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IN THIS ISSUE

How did Kuwait come to be an independent state? What was the role of the colonial powers? How has Islam been depicted during these months in the world press? What is Jihad? Is there an "Arab mentality"? Is the Gulf War the first North-South War? How will it affect Christian-Muslim dialogue? TOM MICHEL, SJ. spoke to these and other questions at a SEDOS Conference on February 21st. The complete text is in this issue.

How genuine are the South African President's moves toward the abolition of apartheid? Is there a possibility of a democratic form of government based on universal suffrage emerging soon? What are the causes of the unprecedented violence in South Africa to-day? Is it deliberately provoked as the South African Institute of Contextual Theology alleges in its KAIROS document? Is it meant to show the world that black South Africans cannot be trusted to take their place in a future government? CASIMIR PAULSEN, CMM answered some of these and other questions in his Conference on February 11th and introduced us to the new KAIROS document. We include a slightly shortened version of it in this issue.

What are the countries, churches, dioceses of Oceania? What is the missionary outreach of these churches and of the churches of Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea? A team of four speakers, one from each of the four areas introduced us to the many aspects of these churches at a Conference on February 27th. This issue contains the full text of the principal address given by FRANCIS GROSSIN, SM.

Over 3000 people, the majority lay, gathered at Lima, Peru for the Fourth Missionary Congress of Latin American Churches. Two Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa capture the atmosphere of the Conference. In this entertaining, serious and comprehensive report they describe some

of the key issues that emerged and evaluate the Conference. We thank the Sisters for permission to publish it here.

There are Mission Moments from Senegal, Niger, U.S.A., India, Mozambique and Somalia; news, notices of future SEDOS events.

NEWS

Three SEDOS Conferences took place in February. All were well attended. Texts of the Conferences form the main part of this Bulletin. The Christian-Muslim Commission will hold another Conference on March 18th. The speaker will be Justo Lucunza Balda M.Afr. of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies.

SEDOS Haiti Group will meet on April 8th at SEDOS Secretariat.

The Research Seminar - Prophetic Challenge in a Changing World is very heavily booked. We are seeking additional accommodation outside the Villa.

Justice & Peace. Note for your diary. There will be a full-day open meeting of the Rome Religious Justice and Peace office in the Brothers of the Christian Schools on April 30th, 1991.

SEDOS Bulletin. Help! We remind readers to send in their 1991 subscription if they have not yet done so. Please note that all SEDOS Members receive 3 complimentary copies of the Bulletin.

We have written to a number of SEDOS Bulletin readers for assistance in bringing our address list and receipt of payments up to date. If you have received a notice from us please help us by responding as soon as possible. Thank you!

SOUTH AFRICAN UPDATE

A SEDOS CONFERENCE; FEBRUARY 11, 1991

Casimir Paulsen, CMM

(Casimir Paulsen, CMM is a member of the Marianhill Missionaries. He has worked as a youth and hospital chaplain in South Africa, 1966-71, in parish ministry in Zambia, 1972-77, and as a university chaplain and diocesan youth director in Transkei, South Africa, 1978-87. On December 17, 1986 he was detained and tortured by the security police while in prison. He was released on March 11, 1987 and deported. At present he is working in Harare, Zimbabwe, with South African exiles most of whom are members of the African National Congress (ANC) which was banned until last year. Ed.)

After a short presentation on the situation in South Africa today, Fr. Paulsen invited questions. We give here the main points from this very interesting question and answer session with the participants, most of whom had personal experience of the South African situation. We follow this with the text of the new Kairos document referred to by Fr. Paulsen

Sanctions

Fr. Paulsen is opposed to the cessation of sanctions at this time and quoted the Conference of Catholic Bishops of South Africa and the South African Conference of Trade Unions in support of his position. European governments, and the U.S. to a lesser extent, are anxious to see the end of sanctions and get back to "business as usual". Fr. Paulsen advises that we should be guided mainly by the people on the spot when making any decision on this question.

Black-on-Black violence

The sources of news on "black-on-black" rioting and killing are

based on highly suspicious police reports (see the Kairos document below). There is widespread suspicion of a conspiracy to show that the black people of South Africa are unable to govern themselves and that any future democratic form of government would be chaotic. The Civil Co-operation Bureau, "new speak" for one of the most brutal death squads run by the South African Government deeply distrusted F.W. de Klerk and saw his policies as paving the way for a communist government.

The death squads of this Bureau were aligned ideologically more to the white right-wing than to the government they were intended to serve. The Bureau intended to strangle the new non-racial South Africa at birth and become the nucleus of a South African "RENAMO" which would undermine post-apartheid South Africa in the same way as RENAMO disrupted and still disrupts post-colonial Mozambique.

The Bureau was disbanded last year but its members have not been dismissed. Instead they have been transferred to the South African Defense Forces.

Land

The most oppressed people in South Africa are farm labourers. They flock to the cities, hoping in the end to own a little piece of land with a house on it. Some white farmers, anxious to mechanize, dismiss their workers who are literally dumped in the cities.

President de Klerk's recent statement is largely window-dressing regarding the land as it has already been allocated to whites. It is difficult to see how the whole system of land ownership can be overhauled against fierce Boer opposition, but the problem will have to be addressed sooner or later.

South Africans in Exile

Members of the ANC outside South Africa do not want to be called refugees but South Africans in Exile. They hope one day to return and to help bring about full independence. But few have returned before the date-line set by the government because returnees have to sign an "Indemnity Form" which contains a confession of guilt concerning involvement in ANC activities and involvement in damage to property. This means confession of guilt to the South African police! Also some returnees have been killed by "Askaris", who are known to be ANC renegades. Before any wholesale return of ANC refugees will occur, a general amnesty must be declared and there must be guarantees of life and safety. The Churches have been publishing long lists of political prisoners who are still held, asking for their release. They are also asking for a continuation of the sanctions until the principle "one person one vote" is conceded.

The government controls the

"irreversible process towards integration" but one must ask "process towards what kind of integration?" De Klerk has said that "one person one vote" is not the solution of South Africa's problems. Is it then towards continued white control, because blacks are unable to manage?

Race Distinction

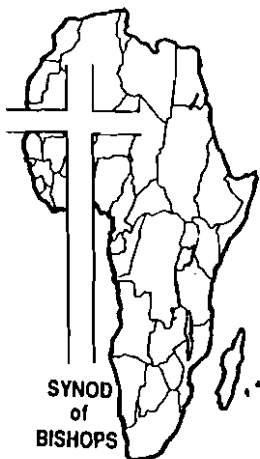
Schools are not allowed to take in more than 50% black pupils which means that the principle of race distinction still operates on paper. In practice when schools have been asked why they have more than 50% black pupils, the matter rests there. The returning officer has done his duty and a certain amount of intimidation has been applied.

Homelands

The Homelands are economic impossibilities, but they consider themselves independent states and out of the struggle. They will have to be re-integrated, perhaps as provinces in the future South Africa.

Fundamentalist Churches

In Mozambican refugee camps the Jimmy Swaggart movement and "World Vision" are influential. They propagate a highly personalistic individual religion and are linked with the S.A. government and the USA. The Catholic Church is not completely free to operate in ANC camps. The South African Government has always encouraged division, including religious division. In reaction to this the ANC insists on ecumenical pastoral programmes. In Harare we refer people back to their own Churches once they have returned to their home country.



VIOLENCE THE NEW KAIROS

CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Institute for Contextual Theology

In July 1985 the iron fist of the first state of emergency came down hard upon the people of South Africa's townships. Many were killed, injured, maimed for life or locked up in detention. Some of the pastors, theologians and church workers who were appalled by the iron fist of the police, came together to write the Kairos Document. They said that it was a moment of truth for the Church and that it was no longer possible to remain silent or to indulge in vague generalities.

The Kairos Document was published on 25 September, 1985. Today, exactly five years later, with violence of horrific proportions and the real possibility of even more violence to come if the perpetrators are not exposed soon, we face a crisis, a moment of truth, that is even more of a kairos than 1985. It has been said that if we had all heeded the prophetic warning of the Kairos Document five years ago, today's violence could have been avoided. Be that as it may, the challenge to the Churches at this moment in our history is more serious than ever before.

The challenge

What is required of us in the present circumstances is a penetratingly astute analysis of the signs of our times. We cannot afford to be fooled by the propaganda, the cover-ups, the smoke screens, the lies and the confusion. For, as Jesus warns us, *the children of darkness are frequently more astute than the chil-*

dren of light (Lk 16:8). We cannot afford to rely upon superficial explanations of the present violence: tribalism, political rivalry between ANC and Inkatha, gangsterism, poverty, conditions in the hostels, police partiality and so forth. Some of these things are indeed factors to be considered but there is more to it than meets the eye. We must become astute enough to find out what is really going on.

The conditions for violence

A good analysis will need to be clear about the difference between the causes of the violence and the conditions that make violence possible. The present conditions in South Africa are the results of oppression and exploitation, of colonialism and apartheid. Most black people have been deprived of their land, reduced to poverty, forced into hostels as migrant workers or into squatter camps as job-seekers, while others have managed to settle permanently as residents in townships. Exploitation and apartheid education have given us a vast number of semi-literate unemployed youth. The homelands policy failed, but it left us with potential tribalism in some places and a certain amount of tension between urban and rural people. The potential for conflict, has been there for a long time.

The unbanning of political organisations on February 2, the release of political prisoners and the talks about talks have not really

changed the conditions of life in the townships. At first there was hope but for those whose sufferings have continued and even become worse despite all the talk about a new South Africa hope has turned into disillusionment. On the other hand, the prospect of majority rule and the possibility of some form of socialism in the future has filled many whites with greater fear than ever. Disillusionment, fear and mistrust only serve to make the situation even more of a fire hazard.

Nor has the Church itself been all that helpful in diffusing potential conflict. Many pastors have actually contributed to the conditions that do not make for peace by underlining the fear of communism or socialism. They create an unbridgeable gulf between the spiritual and the material. Many pastors give the impression that the values of the gospel are so exclusively personal, private and spiritual that they have little or no bearing upon social, political, economic, national, tribal and racial affairs, except to condemn blindly everything associated with communism. As we now see, that has been of no help at all in preventing violence. However, none of this can be said to be the cause of the recent violence in our country. These are only the conditions that have been so effectively exploited. By whom? Who started the fires around the country?

THE PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

Allegations of police using excessive force against crowds of people engaging in peaceful marches or rallies have been made frequently. At times the people have retaliated by throwing stones, going on the rampage or attacking the police themselves. In Natal, affidavits presented to the courts point to indiscriminate attacks. Everyone involved, both the attackers and the victims, are Zulus. But tensions between rural and urban Zulus,

between squatters and residents, between supporters of Inkatha and supporters of the ANC, have been systematically exploited by the warlords to fuel the fires of violence and bloodshed. But what for?

In recent months the violence has been systematically and deliberately exported from Natal to the Southern Transvaal. The evidence from the people in the affected areas is unanimous. In one township after the other the violence was deliberately sparked off by mysterious people and by certain white policemen. The spark in most cases was a skillfully placed rumour. The fact that hostel residents have been armed and that the police role has been highly partial, has meant that the violence has been even more devastating.

All the eyewitnesses attest to the fact that there was nothing spontaneous about the conflict. It was carefully orchestrated and it had nothing to do with tribalism. 40% of the residents in Soweto who were attacked by hostel dwellers were themselves Zulus. In Thokoza especially, attempts were made to get Zulus and Xhosas to fight. Nor were the attacks aimed solely at the ANC or at the young comrades. Residents of the townships were killed indiscriminately.

What we are dealing with here is a well planned conspiracy. In some places it simply didn't work. In Soshanguve, Atteridgeville and Alexandra, for example, the rumours were spread, but the civic associations intervened quickly to avert the violence by showing both residents and hostel dwellers that they were being used as pawns by unscrupulous instigators of violence.

Naked terrorism

Gradually the plotters, whoever they are, began to overplay their hands: minibuses with armed men,

black and white, shooting people indiscriminately in several townships and in the centre of Johannesburg, balaclava-clad gunmen, whites with faces painted black and then the great train massacre. No attempt was made to disguise this violence as tribalism or factionalism or political rivalry or any other form of so-called black on black violence. It was naked terrorism executed by well-trained and highly professional hitmen.

A pattern now begins to emerge. In all the different incidents from the shooting of peaceful marchers to Inkatha warlords, from the burning of squatter camps to train massacres, from the inciting of hostel dwellers to the failed attempts to set Indian and African against one another in Natal, one aim or purpose emerges. It is known as destabilisation. All the evidence, according to the best analysts, is pointing to a well-planned conspiracy to destabilise the emerging new South Africa. Why? And who is responsible?

THE CONSPIRACY

There is a sinister hand behind it all, a "third force". It is possible to narrow down the range of possibilities by trying to answer two questions: who would have sufficient motive to want to commit the crime? and who would have the means to execute it? There are people who could have a sufficient motive because destabilisation is in their interest, but they do not have the means, the resources, the power, the weapons, the professionalism, the information and the skills to carry it out. On the other hand some who have the means might lack a motive since it does not benefit their cause.

The "Right Wing"?

We can begin with the Right Wing, e.g., the AWB and all the other

militant formations. Destabilisation is very much in their interest. They want to reverse the process of negotiations that Mr. de Klerk says is now irreversible. But does any right wing group have the means to mount a national operation that is so sophisticated, so professional, so well co-ordinated and so invisible? And which right wing group has the power to give instructions to policemen and to Inkatha supporters, and to employ extremely well-trained black and white hitmen? The so-called "third force" is not a right wing formation like the AWB, although individual rightwingers are no doubt members of this "third force".

Inkatha?

What about individuals in Inkatha? Because Inkatha feels excluded from the negotiation process and because it is losing support, and because Mr. Mandela has proved to be so much more popular than Chief Buthelezi, there are some who believe that individuals in Inkatha might well regard it as in their interest to destabilise the present process and especially to destabilise the ANC. But these individuals in Inkatha do not possess the means, the resources and the influence over white policemen. Inkatha is not *"the fox behind the wolves who are killing us"* as a woman from Soweto put it, nor is it the *"third force"*.

Police?

Many people believe that the police are behind all the recent violence. Whatever Mr. Vlok may say, some policemen are certainly responsible for not preventing the violence. They have protected Inkatha supporters and the hostel-dwellers, they have stood by watching while the violence rages and they have themselves been responsible for the shooting of countless people. On the other hand, not all policemen have been involved.

Black policemen are often excluded from acts of killing or destabilisation and some police officers have genuinely tried to work for peace. But it is unlikely that a group of white policemen alone could command the necessary authority and resources to execute such a sophisticated conspiracy.

Special Forces of the SADF

If we are looking for people with the resources, the weapons, the expertise and training, the professionalism and the experience, the ability to kill and to destabilise, then we must surely look at the history of the SPECIAL FORCES of the SADF. Destabilisation has always been their speciality: in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They have always trained and used surrogate forces: Koevoet, Unita, Renamo. That the special forces have been training Inkatha at a place called Hippo along the Caprivi Strip seems to be supported by incontrovertible evidence gathered by the alternative press (Weekly Mail 21/9/90, p.1).

Moreover the evidence presented to the HARMS COMMISSION has made us all more aware of the sinister role played by one of these Special Forces: the CIVIL CO-OPERATION BUREAU (CCB). We have also heard of the use that was made of Askari death squads and other highly trained hitmen.

Destabilisation

Here we have the people with all the means necessary to orchestrate a massive covert operation of destabilisation. They have the motivation. It would be the same as their reasons for destabilising Mozambique or Angola and their reasons for trying to destabilise SWAPO and the ANC over so many years. Their reasons would be the same as those of other similar forces in other parts of the world, from Central America to

the Philippines. These reasons are quite simply to wreck any attempt (by a government or a potential government) that is perceived to be a move towards a Marxist one party state, or a move towards communism.

Many whites and not a few blacks believe that the greatest danger for the future is the ANC's talk about negotiations and its close association with the South African Communist Party (SACP). At the level of politics this entails discrediting the SACP, ridiculing nationalisation and trying to weaken the support for the ANC. At the level at which these elements operate anything goes: killings, massacres, wars, terrorism; as long as it helps to destabilise communism.

"Low Intensity Conflict"

The conspiracy behind the violence in South Africa today has a name. Its advocates or proponents throughout the world call it Low Intensity Conflict. There is no conclusive proof and in such operations it would be very difficult to find conclusive proof; but "*Direct involvement by members of the military's special forces, in the violence, for personal or other reasons, cannot be ruled out*" (Weekly Mail 21/09/90, p.2). If this were true, then, as in the case of the CCB operatives, a question arises about the line of command. How far up does it go?

Church leaders and the Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal Repression (IBIR) have handed over a large number of sworn affidavits to the government. The ANC leadership has presented dossier after dossier of evidence pointing to a sinister plot. The alternative press has also unearthed a great deal of information. So the evidence is there, and in any case if the police and the army were really interested in finding out who was behind the violence they would be questioning the hostel-dwellers, the squatters, the residents

and black police officers, they would be collecting affidavits, they would be following up clues like the bullets used, the false number plates on minibuses, the whites with blackened faces and so forth. The fact that they are not doing most of this and that they have instituted *Operation Iron First* instead, is in itself very, very suspicious. Are these the signs of our time?

CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

Many Church leaders and pastors have shown great concern for the victims of violence and for the women and children who have become refugees. They have visited the strife-torn townships, collected affidavits and taken them to Mr. Vlok and to Mr. de Klerk. They have tried to get individuals and groups to meet with one another and they have made numerous appeals for peace from the pulpit and through the media.

But all of this does not reduce the contradictions and crises of the present situation. There is more violent conflict than ever before. Exiles are about to return, prisoners are being released, and yet others are still being detained. Mysterious forces are killing our people. The Church itself is caught up in these dilemmas: the more the Church appeals for peace, the more the violence continues; and the more the Church condemns the savagery of the killings, the more savage they become; and the more the Church speaks about reconciliation, the more the people plead for arms to defend themselves against attack. Appeals for peace have more and more of a hollow ring about them because they do not put the blame for the violence where it really belongs outside the townships. Here then is the new kairos.

A prophetic word

A strong, clear prophetic word is needed. We dare not sit back and

wait because the evidence is not yet technically complete, while hundreds of people are being slaughtered in our streets. We must speak up, we must raise questions, we must take risks, we must call for inquiries. Together with the lawyers, the politicians and the journalists we must monitor the violence, search for its causes and try to make the truth known. We must not be afraid to point a finger in the direction of those who are conspiring against us all. The violence must be stopped at its source.

Let Mr. Vlok and Mr. Malan shout at us. Let our critics accuse us, let the death squads themselves haunt us. But for the sake of those who are suffering we must speak out. In the name of God we must condemn those who hire others to kill, those who treat black life cheaper than dirt, those who plot and conspire and provoke others into acts of savagery. The wickedness of these conspirators has no precedent even in South Africa. We must condemn their sin, even if we have never seen their faces and we don't know their names. We must say to them, in the name of God, "*Thou shall not kill*".

False prophecies

A prophetic word would also have to show how this violence and the conspirators behind it **expose the false prophecies** of a new South Africa, of an end to the season of violence, of an end to white domination and control. Apartheid, racism, oppression and violence are still very much part of the system that rules our lives - despite all the promises of a different future. The Church must continue to take action, inside and outside of the Church itself, against any form of racism, discrimination or injustice, and find ways and means of healing and repairing the damage that has been done to all the people of South Africa by apartheid.

A WORD OF HOPE

And finally a prophetic word from the Church at this time must be above all a word of hope. Nothing could be more hopeless than the realisation that you are unable to defend yourself and your family, that there is no one else to defend you, that your attackers will never be apprehended and that justice will not be done. Some measure of hope could be restored if there were a prophetic church leadership that would risk everything to search for the truth, to publish the truth and to take every action possible to ensure that justice is done.

The Church should also encourage the people of the townships to

organise themselves into structures like civic associations which would ensure greater unity on the ground. This in turn, will help to resist the counter-revolutionary tactics of the enemy. God in Jesus Christ is our hope. But how do we communicate this to people who live in fear of the next attack?

Call for justice

The primary task of the Church at this moment, then, is not to call for peace but to call for justice. The culprit must be found and brought to justice. And there must be no cover-ups. Because unless justice is done and seen to be done, there is no hope of peace in the near future.



MISSIONARY CONGRESS

**COMLA 4 — LIMA
February 1991**

Josefa Martínez, MSOLA
Beverly Lacayo, MSOLA

(Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, Josefa Martínez and Beverly Lacayo participated in the recent Missionary Congress of Latin America (COMLA IV). This is their personal report on the Congress. They begin with a short analysis of the social-economic situation in Perú which we have to omit for reasons of space. A cholera epidemic during the Congress reflected the appalling poverty and lack of infrastructure in LIMA especially in health and social facilities. Responsibility for bombings which took place even during the Congress was claimed by Sendero Luminoso and Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru - two groups trying to destabilize the government. Ed.).

The Congress was held at San Augustin, a large private secondary school located in the heart of modern Lima run by religious, and with plenty of space for all the activities. More than 2000 came from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, the U.S. and Canada. The Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio Texas, an Irishman who barely spoke Spanish, represented the U.S. Bishop's Committee on Missions. He was not seen toward the end of the Congress and was not at the group meeting by nationality which took place on the last day. The Mexican delegation was about 50.

At the opening Mass in the Cathedral on Sunday, we counted 78 Bishops and Archbishops, including 3 Cardinals. There were substantial representative groups from the Bishops' Conferences of all the larger Latin American countries. Delegations from big countries like Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Colombia were composed of bishops, directors of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Holy Childhood, diocesan and missionary priests, sisters, lay men and women, and single young

adults. A few families came as well.

Some Africans were present - students in Brazil and other L.A. countries. Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, Chairman of the Episcopal conference of Zaire was present for the whole Congress.

DAY ONE

Cardinal Tomko, the Pope's special envoy to the Congress, spoke of the missionary needs of the Church as a whole, giving special place to Africa and the need for inculturation. But he also spoke of the needs of humanity through integral development, justice, and liberation from all forms of evil.

Archbishop Luciano, as Chairman of the Brazilian Episcopal Conference Archbishop Luciano Mendes de Almeida of Mariana gave an overall view of the Church in the context of modern day Latin America.

The bad news: terrible injustice in the social and economic order,

both within countries and between countries, disregard for human rights, illiteracy, debt, migrations, frequent and violent changes of government.

The good news: strong pastoral movements, communication between Episcopal Conferences, a change of outlook leading to sympathy for the needy, speaking out for justice, fearlessness even in the face of persecution, ministry to the exploited, attempts to achieve a better distribution of land in some countries using the word of God in preaching, better participation in the liturgy, the spread of justice through the basic Christian Communities, middle-class movements to transform society, theological reflection to promote working people and native peoples, the rise of a missionary movement towards Africa.

The not-so-good: some specific problems for the Church of Latin America: there is still a lot of religiosity in the cities which are secular in ambiance, but no support from the church in the form of teaching or help in understanding their situation; proselytism from the protestant churches, particularly sects; personal and family moral decline.

The aim of COMLA IV. It was clearly defined: to give information, to have serious exchanges on the topics, to come to practical conclusions which will lead to sending more missionaries "ad gentes".

The passivity of a Church, evangelized for 500 years, and having 40% of the world's Catholics but less than 2% of the Church's missionaries, weighed heavily on church leaders. The Pope's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, quoted extensively on the first day, served as a rallying point throughout the Congress. The Eucharist, followed by folk dancing and singing, marked the end of the first day.

DAY TWO - (AFRICA)

Archbishop Monsengwo spoke on inculturation of the faith in Africa with special reference to Zaire. He was very well received by the participants and got a long and enthusiastic standing ovation. His approach was scholarly. He explained well the real meaning of inculturation, distinguishing it from folkloric adaptation. He invited Latin American missionaries to deepen the inculturation of their own faith. They could then come to Africa to dialogue and to enrich their own and the African Church's sense of mission and its basic Christian communities. What he shared was good, especially his explanation of inculturation from an incarnational theology standpoint. As a Biblical scholar he elaborated on this in rich detail. He also shared with us an African outlook on religious poverty, marriage, family life and burial rites which spoke to real needs in the Latin American Church.

However, we thought he did not give a sense of the problems which are facing Africa and the Church in Africa today. It was not a realistic picture, nor was there any sense of the urgency of the needs. We had the feeling that he was rather a scholar, and probably not in touch with the grass-roots. However, he may have taken this approach deliberately. He was mobbed by autograph seekers after his talk.

Beverly overheard an interesting conversation while waiting in line with some Mexican religious. The Africans' way of looking at poverty seemed more like their own, they were saying: "We complicate our lives by trying to be poor. Better just to share everything and we'll never be rich!" "The trouble is we've taken the European way which is to save and economise so we can have more and invest it and buy bigger, better and more things. In our religious life we

are taking this same model. We economise so we can have money to go ahead with our projects instead of trusting in God."

Panels. The main speakers were to be followed each day by a panel of three to continue the theme from different perspectives. However, on Africa Day, the speakers did not give much of a perspective on Africa and very little on inculturation.

Singing and "witnessing" followed the panels. Lay people, sisters and clergy who had missionary experience took part. Some of the most moving and lively material was brought forth during these sessions. A black man from Brazil, a descendant of slaves, told us he had gone as a missionary to Angola to help repay the debt Brazil owed to Africa. He discovered his roots there and also the gift that the African Church has to offer the world.

Lunch was served around 12:30 in boxes and we ate either on the lawns under big umbrellas or at picnic tables under a canopy in one of the patios of the school.

Group work At 14:30 we came together in five large groups: youth; lay adults; women religious; secular priests and men religious; bishops, Propagation of the Faith directors and major superiors. These large groupings were given a short introduction and questions on which to work. They then broke into smaller groups of 25-30. The women religious had 20 such groups!

The biggest surprise of the group work on the first day was that more than half the women religious groups reported in one form or another that they felt the organisers had been quite chauvinist in their preparations. There were no women religious missionaries represented among the speakers nor among the panelists. No question had been proposed on this topic, it emerged

spontaneously. One group put it quite strongly: in the Latin American Church the men make the decisions and the women do the work.

DAY THREE - (ASIA)

Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila gave a truly fine presentation of the Church in Asia. It was a comprehensive view of the different large ethnic groups - India, China, Japan, Indonesia; the great religions; the problems and struggles as well as the opportunities. The Cardinal was full of humour. He interspersed his message with stories which went straight to the heart. His theme was that the main gift of the Church in Asia is dialogue. Since Christians were a minority they had much to learn from Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists, Taoists and Muslims, all of whom number in the hundreds of millions and whose traditions span thousands of years. These eastern religions are, for the most part, religions of peace and dialogue. Dialogue has brought a great creativity and new life in the theology and spirituality of the Catholic Church in Asia. In spite of its status as an extreme minority it has been notable for its service and its vocations.

He noted problems: great poverty, struggles for justice and freedom, the extreme youth of the population (79% are under 24); violent upheavals, wars and repressions. He gave special emphasis to the needs of the Church in mainland China. This is the time for helping that Church. The most important and urgent need is for prayer. It is vital that there be a successful conclusion to the negotiations between Beijing and the Vatican for reconciliation with and within the local Church. There is also need for small economic projects to which the present government is open. There are 15 major seminaries with 600 seminarians who need help especially with

modern books. There are also women religious who have no resources for formation and who need the help of modern theological and pastoral literature since all are still in the pre-vatican II era.

Inculturation is the biggest challenge to the Church in Asia for its own sake as well as for credibility among Asians. Other needs he mentioned were basic Christian communities and a theology of social justice which would give the poor some hope about the possibility of change.

The Panel carried on with the theme of **religious dialogue**. The interrelatedness of dialogue and inculturation came out strongly. There has never been and still is not much dialogue with the indigenous cultures of Latin America; their religions and cultures were violently irradiated. The Church in Latin America must first be sure that it has learned something about dialogue and inculturation at home, otherwise it will export the same kind of colonialist missionary methods it has known in the past 500 years.

Group work dealt with the **proliferation of sects** in Latin America. Women religious stressed the need for formation in biblical spirituality for both religious and laity, stronger family catechesis and more rallies for youth. There was an admission by all groups in our section, that catechesis lacked a sound doctrinal foundation. Again the question of clerical dominance emerged. Laity and religious women need to be taken into the pastoral planning. Also mentioned were the lack of presence among the poor, and the lack of closeness to them in their needs and problems, especially their unjust living situations.

The group work during three afternoons brought us into more contact

with pastoral realities in Latin America. We could see **a continent which was very uneven in its theological and pastoral development**. Many of the religious were still speaking in a maternalistic and pietistic way about their work and could not even understand the suggestions and contributions of those who were actively involved in basic Christian communities and social justice struggles. Others were convinced that the institutional Church had all the answers including the plans of how to evangelise the world and how to create a missionary awareness among the people of Latin America. Although the participants saw the need for commitment to scriptural spirituality and an option for the poor in ministry no one that we heard in our groups or in the larger assemblies, linked the option for the poor with scripture.

Evening liturgies always had an element of inculturation or adaptation to the world region of the main speaker-celebrant. Cardinal Sin was the main celebrant in the evening. He came for this one day only.

DAY FOUR - (LATIN AMERICA)

Latin America day began with "Buenos Dias America!" a rousing song in which each country is mentioned by name and its flag is raised by the choir as the name of the country is sung. This turned out to be the most popular song of the Congress. The day was dedicated to Mary the Mother of God and Mother of Christians.

Bishop Luis Augusto Castro a Consolata Missionary from Colombia was the main speaker. He gave 10 points which he felt were essential if the churches in Latin America are to become truly missionary. We record them here.

1. **A universalist education** in the

faith applied to education and catechesis. The mind and heart are made to encompass all creation, so too should our understanding of God's call and our mission.

2. **Faith in the missionary power of the poor** Indigenous missionary vocations have been so few because we do not trust the poor. We think they are not capable of this great effort of faith. So it was with women in the 1st centuries of the missionary movement. Men thought that women were too frail for missionary work. Today they are the most numerous in the field.

3. **Clear missionary theology** Undo the links with colonialism. All are children of God, all are our brothers and sisters.

4. **Popularization** Whoever brought first aid and education in nutrition out from under the prerogatives of medical experts and taught these to ordinary people understood the value of popularization. We need to popularize the church's mission, get it out of the esoteric to the ordinary Christian.

5. **Creativity** Look for thousands of ways to reach people and help them to expand, to become people of the world whose minds and hearts encompass the whole of creation.

6. **Global motivation** Give Christians a vision of what they are working towards in mission - a world of justice, peace, sisterhood and brotherhood, where each human being is valued and each culture contributes its truth and beauty. Make them part of this universal vision.

7. **Care for ethnicity** Americans and Europeans need to learn to care for the wound they have inflicted by ignoring the ethnic cultures of the people they evangelized. They must not forget this wound. They must let Christ take root in all our own indigenous cultures, otherwise we will never commit ourselves to the mission "ad extra".

8. **Move people from "being evangelized" to "being evangelizers"** Restore this reality to each Christian. Anything which helps a person to pass from being passive to being active will help that person to become an evangelizer.

9. **Understand responsibility for missionary animation** The local Bishop is the first who must allow himself to be led by the Spirit to animate his people to be missionary.

10. **Diocesan support for missionaries** - in a broad sense, by popular prayers and interest, as the astronauts are supported by thousands of technicians and mission control personnel; in a specific sense, by taking initiatives at diocesan level. If we are serious about animating a missionary effort in Latin America we will have diocesan centers for missionary information, education and animation; creative teams for missionary animation in parishes; missionary send-offs; formation of lay missionaries etc.

He reminded us that Latin American missionaries have already gone out. There are 1000 in Africa; 700 in South America; 310 in Asia; and 336 in Oceania.

Panels We learned on this 4th day that COMLA was organised by the national directors of the Propagation of the Faith and that the direct line of responsibility for missionary animation in the Diocese comes from the Bishop through these directors. (A clear message to religious and missionary institutes!)

We also learned about the "Jovenes sin fronteras", youth and childrens' missionary groups. These groups were directly responsible for almost all the services enjoyed by COMLA IV - security at all the gates, ushering, serving food, singing, putting rooms in order, making posters, distribution of materials, etc. Immediate preparation for COMLA IV was

started a year before by a group of 800 planners from all the countries who gathered in Lima.

The panelist from the Vatican, a former missionary and superior general, quoted extensively from one document after another. The contrast with the liveliness of the other speaker was striking.

Groupwork The groups were asked to make concrete suggestions for commitment which would be shared on the final day.

The Banco Nacional, across from the college, had an exhibit of Latin American Church history. It gave much attention to the 500 years of evangelization as did this Day 4 of the Congress. On the grounds before the evening celebration of the Eucharist a native lay woman was walking around with a placard which said: "500 YEARS OF OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION" and showed an Indian being beaten down by a Spaniard.

DAY FIVE (RECOMMENDATIONS)

The five major groups reported their recommendations for commitment.

Youth Among the many good suggestions of the youth were: reach out to all parish groups so they know that every apostolate is missionary; organize diocesan centers for mission animation and formation (an idea which came back in all the groups); have radical integral formation in mission, including anthropology, linguistics and Scripture; support the existing missionary institutes; encourage lay missionary institutes; make prayer and retreat centers accessible to lay people; utilize the mass media; organize national mission congresses for youth and missionary "send-offs" (another idea mentioned in each group); bishops should give directives of encouragement for the missionary education of youth at their next CELAM meeting in Santo

Domingo, 1992.

Lay adults Their specific contribution was: include missionary in all seminaries and formation institutes; create regional research and study centers; encourage study of church history to avoid the mistakes of the past; encourage lay-missionary work not only outside but also within the country; include lay people in missionary and pastoral planning.

Religious women Their specific contribution was: incorporate their efforts with those of the diocese; stress inculturation and respect for indigenous cultures in the novitiates and houses of formation; revise their structures to be more open to the marginalized; encourage a feminist theology; ensure that more women are represented in COMLA V, its presentations and panels.

It was truly remarkable that there was only one woman panelist and no main women speaker in the whole of COMLA IV. The Bishop of Lima, chairing this part of the Congress, tried to make excuses for this lack of women. He was booed by the assembly, something unheard of, but he accepted it graciously.

Religious men and diocesan priests

Their recommendations: conscientize bishops and parish priests; include missionary education in diocesan pastoral plans; ask CELAM once again for a commitment to national missionary formation centers for priests and laity (apparently it had already been asked at COMLA III); offer to send and support lay missionaries and diocesan priests overseas for periods of two years; invite missionary institutes to participate in planning and formation for missionary education in the dioceses; continue COMLA IV in each diocese by coming together

once a year in each country; parish priests should not leave everything in the hands of the institutes.

Bishops, Propagation of the Faith and major superiors

Their recommendations included: the internal and external mission in the Church should enrich both mutually; the local church is the subject of the internal mission; to stimulate native and black vocations missionary animation must penetrate all levels of catechesis, must establish national formation centers using and building on what is already in existence, and cooperating with other Christian churches and secular educational facilities; support missionary institutes which have a vital role to play in educating secular clergy; support basic Christian communities and encourage them as missionary communities; major superiors should ensure greater stability of their personnel in the missions; CELAM 1992 should take up these priorities from COMLA IV, concretize them further and make a stronger commitment to mission; women religious and laity should have a greater place in COMLA V.

After this we met in national groups for one hour. Meanwhile representatives of each of the five large groups came together to draw up the recommendations and priorities of the Congress.

Priorities and Commitments

There were three priorities:

1. Missionary animation at all levels for all people.
2. Missionary formation.
3. Organisation to promote and facilitate missionary "send-offs"

Commitments

Commitments were too many to list here but they will be published extensively in the official Congress Report, itself one of the commitments. Probably the most likely to be followed up were: that CELAM 1992 take the conclusions of COMLA IV as a working paper; that religious women, lay people, and indigenous people have greater responsibility in COMLA V; that a permanent committee be established to follow-up and evaluate COMLA IV.

Brazil was chosen unanimously as the venue for COMLA V in 1995 by the Bishops and Propagation of the Faith directors.

The closing liturgy was held in an enclosed stadium, and included a missionary send-off of all Peruvians and others, who were being missioned in 1991. The biggest cheers went to lay people being missioned to Africa. Once again the favorite missionary songs of the Congress were taken up enthusiastically, including an offertory hymn in a local Zairean language. Msgr. Monsegwo, who stayed for the entire congress, personally blessed all those who were being sent to Africa.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Great organization! A total of 2300 participants; about 600 religious women and 600 priests and Bishops; 1100 lay people, including 300 youth who provided all the services for the Congress; 2500 people participated in the simultaneous TV presentation which was being held in the sports arena of the school and completely separate from the Congress. That this large group of people could have such a profitable, well organized and enjoyable experience for five days, given the context of terrorism and a cholera epidemic says much for those responsible.

Participation of the hierarchy gave some credibility to the commitments and priorities. The Congress was a living and practical witness of mission; a great desire to take the Church's mission seriously; a beautiful, ambience; youth kept it going, full of joy, songs, and genuine service; gracious hospitality by convents and families who opened their homes to us; beautiful and authentic presentations of folkloric dancing and singing from most of the countries represented.

Other observations The view of Latin America and Asia given to the participants was good. The view of Africa was limited.

It was clear that religious women and laywomen were a disfavoured sector. There was a strong movement to promote a missionary laity.

Very little was said about the missionary institutes.

Communication was poor; no structures of communication between the separate groups until the final session on recommendations.

Religious and missionary institutes were not given a forum.

U.S. representation was very poor considering that the U.S. has more than 60 million people of Latin American origin. We five from the U.S., together with the Canadians, made a suggestion that future invitations be sent individually to the Hispanic Bishops of the U.S. They could activate their dioceses to send representatives. We felt it would be a blessing for the Hispanic Catholic population in U.S. and Canada to be able to participate in such a Congress.

If the commitment to missionary animation which emerged at the Congress gets to the grass roots there will be a good terrain for missionary vocations.

We felt that the Bishops want to do something at national and diocesan level, but they do not seem to be in communion with the missionary church. The Congress was a genuine effort to start communicating. It needs plenty of follow-up.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
and
RELIGIOUS ASPECTS
of the
GULF WAR**

A SEDOS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 21, 1991

Tom Michel, SJ

(Tom Michel, SJ is Secretary of the Commission for Islam at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Rome).

It is difficult for Christians in Europe to understand why many Muslims, particularly those living in the Arab countries, should be supporters of Saddam Hussein, a man often presented by the Western press as "a new Hitler". We see on television that many Arabs are responding positively to Saddam's appeal for a "Jihad", an armed struggle against the Western powers and the allied Arab governments.

Here, in an attempt to help us reach a better understanding of the feelings of Muslim Arabs, I would like to show how the fundamental issues of the Gulf crisis appear to a lot of Muslims, especially in the Arab countries. The justification for this "biased" presentation is the fact that we have frequent opportunities - from the newspapers, television, and politicians - to hear how the problem appears to the governments of the West, but the position of the Muslim Arabs is less known and, frankly, often distorted.

I A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

In the recent *Civiltà Cattolica* Article: "War is an adventure without return" (1991 1:221), the conflict is presented as a clash between two opposite points of view: the historical-geographical type, and the juridical-legal type. I agree sub-

stantially with the analysis made in that article, although, as shall be seen, with some variations. The historical argument produced by Iraq as justification for the invasion of Kuwait, is that it has always been an integral part of Iraqi territory. It was subsequently carved up by England, to protect its own maritime interests and eventually the oil wells. This argument has been vigorously denied by the Western press, where it has often been called a lie, affirming that Kuwait has always existed and was visited by the Portuguese, and recognized by the Ottomans, etc.

A glance at history shows us that as often happens with historical events, reality remains ambiguous and debatable. In the Ottoman Empire until the end of the last century, the province of Iraq was divided into three districts: Mosul (in the north), Baghdad (the center), and Bassora (in the south). In theory, Kuwait and the neighbouring desert were part of the Bassora district. But everything depended on the power of the Ottoman Empire; when the Ottoman reign was strong, (as it was after 1870), it also included Kuwait; during the weak periods of the Ottoman regime, the Sheikh of Kuwait, nominally a governor of the Ottoman regime, reigned virtually independently. From 1756, the Sheikh of Kuwait was always a descendant of the Sabah family.

Istanbul-Baghdad Railway

The Ottomans wished to build a railway from Istanbul to Baghdad. Three European countries, England, France and Germany, who all had hegemonic aims in the area, competed to implement this idea. The winner was Germany, which wanted to extend the railway from Baghdad to Bassora, as far as the port of Kuwait. The English interpreted these plans as a threat to their presence in India, and in 1899 made a secret pact with the Sheikh of Kuwait, under whom the zone became an English protectorate. One of the reasons that relations with England were attractive to the Sheikh, was that bands of Arabs allied with the Saudis, used often raid the territory.

During the First World War, the English invaded Iraq and after the war, divided the region from the Ottoman Empire. In this way they created a state for their protégé Feisal, of the Hashemite family. There were no fixed frontiers in the desert between Iraqi, Kuwaiti and Saudi territories, and therefore vast zones were reclaimed by all three. In 1922, at a famous meeting in the middle of the desert, the English High Commissioner traced the lines on the map which were to determine the future frontiers, with a red pencil.

At that time Kuwait was a tiny country (35 thousand habitants in 1904) of pearl fishers and boat builders. It had a good port; inland, there were nomads, shepherds with sheep and camels. There was no fresh water. The zone always depended on Iraq for water, but in recent years, with the building of desalinization plants, Kuwait has become partially self-sufficient from Iraq as regards its water supply.

Oil

On the threshold of the Second World War, an Anglo-American company discovered oil. With the development of the oil fields the face of Kuwait

changed dramatically. In the 60s, Kuwait was the major oil producer in the Middle East, until it was overtaken by Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 70s. The Iraqis considered Kuwait part of their territory, but under the English mandate, they were not able to do anything to implement their designs. However in 1961, when England granted Kuwait its independence, Iraq declared it was an integral part of Iraq and asked for its sovereignty.

Iraq opposed Kuwait's independence and the Soviet Union, friendly with Iraq, imposed a veto on the UN draft resolution which recognized Kuwait's independence. When Kuwait was accepted as a member of the Arab League, Iraq boycotted the League for three years and eventually recognized Kuwait's independence in 1963, mainly because of the Arab League. However, in 1973, the Iraqi armed forces threatened Kuwait again, claiming two islands.

II ARAB REACTIONS

I do not mean to give a history lesson, but these historical facts are important if we are to understand the general reactions of the Arabs to the current Gulf crisis.

First and foremost, the fact that Iraq is claiming Kuwait for itself is not an invention of Saddam Hussein. Those who know Iraqis know that they have always considered Kuwait an integral part of their country. This explains the widespread support that Saddam's decision found among his own people.

Secondly, the frontiers were created by a Western power and imposed upon the Arab people. Furthermore, the concept of a frontier in the desert is alien to the tradition of the region; the desert was traditionally the common property of all, under the fluctuating control of one tribe or another. Not only the frontiers of Iraq, Kuwait and Saud Arabia but also those of the other Arab

states, date back to the conflict between Western powers to establish their own influence. The Arabs generally see their national states as having been artificially created by foreigners, and not as a natural development in their own history. Since the Arabs consider themselves a single people artificially divided into various states, their nationalistic sentiments are always orientated more toward the unity of the Arab people than toward a European type of nationalism, which tends to defend and to promote the ethnic group.

For many Arabs, the most unjust European imposition in their region was the creation of the state of Israel, the expulsion of the Palestinians and the oppression in Israel of the Palestinians who have remained. They believe that through a sense of guilt, because of the persecution of Jews in Europe, the Europeans found a convenient solution by giving them the Arab territory of Palestine. The first injustice was further increased by the occupation of other Arab territories (Syria, Jordan, Egypt) and then by the invasion and occupation of Lebanon and the violent repression of the Intifada.

Thirdly, there is general indignation toward the Western peoples, the feeling of being manipulated, exploited and mistreated by the Europeans, and after the Second World War by the Americans, to the West's advantage. They are under the impression that their Islamic faith, their Arab culture, and their native traditions are despised by the western peoples. This indignation is not only felt by the masses, but also by intellectuals, religious, the military and politicians.

When a leader emerges like Gamal Abdl as-Nasser in the 50s and today Saddam Hussein, who resists the pressures of the Western powers and challenges their ultimatums, he appears a hero in the eyes of many. It should be observed that a large part of

Saddam Hussein's popularity, as was Nasser's previously, is based on making the Palestinian issue the focus of world attention.

III. THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR

Here it is relevant that the faith of more than 90% of the Arabs is the religion of Islam. But I think the religious factor has been too easily emphasized in this conflict. We must remember that three of the main protagonists, on both sides, represent a very lay tradition: those of the Baath parties in Iraq and Syria, and of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. On the other side, the Saudi Government has been linked to the reformist Wahhabi movement **Wahhabita** for more than 150 years, and has always promoted a reformist interpretation of Islam; however, several reformist movements have taken Iraq's side in the conflict.

In my opinion, this concern regarding Islam is possibly highlighting the journalistic convictions of the Western mass media rather than offering the right direction to an understanding of the situation. Let me explain. When the initial occupation of Kuwait occurred, I was in the United States. The television networks relayed round-the-clock programmes; newspapers and magazines spoke widely of the crisis. Even though from the very start almost all the Muslim leaders and every state with a Muslim majority condemned the invasion, the media were already stressing the importance of the Islamic factor in the conflict.

Islam

I started to notice and to record the errors, insinuations, half-truths and explicit calumnies about Islam in current daily circulation. I thought the information could be a source of material for an article on the West's view of Islam. In the following months, I stopped because there really were too many examples.

On my return to Rome, numerous journalists wanted interviews on the crisis. They were preparing articles on Islam and were looking for information. I have found that they always ask the same question. What is the Holy War? Why is Islamic fundamentalism growing everywhere? How has Islamic culture shaped the Arab mentality? All these concepts, easily used by journalists, are, to say the least, debatable. Even their questions spring from a pre-determined context, which is often prejudicial. When I gave talks and participated in round tables where there was time for discussion, I noticed the same questions recurring, obviously reflecting what people had learned in the media.

These questions refer to the various conceptual categories where terms are not easily translated. For example, does an Islamic concept of the Holy War really exist? Can "Islamic fundamentalism" be seriously discussed? In the last few months, I have seen defined as fundamentalists such radically different people and movements as Ayatollah Khomeini, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Moammar Qaddafi, the Muslim Brotherhood, the pacifist Tabligh movement, Saddam Hussein, and the Jama'at-i-Islami movement of the Indian subcontinent. What meaning can a term have which includes such radically diverse views of Islam and its role in the modern world? I have frequently been tempted to decide cynically that the term refers to any Muslim individual or movement currently bothering us!

Jihad

As there will be a further Conference in this series dealing with "**Jihad, Struggle in Islam**", I will not elaborate on it here but draw your attention only to a matter of some consequence. When we are dealing with the concept of Jihad, it is immediately apparent that the term has a very different meaning for Muslims than that which is usually presumed by people in the West. Its translation into European languages as "Holy War", is incomprehensible to a

Muslim. It is true that every Muslim man and woman has the obligation of Jihad which means "struggle"; a struggle necessary to every Muslim. Muslims who die while involved in this struggle are rewarded by God. Muslim scholars describe it as having three meanings, but the second and third are often combined.

The first is the struggle to submit every aspect of one's personal life to God's will. It implies a real struggle to control one's passions, to build a good marriage, to bring up children, and to remember God and thank Him every moment during any kind of activity. The second meaning is a social one. A Muslim should strive that human and divine values be integrated into society. Its third meaning is the struggle to oppose injustice and oppression, when necessary, by force. This meaning, which is the rarest in everyday life, provides the basis for the common translation of the Jihad as "Holy War". It can be understood as a commitment to oppose injustice. As was the case of the crusades in Christian history, this admits the possibility of being manipulated by a leader who can call a religious Jihad for motives that in fact stem from ambition, power, vendetta or riches.

The fact that the majority of the Muslim states supported the Saudi coalition with the West while the masses often tended towards Iraq, caused a split between the governments and the people. Saddam's criticisms of the royal families of the Arabian peninsula have had a widespread echo in other countries. It does not seem that the support given to Saddam in other Arab countries is basically religious, indeed, it appears rather to be based on Arab nationalism and on the popular lack of trust in the governing elites.

"The Arab Mentality"

If the religious attitude is an inadequate explanation of the enthusiasm in many Arab circles for the

President of Iraq, perhaps it has something to do with the mentality of the Arab people. But here too we are dialing with a very vague concept. What actually is an "Arab mentality"? I have discovered that in the minds of many people in the West, a preconceived idea of the Arab mentality exists. It includes an absolute attitude to reality: everything is black or white, divine or diabolic. It includes characteristics of fatalism, fanaticism, violence, vendetta, loyalty to a cause that can be either destructive or suicidal, a lack of forgiveness and mercy, etc.

After the "itinerary" of recent events I am now of the belief that this confrontation with the Western preoccupation about Islam contains an unhealthy aspect. It is an attitude which transfers to others the problems which we do not want to face. We are far readier to examine, for example, the concept of the Holy War in Islam than to face what ought to be the central question for a Christian in wartime: is this war just or not? We prefer to create an image of a fatalistic people who are therefore ready to die, rather than recognise that they are no different from us.

I cannot say that the Iraqis and the other Arabs I know, and I know many of them really well, have a different mentality. They want to work, to bring up their children, they are fond of family life and a good meal together. I have tried to discover in what attitudes or characteristics this different mentality can be found, but I have not been successful. Can it be found in their Islamic faith? But the teaching on the Islamic ideals are not very different than those of Christians; to believe in a God who has created all things, has a moral will according to which all will be judged, who rewards the good and punishes wrongdoers, lets people free to choose and immediately forgives anyone who repents, etc. These elements of the Islamic faith are not my own interpretation; they are stated in the Vatican II document

Nostra Aetate, concerning Muslims.

IV. A NORTH-SOUTH WAR?

Should we not perhaps seek the reasons for supporting Saddam more in universal attitudes than in a preconceived Arab mentality or in our own ideas of the Islamic culture or religion? Can we not see an important factor in the sense of solidarity and identification with a Third World leader, who, in the eyes of many living in the south of the world, has been treated by the great powers more as a criminal than as a Head of State? During the months of November and December, when the Western leaders refused to undertake negotiations on the Kuwait issue, a growing sympathy for Saddam could be perceived in the African and Asian press.

This growing support is not only, or especially, found among the so-called fundamentalist Muslims, nor is it an exclusively Islamic reaction, but it is present also among Christians and the followers of other religions in the Third World. Indeed, I have repeatedly found a surprising deeply felt sympathy for Iraqis and their President among the clergy and religious of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in our colleges and religious houses in Rome. They know well that Saddam Hussein is not a saint; they are well informed of his lack of respect for civil rights and abuses, such as the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. And none of them defends the invasion of Kuwait. But they can identify with a people relentlessly bombarded by a war machine so immeasurably stronger.

In the African and Asian press, it is being said that this is the first North-South war, with all the technical and military imbalance that such a war implies.

Accusations of hypocrisy

In the points of view expressed on the war, we find frequent accusations

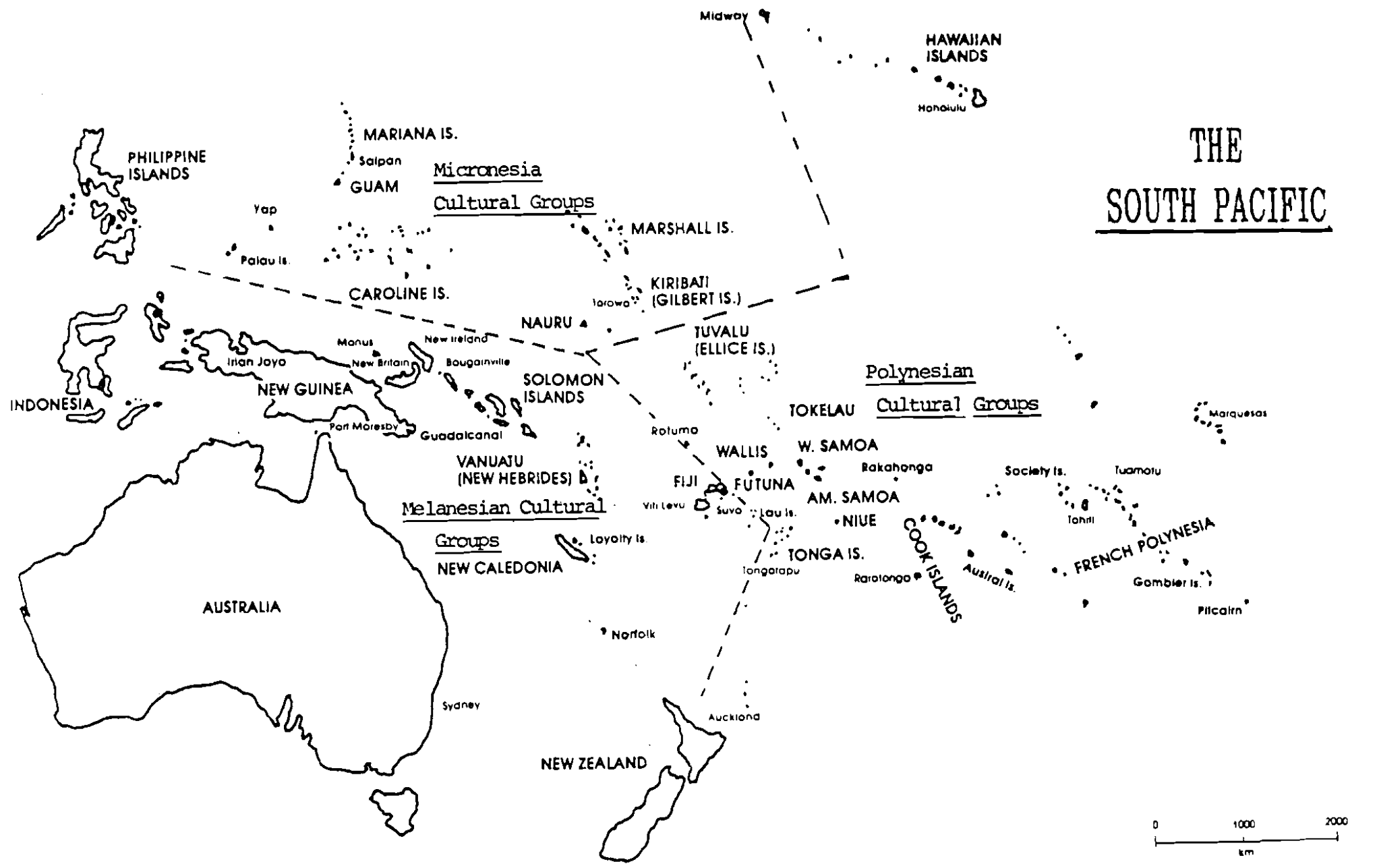
that America is hypocritical, silent on the issue of the invasion and occupation of Lebanon by the Syrians and the Israelis and the occupation of the Palestinian districts by Israel, while we find that, on the contrary, it expresses a hasty indignation at the invasion of Kuwait. Widespread resentment of American arrogance is reflected in the vote of the UN General Assembly that condemned the invasion of Grenada 109-8 and then the vote of the Organization of the American States 20-1 that condemned the invasion of Panama, (the favourable vote being that of the U.S.)

It could be objected that I am not sticking to my subject, but I believe I am not wasting time in useless digressions because this conviction regarding Western arrogance, American arrogance in particular, is the context in which numerous Muslims see the war and the current excessive bombing of Baghdad. And in this case, the Muslim Arab experience of the

geographical and political reality seems to be close to that of the Third World in general. An African said to me: "For us the message is clear: this year it is Baghdad's turn, next year it will be the turn of Teheran, Cairo or Algeria, of Lagos, Lima or Karachi, in other words, of more or less any country that does not toe the line".

Still today prospects for the future of Islamic-Christian relations do not bode well. In spite of the Pope's consistent appeals for peace, for a negotiated solution, for an international conference, the Christian community, in the eyes of many Muslims, is identified with the European and American countries. There is a frequently expressed feeling that "the West wishes to destroy Islam". Unfortunately these feelings can easily be directed against the Christians dwelling in these regions. It may be difficult to construct a good relationship between the Muslim community and Christians for many years to come.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC



PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

MARIANA IS.

Salpan
GUAM

Micronesia
Cultural Groups

Yap

Palau Is.

CAROLINE IS.

MARSHALL IS.

KIRIBATI (GILBERT IS.)

Tarawa

TUVALU (ELLICE IS.)

NAURU

Polynesian
Cultural Groups

Manus

New Ireland

Irian Jaya

NEW GUINEA

New Britain

Bougainville

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Port Moresby

VANUATU (NEW HEBRIDES)

Melanesian Cultural
Groups

NEW CALEDONIA

Loyalty Is.

Rotuma

WALLIS

W. SAMOA

Rakahonga

FIJI

FUTUNA

AM. SAMOA

NIUE

Society Is.

Tuamotu

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Tahiti

Gambier Is.

Pitcairn

INDONESIA

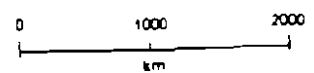
AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Norfolk

Auckland

NEW ZEALAND



MISSIONARY OUTREACH OF THE CHURCHES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

A SEDOS CONFERENCE, February 2, 1991

Francis Grossin, SM

(Fr. Grossin is a member of the Society of Mary (Marists). He spent most of his life, including some years of his early studies in the South Pacific. His conference was followed by three short presentations by speakers from other churches of the South Pacific. Anastasia Sai, a laywoman from Papua New Guinea told us about her involvement as a layperson in the various activities of her local church. Trevor Murray, a Maori diocesan priest from New Zealand, made perceptive comments on the lack of, and the need for, a respectful recognition of the diversity of cultures in mission activities. He illustrated this by anecdotes from his own experience as a Maori priest. Sr. Moya Byrne, MFIC from Australia then presented a brief overview of the missionary outreach of the Australian Church. The session was marked by a spirit of welcoming cordiality and hospitality, an example for us of "the prodigality and generosity" of the Oceanian peoples mentioned by Fr. Grossin in his talk).

The "South Pacific" includes every land below the equator, an imaginary line which Governments and Churches do not care much about it when shaping their zones of influence. So I will confine my talk to the areas covered by the two Episcopal Conferences present in the Pacific (CEPAC): the Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands (SI) Conference of 21 dioceses and the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC) with 14 dioceses and 1 *sui juris* Mission, the Tuvalu islands. These are spread over both sides of the equator from the Republic of Palau, near the Philippines, to the Gambier islands, part of the Territory of French Polynesia 10,000 kms. away to the south east on the way to South America.

I have to restrict my topic further still because it is impossible to speak about all the Churches in the Pacific. How many are they? Only God knows! There are a few thousand for sure! When I say "the Church," please understand it normally in the limited sense of "Roman Catholic Church." To try to say more would be foolish on my part because I do not

have the requisite knowledge and expertise.

I will speak from my own experience and knowledge, limited as it is, although I have spent 18 years in the South Pacific working in three different dioceses: Vanuatu, Bougainville in PNG, and New Caledonia, and visiting most of the countries, except in Micronesia.

My talk is meant to be an introduction to the local Pacific Churches so often ignored in this part of the world. If you read the Fides International Agency information based in Rome you may know what I mean. Last year Oceania was mentioned only three times and always in reference to Tahiti, as if Tahiti were the whole of the Pacific, and as if nothing had happened in the rest of the islands. Nothing about the post-coup situation in Fiji and the promulgation there of a new racist Constitution challenged by the Pacific Council of Churches; nothing about the diocesan Synods in Fiji, Western Samoa, and Honiara (SI); nothing about Bishop Finau's courageous statements on political and social events in the Kingdom of

91/86

Tonga nor of his designation as the "man of the year" by a Pacific-wide magazine, Islands Business; nothing about the struggles of the Bougainville people for independence from PNG and the personal involvement of the local Catholic and United Church bishops, etc. So much to be said, and so little being said, as if the Pacific hardly existed.

Missionary outreach.

It has two dimensions: *ad intra*, and *ad extra*. One may question that distinction, but I use it as the basis of my talk rather than enter into a discussion about ecclesiology or missiology.

Mission ad intra. Mission *ad intra* takes place within the boundaries of the local Churches. If you look at statistics you might think that the Church's mission is nearly over in the Pacific since there are now very few non-Christians anywhere. This is startling since it was less than two hundred years ago that the first Protestant missionaries from the London Missionary Society arrived in Oceania. It was 150 years later that the first Catholic missionaries landed in Mangareva in the Gambier islands. Nowadays most of the countries could claim to be "Christian". Some of them have even based their Constitutions on so-called "Christian principles". Such is the case in Vanuatu, whose motto is "*Long God yumi stanap*", which means "In God we stand", or in the Solomon islands, whose motto comes directly from the Gospel, "To lead is to serve."

National censuses, which often include religious affiliations, show that an immense majority of Oceanians belong to one Christian Church or another. As a whole, Catholics constitute a minority Church everywhere. The exceptions are Wallis and Futuna (98% Catholic), Northern Mariana (95%), Guam (91%), New Caledonia

(64%), and Kiribati (53%). Sometimes they are very few in number: Tuvalu (less than 1%), Fiji (9%), Tonga and Cook islands (13%), Vanuatu (14%) - so much so that sometimes they are considered by the major Protestant Churches as "a sect"!

Mission "ad extra". If it is true that in Polynesia and Micronesia nearly everybody has been baptized and it could be claimed that mission there, in the strict sense is over, such is not the case in Melanesia. From Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu, there are still thousands of people who have not yet been in touch with Jesus the Lord. They are still waiting for missionaries to tell them the Good News. Most of them would be "bush people" living in remote areas and having very little contact with the modern world. Some also live in urban areas or on coastal plantations. They have yet to be reached as for various reasons, very little has been done about them in the last decade. Lack of adequate personnel would be one reason. Lack of interest may be another. There are so many other demands, all very important and demanding, so why bother about these "manbush", as they are called in Pidgin English. One day or another they will leave their mountains and come closer to the civilized world. I am afraid that it will then be too late, and that in the meantime they will have been caught up by one of the many sects at work in the Pacific.

MISSION "AD INTRA"

Vanuatu

An initiative taken by Bishop Lambert in Vanuatu must be mentioned here. He, for one, was concerned about the "pagans". He also noticed that some young men were ready to commit themselves to work for the Church as lay brothers for some years without taking the religious vows required by canon law. Under the

supervision of a Marist priest, he developed a kind of lay institute, called the Brothers of St. Martin de Porres. After an initial specific training they worked among the non-Christians for five years. Every year these Brothers meet together for a retreat and renew a promise of apostolic service in the hands of the bishop. In the last ten years they have worked marvels on Tanna and Santo islands. Every year dozens of people have been baptized through their ministry. No priest and, I believe, no single or married catechist would have been able to live under such extremely difficult physical conditions as do those Brothers.

Solomons and PNG.

In the Solomons and in PNG the bishops also share concern for the evangelization of non-Christians, but I am not aware of their taking any kind of initiative as Bishop Lambert did in Vanuatu. Yet some of them have opened and operate Catechists' Schools and Pastoral Centres where lay people, mostly men, but also some women, are trained for apostolic activities. Their activities include the pastoral care of already-established Christian communities and youth catechesis. Last year I visited the pastoral Centre of Buma, in the Auki diocese of the Solomon Islands and was very much impressed by the enormous revitalization of faith achieved by a mobile team composed of one priest, two lay brothers, and two local sisters. They reached out to all kinds of people in all the parishes of the diocese.

Fiji

The situation in Fiji is quite unique because it is the only country in the Pacific where nearly half the inhabitants do not belong to any Christian Church. Hindus are 38% of the population, Moslems 8%, and there are Sikhs and Confucians; about half the population came originally from

India and are Indo-Fijians. Through the years the various Churches have made some efforts to reach out to these Indians and bring them to Baptism but the results have been minimal. Only a few thousand of the 400,000 Indians have joined the Churches, and only 2,000 are Catholics. Under the guidance of a Columban priest the diocesan seminarians are now being exposed to an Indian immersion experience during their pastoral year of studies. This has been a very valuable experience. They discover, often for the first time, that they know very little or nothing at all about the Indian mentality and milieu, and they realize that the Mission is right in their own backyard. In the troubled post-coup situation of the country, the Indian Mission offers tremendous opportunities for the Church to be an instrument of reconciliation and justice between the various ethnic groups of the Republic.

Last year on a visit to Taveuni Island it was a joy to hear a young Fijian confrere telling me that at the last Mass he had celebrated in Hindi, some 300 people who had been brought into conflict by the political situation were gathered around the altar; 270 were native Fijians and 30 were Indians among whom not even half were baptized, an example of what "reaching out" can mean in the local context of Fiji.

Tuvalu Islands

Four hours by propeller plane north of Fiji, the Tuvalu Islands offer the Catholic Church a unique missionary challenge reminding me of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. A handful of Catholics, (56, I was told last year), born of Catholic Kiribati and Protestant Tuvaluans live there among an overwhelming majority of strongly convinced Protestants. Cardinal Pio of Samoa, who was officially responsible for that tiny community as part of his archdiocese, did not neglect or abandon them. Through his efforts,

a Catholic Center was established and a priest was appointed permanently as the administrator *sui juris* of the Tuvalu Islands. Questioned recently on the value of his presence in the middle of nowhere while there were so many important needs elsewhere, French-Canadian Father Desrosiers answered: "If the Lord sent me there it is because he has a plan. I trust and believe in Him. Then, too, the Lord is now present there in the Eucharist and nothing is impossible with Him".

Kingdom of Tonga

Since so few remain outside the visible Churches and something is being done to minister even to them, is the church's mission in the Pacific almost over? Mission should not be judged only in terms of numbers, but also in the quality of membership and of the message. The challenge is not so much one of church growth, of names listed in baptismal books but of people becoming Christ-like. That is a completely different challenge.

In the Kingdom of Tonga every single person belongs to one Church or another. But is it really a Christian country? Bishop Finau thinks it is not and he has challenged the situation there loudly and clearly in recent months, as circumstances demanded.

He supported openly some members of parliament who were challenging the diversion of public funds. Again he questioned publicly the scandalous increase in parliamentarians' allowances while many people in the northern islands of Tonga had been left homeless by a cyclone. Bishop Finau is convinced that the Church has a prophetic role to play as part of its mission, and he puts his convictions into practice regardless of the consequences to himself. He is not frightened by public allegations made by the King alleging that he is a Marxist-Leninist trained to

destabilize the Kingdom and overthrow the Government. Quietly he replies in an editorial in his diocesan paper: "Revolution, no; conversion, yes."

New Caledonia

Much has been said and written about the issue of Church and politics in New Caledonia, particularly during the recent troubled period beginning in 1984 and ending in 1989 with the signing of the Matignon Accords between the French Government and the local political parties. Archbishop Calvet was accused of being too silent and not prophetic enough. It is not possible to answer those accusations in a few moments and remain fair to everybody. The New Caledonian scene, was one of enormous complexity. Each bishop has his own style and character! and Caledonia is completely different from Tonga!

Most of the people who died during the troubles were Catholics. Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the leader of the Kanak Liberation Front, was a former Catholic priest shot by a former Evangelical Church pastor! 15 of the 19 people killed at the grotto in Ouvea, belonged to the Catholic community of Teouta. There is an accusation that the Catholics in New Caledonia are against independence and the Protestants in favour of it, but the leader of the anti-independence movement, Jacques Lafleur, is a Protestant!

Bougainville

Bougainville in Papua New Guinea has been another bloody spot in the no-longer Pacific Ocean. In a total population of 150,000 there have been about 3000 victims of the war in the last 26 months. As in the case of New Caledonia much time is needed to give a full picture of the situation. Only the starting point seems to have been the same in both places, - the land question. But the crisis developed in

a very different way here and with much suffering. Only the neighbouring Solomon Islands and the two big "brothers" - Australia and New Zealand showed concern.

I would like to draw attention to the role of the Churches in that crisis, and particularly the role of the Catholic Church which makes up 80% of the North Solomons population. Catholic Bishop Gregory Singkai and his church co-workers, priests, religious and catechists, were very closely involved in what happened. Some might even have said "overly involved," when they heard that Bishop Singkai had accepted the portfolio of the Education Ministry in the self-proclaimed Republic of the North Solomons. There, as in New Caledonia, one finds Catholics on both sides, pro-secessionists and anti-secessionists.

One might have preferred that official Church leaders stayed out of politics, but they made their own decision and we have to respect it. Bishop Singkai played an important role recently in re-establishing dialogue between the two parties involved in the crisis and in his contribution to the signing of the Peace, Reconciliation, and Rehabilitation Declaration in Honiara last month. The Solomon Islands Council of Churches was also very actively involved both in humanitarian assistance to Bougainville and in the peace process. The Pacific Conference of Churches had asked that Sunday, 20th of January, be known as Bougainville Sunday and that special prayers be offered in all the churches throughout the Pacific. The unexpected Honiara Declaration was signed three days later.

Republic of Palau

Further to the north, the Republic of Palau is quite a special country for it is the first in the world to have banned nuclear energy in its Constitution. U.S. nuclear warships

are therefore not allowed to pass through its waters. Is that the real, secret reason why its Presidents have died in dramatic circumstances? Haruo Remeliik was assassinated in '85; Lazarus Sali died in '88 in a mysterious car accident. All the referendums organized to change the Constitution have failed and more violence is likely. Has the Catholic Church in Micronesia said anything about those events? I am not aware that it did, but in the rest of the Pacific, the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, have been very vocal on the nuclear question and criticized the French government many times for its underground nuclear tests in Mururoa and Fangataufa, in French Polynesia.

I have already suggested that in Fiji the social and political situation is not that rosy either. Archbishop Mataka has kept quite a low profile and raised his voice only in union with the leaders of the other Churches. Some of his co-workers, however, have been more vocal and some of his priests have been refused visas.

Renewal Movements

I would like to mention some examples of these. In the archdiocese of **Papeete, in French Polynesia**, a complete revitalization of the Church is taking place through the charismatic movement. This began about ten years ago. Many baptized people who were no longer practicing came back to the Church. Not so long ago in one of the remote Tuamotu atolls 6 people were put to death in a collective fit of hysteria under the alleged cover of the charismatic movement. This had nothing to do with the genuine movement of renewal in the Holy Spirit. The archdiocese of **Fiji and Rotuma** is implementing the **PARISH CELL SYSTEM** very successfully. It is already being used in the United States for the renewal of the faith of its members and to reach out to Christians who are no longer active. **Western**

Samoa has used RENEW, another programme from the U.S., having a similar goal. **New Caledonia** will soon launch a similar kind of parish renewal in preparation for the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic Church in 1993.

MISSION AD EXTRA

I move now to the second and shorter part of my talk, the *Mission ad extra*. I have already dealt, in passing, with many aspects of the mission *ad extra*, because political and ecclesiastical boundaries in the Pacific are very artificial. They mean nothing to Oceanians who do not have to travel far to leave their own culture. About 700 different languages are spoken in PNG; in Vanuatu, about 110; in the Solomon islands about 90 and in New Caledonia, 32. Various kinds of Pidgin English are the only "common language" of all those people, with the exception of New Caledonia. In Vanuatu, on Pentecost Island which is less than 60 kms long, people speak 10 different languages and dialects. According to the 1989 census there are only 11,240 people living on that island!

In the areas of Polynesia and Micronesia there is less diversity, but the distances are sometimes so great and the attachment to the homeland so strong, that to leave one's island means a complete uprooting. When a Brother of St. Martin of Porres leaves Malekula for Tanna, both of which are in Vanuatu, he is a missionary *ad intra* and *ad extra*. A native Sister of Ouvea, in the Loyalty islands, who leaves her home to spend all her life on the main island of New Caledonia, would say she too is a missionary *ad extra*. And the same answer would be given by a Fijian priest working among the Indians of Fiji. Many catechists share the same experience. They are tremendous missionaries within their own

countries and even dioceses.

But one finds also the "missionary vocation," in its specific meaning. The Oceanians have not been slow in answering the call to leave their own country. When I visited the Basilica of Poi, on Futuna island, two years ago, I was very much impressed at the names of all the Futunian and Wallisian missionaries who have left their home-islands in recent years. Forty one of them, lay people, sisters, brothers and priests, are at present on mission in the four corners of the world, from Colombia to the Philippines, in Sénégal and Rwanda, in France and Italy, - hardly believable for a small Catholic community of 13,000 people. Of course not all Pacific Churches are so blessed. But Tonga or Western Samoa could also present impressive lists of overseas missionaries labouring in many parts of the world, including a Superior General of a Missionary Order in Rome,* happily present in our audience today.

I am quite hopeful that the Pacific Churches will take a growing share in the missionary efforts of the universal Church. They will answer the calls of the multitude with the same generosity as the European Churches which gave birth to them. They will do so with an even greater generosity because generosity and prodigality is part of their cultures. What seemed a dream some decades ago is already becoming a reality. Formally a Mission territory, Oceania is now in turn sending out missionaries. The seed sown in the ground of those low lying atolls and huge mountains landscapes produces an abundant fruit. May it be a hundred-fold.

*Sr. Patricia Stowers, SMSM of Samoa is Superior General of the Marist Missionary Sisters. Sr. Claudine Nakamura also from Oceania is a member of the General Council.

MISSION MOMENTS

AT THE FRONTIERS OF MISSION

(SENEGAL)

I have spent two years in Matam this region of Senegal where not many tourists venture. We do not have the sea, but we do have the Senegal River that adorns our arid region. The old people tell me that in other times there were forests. Today drought, the hands of people and flocks of animals have turned Fouta Toro and Ferlo into the beginning of the Sahel. During the first months, I crossed this river by canoe twice a week to celebrate the Eucharist for the community of sisters who work in Mauritania. Today canoes can no longer cross the river. The break between the two countries has been total.

The Refugees

I have thus been confronted with the painful reality of the refugees. There are 26,000 in Matam and 4,000 in Bakel. They crossed the river, leaving everything they had on the other side. Persecuted and mistreated in Mauritania, they arrived in a sad state. I take off my hat to my Senegalese brothers and sisters for they did everything they could in the beginning to feed them, even to the point where in some villages the stores of millet, maize and sorghum were almost empty. Little by little the refugees organized themselves, set up

their camps... no barbed wire... they have settled at the edges of the Senegalese villages.

It is not easy to fit into this situation as a religious missionary. The refugees are all Muslims, coming from a country where missionaries are not wanted. Because of this in the beginning I was called 'Sir'... then 'Mister the Father'. I even received a letter addressed to 'the Pope of Matam'... Now they call me 'Father Manou' or just plain 'Manou'. When the poor cry out in their misery it is not possible to remain insensitive. Our heart is moved certainly, but Jesus invites us to meet him in the persons who knock on the door. These persons must be met with all their dignity and with all their capabilities. Discernment is required to find the means to allow the poor to leave behind their misery. It seems important to bring them together and invite them to work more for the common good of the camp than for personal profit.

There are four main lines that direct my action: Heart, Discernment, Gospel and Being Together. Concretely, I work with international organizations... It sometimes happens, however, that these organizations cannot intervene. I then put myself in the role of 'repairman'. Some groups of peasants have no voice, no political support. Some people will never escape their

misery....

Christian witness

My main missionary work, however, remains that of being witness with the local Catholics to a life of sharing in prayer, brotherhood and sisterhood. They have but "one heart and one soul" We are trying to shape the communities in Matam and in other places, some quite faraway, in the image of the first Christian community... I pray every day to the Lord that these small Christian communities may become completely responsible for themselves one day.

Ref. CRONICA, CICM, No 2.
March 1991. Via S.
Giovanni Eudes 95,
00163 Roma

TO BE A WOMAN IS VERY GOOD FOR ME!

(NIGER)

Brigitte Adi Aklare is a Soney woman, 35 years of age. She, her husband Victor and another household have responsibility for the christian community in the village of Fantyo in Niger. This village has a population of approximately 750 inhabitants of whom 150 are christians and catechumens. One year after leaving school, at the age of 15 years Brigitte Adi married. She has five children: 2 girls and 3 boys.

She says about herself: It is Jesus who entered my life. I have heard his Word and I have understood that he has come among us to make of us free men and women. He came to tell us that before God there is no difference between man and woman, that all are equal. Formerly, and even today in the Moslem society, the woman is a slave of man. But the coming of Jesus changed everything for all those who want to follow his way. Among us christians, women can never again be slaves of men. Man and woman are always equal in the thoughts of Jesus. Among the Moslems, even today, the woman can do nothing without the authorization of her husband. Jesus truly brought us liberty. He brought us out of slavery.

- Moslem women say we have been lucky, that our intelligence has been liberated. They see that we are not afraid to converse with our husbands in public, that we pray with them, that we eat with them without shame although this is forbidden to Moslem women. They have not the right to enter the mosque. The mosque is a man's affair.

I am responsible with my friend, Elise, for a women's prayer group. We animate Scripture sharing and meditation on the rosary. We meet once weekly to do one or the other. Together we seek to develop our knowledge of the Word of God, to understand better the life of Jesus and what He wants to say to us today, to help us to transform our lives...

The villagers chose me as a matron. I help the women to deliver their babies in good hygienic conditions. They can

call on me at all times. Before leaving the house I say a 'Hail Mary'. I pray, and then I go to the village with greater strength. Mary helps me a lot.

- The women are happy that I go to help them, and this applies to both Moslem and Christian women as no distinction is made... Sometimes when I see a woman suffering because of a great number of pregnancies, I advise the husband and try to make him understand why this child should be the last. Some listen to me but do not know what to do. I explain what I know, but it is difficult, sometimes they are ashamed to speak about this problem. But if they do not speak about it how can they find a solution!

- With Elise my friend I am responsible for a group of women to whom we teach dressmaking, knitting and crochet. We try together to improve our standard of living. This we seek to do by the path of learning, the opening of the mind.

Now we try to know ourselves, to know the reality of our bodies, our womanhood. This kind of knowledge brings us out of obscurity and ignorance which is the lot of beasts, and not our lot. We must use the intelligence that God has given us. If we understand our own bodies well, we can give life to children that we are capable of rearing. If women have too many children, they cannot educate them and then they are unhappy.

- Some would like to practice legitimate birth control as I do but they are afraid. They are afraid to discuss this with their husbands. It is a decision that cannot be taken

without dialogue. Since my husband and I took this decision, we have felt more responsible.

- The people of the village, especially the women, see that I am a little different, that many things have changed in my life. Formerly, I was a Moslem. I was baptized only fourteen years ago. Many come to chat with me. Some would very much like to have no more children, or to pass some years without a pregnancy. Before, no one would speak about this subject. My experience has helped certainly. I note that more and more speak of it now. But one can sense that embarrassment and shame still hinders them - they are not free.

- It is very good to be a woman! My heart rejoices that I am a woman, because I am the mother of five children. With them, I am filled with joy.

Ref. O.L.A. MEETING POINT
Feb. 1990. Via Ghislieri
15, 00152 Roma.

PRIESTHOOD SHORTAGE

(U.S.A.)

"We cannot be assured that all parishes will have full eucharistic celebrations or Mass every Sunday. We cannot be sure that we will be able to provide a priest for all weddings and funerals."

Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee says this in the draft of a pastoral letter that will serve as a basis for consultation with archdiocesan priests and lay people on the future of parishes in light of the priesthood shortage. In the widely reported draft

pastoral sent to all priests Jan. 7 and published in the archdiocesan newspaper, The Catholic Herald, Weakland says that under certain specified conditions related to the vitality of life in a parish without a priest, including a demand that the parish have "an active vocation programme for the celibate priesthood," he "would be willing to help the community surface a qualified candidate for ordained priesthood - even if a married man - and, without raising false expectations or unfounded hopes for him or the community, present such a candidate" to the pope. "In such a case we would have done all possible at the local level, Weakland states.

The draft pastoral opposes the idea of creating megaparishes as a response to the priesthood shortage. Weakland also finds that Sunday services with a Liturgy of the Word and distribution of holy communion in parishes without priests are "not traditional in the Catholic Church". He expresses concern that such Sunday services over a long period of time could lead to a loss of Catholic identity. "We would become a different kind of church", he says. He stresses the continuing need for celibate priesthood, saying "we want to continue to pray for such vocations and do all in our power to support those who respond to the call".

(The situation described by the Archbishop will be familiar to many in mission situations. Ed.)

Ref. ORIGINS, Vol. 20: No. 33, Jan. 1991.

INSERTION IN A SLUM EXPERIENCE

(INDIA)

Eight Holy Spirit Sisters (tertians, in immediate preparation for final vows), had an exposure experience in two slums, Gopabandhupali and Rourkela. It lasted from 2 September until 3 November last year.

The sisters hired huts and lived like any slum dwellers with no special facilities like electricity, running water or bathrooms. The purpose of all this was to gain a first-hand experience of slum life, and then to work out a way to face the problems of such a life, foster team work in the midst of harsh realities, and to integrate work with prayer.

They had a well planned programme dealing specifically with three areas: women, children, and health. Every day, they went from house to house in the slum, organized people, instructed them, showed them films, and even arranged picnics for them. In the evenings they returned to their huts and evaluated the day's doings.

They were looked at with suspicion at first, but they soon won the hearts of the people. When the two months together ended, the sisters and slum-dwellers parted ways, both of them with heavy hearts, wishing only that the experience could continue. Please God, some of the sisters may return there some time after their final profession!

Ref. SAMBALPUR TIDINGS, quoted in ARNOLDUS NOTA, March 1991. Via dei Verbiti 1, 00154 Roma.

THE COST OF MISSION

(MOZAMBIQUE AND SOMALIA)

We offer our sympathy and our prayers in union with two societies, members of SEDOS on the news of their recent loss.

Fr. ARIEL GRANADA, a Columbian Consolata Missionary was killed on February 15, 1991, at Massangulo in Mozambique. On his way to the airport to return home for his mother's funeral his car was ambushed. Traveling with him were another Consolata missionary, Portuguese Fr. da Rocha who was injured in the attack and Mozambican Sister Rebecca who escaped uninjured. The ambush was apparently intended for others as those responsible expressed their dismay as they retreated. Another Consolata priest, 30 years old Fr. Prandelli was killed by a mine explosion in 1972. They are both buried in the cemetery of Unango.

Fr. Pietro Turati, an Italian Franciscan Missionary was killed on February 9 at Jilib in Somalia where he had been for 42 years. The Franciscans, with four Consolata Sisters, took care of an orphanage and a leper colony in the area. They were forced to leave Somalia by the intensity of the recent fighting. Fr. Turati volunteered to stay on with the people, almost all Muslims, who respected and loved him. It was reported that rebels were apparently searching for deposed President Siad Barre who was reported to be hiding in the area which is not far from the Kenyan border.

Mission can still call for the ultimate sacrifice.

Ref. Fides. February, 1991.

COMING EVENTS IN SEDOS

STRUGGLE IN ISLAM - UNDERSTANDING JIHAD

SPEAKER: JUSTO LUCUNZA BALDA M.Afr.
March 21, 1991; 4.00 - 6.30 p.m. SVD College

MISSIONARY OUTREACH OF THE ASIAN CHURCHES

Team Presentation
April 10, 1991; 4.00 p.m. SVD College

PROPHETIC MISSION IN A CHANGING WORLD

SPEAKERS:
BRYAN HEHIR, U.S.A.
EDWINA GATELEY, ENGLAND/USA

May 17 - 21, 1991; Villa Cavalletti, Frascati

This seminar is fully subscribed. We are investigating the possibility of accommodation nearby for late applications.

HEALTH IN A SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS II;

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

A follow-up to the June 1990 SEDOS Seminar

Team Presentation
May 29th, 1991: SVD College

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FAITH OF ISLAM

October 10th, 1991: SVD College

**QU'RAN;
ISLAMIC REVELATION AND BASIC TEACHING**

October 24th, 1991; SVD College