle against hunger, and one fights hunger with food and solidarity", he said.

"Solidarity is a demonstration of faith in the human condition of the marginalised and an exercise in community, not an act of charity".

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U.S.A.

MY «SECOND NOVITIATE» WITH MAYA Q'EQCHÍ INDIANS (COBAN)

A Gradual Insertion

An important stage of my mission internship in the CICM parish of El Calvario in Coban, Alta Verapaz is a gradual insertion into the life and struggles of the Maya Q'eqchí Indians. I hope to deepen my understanding of their life and world view, so that in the process I may be better able to accompany their efforts to strengthen their identity, faith and culture. Specifically, this immersion means living closely with a Q'eqchí family and experiencing first-hand their rhythm of life and hard manual work at home and in the fields. It also means accompanying people of the village to do and share communal work planting corn or harvesting beans, cleaning the fields or constructing a latrine, picking cardamom or serving cacao during a feast. But mostly it means doing a «second novitiate», i.e., sitting at the feet of Maya Q'eqchís to learn and patiently listen to their stories, inquiries, concerns and wisdom.

And so I trekked to the mountainous interiors of Alta Verapaz until I reached Sta. Elena, Sa'tolox, a village about 47 kilometers Northwest of Coban. For a person used to the easy comfort of city life, I readily experienced the physical demands of living in a far-flung village as a tough but necessary challenge. But thanks to the hospitality and generosity of the family of *Qaawa'* Manuel and *Qaana'* Paulina (*Qaawa'*, *Qaana'*: are titles of deep respect given to elders), I easily settled down in my new environment.

Encountering a Maya Q'eqchí Family

It is my initial and closer encounter with a Maya Q'eqchí family: with its hard work and

harmonious familial relations, its indomitable will and resourcefulness to survive in a harsh environment, its child-like spontaneity in finding joy in the simplest of things, its close contact with and ingrained reverence for Mother Earth. The family of Manuel and Paulina starts its day around five in the morning. Their daughters start by making the fire, they heat the coffee, cook (corn-based) tortillas and prepare whatever is on hand: beans, chicken eggs, «macuy» leaves, leftover meat or just hot chili. Father and sons sit around the kitchen, patiently waiting for their meal. When done eating, they begin preparing their tools, usually sharp-enning a machete or an axe. Then they are off to work, maybe to gather corn from their *rochochil ixim* (corn house) or gather firewood or beans or edible leaves. At other times, they may be preparing the fields for the next planting season. Sometimes, the whole family goes together to harvest cardamom.

At home, mother stays put to manage household chores, directing, teaching, sometimes admonishing her daughters even as she breast feeds her youngest. They thresh corn, grind and mould it into tortillas, shell beans, forever gather water at a nearby brook (remember that there is no water or electricity in this part of the world), wash clothes, clean the house, or feed their domestic animals when not chasing pigs away from the house.

Around five in the afternoon, the men start coming home, tired but thankful to quench their thirst with a hot drink of «*agua de masa*» (boiled water with ground corn). The family meets in the kitchen. Soon the place becomes a microcosm of Q'eqchi harmony, that sense of being at peace with Nature and with one another. They chat, laugh, share stories, listen to music while relaxing in a hammock or plan the next day's work. They receive visitors like Qaana' Maria, the only widow in the village. Children either sit quietly in one corner, play or eat their tortilla. When not blowing the firewood to keep it burning, the

daughters fix their long hair in a mirror. Dogs lie around either quietly enjoying the heat of a close-by burning wood fire or patiently wait for food to be thrown in their direction. Ducks and chickens join the scene, passing to and fro looking for a grain or morsel of food. By seven in the evening the family will have done with dinner. By eight they retire for the night, to rest their body and soul in the hope of keeping them together to face another day - to survive.

The People of Sa'tolox

What I have just described is not something extraordinary. But there is something special about these people of Sa'tolox. Most of them have known or have been victims of a history punctuated by the most unimaginable sorts of suffering -- family separations because of war and violence, dislocation, hamletting, economic exploitation by big landowners and social and cultural marginalisation. Despite the hard weight of history upon their shoulders, all the machinations of war-like, diabolical minds to erase them from the map, and the military control that the «principalities and powers» hold over these people making them captive and enslaved, they still manage to go on living, to survive, to will to live and celebrate life as their «ancianos» (elders, dead or living) have taught them.

Living with this people, one becomes convinced not only in the mind but also in the heart that God is truly immersed in their midst. God is already working in the very centre of their life, guiding them towards fullness of life in Christ. God so frequently works from below in human society, like leaven working in the dough. God works from unlikely and marginal situations in history through the poor and the despised and those who are apparently «unlearned» (the majority of school-age Q'eqchi youth and children cannot read nor write well).

What all this tells me is that for a pastoral worker to become a compassionate and effective

«evangeliser» among the Q'eqchis, she/he must learn to live their simple but profound faith and to be open to those liberating signs and values of God's incarnation in their own milieu. The «evangeliser» especially the one coming from a different culture must first be evangelised by the Q'eqchis through a process of inculturation.

What is Inculturation about?

Inculturation is not merely learning how to observe well what the Q'eqchis do. Any social scientist can do that. A call is being made to go deeper into their thought and decision process, their criteria or judgements, determining values, points of interest, thought patterns, sources of inspiration and models of life and relate them to the core values of the Gospel. Language study is only a preliminary step in inching closer to that long-term objective.

I am aware that with what I know of the Q'eqchi language at the moment, I am just beginning to scratch the surface of Q'eqchi life and history. In fact, real inculturation begins when one has a fair knowledge of the language. This personal realisation resonates with another necessary condition of inculturation: a long and continuous period of patient listening. At the present moment, there is no better way to know from within the life of the Q'eqchis than living with them for a period of time. It is through this closer contact with them that their cosmo-vision becomes a lived experience and not just something heard about in a seminar. It is through this direct experience of Q'eqchi life that one begins to appreciate their unflinching efforts to celebrate their life and to defend it from the military, political and pseudo-religious forces that seek to extinguish it.

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 00163 Roma.

COMING EVENTS

ASIA: CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR (May 17 - 21)

Speakers:

Fr. John Tong (China)

George Soares-Prabhu, SJ (India)

Ms. Michiko Ota (Japan)

Place: Villa Cavalletti

WORKING GROUPS

May 11 HAITI

June 2 AFRICA - Follow-up

June 8 PHILIPPINES

June 16 SUDAN

Place: SEDOS Secretariate; via dei Verbiti, 1

Time: 16:00 p.m.
