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### COMMENT

Urbanisation: The first part of this SEDOS Bulletin is an introduction to the theme of the Seminar on Mission and Urbanisation which will be held on the occasion of the 1984 Annual General Meeting of SEDOS. Extracts are chosen from the Pro Mundi Vita, Quarterly Bulletin, 1984/4, "Megalopolis". These are from essays by Fr. Arthur McCormack on a demographic approach to the problems of 'megalopolis' and by Pierre Delooz on some aspects of the pastoral problems in 'supercities' to-day.

That there are problems is incontrovertible. Are there perhaps, opportunities for new pastoral approaches also? It was in the super-cities of antiquity, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople that Christianity developed and that people were converted to the gospel long before their rural sisters or brothers began to hear it. The PMV Bulletin is a good introduction to the theme of the forthcoming SEDOS Seminar. Pierre Delooz of the PMV Staff will be one of the resource persons there.

Refugees: The second part of this SEDOS Bulletin completes the immediate report of the recent Seminar on Refugees. There are the proposals which emerged at the Seminar, extracts from a World Council of Churches' background paper which helped to formulate their important Dresden statement on Refugees, and information on some resource materials about Refugees, available at SEDOS Documentation Centre.

The bridge between the two parts of this Bulletin is a letter...

"Its as if I had told him: You're important; I like you. Sometimes a photograph is like a hug"... In this case the photograph was of Ayub who is blind! we recommend you read Bob McCahill's letter from Bangladesh.

#### NEWS

Sponsorship of Refugees: Participants at the SEDOS Seminar on Refugees asked for details of how to sponsor refugees in Canada and US. SEDOS Documentation Centre now has details about the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programme. (SEDOS Doc. Ref. No.4/4687).

Regarding the US we have been informed there is no single document available. We recommend contacting the DIOCESAN CATHOLIC CHARITIES OFFICE of the US diocese in which the sponsorship will be effected (every diocese has such an office), or write to:

United States Catholic Conference (USCC)  
Refugee and Migration Service,  
1250 Broadway, N.Y.  
N.Y. 10001, U.S.A.

Two other significant documents were received last week at SEDOS Documentation Centre:

REFUGEES: THE STRUCTURES OF A GLOBAL JUSTICE ISSUE - Michael J. Schultheis SJ, - an occasional Paper of the Center of Concern, Washington D.C. (SEDOS Doc. Ref. No.4/4686);

PROBLEMS OF URBANISATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: A PERSONAL WITNESS:  
Sr. Emelina Villegas, ICM. This is the text of a paper presented at the Caritas Internationalis Executive Committee Meeting held in Rome, November, 1984. (SEDOS Doc. Ref. No. 1/1117).

Islamic Christian Relations in Algeria: Mgr. Henri Teissier, Coadjutor Bishop of Alger, gave a fascinating account of the present situation at the informal meeting with SEDOS Members on November 6th. The text of his address and the replies to questions will be published in a coming issue of SEDOS Bulletin. We are very grateful to Mgr. Teissier for his visit. The personal witness of his presence in Algeria in a population which is almost entirely Muslim and his deep commitment to dialogue in these days was an inspiration to all present.

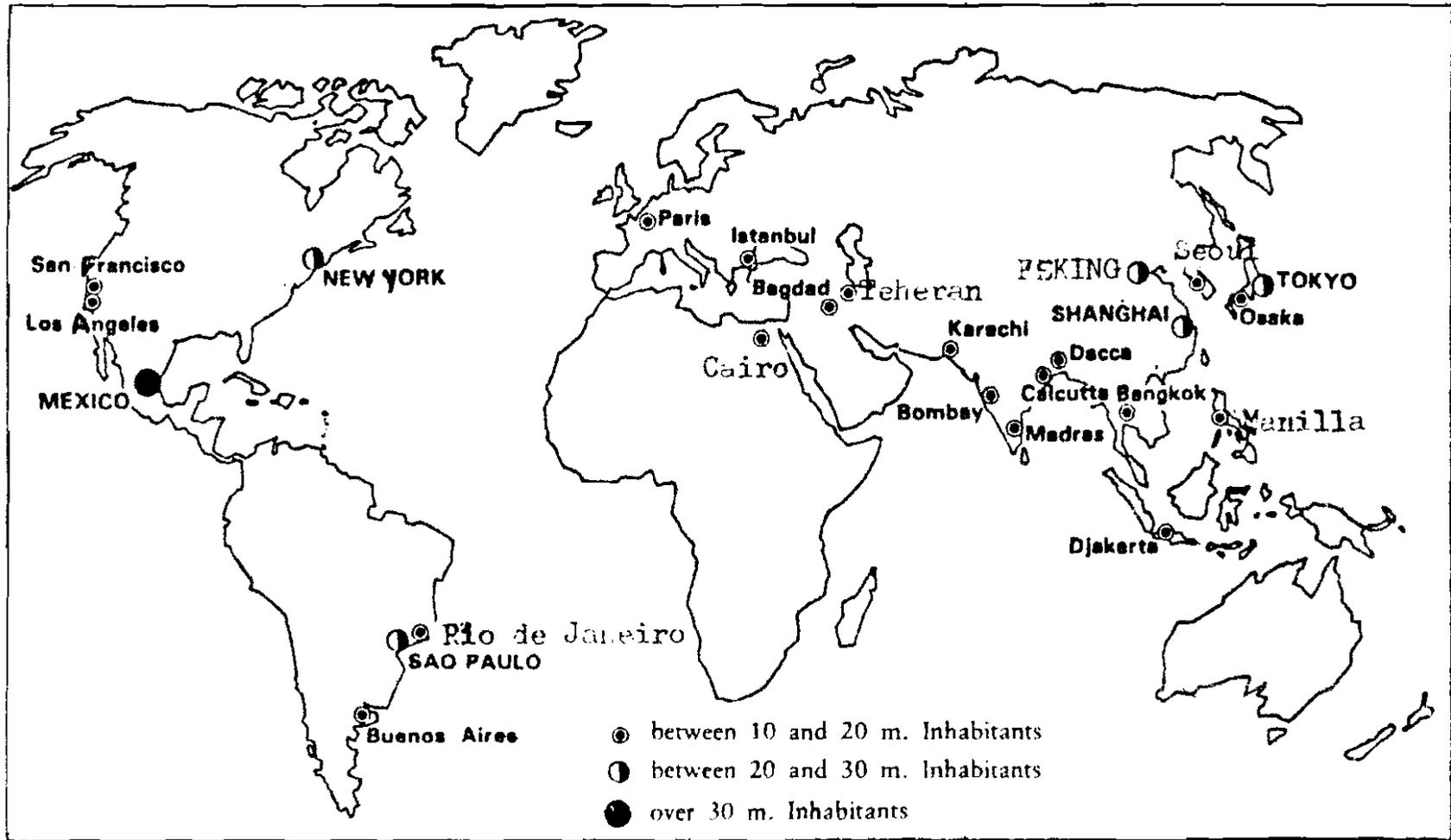
Corrigendum: SEDOS Bulletin 1983/No.19 Page 367: in the paragraph "Individual basis" the third line should read: never really been a Christian. Fr. Yves Calvez SJ drew our attention to this, having seen extracts, in a Flemish translation, from his address given at the SEDOS Seminar on Dialogue with Post-Christians, October, 1984. Fr. Calvez is now at the Centre de Recherche et d'Action Sociale (CERA), 14, Rue d'Assas, 750006, Paris.

#### Coming Events:

SEDOS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
and SEMINAR ON MISSION AND  
URBANISATION.

Tuesday, December 11, 1984  
9.30 - 18.00 hrs. at the Brothers  
of the Christian Schools, 476,  
Via Aurelia, Roma.

Urban conurbations with over 10 million inhabitants in the year 2000



Source: *Le Monde diplomatique* (Paris), August 1984. (Courtesy of Pro. andi Vita)

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A DEMOGRAPHIC APPROACH

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Fr. Arthur McCormack

*(E' appena uscito il Bollettino (n. 99, 1984, n. 4) di Pro Mundi Vita intitolato "Megalopolis". Ne riproduciamo qui alcuni estratti che trattano dello stesso problema su cui vertera' il prossimo Seminario del SEDOS previsto per l'11 dicembre, 1984 in congiunzione con l'annuale Assemblea Plenaria del SEDOS.*

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One of the most serious problems facing the world today is the problem of population growth and especially the rapid increase in the size of cities, but the situation between more developed and less developed countries is so different that many, in the more developed regions, do not even perceive the problem.

Although significant fertility declines have occurred in some developing countries, over the past two decades these have been offset by falling death rates, thus the total population continues to surge ahead. The 4.7 billion people in the world today will be 6.1 billion 15 years from now.

The birth rate in the less developed countries is twice that of the more developed countries, 33 compared to 15 per 1,000. Because of this and the much larger less developed countries' share of world population, there are almost seven times more births per year in those countries than in the more developed countries as a whole.

While in the more developed countries women can be expected to have fewer than two children during their reproductive lifetime - less than the replacement level of 2.1 children per family - women in the less developed countries can still be expected to average between four to five children. As a result, if growth continues at the present rate, these countries would double their population in the next 32 years.

Crude death rates in the two "worlds" are similar-between 10-12 deaths per 1,000 population-but these crude rates mask the striking differences in mortality. For example, people in the more developed countries can expect to live 15 years longer (to age 73) than people in the less developed countries.

From these facts - growth and contrast between the two "worlds"- the urgency of the population problem can be seen. While extremists who prophesy inevitable doom may be unduly alarmist, those who reject the reality are showing an unjustified complacency which could well bring about the disaster the alarmists threaten if it inhibits positive

action or gives the impression that the problem will easily be coped with.

The more urgent part of the problem - a still very present problem - of that massive population increase is the rate of increase in developing cities. Mexico City, for example, had 1.5 million in 1940, 2.7 million in 1960 and 14 million today. If birth control measures become more successful than expected and measures to lessen migration to the city are more successful than today, the Mexican government hopes that there will be only 25 million 15 years from now. Only! Sao Paulo had a population of 1.3 million in 1940, 3.7 million in 1960, 10.7 million in 1975; the estimate for the year 2000 - 15 years from - is 20.8 million. How can such cities be managed and administered to enable them to provide a decent human life for their inhabitants, to cope with the impact on the demand for urban services, housing and resources of such unprecedented large numbers of people?

### URBANIZATION

It is in the general framework of world population that the urban expansion of this century must be seen and explained, though that increase is not the only factor. The other factor is the migration from the rural areas which itself may be a reaction, if only a partial one, to the rapid growth of the number of people in the rural areas, plus, often enough, a shortage of good land and the means of earning a living. It is reckoned that in the developing cities half the increase in numbers of people will come from natural increase and half from internal migration from rural areas.

Patterns of urbanization: Although rapid urban growth is general in developing countries, it could be interesting for our readers if we differentiate between types of country.

Type 1. This group includes those countries in which urbanization is well under way. The population is already more than half urban, incomes are relatively high, and there is little population pressure on arable land and natural resources. The urbanization process will end before the turn of the century when most of the population will be in urban areas. This description fits most Latin American countries, where high incomes and employment opportunities accompanying steady growth of urban industry and commerce have encouraged rural-urban migration since 1900.

Type 2. In these countries the urbanization experience is more recent. Over half of the population still lives in rural areas, where arable land is often scarce and incomes are relatively low. If population pressure can be eased and resource constraints overcome, these countries should be as urbanized in the year 2000 as Type 1 countries today.

Type 3. The sub-Saharan countries of Africa typify the third pattern. Incipient manufacturing and other productive activities in the cities, plus large rural-urban income differentials, have fueled urban growth in recent years. However, with land generally not yet scarce, agriculture can continue to absorb growing numbers of rural

dwellers productively. These countries will still be predominantly rural in the year 2000.

Type 4. The fourth urbanization pattern is found in the large Asian countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and China. If current trends continue, most of these countries will still be dominated in the year 2000 by large and growing rural populations living in utter poverty. However, urban populations are also large and could swell massively even if only a small percentage of the rural population is pushed out by accelerating pressures on land. In India, for example, estimates are that the urban population will grow by 210 million between 1975 and 2000, versus a rural increase of 236 million, without allowing for any substantial push out of rural areas.

Father McCormac then goes on to treat of:

- The consequences of urbanization
- Migration
- Poverty and household
- Absorptive capacity of cities
- Urban Consequences of rural labour market.

There follow some details of the unprecedented situation in sample cities: Mexico City, Cairo, Lagos and Dacca.

He then outlines some models of the future based on the work of a private organization, "The Futures Group" which is under contract to the United States Agency for International Development. In co-operation with the United Nations Fund for Population Division and the World Bank it has "created a model Great City, 'Futurba' with demographic, economic and social characteristics representative of the great cities of the world".

The final section of the essay contains some recommended policies for the future and a short useful bibliography.

Ref. Pro Mundi Vita - Bulletin 99 - 1984/4.

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**PASTORAL CARE FOR SUPERCITIES**

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Pierre Delooz

*(La seconda parte del Bolletino di Pro Mundi Vita si occupa dei problemi pastorali e delle opportunità propri delle grandi città. Presentiamo qui alcuni brevi estratti del saggio di Pierre Delooz riguardanti alcuni punti di vista teologici sulla città, l'esempio di un programma pastorale per una grande città - presentato dal Vescovo Ausiliario di Sao Paulo, Don Antonio Celso Queiroz, e l'esempio di un programma pastorale per Kinshasa, Zaire. Pierre Delooz nel suo saggio propone alcune possibili questioni e conclude offrendo elementi per una soluzione del problema.)*

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**THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE CITY**

The kind of demographic facts which we have just set out represent a challenge to Christians and for that matter to all individuals concerned with the future of humanity - a future which, in the case of the supercities, appears very bleak indeed. In the light of such a prospect how should Christians react?

This might appear to be a simple question but it involves at least one preliminary question: is there a specifically Christian vision of the city?

We could, of course, go right back to its beginnings and note that in antiquity Christianity developed chiefly in the cities. The supercities of those days, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, were converted to Christianity long before the rural areas. As everyone knows "pagan", paganus, means a peasant. And this is very significant, for it would thus seem that cities have always been areas of freedom, of liberation from the traditions which were kept alive by the peasants because they provided a sense of security. To the peasants of antiquity Christianity must have appeared as something terrible and if, indeed, the country districts did slowly become Christian (and in certain areas did they ever?) then the price which had to be paid was a certain "sacralization" of Christianity, and a "watering down" or even the abandoning of its liberating aspects and in particular the fact that Christianity did away with the categories of the pure and the impure.

The fact remains that the situation which we have known for a century - rural areas putting up greater resistance to the forces of "de-Christianization" than the cities - is a phenomenon which is both new but also structurally analogous. The consequences of this change are only beginning to be seen. One result in particular is that when in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century Western missionaries went out to the four corners of the world they went out to serve people in rural areas, for scarcely one tenth

of the people in non-Western countries lived in towns. Today, however, this situation has changed completely and between now and the end of the century two-thirds of these people will be living in cities. The whole way in which Christianity is presented will require to take account of this if it is to make any impact. The question of whether there is a specifically Christian image of the city then becomes loaded with a new sense of pertinence and unprecedented urgency.

The relationships between religion and urbanization are very complex and cannot be gone into in depth here. Moreover they would require field studies - something which as yet has never been done. We would however mention as an example a study carried out in India over a period of twelve years, with the assistance of Harvard University and dealing with the development of a modern city on a traditional, religious site. It would seem from this that Hinduism was capable of adapting itself in numerous unexpected ways. See S. Seymour (et al), *The transformation of a Sacred Town: Bhubaneswar, India*, Boulder, Col., Westview Press, 1980

Is there, then a specifically Christian vision of the city? A number of theologians have asked themselves this preliminary question and their responses have been very different and even contradictory. The reason for this is that the question itself implies a well-defined theological attitude vis-a-vis the earthly realities. Here are but four examples.

1) Harvey Cox praises the city as the supreme place of human, secular liberation, a dangerous liberation no doubt but a liberation the promises of which are well worth the risk because this liberation makes the individual responsible for his own fulfilment. (H.Cox, *The Secular City. Secularization in Theological Perspective*, New York, Macmillan, 1965.)

2) Joseph Comblin sees the growth of cities as a stage in the divine pedagogical plan, one which teaches people to live in intercommunion with others. (J.Comblin, *Théologie de la ville*, Paris, Editions Universitaires, 1968.)

3) Jacques Ellul looks into the Bible and finds that there the city is marked by a sort of curse; the city is the place where human beings claim to be able to do without God and where they fail. Jerusalem alone, although continuously destroyed and continuously rebuilt, proclaims something completely different: Jerusalem is the holy city which God will send before men. (J. Ellul, *The meaning of the City* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1970, and published in French under the title *Sans feu ni lieu. Signification biblique de la Grande Ville*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.) H. Cox published a critique of J. Ellul in *Commonweal*, July 1971. Ellul replied to this in the French edition of his work.

4) Benjamin Tonna bases his reflection on the special case of the supercities in the developing countries and sees in them a sign of the times, potential places of incarnation where the local Church will require to give shape and form to the redeeming plan of God. Thus, according to him, the God of the Bible will be in favour of the city, for the city will proclaim the reconciliation

of humanity with itself. (B. Tonna, *Un vangelo per la città*, Bologna, E:M:I:, 1978. Eng. transl. *Gospel for the Cities*, Maryknoll, 1982).

Despite the rapidity of this overview it demonstrates that the city, to say the least, is a source of contradiction for theologians and that the only point on which they might agree among themselves would be to say that on earth there is no celestial Jerusalem to be built as of today... In the meantime, however, the cities are there; they are developing in what is often a monstrous manner; they fascinate thousands of millions of people who pile into them in ever larger numbers and who, unable to find anywhere else to be born, to live and to die, prefer to remain there rather than go, or return, to the countryside where very often there is no longer a place for them. Indeed, it may well be that today it is only the rich who find the country attractive because they have the means to maintain contact with the city and to take with them all the advantages of the city without any of the disadvantages....

The people to whom the Church seeks to bring the Gospel is more and more an urban people who will become increasingly concentrated in large urban centres. Such a transformation has never been seen before and the Church, like everyone else, lacks experience in dealing with the problem.

Certain "earthly" aspects of the development of the supercities are closely linked to human destiny as a whole and therefore to the Christian destiny of mankind. Has, for example, sufficient emphasis been placed on the fact that certain forms of urban architecture have contributed to isolating individuals from their neighbours and to the creation of this "lonely crowd" which is so detrimental to the poorest of the poor? Are we sufficiently aware that the need for birth control which is more acute in the supercities than anywhere else is nothing more than a quantitative problem to be resolved by all possible means?...

#### A CONCRETE EXAMPLE: BASIC ELEMENTS OF PASTORAL CARE IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

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Presented by Dom Antonio Celso Queiroz,  
auxiliary bishop of Sao Paulo.

1. A real presence in the life of the people, responding to their needs and helping them to organize. Pastoral care in peripheral districts works along these lines, supporting people's movements which constantly denounce injustices and defend the people. One of the priorities here is the purchase of land for the construction of community centres in new districts on the periphery. Over the last few years around 70,000 sq.m. have been acquired in this way.
2. Pastoral care for human rights. This is organized through defence centres in the various regions. It receives considerable support from the Justice and Peace Commission.
3. Pastoral care for labour which trains militants who guide and support the Christian presence in factories and work situations.

4. Pastoral care for basic communities, which attempt to bring people together in small communities where they can live and express their faith and from which they can take up their evangelical mission. There is no means of knowing how many basic communities there are in the various regions of the archdiocese. There are, in any case, different types: decentralized parish communities, community centres with their own property, neighbourhood groups or street groups which meet periodically, etc. The basic communities have emerged as one of the principal strengths within the pastoral work of the Church in Sao Paulo. It is they who, to a great extent, have supported the most lively initiatives in issues of faith and social commitment in the regions and in the parishes.
5. Specific forms of pastoral care for underprivileged areas. Thus a form of pastoral care for slum-dwellers and children, as well as first steps towards forms of pastoral care for farmers and peasants, are being worked out.
6. A major concern is finding a way to ensure a pastoral presence within the means of social communication as well as means of integrating the Catholic University and its theological faculty into the pastoral work of the archdiocese.
7. Training of new priests, training for other forms of ministry and training of the laity in general with the aim of defining better their role in the various participatory bodies.
8. The constant renewal and continuous stimulation of liturgical, sacramental and catechetical life in line with the directory of sacraments of the Sao Paulo archdiocese.
9. Other essential parts of the pastoral work within the archdiocese but which at present are being clarified and researched include:
  - a) the lay pastorate which, as is the case with the Church in Brazil as a whole, is immature and poorly defined;
  - b) pastoral work among the middle classes who have problems in understanding the evangelical option for the poor;
  - c) the harmonization of the pastoral work of the movements with that of the archdiocese;
  - d) the rapid multiplication of sects and of their ministries among the poor;
  - e) the need for an appropriate response to the new challenges thrown up by the city in terms of evangelical presence and action, above all in the centres of urban industrial culture, as well as the training of workers in evangelism (priests, members of religious orders, the laity) who can tackle these new challenges.

#### PASTORAL CARE IN KINSHASA

(Presented by Fr. Léon de Saint Moulin  
former Vice-President of the University of Kinshasa).

.....In 1950 there were eight parishes for 200,000 inhabitants, 21 in 1960 for 400,000 and 43 in 1966 for 800,000. Since 1967 there has been a slowing down for no more young missionaries are coming in and local vocations for the priesthood are few.

At the same time, however, and in part to respond to this growing scarcity, the Church has embarked on an intense programme of laity education and, following the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council, has launched research programmes with the aim of encouraging the participation of the laity at all the various levels of the Christian life. In June 1983 a basic education course ended its fourth complete three-year cycle with 1,300 participants. More than 2,500 people have registered for the fifth course. This course trains Christian leaders who undertake, in particular, Christian education among children and young people in the parishes and the basic communities.

Three forms of lay ministry have been defined: a) the *bakambi* or lay leadership of a parish where they are generally assisted by a priest "animateur" who has other apostolic commitments either in teaching or in the central services of the Church; b) parish assistants and c) pastoral workers. One of the latter is in charge of a centre for meditation, study and retreat. In 1983, 19 parishes were in the care of *bakambi*, there were four parish assistants and five pastoral workers. Thanks to the training of these lay ministers 13 new parishes could be opened in 1980 alone. Thus in 1983 there were 74 parishes for almost three million inhabitants while some further churches were already built or in the process of building.

Since the end of the 1970s the number of vocations for the priesthood has also been increasing considerably. In the three-year philosophy course, there were 80 seminarians from the archdiocese of Kinshasa, with 50 more in the theology course. At the quantitative level the aim is to provide care for around 250 parishes over the next thirty years or so, given that by the year 2000 the city should have a population of 6 million and twenty years later should have reached the 10 million mark. Financing such a programme represents a problem but resources increase as the number of churches increases and an effort is being made to develop a model for establishing parishes while keeping to ever stricter expenditure limits.

To a certain extent the image of the parish is that of a place of worship where the liturgy comes into its own; more fundamentally, however, it is a centre for stimulating the basic communities. The liturgy is very much alive. Relatively few masses are celebrated according to the full Zairian rite created in the mid-1960s, but the celebration of all masses involves the participation of the faithful which is characteristic of the Zairian rite.

This dynamism is also to be found in the organization of pastoral work at the top level. Together with all the bishops of Zaire the Archbishop of Kinshasa has always supported the Catholic Faculty of Theology and the efforts to Africanize the Church.

As far as the actual organization is concerned, three apostolic regions have recently been created. The central region is directed by the archbishop himself with an auxiliary bishop in charge of the two others. These regions are, however, more executive units or practical units than bodies for the conception of a particular form of pastoral care. Religious congregations also have an important role.

Ref. Pro Mundi Vita - Bulletin 99 - 1984/4.

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MISSION TO-DAY  
A LETTER FROM BANGLADESH

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*Bob McCahill e' un missionario del gruppo Maryknoll che vive in Bangladesh in un ambiente praticamente tutto musulmano. "Che cosa stai facendo?" chiede ogni tanto a se stesso. A volte sembra piu' importante essere semplicemente la', ad aiutare se si puo'. La lettera di Bob e' una testimonianza personale su come si puo' essere un missionario in questa epoca delle missioni.*

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"It is reported that the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed (SM), once said: "What actions are most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured." I am daily and deeply grateful to God for having given me one more year of life (number 47) with its many opportunities to gladden, to feed, to help, and to lighten the sorrows of others.

Probably this year's most surprising discovery has been that blind people, of whom Bangladesh has hundreds of thousands, wish to have their photographs taken. Ayub came to get his photo the other day. I had a nice one to present to him. He smiled broadly when I placed it in his hands. His companion, the boy who leads him around the town and villages, exclaimed: "Fine photo!" Ayub chuckled and squirmed with pleasure as others gathered to view his portrait. He cannot see it, of course. But others do see it, and offer their comments about it. That photo indicates to Ayub something about his value. It's as if I had told him: "You're important; I like you." Sometimes a photograph is like a hug.

It's easy to admire blind people. They instruct me by their good example. Every few days I pass by Banu who sits at the roadside begging. Her naked three-years-old daughter, Fori, plays in the dirt beside her. Last week I greeted the blind mother and her seeing child. Banu responded in her customary, cheerful way. Then she called my attention to the torn sharee she was wearing. I cajoled her: "Listen Banu! Already it's the hot season; torn clothing is advantageous; you'll be cooler and more comfortable that way." Banu's face lit up. She giggled merrily. Such a good humoured lady. Blind since birth, owning nothing, and always ready to laugh.

Some persons are so grievously ill that the best way I know to help them is by speaking a word of truth. Last month I admitted Bilayet to a hospital, but within one week they released him. They could not treat him; he should return to the village in order to die at home. Bilayet draped his arm over my neck while we descended the stairway, and sighed: "I'm so weak...couldn't eat all week long." I spoke of Allah's love for him, assured him that Allah knows what he's going through, and that he is a good person. Among those truths

the latter one was the most astounding for him to hear. No one ever tells a black, illiterate, threadbare and shoeless physically broken villager that he is a good person. Although Bilayet was beyond smiling, I believe he treasured until the hour of his death those three little words: You are good.

You may have read about the floods in Bangladesh this year. Recently I was slogging through thigh-deep waters in order to visit Amena, an ailing mother. It was slippery going. A crowd of onlookers watched expectantly for me to fall. I didn't disappoint them. As I lurched backwards into muddy water do you imagine that I heard expressions of sympathy or even politely muffled laughter? Not so. I heard, rather, guffaws and observed that even the sick lady was grinning. I'd touched her funnybone. Sometimes the good I accomplish is not the good I'd intended.

Multiply the above mentioned incidents by a few hundred or thousands and you'll have an accurate enough idea of what one Catholic missionary priest in a Muslim majority country has been doing. I try not to exaggerate the joy God gives me through the sick-poor. But, as a matter of fact, I'm truly happy, in love with persons who suffer without grumbling, and more in need of them than they are in need of me.

Praise belong to Allah!"

Your Brother,

Bob McCahill.

Postscript for fellow - pilgrims: Sometimes I accuse myself: Man, what are you doing!? When are you going to start helping to change structures that oppress people? You're so wrapped up in peoples' lives that you haven't the time or energy to grapple with the big issues. Then I beat my scrawny chest, admit my deficiencies, and view myself with calm amusement. Anyway ( I say to myself), who knows? Maybe God uses even my wee efforts to help transform oppressive structures.

Helping the poor is a work recommended by all the great religions. "Helping the poor" is also an expression so trite that I used to think it described just one among many laudable human activities. No longer do I underestimate that work. The promise of another Great Propheet is fulfilled: "When you give a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. They have no means of repaying you. That way lies real happiness for you."

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PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

From

THE SEDOS SEMINAR: MISSION AND REFUGEES, OCTOBER 31, 1984

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1. SEDOS members are international societies with contacts, frequently in US and Canada. They should avail of this 'to Sponsor' refugees for entry into these countries.
  2. Again - through their international contacts SEDOS members could put their US or Canadian members in contact with refugees from Italy who have been granted entry visas to these countries. Such contacts can be particularly helpful in the early days after the refugees' arrival.
  3. SEDOS could make available information on the legal aspects of "sponsoring" refugees, by individuals, societies, parishes, groups.
  4. Missionary Societies should pool their resources and act together in collaboration with each other in programmes for refugees 'sur place' in the countries where they work.
  5. SEDOS members are urged to make efforts, through the Italian Episcopal Conference and their own Societies, to bring pressure to bear on the Italian government to enact laws legalising the situation of refugees in Italy.
  6. There are many Asiatic refugees in Italy particularly from Vietnam. SEDOS should take an initiative in encouraging the publishing, in Italian, of books on Vietnamese culture.
  7. An abandoned or unused Church in Rome could be made available as a Mosque for Muslim refugees.
  8. Efforts should be made to help refugees understand the cultural patterns of receiving countries. There are nearly always some SEDOS members learning Italian - could they learn together with refugees where possible?
  9. Members should try to be informed about the complexities of the problem. There are few if any simple solutions. (Examples mentioned in the proposals were: an over simplification of the connection between Marxism and refugees; the materialistic attitude of some Europeans illustrated by a group of people taking a pastor to court for allegedly causing an increase in local taxation due to refugees services which he had undertaken).
  10. It is important to respect the cultural patterns and religious beliefs of refugees.
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**THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD REFUGEE CRISIS**

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*(At the World Council of Churches' Central Committee meeting held in Dresden in August 1981 the Committee adopted a Statement on "The Churches and the World Refugee Crisis". This is an abridged version of the Background Document presented to that meeting and is taken from the official booklet containing the Statement. The full text is available also in French, German and Spanish from WCC, 150 Route de Ferney, P.O.Box 66, 1211 Geneve 20, Switzerland.*

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*(Durante la riunione del Comitato Centrale del Consiglio Mondiale delle Chiese che ha avuto luogo a Dresden nell'agosto 1981, il Comitato ha fatto propria una Dichiarazione su "Le Chiese e la crisi mondiale dei Rifugiati". Questo e' un riassunto dal documento introduttivo presentato a questa riunione, tratto dall'opuscolo ufficiale contenente tale Dichiarazione. La versione integrale, disponibile anche in francese, tedesco e spagnolo, si puo' richiedere al WCC 150, Route de Ferney, P.O.Box, 66, 1211, Geneve 20, Switzerland.*

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INTRODUCTION

A worldwide refugee disaster of unprecedented proportions is fast developing, a cumulative nightmare for many millions of men, women and children forced to flee their homes. Whole populations have become refugees from war, repression or deprivation. Semi-permanent concentrations of refugees continue to accumulate in several parts of the world, but they risk being forgotten as newer refugee movements claim priority.

While some people choose to leave home, refugees do so involuntarily. The choice is forced upon them by turmoil or pervasive injustice where they live. In Africa an estimated 5 million refugees and displaced people have fled apartheid and its consequences in the southern part of the continent, or wars or oppressive regimes elsewhere. Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, has one of the highest concentrations of refugees in the world-1.5 million.

In Asia there are nearly 2 million refugees from Afghanistan in Pakistan, and at least 1.5 million people have fled wars and turmoil in Indochina. In the Middle East a just solution for the 1.7 million Palestinian refugees remains elusive, and hundreds of thousands of other refugees and displaced persons, including many Christians, are concentrated in Lebanon, Cyprus and elsewhere.

In Latin America close to 150 000 persons have sought refuge from repression in other countries, especially today in Central America. North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand remain the

major recipients of resettled refugees, and the recent Cuban and Haitian refugee movements have made the United States a country of first asylum.

Refugees have a natural claim on the churches. The concept of refuge is well-known in biblical thought. Thus for many years the churches have organized large-scale efforts to help refugees, first in Europe, then in all parts of the world. As the churches and other refugee-serving organizations seek to devise new international strategies, certain recent trends in refugee movements must be taken into account:

- a) The burden: The brunt of the world's refugee burden is borne by countries of the Third World. Although many western countries have made substantial efforts in settling and in financing and staffing refugee work generally, it is the countries which can least afford the presence of refugees that have the largest numbers of them.
- b) Population increases: Rapid increases in much of the world's population, especially in parts of the Third World, have magnified the potential for movements of refugees and others.
- c) National borders: National borders are much more sharply defined than they formerly were, which increases the probability of many people becoming refugees.
- d) World instability: The world is far more unstable than it was a generation ago. This is especially true politically and economically but also socially.
- e) Modern communications: Improvements in communication have allowed the world to become much more aware of refugee situations, and simultaneously better transportation has made possible the movement over long distances of considerable numbers of refugees.
- f) Growing pluralism: Movements of refugees and other people are making the world increasingly and irreversibly pluralistic. This is too often seen in a purely negative way which overlooks the many advantages that pluralism can bring.

#### MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Definitions: who is a refugee? The question of who, by definition, is and is not a refugee is of primary importance, but the definitions that have been formulated so far are by no means free of difficulty. The two basic international agreements which set guidelines for dealing with refugees are the United Nations *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, and the very similar *1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* which eliminated the 1951 cut-off date, and the geographic restriction for refugees covered by treaty.

It is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, created in 1951, which is charged with the task of supervising international conventions providing for the protection of refugees and of seeking durable solutions for the problems of refugees in cooperation with governments and voluntary agencies.

Asylum: The granting of asylum is not dealt with in the Convention or protocol. It is, however, recognized as an important issue in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that every person has "the right to seek and enjoy asylum" when his life and liberty are in danger.

"Non-refoulement": Directly connected with the question of asylum is the basic right of "non-refoulement", included in the Convention and Protocol, according to which governments should not expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. It is unfortunately well-known that in many parts of the world, governments have violated this fundamental right and that it is happening on a rapidly-growing scale.

Mass exodus: Although the needs of individual refugees may be met under the Convention and Protocol provided the host country so decides, nowhere in the language of these instruments is the phenomenon foreseen that again and again has so dramatically swelled the world's refugee population: the mass exodus.

Refugee rights: Because refugees are people, their rights go far beyond their claims to asylum from persecution. Refugees too are covered by all the basic provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are therefore entitled to the same treatment as nationals, or at least as favourable a treatment as possible.

Solutions: It is a sad reality that whilst the number of refugees is on the increase, the possibilities for solutions are decreasing.

- a) Voluntary repatriation, the ideal solution, remains a distant dream for most refugees.
- b) Local settlement within the region has met with only limited success because of the social, political and economic instability in the less-developed host countries.
- c) Resettlement of refugees from Third World countries in the industrial world may offer certain advantages and new opportunities to those who are admitted, but this "solution" is fraught with risks of discrimination, cultural shock, racism and exploitation.

#### GUIDELINES FOR THE CHURCHES

The world's Christians represent a vast potential for refugee advocacy and service.

On issues pertaining to the interpretation and application of the Convention and Protocol:

- a) The churches can help refugees by taking into account the importance-and the weaknesses-of the Convention and Protocol (and certain other international instruments like the OAU Convention) first by urging their respective governments, if they have not already done so, to *accede* to these agreements, and further, to encourage the *liberal application* of the provisions of the Convention and Protocol in matters of definition.
- b) The churches can also be protagonists for refugees by encouraging governments to accept the right to asylum of genuine applicants as an *inalienable human right* that transcends considerations of domestic or foreign policy.
- c) In full realization that it is a long-term prospect, the churches should support a *preventive approach* to the world refugee crisis.

On issues having to do with the rights of refugees:

- d) The churches should recall that their role in upholding the rights of refugees and other oppressed people is based upon an *ancient biblical and historical mandate*.
- e) The churches should remember that these issues are raised in *two places*: where the refugees fled from, and where they are now.
- f) The churches can serve as *advocates and teachers*. The inter-relatedness of the many human rights issues pertaining to refugees, their complexity, and the need for action have to be explained again and again even to maintain the present insufficient level of service endeavours.
- g) The churches should strive first for much improved *cooperation* between themselves, and then with all other refugee-serving organizations and the relevant international institutions.
- h) The churches can promote *healing and reconciliation*. Recognizing that any progress towards eliminating the human rights violations that produce refugees is likely to be very slow, The churches should in the meantime expand their efforts to ameliorate the suffering of homeless people wherever they are.
- i) Churches should study the recent idea of establishing an international *code of conduct* which would, whenever appropriate, make governments accountable for policies that produce large numbers of refugees.

Conclusion: Despite the difficulties of establishing order in a disordered world, and of bringing hope to refugees now in despair, the churches must strongly express their determination to help ease and finally solve the world refugee crisis. Churches everywhere should state and show their refusal to accent the chaos and injustice of the world as it is, and express their solidarity with all the refugees who have become its victims. Translated into action, this expression of solidarity means for the churches a much fuller participation in the search for global justice.

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**REFUGEES: SOURCE MATERIAL**

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James McDonnell, CSSp.

1. ICMC NEWSLETTER. Publication of the International Catholic Migration Commission, 37-39 rue de Vermont, CH-1202 Geneva. Available in English or French.
2. LES DOSSIERS FAIM DEVELOPPEMENT. Sometimes it carries an article on refugees. Available from: Faim-Development, 4, rue Jean Lantier, 75001 Paris.
3. MIGRATION NEWS. Quarterly publication of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). Devoted to migration, population, land settlement and refugees. The Agency is concerned with the problems of population movements and the migration of refugees and nationals.
4. MIGRATION TODAY. Published by the World Council of Churches, 150, route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20. It aims at providing a clearing house of ideas, resources, documentation and action on the migration process.
5. ON THE MOVE. Publication of the Pontificia Commissio de Spirituali Migratorum Atque Itinerantium Cura, Città del Vaticano. Deals with the pastoral care of migrants.
6. REFUGEES. A news sheet of the Refugee Service of the Commission on Interchurch Aid, Refugee and World Service, World Council of Churches, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20.
7. REFUGEES. A monthly newspaper of the UN High Commission for Refugees-Public Information Section, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10. Available in English, French, Italian. Very useful.
8. REFUGEE MAGAZINE. Is a supplement to the above mentioned monthly newspaper REFUGEES. Excellent.
9. RIFUGIATI-Edizione Italiana contains articles and information with particular reference to refugees in Italy.
10. SERVICE DE L'INFORMATION. A news sheet published by the United Nations, Geneva. Gives information on refugee and migration movements.
11. UNCHR FACT SHEET. Another publication of the UN High Commission for Refugees. It is full of information, statistics and figures on refugees. Available in English or French.
12. WORLD REFUGEES SURVEY. This is an annual published by the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR), 20 West 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018. An excellent and indispensable source of articles on main refugee movements and the issues involved. It also includes a Directory of Organizations, Books, Reports and Bibliographies in the field. And it costs only \$6.

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