



CHRISTIAN PEACE CONFERENCE

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Our Current Task: Overcoming Mistrust

WALTER KRECK

The following article is the text of a speech delivered at the CPC meeting to mark the IYP in Hannover, FRG in October 1986.

"Confidence and cooperation ensure survival!" This is the theme of this evening. But is it correct? Has not the opposite applied throughout the millennia of human history? That is to say the maxim: "If you want peace, arm for war!" It was on such a policy of strength and superiority that the Pax Romana was based — it was the ultima ratio of statesmen. And even the most recent meeting in Reykjavik between the two most powerful politicians in the world apparently so promising at the start, ended in failure, because the American President thought he could not give up his SDI project, and his Soviet partner could not but take this as an obstinate continuation of the policy of strength and superiority. Rather than confidence and cooperation, it is mistrust and confrontation which appear to be the law of history.

Or has something now changed after all? Do we find ourselves in the nuclear age, on the threshold of an epoch-making turning-point? Not because we have become more moral than our fathers were, but because the means of mass destruction invented by human beings now render the policy of strength an absurdity, since their use would provoke an inferno. As UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar has said, today the Apocalypse is no longer merely a biblical image, but a real possibility. Indeed, it is predicted by leading scientists all over the world not only as possible, for the first time in the history of humankind, but even as probable if we fail to put a stop to the insane

arms race once and for all. If we want to survive, there can be no alternative to peace and cooperation in place of armament and confrontation.

Millions of people are aware of this. Why is it, then, that not all politicians appreciate the full consequences of this fact? Certainly, there are the tangible interests of influential circles and power centres who fear for their privileges and are prepared to do anything to secure cheap sources of raw materials and to gain access to markets, and who profit directly from arms production. And yet I do not believe that in the long run the majority of people would bow to them, were it not for a form of psychological warfare with a mask of morality clouding the heads and hearts of millions, so that fear and mistrust threaten to stifle all signs of hope. After all, everybody wants peace, and open attacks on the vast world peace movement are progressively becoming less frequent, but there remains the danger that peace slogans and peace negotiations might once again become subject to conditions blocking any chance of success.

I am thinking, for instance, of the slogan "Peace in freedom", which was coined as early as the fifties by Karl Jaspers, and which we recently heard once again from the winner of the German Book Trade Peace Prize in Frankfurt. Who would disagree that peace is not possible where people are kept enslaved? But what is freedom? Freedom of belief, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and of assembly, certainly, but also freedom from hunger and poverty and unemployment. One's priorities here depend very much on the historical conditions in which one lives. There are millions of people living on our earth for whom freedom from hunger and exploitation rank much higher than the freedom of the press or freedom to travel. And in Western history, even in all struggles for freedom, there were always groups who found themselves excluded on religious, racial or political grounds, at least in practice, from the rights which were considered a matter of course by the propertied and educated middle-class.

The debate on the correct understanding of freedom — which almost all countries of the earth support, verbally at least — will continue, but the great word 'freedom' must not be abused as a propaganda bludgeon with which to hit out at the opposing side with our gaze fixed on the splinter in their eye and blind to the plank in our own, deliberately informing people falsely or with hatred in our hearts, proclaiming the other side the centre of evil and threatening nuclear annihil-

ation should it fail to come whining to its knees. Steps towards detente and disarmament cannot wait until all nations of the world might have agreed on a uniform interpretation of values, for peace is not the consequence of victory in an ideological battle, but the condition of the inevitable competition between differing systems and social orders being soberly conducted.

Another important slogan predominantly heard at ecumenical meetings, coming from representatives of the Third World, is 'Peace Through Justice!' It is quite understandable that people who are undernourished, whose life expectancy is half as long as ours, whose countries are suffering under the unbearable burden of interest payments and are facing bankruptcy — that they counter our fears of nuclear war by saying: in our part of the world, millions are dying even now in peacetime. In view of the uneven distribution of the goods of this earth and the obstinacy with which the dominant industrial countries ignore the call for a more just economic order, has not indeed the call for justice priority? Some politicians, even in our country, believe that it has, that the North-South problem ranks higher than the East-West problem, and that the greatest danger of world conflagration might arise from unsolved conflicts in the Third World.

Indeed, all too often in history hunger and oppression were the cause of wars, and it is not surprising that in large sections of the peace movement, including its Christians groups, there is growing sympathy for the liberation movements in the Third World which are defending themselves against racial discrimination or neo-colonialist exploitation with all their might. We cannot expect people to believe in our peace slogans if they are denied the basic conditions of life. But here, too, it must be seen that without ending the militarization of international relations and without halting and reducing armament, underdevelopment cannot be overcome. For the trade and currency policies working to the detriment of the weak are still being backed up by the — naturally updated — gunboat policy of the strong, and the billions wasted on armament are needed urgently for the development of a productive base in the Third World countries. So, not only 'Peace through Justice', but also 'Justice through Peace and Disarmament!'

There is one more theme which I should like to mention, which in the view of some people pushes the call for disarmament and detente into the background: the problem of the destruction

of the environment by the brutal exploitation of nature, by the poisoning of air, water and soil and now also in particular by the civil use of nuclear power which, as the accident in Chernobyl made many people realize, is not yet completely risk-free. What use is the elimination of all nuclear weapons if we increasingly endanger the essential basis of life, threatening the future of our children and grandchildren! Part of survival is also peace with nature. But here, too, it has to be seen that there is a close connection between this issue and the two aforementioned global problems, in particular the problem of armament. It is not only the possibility of converting nuclear power from peaceful to military uses, but also that the reactors intended for peaceful uses would become a source of imminent danger should war break out. In any case, to combat the threat to the environment intensive international cooperation is indispensable, for nuclear energy does not recognize any national borders, and such cooperation cannot thrive in a climate of constant mutual fear and permanent production of enemy images. Nor are these merely regional or national problems, but global problems concerning humanity as a whole which can be solved only by joint effort.

How can we contribute, as Christians and churches, to the overcoming of mistrust and the strengthening of confidence?

First of all, faced by the challenges of our times endangering humankind, we ourselves must learn to think differently. We must not forget that Christianity has all too often helped to justify unjust wars, to have intolerable economic and social conditions regarded as God's Will, and to even give racial discrimination a biblical foundation. It has also encouraged the toleration of colonial exploitation and above all helped to anchor in people's minds the 'friend-enemy' approach between Christians and atheists, which has underpinned the political and social frontlines metaphysically so to speak. I should only like to remind you of the cable sent to Hitler by the German Evangelical Church congratulating him on the invasion of the Soviet Union by German troops: it had been drafted by the Spiritual Trust Council of the German Evangelical Church, headed by the then Hanoverian Bishop Marahren, and was supposed to be read out from every pulpit. It welcomed the annihilation of that "bed of pestilence" and of the mortal enemy of all Western Christian culture! Today, when humanity must choose between joint survival or joint annihilation, we Christians should finally come to understand in its worldwide context the message of the reconciliation of God with

the world through Jesus Christ, and to regard every human being — to whichever race, nation, social system, faith or religion they might belong — first and foremost as a creature of God, called to be one of God's children, whether already aware of it or not. This must make us into fighters against the spirit of the Cold War, that gravedigger of all efforts for detente.

In this we must not, as the Church has so often done, be satisfied with general peace slogans, but must take up a concrete position, regardless of Christian or atheistic labels.

We must expose the deceitful propaganda which in a constant stream reinforces the deep-rooted prejudice that we, of course, are on the side of light and the others on the side of darkness. We must contradict the slander spread about today, as in the press report in which the Federal Chancellor, in an interview for Newsweek, declared with regard to Gorbachev: "Goebbels, one of those responsible for the crimes of the time of Hitler, was also a public-relations expert . . ." (Frankfurter Rundschau of Oct. 24, 1986, p. 3) The parables of Jesus give us a wealth of examples that the last shall be first and the first shall be last, that is, that those whom we consider lost, godless souls put the so-called righteous to shame. (I should only remind you of the God Samaritan in contrast to the priest and the Levite; of the unequal sons — the yes-man who does nothing and the rebel who does his father's will, and of the great surprise in the parable of the Last Judgement, Matt. 25.) Applied to our situation today, this means to me: if Moscow proposes helpful and reasonable steps towards peace while the West twists and turns, inevitably creating the impression that it is, after all, striving for superiority and not for security in partnership, then we should throw all our traditional prejudices overboard and accept whatever best serves peace.

The most important thing, however, is to resist the resignation which might set in in view of a thousand years of war and numerous disappointments and setbacks in detente, and which is frequently being justified by Christians, since people are supposedly evil and the world incorrigible. Of course, the elimination of nuclear weapons will not create an earthly paradise, nor will the most just social order establish the Kingdom of God. But neither should we wait fatalistically for the expected Armageddon, a war of annihilation against the godless, nor indeed feel called upon to fight such a war. Whoever believes in the crucified and resurrected Christ has the certainty that God

reigns supreme and that even the coldest cold warrior is for him still not a hopeless case. Despite the enormous threats looming we should not forget that even today there are surprisingly hopeful signs, unthinkable a few years ago, that many people in their hearts and minds have begun to think differently, and that even the most hawkish among our rulers may have difficulty continuing to resist the growing pressure from people and na-

tions calling for a test ban, disarmament and peaceful cooperation. However, we Christians, who so like to confess in our worship that the Creator and Reconciler of the world "keeps his word and loyalty for evermore and will not abandon the work of His hands", should not allow ourselves to be put to shame by the so-called worldly people in our confidence, hope and struggles for peace and justice.

Clearing the Way for Inter-religious Cooperation for Justice, Liberation and Peace

CHRISTIE ROSA

Points of take-off

The relentless search must continue by the believers of the Great Religions: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews — to identify and discover the total religious resources of common human and spiritual roots in the global understanding of the world faiths, investigate how they relate to the universal issues of justice, liberation and peace and search for the possibilities of practical cooperation which will manifest the humaneness and humaneness of life which all faiths advocate.

Excessive Pietism

In such a take-off, we have to be fully aware of the obstacles that hamper any advance. As an overall perspective, we have to admit that religions have often been inward-looking, personalized, privatized and individualized to the extent that personal salvation, inner tranquillity and pietistic enlightenment have gained dominance over peace praxis. This may be alright as far as it goes, but to grant undue weight to personal salvation at the expense of religious concern for the social dimensions of reality is to isolate the religions from global, international, national, socio-political and economic contexts, and deny the basic reality that religions are integrally related and must address themselves prophetically to the well-being of society in all its complex involvements.

Searing divisions

Another factor which hinders viable inter-religious cooperation is the existence of deep-rooted divisions that lie within the religions. Fanatic denominationalism and sectarianism on the basis of belief, caste, race, nationalism or even questions of administration tear religions apart. The situation is aggravated in attempts to safeguard investment in properties, trusts and large-scale financial enterprise which each denomination or sect activates and manipulates. The tragic fact is that religions within themselves are so torn apart, that the adherents of the denominations revere the teaching, traditions and founders of each denomination while paying lip-service to the overall faith. In any event believers within the denominations of the religions are loath to sacrifice the "principles" of their sect, even though it be for the good of the religion. They would not even hesitate to go to law or war to safeguard their denominational material interests. But this state of affairs should not deter us from summoning the religions to an understanding in themselves that their basic unity lies in directing their energies to venture in inter-religious cooperation for liberation, justice and peace.

Further, divisive forces can easily manipulate religions as pretexts for the promotion and the covering-up of conflict. It is, however, possible in a spirit of honesty and integrity to engage the religions in the crucial activity of summoning the peoples of the world to the task of preventing nu-

clear catastrophe and eliminating death by hunger by promoting a just social order free from poverty and discrimination.

Retreat to Fundamentalism

Another serious obstacle in pursuing the area of potentially fruitful religious cooperation is the increasing retreat to fundamentalism which is evident in all religions seeking refuge in the literal interpretation of the scriptures, which are considered to be divinely verbally inspired. Fundamentalism brooks no amendment, correction or other interpretation. This poses an adverse threat to any form of inter-religious cooperation. It is claimed that religious fundamentalism often proves a barrier to the growth of insidious elements which pollute the nation and the body politic, as in Islamic fundamentalism, which called a halt to excessive Westernization. Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalism geared millions of believers to a new devotion to the scriptures resulting in a faith generating myths of race, language, religion and soil as sacrosanct, thus creating fanatic religious communities in face to face confrontation.

Fundamentalism perverted

Such fundamentalist affirmations are not only detrimental to inter-religious cooperation, but signal a danger to human beings and society as a whole. Unscrupulous preachers use the already perverted forms of religious fundamentalism to lead people further into deception, as happens in the religious right, which preaches the new gospel of prosperity that sees wealth as a sign of God's favour and poverty as evidence of spiritual failure. It extols a new gospel of strength proclaiming the country's cause and even her nuclear weapons as righteous, while demonizing all adversaries as "evil empires", "godless communists", "international terrorists" and "mad dogs". This doctrine justifies nuclear war as a divine instrument to punish the wicked and complete God's plan for history. The ideology of nuclear Armageddon is inevitable and imminent, it claims, and identifies the country's enemies with the enemies of God. Since the destruction of these enemies is decreed in Scripture, they conclude that reconciliation with adversaries is ultimately futile.

In all this, religion is used as a weapon of anti-communism. Religious anti-communism active in extreme fundamentalist crusades fight and attack communism in theory and practice and promote Godism. Such fundamentalism claims to offer a positive philosophy to assist in developing an ideological offensive against communism and to

formulate and carry out an expanding educational programme against communism that will help liberate the people of the world dominated by communist rule.

Deification of technology

The technological drive to gain overwhelming military superiority engages some of the most brilliant minds in a broad range of scientific expertise to advice and formulate policies for a rational use of nuclear weapons. The overweening limitless passion for military superiority is well set out in "The Wizards of Armageddon" of Fred Kaplan. The range of scientists in the military-industrial complex includes biologists, engineers, physicists, mathematicians, chemists and astronomers as well as social and political scientists. Military-related jobs account for a large percentage of the US workforce: over 8 million people in the US are supported by jobs in defence. Of the more than 3.3 million who work directly for the defence industry, 1.1 million are civilians employed in support and clerical positions with the Department of Defence. Uniformed personnel account for 2.2 million workers, and 1.4 million are with the National Guard and Reserve.

An authentic survey of the prostitution of science for military build-up increases the frightening spectacle of "the wonders of high technology" as though it were the answer to all needs. The most creative research in the field is conducted by scientists in universities, weapons labs and industries that are involved with the military. High technology has become so extraordinarily sophisticated that satellites from space can now photograph license plates on earth. They can also monitor radio, telephone and other communications globally. It is no exaggeration to state that the whole world is wired up like a ticking time bomb, ready to explode with only a thirty minute warning.

Woven into the basic military structure are such words as superpowers, balance of terror, first strike, nuclear exchange, counter force, nuclear deterrence and nuclear war fighting, which are common currency in our daily usage. A hair-raising aspect of the high-tech revolution is the video game industry that captivates children. Many of these computer games such as "Space Invaders", "Star Path", "Killer Satellites", "Commie Mutants from Space" etc. condition our offspring from a very early age to the prospect of high-tech nuclear war in space leading to the illusion — "We're Number One!"

It is no wonder that this highly inflated concept of high technology with its military and space war orientation, creating the dream of invincibility, has

resulted in what is termed as "technological hubris" — an overweening pride in high technology. It is, of course, an undeniable fact that the present sophisticated military nuclear arsenal has the overkill capacity to destroy the globe several times. The question therefore, arises as to whether we SHOULD do what we CAN do! A response by technological expertise alone is wholly inadequate to deal with the issue, since it is basically devoid of a moral summons which must arise from a religious rootage. If high-tech strategic superiority of a nuclear "war-winning" capability is left to itself to work out its own destinies, bereft of a moral and religious ground base, we shall surely wind up in holocaust. The worship of high-tech with religious zeal will not bring any respite. The challenge of military superiority on a basis of "technological hubris" can only be met sanely by the cooperation of religions for human survival, liberation, justice and peace. We need to be vigilant to the extreme danger of the deification of technology, which not only poses a threat to the faiths, but whatever its claims is inadequate to meet the basic challenges that make for liberation, justice

and peace. Needless it is, therefore, to emphasize what "technological hubris" backed by the religious fundamentalist new right must be courageously countered, to unveil the centrality of the religions and their essential cooperation.

The search continues

The attempt to analyze the obstacles to inter-religious cooperation is valid as it creates awareness of the traps set to mislead those who are courageous enough to explore the fields of inter-religious cooperation. The world is a global "village" and the religions which were largely separated into distinct geo-physical areas are closely related. It is also a fact that since the majority of the world's population is religious, peace cannot be a reality without the enlistment of the major religions of the world. While religions cannot sidetrack the confession that they have often been the cause of conflict, the urgency of the current world situation acts as a major imperative for practical inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. The search continues.

THE WORD OF GOD PRESSES

PETER BEIER

I.

The appeal made by Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker opened a phase of church activity in the Federal Republic of Germany which was initially totally unexpected. As only few people will be familiar with the wording, I would like to quote the original text of the appeal:

„Appeal made at the 21st German Evangelical Kirchentag 1985: We call upon the churches of the world to convene a Peace Council. Today peace is an essential condition for the survival of humankind. It is not guaranteed. At an Ecumenical Council convened for the sake of peace, the Christian churches, on the basis of their common responsibility, must speak out in such a way that humankind cannot fail to hear. Time presses. We request the church leaders to do all they can to enable such a Council to meet as quickly as pos-

sible. We call on the congregations to strengthen this appeal by lending it unequivocal support."

From the outset this appeal failed to take one particular problem into account. Long before efforts towards a Council ever began in the Federal Republic, the World Council of Churches in Vancouver had called for a World Christian Assembly. It was therefore understandable that the Declaration made at the 21st German Evangelical Kirchentag in 1985 was initially suspected of ignoring the Vancouver Declaration. This, of course, was not the case. However, it must be admitted that in this country the peace issue was seen as the main aspect to be developed, and so from the start there were two doubtful areas with regard to content: — As mentioned above, the link between peace and the other two major themes of justice and the integrity of Creation was seen to be lacking; — Moreover, the term "Council" was a difficult

one from the beginning, since it could not count on general ecumenical acceptance.

The appeal drew various reactions:

- In Geneva the Europeans, and the Germans in particular, were accused of trying to bring their own problems into the global arena;
- The Catholics immediately pointed out that the term "Council" could not be used;
- The church leaders exhibited great caution with regard to the appeal, since it was not accompanied by any prospects for conciliar praxis.

There seemed to be little chance of ever getting anything moving.

II.

The above-mentioned suspicions were reinforced by political reservations in the public mind. The basis for the Düsseldorf Declaration was a text prepared by myself and others which met with firm rejection because of its allegedly radical nature. Looking back at the text now, it has to be said that this radicality is much less political than theological, which I would account for in the following way:

- The Declaration clearly expressed that the peace issue does not just concern any question of Christian ethics, but touches the central relationship between faith and obedience;
- Further, the Declaration expressed that the radicality of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction demands a radical faith response;
- Finally, the Declaration represented the correction, or to put it more plainly, the rejection of the eighth Heidelberg Thesis of 1959 which recognized efforts to secure peace with nuclear weapons as "still acceptable Christian behaviour today".

In response to this, we have formulated our position in the following statement:

"We believe: We should serve no powers, interests or truths other than the living God. The faith and obedience of the Christian community are not subject to any constraints of an economic, political or strategic nature, nor should they be so.

We believe: The Peace of Jesus Christ is a product neither of human effort nor moral exertion. The Peace of Jesus Christ commits us to struggle for social and political peace here and now on earth.

We believe: In view of the danger threatening human beings and the natural world, the Church can and must not prefer neutrality or silence to clarity of word and deed. The apparent security through arms, achieved at the cost of the poor of

this earth, provides no guarantee of peace among enemy people and nations.

We believe: It is not fear, nor the experience of powerlessness, which govern Christian faith and obedience, but it is the certainty of faith, hope and love which rules the words and deeds of Christians. For the Church and Christian community there can be no withdrawal from the world agenda on the pretext that the end of world is approaching."

III.

However, following the Kirchentag, a further stage was reached with the formation of a broad grass-roots movement, which rapidly gained ground in various regional churches and in ecumenical circles. We received around 20,000 reply cards in response to the Düsseldorf Declaration, which represented a not insignificant vote in favour of the continuation of our work and the conciliar process. Meanwhile, there was also considerable reaction from the regional churches. While the grass-roots movement was forming, the Federation of Churches in the German Democratic Republic and the Evangelical Church in Germany gave the suggestions their consideration; in various areas, commissions were established to deal with the issue, and first contacts made with the Roman Catholic episcopate and with the WCC in Geneva. The following are the practical results of consideration and consultation up to now:

- The term "Council" has been dropped and replaced by "World Assembly";
- At various levels negotiations have been initiated with church institutions and with the hierarchy;
- A coordination post has been set up within the German Evangelical Kirchentag to gather the results;
- Regional events have been held in many regional churches on the theme: "On the Way to a Peace Council". What was particularly remarkable here was the shift in priorities from the goal itself in favour of the path towards it. The goal remains a general World Christian Assembly, but the road towards it has now been clearly defined as a "conciliar process", in the form of a grass-roots process.

IV.

At the large regional event on the 1986 Day of Repentance and Prayer in Cologne, I gave the following statement on the issue:

THE WORD PRESSES

There is no need to repeat nor lengthen the horror calendar of the international arms race, nor listen to wearisome political commentaries to find justification for Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker's simple and enlightening words: "Time presses".

Every day passing over the world political stage drags with it the burden of terrible evidence.

This is the simple truth.

Reason enough for our gathering here for the Day of Repentance and Prayer in Cologne.

And yet I still wonder whether this is the sole reason for our meeting, and whether a sufficient one.

Is it only time that presses, the cold shudder in fear of a future perhaps long-gambled away?

No.

The WORD presses us.

Above all, the Word of God as heard in both Testaments, which came among us in Jesus Christ, pressurizes, calls and encourages us.

HE presses.

He presses Christians to take a decision already due in the 1950s, when the nations were first threatened with destruction and self-destruction.

The Word of God presses us into a conciliar process which in our country was said to be dead from the outset, yet which will be unstoppable — and which in other areas of the ecumenical Christian community has long since borne fruit.

This is the simple truth.

It was for this reason, and this reason only, that the clearly worded theses of the so-called Düsseldorf Declaration were adopted and published during the Düsseldorf Kirchentag. This was also the reason why at that time we expressed in summarized form, with explanation, what had already been realized by many Christians and had long been the basis of work in many congregations: Christians can and must no longer have any part in the production or deployment of weapons of mass destruction, nor have anything to do with threatening others with them.

Where did we stand then, where do we stand today?

Has there been any change for us who are of this conviction, justifiable, as we believe, by Christian faith?

As far as my friends and myself are concerned, the answer is no. But we have come here with hope, have joined others on the path of conciliar process and have helped to organize this event today because the stubbornly deadlocked dialogue between the various parties must be sought anew, must be revived. Under all circumstances.

Why?

Whoever wants a World Christian Assembly, whoever desires that the conciliar process commence and continue, should not shy away from this dialogue, nor from a renewed and perhaps particularly painful scrutiny of their position.

Silence is death.

More than a few of us have followed hesitantly, sceptically. Serious reservations have been voiced.

In Cologne there is the danger of regressing to positions long left behind: with Christianity so divided, what is the point of a World Assembly — not to mention high-flown conciliar demands! The split is irreparable.

Wherever such scepticism prevails — and God forbid! — the common way forward is blocked, and any call for promotion of the conciliar process in the congregations nothing but deception and illusion.

I have thus found it necessary to put what was declared in Düsseldorf — which some deem too extreme, others not extreme enough, and many totally unacceptable — in question form, so that the desire for a renewal of the dialogue becomes apparent. Equally, however, there should remain no doubt as to what it is we are taking with us along the road towards a World Christian Assembly.

1. They say: We still need to be able to threaten to use weapons of mass destruction to avert nuclear catastrophe and to prevent our country being open to blackmail.

We ask: Can this frequent argument stand up for one moment against faith in the crucified and risen Jesus?

Can even the slightest agreement with this political decision be expected from his witnesses?

2. They say: Political responsibility and Christian faith should be distinguished in such a way as to preclude any improper overlapping of the two.

We ask: Even if we agreed in principle, would this not, in view of the relentless continuation of the arms race, touch the very centre of our faith in the crucified and risen Jesus and challenge us to an obedient response?

3. They say: The Holy Scriptures are not explicit, but provide arguments for all known positions.

We ask: Can it be true, or believable for a single moment, that the prophetic, evangelical and apostolic basis of faith, that is, in Christ God reconciling the *world* to Himself (2 Cor. 5, 19) only applies to personal religiosity, bearing no relation to political and social reality?

4. They say: Faith in Christ is one thing, but the obedience of faith and the attempt to tell the truth and to do what is righteous is another.

We ask: Where in the Holy Scriptures, in the life of Jesus, where in the two thousand years of wanderings of God's people on earth have faith and obedience ever been separable? Faith and obedience, separate yet undivided, being the two sides of the same thing?

In short, it is our conviction that the Word of God presses Christianity to a unanimous decision — just as time is now pressing for an end to be put, step by step and with political common sense, to the insanity of the arms race.

We have no other choice: the conciliar process, the search for a clear, common statement transcending all confessional and ideological borders, and the goal of a World Christian Assembly must now guide the head, hand and heart of every Christian.

What collective action can we in this country take, despite our differing, fixed or controversial positions, or even long-standing indifference?

If the first tentative steps were to lead to initial agreement on our common goal, then eventually, perhaps, we could agree to commit ourselves to working together for broad acceptance of the process in the congregations.

Do we already hold views in common that we can perhaps formulate today?

This is the way I see it:

1. The continuing arms race, already costing countless human lives, confronts us with an "either-or" situation which can no longer be left to a subjective decision of the individual in the name of freedom of conscience.

Can we collectively agree on this at least, and take it with us on the way of conciliar process?

2. The continuing arms race, already costing countless human lives, concerns Christian faith not only at its margins, but touches and challenges its very centre.

Can we collectively agree on this and take it with us on the way of conciliar process?

3. In pursuing a hopefully common way towards our hopefully common goal, a World Assembly of Christians, we should refrain from mutual moral terrorism, and so rather than fulminating against each other's worse — or vaunting our own better — brand of Christianity, we should keep strictly to the way of Jesus of Nazareth, and concentrated, well-informed and prayerful, let his truth prevail.

Can we collectively promise this, at least, and take it with us on the way of conciliar process?

Only the decisions of the World Christian Assembly or, indeed, a general holy Christian Council, with their respective powers of authority shall possibly — or necessarily — provoke a difference of opinion.

Finally, a request: Do not slacken your efforts in the congregations to strengthen the ideas, the necessary preliminary work and the actual preparations for a World Christian Assembly — in spite of visible success or miserable failure.

Join together, seek partners in alliance.

Encourage each other, commit yourselves to working together, avoiding resignation.

Time is pressing.

But most of all — the Word of God is pressing.

SINGS OF HOPE

BISHOP POULOSE

People in the so-called "third world countries" are asking us to buy ploughs with the money we are spending on the nuclear arms. When I talk to the ordinary people in Kerala, where I come from, about the possibility of a nuclear war, they say, "So what?" This indifferent attitude can be explained in two ways. Firstly, many poor people in my country and in many parts of the so-called third world are not much aware of what the consequences of a nuclear war would be. This reminds us in India and elsewhere, that we have to work even harder in our CPC constituencies to tell

people about the disastrous consequences of a nuclear war for our life and the future. Secondly, they feel that they are already experiencing death at the hands of the unjust, cruel, discriminatory and oppressive society in which they live, and it would therefore make no difference if they were killed by nuclear war.

The people in the so-called third world countries are in the midst of two revolutions. Firstly, there is the revolution of rising expectations of the people, and secondly, the revolution of rising frustrations of the people. By the revolution of

rising expectations I mean that people have developed a new self-consciousness: they want to shape their own destiny. They do not want to be the objects of charity, but the agents of change. Perhaps these hopes and aspirations of the people in the so-called third world countries can be summarized in the words of the Spanish philosopher Unamuno; who said: "I would rather be an anguished human being than a contented pig." That describes the situation of the people in the so-called third world countries.

But then there is also the revolution of the rising frustration of the people, to which we referred earlier. There are various forms of oppression, such as poverty in the midst of plenty, and various kinds of discrimination. Take for example the case of India. My country is known as a poor country. The truth is, however, that it is not a poor country, but that there are poor people in India. If you take the seven or eight countries in the world which are highly developed in the field of science and technology, India is among them. And that is why we hear about green revolution and white revolution and all sorts of revolution in India. But still a majority of the people there, say nearly fifty per cent, live below the poverty line.

In my church, there are prayers which go something like this: "Lord, save us from famine and earthquake." And as a matter of fact when I say this prayer I feel like laughing, because, you know, it is 'fooling God'. They say: "God, save us from famine and earthquake" in one breath, as if earthquake and famine belong to the same category. We know full well that the earthquake is beyond the control of human beings. But famine is not: we are quite able to control it. Greater scientific and technological development should not bring poverty; indeed, it is possible for us to liquidate poverty because of the advance of science and technology, which has brought poverty within the realm of moral responsibility of human beings. And that is why the Russian philosopher and theologian Nicolas Berdiaeff said: "Bread for me is a material problem, bread for my neighbour is a spiritual problem." By which he was not making a dichotomy between the spiritual life and the

temporal life, but was calling for a new spirituality. I think in the CPC we have to develop a new theology, a new spirituality, which will undergird all our work. This theology should be made by the people who are actually involved in the struggles for the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations. I find the new theology is being made in the struggles of the people in Korea, South Korea and in the Philippines. I see a new theology is being made in the struggle of women for a fuller participation in the life of the society. I see new theology is made when I see the demonstrations of the young people in North America and Europe against the nuclear arms race. All these are signs of hope that this world can be a better place to live in and that this new theology is to be evolved by the ordinary people.

It is encouraging to see that the churches are now more conscious about the necessity of talking and raising their voices against war. But I think the churches have to be more emphatic and specific. Of course, when we are specific, there is a risk, it is dangerous. I am reminded of reading about the experience of a young American pastor during the final years of the Vietnam war. This young pastor wanted to preach in his church about the withdrawal of the American army from Vietnam. Being a good man, he decided to discuss it with the church board. So he told them: "I am going to preach on the issue that Americans should withdraw from Vietnam." The church board replied: "Pastor, don't create any trouble. You can preach on peace, you can preach on nuclear war and all these things, but not about the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. Because that will create division in the church." I think perhaps we have to face this possibility of having a division in the Church. In order to be honest to the Gospel we have to be specific. We have to speak out against the imperialist forces which are imposing war and nuclear arms on the people.

This is an excerpt from a contribution to discussion at the meeting of the CPC Working Committee in Arnoldshain, FRG in April 1987.

Peace Witness of the Italian Protestant Churches

VALDO BENECHCHI

The last General Assembly of the FCEI (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy)¹⁾, held in Palermo in October 1985, passed a resolution on Peace with Justice which reaffirms that "Jesus Christ is our Peace" (Eph. 2:14) because "in Him God reconciled the world and laid in us the word of reconciliation" (II. Cor. 5:19), and invites the member churches to act in three different fields: the field of witness, the field of information and education and the field of participation in the struggles of the peace movement. Since the Assembly took place in Palermo, Sicily, the resolution particularly focused on the Mediterranean and the Middle East, "one of the international contexts in which the Italian churches today are urgently called to witness to peace with justice", because in this area "any proposals for justice and peace seem to be doomed to submit to the policies of the powerful of today".

Witness

Witnessing Jesus Christ as the unique Lord of Peace with Justice is the recognized priority of the peace commitment of every Italian Protestant congregation, even if the times and places at which congregations generally give such witness greatly differ. For some of them, local parishes (and particularly during worship) are almost the only place where Jesus Christ is celebrated and should be celebrated. For others, public ecumenical initiatives such as the annual Peace with Justice Week in October, the Annual Pilgrimage for Peace to Comiso, Sicily during Easter week, or international relations between churches for peace such as twinning arrangements with churches in the USA, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, may be even more meaningful. For most of the Italian Protestant congregations there is at least a third context in which we are called to witness to our Lord's Peace, i.e. the political struggle of the peace movement "against the thoughtless process of militarization which now also damages Italian territory, the economy and democracy; for disarmament and for

the spreading of a culture of peace, nonviolence and cooperation in the fields of education, defence, scientific, technological and economic planning and particularly in contexts marked by political and social conflict".

The content of the congregations' witness for peace and justice also varies. For a minority of them, proclaiming Jesus Christ as the unique Lord of Peace is not in contradiction with accepting the arms race, which they consider as necessary for national — or even global — security. For the large majority of local churches, however, it is unacceptable to entrust peace, security and world order to the nuclear idol and to the few people in a position to press the button.

Information and education

Global Peace with Justice has been the main focus of the Protestant Church media in Italy during the 1980s, including North-South as well as East-West relations. The same goes for seminars and camps at Ecumenical Meeting and Training Centres such as Agape, Adelfia, Ecumene and others.

The Waldensian Synod of 1981 invited the Waldensian Board to establish a Peace and Disarmament Committee, which was also joined by Baptist representatives. It is called the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches, and was originally established to facilitate deeper theological reflection and political consciousness-raising on peace matters, as well as a more concrete involvement of churches in the struggle for peace.

At the beginning of 1982, a Centre for Peace Documentation and Initiatives (CEDIP) was founded in Catania, Sicily by the local group of the FGEI (Federation of Protestant Youth in Italy). It represents a unique point of reference not only for Italian Protestant churches, but also for many other peace constituencies in the far south of Italy, and is an internationally recognized partner for those working to undo the "deadly connection" be-

tween international relations and the militarization processes in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

In 1984, the Waldensian District and the FGEI of the Waldensian Valleys (Province of Turin, north-west Italy), in cooperation with the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Churches, began on a project called "Culture of Peace and Protestants" involving thousands of people from local neighborhoods in an education programme for peace with justice.

The FGEI Assembly of Palermo stated that in order to improve their witness for peace, "churches should deepen their knowledge of the context defined above²" as well as of the conditions of great imbalance and tension which characterize current relations among and within nations almost everywhere. The churches should also "turn to account the structures of research, documentation, promotion of peace, disarmament and cooperation among peoples which they already have at their disposal".

Initiatives

In 1972 the Waldensian Synod established a Committee of Solidarity with Conscientious Objectors to military service. A law recognizing the rights of conscientious objectors was passed by the Italian Parliament just a couple of months later. Since then, several hundred thousand young Italians have preferred to spend twenty months of their life engaged in civilian service than spend twelve in military service. The Waldensian Board itself was among the first ethical institutions which offered employment opportunities in civilian service to conscientious objectors in accordance with the new law. A rapidly increasing number of young Italian Protestants have chosen conscientious objection and civilian service, particularly over the last twelve years.

In the last few years, conscientious objection has affected other sectors involved in the arms race such as State military expenditure and the arms industry. In 1986, the 8th Congress of the FGEI and the Waldensian Synod passed resolutions expressing solidarity with tax resisters to military expenditure, and inviting Italian Protestants to seriously consider this opportunity, at least up to the time when nuclear weapons will become part of the Italian security system.

During the best years of the Italian and international peace movement (1981—1983), many Italian Protestants, as individuals, joined the struggle to stop the arms race which focused on the deployment of US nuclear cruise missiles at Comiso, Sicily. Many congregations and youth groups were

involved in organizing local peace committees, while church representatives participated in the regional, national and international coordinating bodies of the movement. Following strong resolutions passed by the 6th FGEI Congress (1981), the Waldensian Synod (1982), the FGEI Assembly (1982) and the Assembly of the Baptist Union (1983), the number of Italian Protestants participating in the massive demonstration against the Comiso missiles in Rome on October 22nd, 1983 exceeded all preceding meetings of Italian Protestants.

After the deployment of the first squadron of cruise missiles, the movement was no longer able to keep Comiso as its focus. People who had been trained in the peace struggle on that front brought this lesson back home and opened up a number of new peace fronts, giving fresh impetus to movements struggling for international justice and solidarity. Even the impressive development of the Italian "green" movement, which received an extraordinary boost from the Chernobyl accident, would have been unthinkable without the new political atmosphere and awareness generated by the peace movement during the Comiso years.

Nevertheless, the structure of the Italian peace movement today is weaker than during those years. This means that the Protestant churches, and particularly their Peace and Disarmament Committee (today one of the few nationwide coordinating bodies for peace) now have a much greater responsibility. Going beyond its original duties, the Committee has represented the Italian peace movement in several international peace networks and initiatives including the Campaign to Disarm the Oceans, the IPCC (International Peace Coordination and Communication Centre) and the Preparatory and Follow-Up Committee of the Middle East Peace Conference held in Amersfoort, Netherlands in 1986. In 1985, the Committee promoted six demonstrations on the Italian coast during the first International Weekend to Disarm the Oceans (June 15—16), in solidarity with the North Atlantic Network and the Pacific Campaign to Disarm the Oceans. The Committee has just launched an appeal to repeat such initiatives this year. It is also involved in an attempt to establish a national association or league for peace.

In 1984 the Committee invited congregations to declare their parishes nuclear-free. In some cases, such declarations (a little over twenty up to now) have provoked positive reactions from the town councils, which have then declared the whole municipal area nuclear-free.

In Italy in the last two years, South Africa has become the main item on the peace agenda of many Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian congrega-

tions. Public events have been organized, often with the representative of the African National Congress in Italy, Benny Nato, being invited. In 1986 Mr. Benny Nato also spoke to the FGEI Congress and to the Waldensian Synod, which both passed resolutions condemning the apartheid regime and calling for a boycott of South African products and of Italian companies and banks maintaining economic and financial ties with South Africa. Churches and youth groups in Puglia (south-east Italy) are still devoting most of their energy to this issue.

In January 1987 two Sicilian congregations organized a three-weekend public initiative on the Palestinian question, opening a debate which should spread throughout the national network of churches.

The JPIC process

The Peace with Justice resolution passed at the FGEI Assembly in Palermo also confirmed the in-

terest in and the commitment of the member churches to "the proposal for a Council of all Christian churches for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, following statements already passed by several national and international church assemblies and synods", including the Waldensian Synod in 1985.

The Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches is following developments in connection with this proposal and the difficulties confronting it.

At present the Council of FGEI is discussing the possibility of convening a national ecumenical consultation on the JPIC process next fall.

Footnotes

- 1) The FCEI represents the Baptist, Methodist, Waldensian, Lutheran, Apostolic Churches and the Salvation Army in Italy.
- 2) The context "defined above" in the resolution is the context of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Human Rights and Democracy in Latin America

SERGIO ARCE MARTINEZ

In considering so-called human rights we can take as a starting point the assertion that it is impossible in biblical and theological terms to speak of human rights as such, that is, separate from what we call "God's right". Theologically speaking, the subject of human rights has to be considered in the context of God's right to be God — in a biblical sense — to be a God of the poor, the exploited and oppressed, a God liberating from poverty, an 'avenging God of the poor', a God of total liberation.

If we were to speak of human rights from a historical point of view, in the context of history of liberation, for instance, this could result biblically and theologically in a most ambiguous and dangerous abstraction. The Bible speaks to us of human rights in abstract terms. Similarly it does not talk specifically of democracy, but rather of the rights of the poor, of those oppressed and exploited because of poverty, of those scorned because they

are defenceless and powerless; and at the same time, it talks about the Kingdom of God.

What I want to say is that human rights, which in a theological and biblical sense mean 'the rights of the poor, the orphaned, the widowed, the debtor, the enslaved, the oppressed', signify their rights to stop being poor, exploited and oppressed, their right to liberation from economic oppression, and thus from political, social and cultural oppression.

If we were to base our reflections on human rights on a premise other than that of the concreteness of life and the death of the vast majority of the underdeveloped world, this would result in a purely abstract speech, which would distort God's corresponding right to be God, particularly from the Christian and theological point of view: His right to be incarnated in a man named Jeshua (Jesus), whose name means 'Yahweh is real liberation'.

God assumed the position not of noblemen in

their palaces, even if they were cardinals; nor of intellectuals in their debates, even if they were theologians; nor of generals in their barracks, even though they waged holy wars; nor of merchants at their business, even if they sold Bibles and amulets; not even of the worshippers in their temples or those who considered themselves saints, in their convents — but with precisely the opposite. Which does not mean that all cardinals and bishops or all theologians, generals, merchants, worshippers and saints should be thought of as antichrists, if they do not oppose God's right to be a God who is 'robber of the rich' and a 'retriever of the outcast', destroyer of the pride and greed of those that 'eat the people as if they were bread' and do not challenge His right to be the 'enemy of the oppressors', 'liberator of the oppressed', 'healer of the sick', and 'liberator of the poor'.

Our considerations of human rights from a theological and biblical perspective thus begins with God's right to choose His future freely, side by side with the humble, the poor and the victims of imperialist oppression in any form, including religious oppression, this means His right to choose His destiny, His divine future as the destiny and future of the exploited and impoverished. It is in God's destiny that the way is shown us, as He makes the history, suffering and the anti-imperialist struggle of the crucified Jesus his own.

With this divine right as a starting point we can speak theologically of human rights, always in the context of the right of the poor to life, to the life God gives, the life that means shalom. If we fail to do this, we run the risk of falling into the imperialist political trap of false human rights, as they were visualised under the Carter administration and in its defence policy promoted by neo-liberals, now to be found among the neo-conservatives of the Reagan administration. To give just one topical example of the dogma used by the imperialists, I would like to refer to so-called "freedom of expression", which, if we analyse it thoroughly, is nothing more than the presumed freedom of expression of those having the best means of communication at their disposal — the mass media — because of their financial resources. Thus it was in the name of so-called "freedom of the press" that the closing down of "La Prensa" was condemned, without any consideration of the right of the poor and oppressed in Nicaragua to liberate themselves from poverty and oppression. Or I could mention the condemnation of the Sandinistas' extradition of two "contras" in the name of so-called religious freedom, without any regard for the fact that if we are to follow the message of the Bible, all human rights must be seen in the

context of the rights of the poor, exploited and oppressed to free themselves from poverty and oppression, and their right to life, a full life, to shalom, to peace.

The rights of the poor, dehumanised in their poverty, are the only biblical and theological criteria to be used in deciding when and where human rights have been violated.

So far what I have said has been closely connected with our main theme: "Let us establish peace, in defence of life" and with our text "The fruit of justice shall be peace". However, unless we are vigilant, subjects such as human rights and democracy will be turned — in fact they have already been turned — into double-edged weapons to be used in the name of the "human rights" mentioned above, against the poor in their struggle to build a new society, where peace is a reality as the fruit of justice. My thesis is that both these themes — peace and justice — are linked to the subjects of this encounter, that is the direct dialectic between peace and justice as put forward in the Bible.

These two themes are like the two sides of a unique historical phenomenon, which constitutes one of the Bible's greatest contributions to universal culture. Peace and justice are distorted, if we do not give priority to justice. Our traditional Western "Christian" approach to this issue has drawn more from the Greco-Roman culture than from the Hebrew-biblical culture. If we give peace priority, following the Hellenic culture, both peace and justice find their place in the Right of Jurisprudence, a positive right which demands the peaceful co-existence of social classes. Peace is thus conceived merely as the "absence of war", and justice as the guarantee to give everyone their due and what belongs to them according to the prevailing class system.

The great Roman Emperor Justinian gave the following definition: "Justice is the continuous and eternal desire to give each man his rights", that is, the rights bestowed on each man by the Imperial Roman class state. Likewise, jurists and law philosophers in all subsequent class societies have spoken of the existence of the "fairness" of law, which merely means the need to maintain peace at any cost.

When Mr. Carter spoke of human rights, he also talked about the rights of the oppressed, but only of the rights recognized and accepted by a capitalist society and state, that is, a discriminatory class society. In such a system human rights are limited to the ability to create a society in which the few the rights of the poor and exploited within the

are privileged at the expense of the many, so that system are restricted.

Throughout the development of our Western "Christian" civilisation, there have been thinkers who draw rather more directly on biblical sources and who therefore came nearer to the meaning of justice — and thus of peace — given in the Bible (Kant, for example).

The Bible tells us that justice is not impartial, but is rather a passionate commitment to the poor, oppressed and those discriminated against because of poverty, and a will to deliver them from death and bring them to life. "Mishpat", as many contemporary interpreters of the Bible have demonstrated, signifies "salvation of the poor", the "rights of the exploited", which means first and foremost their liberation from deadly and dehumanising conditions.

If our struggle for human rights is integrated into the traditional understanding of justice and how it relates to peace, then these rights remain subject to the logic of the dominant discriminatory class system. This explains why members of such a system condemn as a violation of human rights the way in which certain countries, including my own, treat the few so-called "dissidents", while they lose no sleep over the hundreds of millions of men, women, old people and children who live in sub-human conditions in the heart of the imperialist world.

All this is linked with the process which the Christian Church went through as it changed from being the "Church of the Poor" into the "Church for the Poor" and then finally, generally speaking, into the "Church of the Rich for the Rich". In the seventh century St. Isidoro of Seville wrote in his "Etymology" that "natural rights are common to all nations... e.g. the union of man and woman, succession and education of children, common possession of all things and freedom for all". I would like to emphasize this last point: "the common possession of all things and freedom for all". Here are two elements shaping one social phenomenon. Saying that "common possession of all things" is synonymous with "freedom for all" contradicts the subsequent process of Christian thought which reduces all social as well as economic problems to mere peaceful coexistence of all human beings. This amounts to a rejection of the assertion of "the right of the poor to the property unjustly stolen from them by the rich", as our forefathers taught us. Justice, then, consists of giving back stolen property to the poor, which means their liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Only this could create the possibility of real freedom, freedom as one of the fundamental hu-

man rights, and not only that of the poor, who would be poor no more, but also of the rich, who would share in the wealth generated by society.

Thomas Hobbes, the father of bourgeois ethics, often talked of peace, and succeeded in making the link between the class ideas of peace and freedom with such logical and philosophical perfection that I doubt whether this can be improved on at all nowadays. Peace in this sense has come to mean the same as defined by Cicero in his "Filipicas", that is, the right to "live freely and in tranquility". All this was reproduced by Hobbes' followers as a legal licence for the system not only to recognize, but also to support the exploitation and oppression of the majority by the rest. A denial of such a right would mean a violation of human rights within the system, that is, a denial of the right to private ownership of the means of production and of the wealth created by the workers, the right to be exploiters and oppressors, the right to be antipeople, which is the same as being anti-God.

From a biblical and theological point of view the concepts of human rights and of democracy are subordinate to the right of the poor, exploited and oppressed to be freed from their condition. This right is based on God's right to continue the building of His Kingdom, come what may, whose legitimate heirs, according to the Gospel, are the poor themselves.

Of course, we are not speaking of general situations, but of particular ones, and I would stress "particular", rather than structural cases, as are usually dealt with. Thus referring only to particular situations (torture, mistreatment etc.) — which are also relevant to the structural one — we affirm the right of all people to the respect of their physical integrity, which is closely linked to biblical anthropology. We are created neither "angels" nor "beasts": we are created human beings. In this sense we are "soma", that is, "body". The human being is "body" in the biblical sense of the term. The body is not something separate from our being: we are neither divided nor quartered, nor in two or three different colours, but a psycho-sociosomatic unity, indivisible.

The body is not something separate from the "I": the ego is "soma". All physical violence against our "somatic ego" constitutes violence and aggression against what was created, according to Genesis, by God's own hand, moulding the soil of the earth with a divine wind. But when we speak of violence against our "soma" — of the violation of our right to physical integrity, as well as to social and spiritual integrity — as one of the fundamental human rights, we should not forget

that this protest will only be valid if made in the context of the structural situation and not merely in that of the individual case.

The violation of "soma" is carried out by incalculable cruelty, although this is perhaps less obvious in the denial of the right of the poor and oppressed to be freed from their situation. This is the fallacy that I observe in much of the so-called "defence of human rights" given by developed capitalist countries, and this is the reason why we must remain vigilant. This does not, however, mean that such a "defence" would not be used tactically in our struggle for the rights of the vast majority of the have-nots to material and spiritual wealth in this world, the have-nots of life, of shalom. Our movements and establishments working for the defence of human rights need to be so vast and comprehensive that they are capable of combining the struggle for human rights with that of the peoples for their sovereignty and peace and the struggle of the suffering masses for total liberation.

For more than twenty years now we have insisted that the basic human right is the right to work, that is to be a co-creator, a co-integrator of nature, history and human conscience, God's partner in the attempt to create a new being in His image and likeness, a "new human being" on a "new earth and in a new heaven". Thus the prevailing system, the "total market system", as Hinkelammert called it, is condemned in God's judgement and in history — which are the same thing — because this system is not capable of guaranteeing that all able members of society can fully become co-creators, co-liberators and co-integrators of nature, history and human conscience. This was made clear more than 20 years ago at a National Theological Encounter in Havana, where an attempt was made to raise the consciousness of the Cuban Church in the face of the challenge offered by the programme of liberation of the Revolution.

Let us now refer to the issue of *democracy*, which theologically can be regarded as being subject to the same contradictions as were indicated in the above analysis, that is, the contradiction between peace understood as an "absence of war", which determines justice as giving "everyone their due", and the understanding of justice as the "right of the have-nots to enjoy the wealth received and created by their hands", which means peace as shalom, as abundance and wealth for all as equals. Thus the notion and practice of democracy is different within a discriminatory class society and one based on equality and participation, that is, the difference between democracy as under-

stood and practised in classical Hellenic and Greco-Roman terms, and its practical implementation in Hebrew and biblical terms. If we start from our initial premise that the fundamental human right to full development as human beings is concomitant with God's divine right to be God, the God of life, peace, abundance, liberation and creation, the God who is the builder and integrator of His Kingdom, then every person's participation in the production, distribution and use of all material and spiritual wealth must be a characteristic of what we call in modern terms democracy, and "theocracy" in theological and biblical terms, meaning the Kingdom of God. This relates directly to the fact that His will, "good, agreeable and perfect", "will be done on earth as it is in heaven", and all this, in terms of the historical experience of ancient Israel, of Christ's Gospel and of the history of the newly-born Christian community of believers would mean, in our modern vocabulary, what I have often referred to as the "New Man's Republic" (and New Woman's, of course).

The history of ancient Israel and its beginning as a people is presented as a real social revolution against the oppressive rule not only in Egypt, but in the whole of Mesopotamia at that time. It was a system identified by sociologists as the "Asian method of production", in which the peasants and other oppressed sections of the population were obliged to work to accumulate wealth, particularly food, for the imperial state oligarchy.

In the cases related in Genesis, the policy followed by the Egyptian state, principally inspired and designed by Joseph son of Jacob, is described as an economic policy by which the state gradually became the sole proprietor of all land. This meant that the peasants, who had formerly owned the land themselves and lived on the land they worked were forced to pay high rents to the state for the use of it, thus being unmercifully exploited.

According to the same story, as related in Genesis, it was Joseph himself, the political genius, who imposed this oppressive system on Egypt. The irony is that it was Joseph's sons and grandsons who were the greatest victims of the oppressive system of which he was the architect.

In the rest of the biblical world of that time, particularly in Canaan, we find that the same "method of production" was imposed by priest-kings of the city-states of so-called Canaan, against whom tribal groups struggled in the aim of creating a CONFEDERATION: This represents the dawn of a people which was to be known as "God's people". These tribes, peasants above all, took on a revolutionary character: a well-known commentator on the book of Exodus tells us that

in Egypt the Hebrews rejected structural slavery as a form of the "Asian method of production" and prepared for the creation of a new society, in which everyone would live as brothers and sisters according to Yahweh's commandments given on Mount Sinai.

It would appear that what really happened was a rebellion by the peasant masses against the structures of established power, a rebellion which aimed to construct, at a very high price, a society on a new basis — an egalitarian society in which Yahweh alone would be recognized as the owner of earth, heaven and all existence. In practice this would mean that everyone could enjoy life to the full and share in all given and created wealth. The central concern was the building of a new and just society in which poverty, exploitation and oppression would inevitably disappear. The oppressed, enslaved tribes and clans declared themselves in rebellion in the cause of a religious ideology which defined the Exodus as God's project of liberation, which was to create the real "theocracy", later called the Kingdom of God. According to the Bible story all this happened under the direction of Joshua and of other prophets, whose title was ambiguously translated as "judges", but which is nearer to "sphet" or "bringers of justice to the exploited, defenders and liberators of the oppressed". All waged an unequal struggle against the monopolising, aggressive and oppressive city-states of ancient Canaan.

Thus we become aware of a united effort by tribes and clans — as different from each other as the Latin American and Caribbean peoples today — brought together, as we are today, by poverty, exploitation and oppression. In spite of their differences and dissimilarity, they threw themselves into the struggle for the creation of a confederation of states on the social, political and economic basis of the participation of each and every one in the production and distribution of all material and spiritual wealth. In other words, a society founded on life and peace sustained by the religious and political ideology which recognizes Yahweh as the only Lord of all existence: Yahweh, the liberating God of Moses whom they would serve in obedience to His liberating will, thus creating and integrating His will.

This real "theocracy", synonymous with "democracy" (if we pass over the gap created by the development of productive forces, the social, political and economic structures that divide us from the liberation which gave birth to ancient Israel) was subdued — because the masses became weary, or for whatever reason — by a counterrevolutionary takeover of power which quashed all efforts to

create a new society with a kind of "popular power".

This betrayal of the project of life and liberation conceived by Moses was completed by leaders, at first popular, but in fact more populist, who by betraying the interests of the people, succeeded in imposing a monarchic power in alliance with priests who supported it. On the one side first David, and then Solomon, on the other, Sadoc. They ignored Samuel's prophetic denial which stated that the imposition of an autocracy on the people whether secular or clerical, would amount to nothing less than a betrayal of Yahweh and the Mosaic project taken up by Joshua and subsequent leaders of Israel. Using the foolish Saul as a temporary justification, the new masters subdued the people, deluding them with dreams of national glory. After taking power, these leaders claimed to be the heirs of the great liberating traditions of the emerging nation — those of Moses — for their own advantage. Thus Yahweh was transformed from being the God of liberation into the God of the status quo, from the God of Moses, Joshua and all the "guerilla leaders of the liberation" into the God of David and Solomon, the God of David's vengeance and of Solomon's absolutism. A temple would be built to honour Him — the final resting place of the Ark of the Covenant, after the pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God, the Promised Land, the "land of milk and honey".

With a few intervals, this situation lasted for centuries, until the time of Jesus. The chance for the popularly claimed "theocracy-democracy" in the pre-monarchial times was again frustrated at the time of the return from Babylon.

At that time we notice two alternative plans: on the one hand, the anti-popular, pro-imperialist project to restore the ruling classes to power based on priestly lineage — Ezekiel's plan — and the popular plan to restore egalitarian values and God's law, for the poor and oppressed, as in Isaiah II and of his heirs in the best prophetic tradition, on the other. The nascent Persian empire imposed the first system on those willing to once again betray the interests of the poor, of the masses, who remained in Palestine during the oligarchic transmigration to Babylon.

The new class system of power now centred entirely on the Temple, and was only opposed by the frustrated revolt of Machabeus, and eventually by apocalyptic expectations and the many unsuccessful messianic leaders.

By taking a large jump, we now reach the time of Jesus and the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus had once more to take up the prophetic tradition of Moses and announce the coming of the Kingdom

of God. There can be no doubt as to the egalitarian and participatory character of the movement He inspired. After His death the community He organized, the movement He founded had to base its thought and action on the power of the Holy Spirit, which, flowing equally among all people, confirmed this community of brothers and sisters through the witness of the Resurrection. Above all, this signified common wealth and elimination of poverty, thus meaning the realisation of complete freedom and perfect peace. At the same time this represented the struggle for the creation of the Kingdom of God in which each person would contribute to the growing community according to his/her ability and would receive according to his/her need. This, the one essential principle for any attempt to create real democracy should not

be sought in Marx, nor even in Calvin, but in the New Testament — and if we look carefully, we can also find it in Deuteronomy. In the history of the growing Christian community we all, the whole of humanity, are one body, with Christ as its head and all those active in its development as its limbs.

This all represents the continuation of God's eternal project of liberation, of restoring His right to be God, the liberator of the poor, the creator of a society of equals. A God who is able, together with the efforts of the head and all members of the social body, to build His Kingdom of Justice and Peace, the eternal mystery and centuries-old secret that "God may someday be manifest in all", in the participation of everyone in the highest good, and in the ultimate goal of our equality.

SOLIDARITY AS MISSION

SARAH CHANDA

"Go tell it to the mountains, over the hills and everywhere" was the farewell message that Ms. Margaret Mugo, Vice-President, African Christian Peace Conference, gave to the members of the C.P.C. delegation on the eve of their departure after a 14 day visit to Eastern and Central Africa. (Antanarivo — Madagascar; Nairobi — Kenya; Lusaka — Zambia; Harare — Zimbabwe; Gaborone — Botswana and Dar-es-Salaam — Tanzania) May 25th—June 9th 1987.

As a member of the delegation, a woman, a Third World woman, an Asian, an Indian whose country was in the fore-front of the struggle against Apartheid, to whom was I to go and tell? Could I use the network of the YWCA's in my country, and tell my sisters all that I had heard and seen — of the sufferings of women and children, and even the imprisonment of some of our YWCA members in South Africa? Could I ask my Parish Church, the Diocese, the Church of South India Synod to remember June 16th — Soweto Day as a day of fasting and praying — a day of solidarity to end the unjust rule of apartheid? Could I through several "widow's mites" cooperate with the state in its efforts to raise funds for the Africa Fund? Yes, I could and must, for I have

been truly humbled through this exposure and feel bold now in proclaiming the Gospel of Truth.

It was a well-balanced delegation that was chosen to visit these countries and to tell those whom they met that they were with them in their struggles, their joys, and also of the CPC's commitment to peace with justice and development. The members were Bishop Dr. Károly Tóth, leader of the delegation and President of the CPC who in his own way was able to keep the delegation on their feet, to keep them together and delegate equally the responsibilities. The balance between East and West was achieved through two "giants" Archbishop Methodij (USSR) who came through very clearly and precisely when called upon to do so, and Rev. Christoph W. Schmauch (USA), Deputy Secretary-General of the C.P.C., who proved himself not only in his theological understanding of peace and justice, but also in his capability in organising and helping John Ligoo (Kenya), Secretary African Desk CPC in the practical arrangements of the tour.

The other members of the delegation included the office-bearers of the African Christian Peace Conference, Rev. Dr. Richard Andriamanjato (Madagascar) President; Mrs. Margaret Mugo (Kenya)

Vice-President; Rev. Canon Stanford Shauri (Tanzania) General Secretary.

In attempting to share and relate the experiences of this delegation, one cannot overlook the fact that the CPC and what it stood for, was most appreciated by the churches and the political leaders whom they met. It also became obvious that much needs to be done to develop an adequate flow of information between the CPC and the various church bodies, in the countries visited.

In almost all the countries visited, the delegation was able to discuss with Church and State leaders the need for the promotion of independence, freedom, democracy and human dignity in South Africa and Namibia. Views were also exchanged with these leaders on the spirituality of peace and the inseparability of peace with justice.

Visits to development programmes such as the visit to the appropriate technology unit at the Lusaka YWCA, and the visit to a refugee transit camp gave the members a firsthand experience of the growing needs of the people in the developing countries being faced with the intensification of the struggle for total liberation, in their attempts for the improvement of the quality of life. The delegation was able to learn about the cooperation between the churches, the Government and the UNHCR in trying to deal with the emergency of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing from war and oppression.

Sunday worship in the various churches and the fellowship hours in the homes helped the visitors to enter into the experiences of the members and congregations of the churches; and have an insight of the family life and the culture of these countries. It was indeed a spiritual experience for the whole delegation as they worshipped in churches other than their own denomination in Dar-es-Salaam (heaven of peace) on Pentecost Day. To worship, to pray and to sing hymns in a tongue other than their own was truly a Pentecost experience and a time for "furahini" (Kiswahili) "rejoicing".

It was a "timely" visit, as shared by all, especially by the President of Zambia, H.E. Kenneth Kaunda, who invited the CPC delegation to a working breakfast. On this occasion the President of Zambia received, on behalf of the Africa Fund, a donation of \$ 5,000, this donation coming from the collections raised on Africa Sunday. The President also accepted officially the invitation of the CPC to serve as one of its Hon. Presidents. In his remarks, he referred to the timely visit and support of the CPC delegation because of the intensifying struggle of the Front Line states and the liberation movements against South Africa. President Mwinzi of Tanzania commended the work

of the CPC in its efforts to seek justice and understanding among nations and peoples of different religious beliefs. He said "the ideals of peace, tranquility and understanding" which the organization was striving to achieve among nations were similar to those of Tanzania. Tranquility and understanding could not exist in the absence of justice. The delegation was impressed with the exemplary way in which Christians and Moslems have learned to work and live together, in Tanzania, under the long-time leadership of the former President Nyerere and the present Head of State, President Ali Hassan Mwinyi. The meeting with the President at the State House in Dar-es-Salaam was a valuable opportunity for the CPC to have their first meeting with the President of this country, which has done so much to help other countries in the region to achieve independence.

The frank and open discussions held with liberation movements of South Africa and Namibia, viz. the ANC, PAC and SWAPO, and with the Zimbabwean Information Minister, Mr. Nathan Shamuyarira, gave an insight of the current situation in Southern Africa, of the mounting propaganda efforts against the Front Line States and destabilizing activities of the racist South African Government in support of bandit groups, also supported by outside forces.

The unscheduled appointment with Party Chairman Mwalimu Nyerere of Tanzania re-established a cordial CPC relationship of long-standing. Having returned from a three-week tour, Mwalimu was willing to meet the members when they called on him at his residence. A very objective up-to-date evaluation of South Africa was shared, and the role that churches and Christians had to play in this struggle for liberation.

Go and tell (1) The vitality of the churches and the potential of the ecumenical movement should be used for raising consciousness on the issues of Southern Africa and creating an irresistible pressure by influencing world public opinion. (2) Support for sanctions by the developed countries emerged as a missing link in the struggle to eliminate the terrible injustice in South Africa and Namibia. (3) The fascist mentality of the South Africa Government would lead to even greater violence and blood-shed. (4) The WCC Lusaka statement May 4-8, 1987 "The churches search for justice and peace in Southern Africa" needed to be studied and carried out, especially Nos. 1 & 2 of the Challenge.

The challenge

"We call on the churches and international community to recognize the overwhelming material

sacrifice and suffering of the people of the Front Line States in combatting apartheid and the destabilizing influence of the Pretoria regime in the region. This necessitates an immediate and enhanced programme of aid and assistance to the Front Line States through the Southern Africa Development Coordination Council and other agencies in order to reduce their dependence upon South Africa and to enable them to continue support to both refugee victims of apartheid and those movements actively engaged in the struggle for liberation.

"We affirm the unquestionable right of the people of Namibia and South Africa to secure justice and peace through the liberation movements. While remaining committed to peaceful change we recognize that the nature of the S. African regime which wages wars against its own inhabitants and neighbours compels the movements to the use of force along with other means to end oppression. We call upon the churches and the international

community to seek ways to give this affirmation practical effect in the struggle for liberation in the region and to strengthen their contacts with the liberation movements."

(5) The role of the church as "bridge-builders" and the need for the world church to support those who are in the fore-front of the struggle, spiritually and materially.

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The many important contacts and learning experiences would not have been possible but for the close cooperation of the CPC with the various Christian councils in the various countries visited.

With the need for strengthening these relationships, the delegation left with a new appreciation of the richness of the ecumenical fellowship and the contribution which a united effort can make towards peace and justice, knowing that "the work of righteousness will be peace." Isaiah Chap. 32:16.

Churches willing to help Africa should:

- 1. Create a base for strong national unity to every country;**
- 2. Show solidarity with refugees to help them develop their God-given gifts for the benefit of all;**
- 3. Provide scholarship for refugee students in areas of greater need in Africa;**
- 4. Develop small labour intensive farms with a view to increasing land under cultivation and diminishing dependence on imported food;**
- 5. Create job opportunities to give refugees the satisfaction of participant in the development of Africa starting from the host country.**

Mr. José Belo Chipenda

An excerpt from the speech delivered at the African CPC to mark the IYP in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in June 1986

Search for Unity and the Conciliar Fellowship

KENYON WRIGHT

This is an excerpt from a contribution to discussion at the meeting of the CPC Working Committee in Arnoldshain, FRG in April 1987.

I will confine myself to making one or two main points about the conciliar process and its relation to the conciliar fellowship and the peace covenant. There has been a great lack of clarity both about the principles and even more about the practice and the working-out of this conciliar process and its relationships. Now it seems to me there are two major issues that have to be worked out.

The first is the theological task of defining the principles. Beyond this we must reclaim theology and the Bible for the whole movement for peace and justice. What are some of these principles? First of all, I would suggest to work out the way in which the process is related to the general move towards unity of the Church and the conciliar fellowship. We are long past the time when faith and order and life and work could be separated, when doctrinal and ecclesiastical unity could be examined outside of its relation to the unity of the world. Vancouver reminded us that the unity of the Church can only be understood in relation to the integrity of humankind and of the purpose of the Church relating to the Kingdom of God.

I would like to go into several aspects of our theological task. First, we need theological analysis of the new thinking, the new thinking which has brought people to the realisation, the astonishing realisation on the part of some politicians, that we live in a world of radical change, a world in which only a new comprehensive, global moral order can offer realistic hope. To hear politicians and statesmen speaking in these comprehensive visionary and moral terms is something new, which calls us to make a theological assessment. Not only are the political options clearer than ever before, but one service which Margaret Thatcher may have done us in her visit to Moscow is at least to have made it no longer possible for us in Britain to speak about the Russian threat as glibly as we did before. But more important, she has clarified, so to speak, the options: on the one hand, the old thinking, which says that nuclear weapons are

actually the means of defence and deterrence and of maintaining peace; and the new thinking, on the other, which says, as not only Gorbachov, but as the New Zealand government also says, that nuclear weapons actually reduce security and make security less likely, less comprehensive — and that therefore only comprehensive security will do. My plea, however, is not just for the political recognition of the clarity of these options, but for a greater theological analysis. For the first time, nuclear weapons are being seen not only as the great threat they are, but as closely and intimately connected with the wider questions of human relationships as a whole — with the gap between rich and poor — and indeed with the renewal of the earth itself, with the ecological crisis we face. That is equally astonishing and similarly demands theological analysis. We need, I believe, a theology of creation, in which we are dealing not with purely moral categories of fine ethical judgements about the just world, but with theological categories of idolatry, and with the perception of a global strategy, a global struggle between the forces of life itself and the principalities and powers of death. Only a theology of creation which is wide enough to do that will be sufficient. We need theological analysis that is based on a clear social and political analysis, but interprets it in theological terms. A theology of peace can only be a theology of the wholeness of life, of the harmony of Creation both in the oikumene and in the cosmos, that is, both in the world of human relations and in the world of nature and the balance of nature. And we must, I believe, analyse the relation of this to the search for unity and the conciliar fellowship; just as in 1910 it was the Edinburgh Missionary Conference which gave the primary impetus to the ecumenical movement as we know it in modern times. In other words, just as the ecumenical movement emerged not primarily from "Faith and Order" discussions among church leaders, but from the missionary imperative of the Church, so I believe in the same way we may be witnessing now that the pressure for world and global understanding of the human predicament is in fact offering us the primary way for the future — for the ecumenical movement and for the movement towards unity.

DOCUMENTS

Orthodox Churches on Peace

The Third All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assembly, which met from October 28 to November 6, 1986 at Chabésy, Geneva, adopted four official documents, including one on peace. This represents an extremely important step for the further "distribution of forces" in the Christian and worldwide peace movement, for these documents are the result of a consensus among all the Orthodox churches represented there, and equally binding on all these churches and their representatives.

The Third All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assembly intends to submit the above text, entitled "The contribution of the Orthodox Church to the realisation of peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood and love among the nations and to the elimination of racial and other forms of discrimination" to the planned All-Orthodox Council, which shall take as its theme "The contribution of local Orthodox churches to the realisation of the Christian ideals of peace, freedom, friendship and love among the nations and to the elimination of racial and other forms of discrimination".

Information on the document — the official text of which appears in French, Greek and Russian, as for all documents submitted to the Council — was published in Bulletin Nr. 379 (March 26, 1987), giving a brief summary of its contents and quoting important passages. Something should now be said more generally about the history of the document, whose significance for the peace movement can hardly be overestimated.

As actual preparations for an eighth 'ecumenical' Council got under way, to be on the same level as the seven early Christian ecumenical Councils, it became necessary to choose from a number of themes already proposed more or less informally at previous meetings. The selected themes were then studied, discussed and recommended for the Council by several All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assemblies. Thus the Second All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assembly, in 1982, dealt, among other things, with the phenomenon of sermons and prophecy; and as well as the peace issue, the Third All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assembly also discussed fasting,

the ecumenical movement and relations between Orthodoxy and the rest of the Christian world. The Fourth All-Orthodox Preconciliar Assembly is to deal with autocephality, autonomy, the diptych and the Diaspora.

Several quotations from the document on peace are printed below: from the document's eight chapters, we have selected the third paragraph of Chapter 5 ("Peace as the prevention of war"), the fourth paragraph of Chapter 6 ("Racial and other forms of discrimination") and the whole of Chapter 7 ("Friendship and solidarity among the nations").

We observe that the current growing danger of nuclear catastrophe and the feeling of powerlessness in the face of it lead some Christians to consider this global threat as a sign of the second coming of our Lord. Although foretelling the signs indicating the advent of the Last Day, our Lord Jesus Christ himself preserves us from such scandalous thoughts of the end of the world when He says: 'But of that day or that hour no one knows'. (Mk 13:32) Our efforts to avert war and bring about the triumph of peace in no way invalidate the Christian belief that humanity and the whole universe are in the hands of God, who created the world in His wisdom, the all-provident ruler. The firm hand of God guides history towards the future, and within the Church, Christians are already experiencing the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God, with hope of a new earth and new heaven. This is why, despite their concern about the extent of evil in the world and their struggle against it, Christians do not sink into despair — for they perceive everything in the context of eternity, awaiting the resurrection of the dead, and life in the centuries to come.

Orthodoxy unequivocally condemns the inhuman system of racial discrimination and the sacrilegious claim which maintains that this system corresponds to Christian ideals. Asked the question 'Who is my neighbour?', Christ replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which teaches us to overcome all barriers of enmity and prejudice. Orthodoxy ac-

knowledges that each human being, regardless of colour, religion, race, nationality and language has been created in God's image, our brother or sister, and an equal member of the human family.

Friendship and solidarity between the nations

1. This last statement can help us to better appreciate Orthodoxy's specific contribution to solidarity and friendship between the nations. Indeed, the Orthodox churches are able to contribute to an improvement in the general climate and spiritual condition not only by educating their believers and the nation in general, but also in all their spiritual activities. What is referred to here are the various spiritual possibilities differing from those that international organizations and states may have, since they arise from the very nature of the Church. As they may produce more substantial and permanent results in the area of peace and friendship, they should be made use of as fully as possible. Here, then, the Orthodox Churches find themselves with a great deal of scope, and the chance to bring before the divided world the basic element of their ecclesiastical and social teaching, that is, the ideal of liturgical, and particularly eucharistic, communion.

2. It is from this perspective that we should understand the Church's enormous responsibility in the struggle against the intolerable hunger and extreme poverty at present affecting large numbers of people and even entire nations, particularly in the third world. This phenomenon, so terrifying in an age when the economically developed countries are living in opulence and wastage whilst at the same time engaging in a deadly arms race, reveals the deep identity crisis of the contemporary world, for two main reasons:

a) because hunger does not merely threaten the sacred gift of life of whole nations in the developing world, but also destroys the dignity and sanctity of the human being, and

b) because with their often criminal management and distribution of material goods, the economically developed countries affront not only the image

of God in each human being, but also God himself, who identified himself with the hungry and poor when He said: 'As you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.' (Matt. 25: 40).

3. In the face of this terrifying phenomenon of our time — famine affecting entire nations — the passivity and indifference of Christians and of the Church as a whole would amount to nothing less than a betrayal of Christ and an absence of active faith. For if concern about our own food is often a material problem, concern about that of our neighbour is just as much a spiritual question. (Jas. 2:14—18). Consequently it is the supreme task of the Orthodox Churches to declare their solidarity with their poor brothers and sisters and to organize immediate and effective aid to them. In this regard the local Orthodox Churches have already gained some experience from their present activities and initiatives, and this is indeed the way of collaboration in this area — and not merely between the Churches, but also with other Christian churches and confessions, with the World Council of Churches and with international organizations committed to the struggle against this terrible scourge. Disarmament would not only eliminate the danger of nuclear destruction, but would also mean that the considerable sums saved could be used to aid those afflicted by famine and poverty.

4. But we can have no illusions: the whiplash of hunger hitting the human community today and the gaping chasm of inequality which has opened up within it serve to condemn our age both in its own eyes and in the eyes of our righteous God. For His Will today, which desires nothing but the salvation, here and now, of actual human beings, obliges us to work in the service of people and to tackle their immediate problems. Faith in Christ becomes meaningless if it is separated from social mission: being a Christian means doing as Christ did, and being willing to serve Him in the weak, the hungry, the oppressed and generally in everyone needing help. Any attempt to perceive Christ as a real presence without seeing the connection to those in need is nothing but theory devoid of content.

PEACE IS SPELLED: B-R-E-A-D

From the point of view of our continent, we support with hope the efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and to stop the arms race, and the desire to keep outer space free from weapons of mass destruction. We are also encouraged by the efforts taken towards the reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe, but remain nevertheless aware of the fact that the proposals discussed provide for the elimination of only 5% of their capacity.

As Christians, we condemn all danger of nuclear confrontation, and identify with the position of many religious authorities — Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox — and with all international ecumenical organizations which affirm that a nuclear war has no possible justification. In this sense we point out that a mere reduction of nuclear stockpiles and nuclear weapons does not mean Peace. Our peoples, besides nuclear blackmail, are troubled by "conventional" or permanent wars that let loose the lash of hunger. A bomb with unforeseeable consequences has already exploded in the Third World: it is called foreign debt — a material debt, yet morally unpayable and irrecoverable, unrequested by our people who bleed for it day after day. That is why we say that Peace is spelled B-R-E-A-D.

We believe that peace is the fruit of liberation, our peace is the shalom that means not only absence of conflict or "tranquility of order", but an abundance of goods, material and spiritual prosperity, victory over enemies, fraternal relations inside the community and intimate communion with Yahweh, God among the People.

PROTEST AGAINST THE IDOLATRY OF POWER

As Christians committed to the struggle for liberation, we denounce the idolatry of power, which distorts the human vision of the Gospel, prevents its full development in a community and ultimately serves death.

The message of the prophets and the message of the Gospel of Christ demand an ethical answer capable of demolishing idols, and leading to the full respect of human dignity and the right to a full life. They also call us to denounce the holocaust of hungry multitudes, torture, unpunished assassinations and forced disappearances. The logic of death also fuels the "religious war" taking place in our countries. We denounce a number of sects and corporations which call themselves Christian and form part of the imperialist project for domination. As Christians struggling for a peace as the fruit of justice, we feel challenged by this phenomenon which mainly affects the poorest in our continent, resulting in resignation in the face of oppression and the weakening or paralysis of popular organization. As well as condemning the menacing and destructive effects of the individualistic preaching of these religious movements, we, as believers, renew our commitment to strengthen the living Church, the Church born of the poor, developing and growing in community and accompanying them on the path of liberation.

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