

hodierna
missio
societatis
jesu
est
fidei
servitium
cui

ut

exigentia

absoluta

pertinet

promotio justitiae

exchanges * échanges * intercambios

No. 13

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- (1) INTERVIEW : EXPOSURE TO AND EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY - FATHER GENERAL p. 69
Why ask ? - Why important ? - What results ? -
Experience for all ? - How to conduct ? - What
to expect ? - How during training ? - Example in
Curia ? - Action from Major Superiors ?
- (2) REPORT : EXPOSURE TO AND EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY p. 76
(1) General
(2) Concern
(3) Life-style
(4) Exposure/Insertion
(5) Apostolate
(6) Identification
- (3) EXPERIENCES : LIVING WITH THE POOR p. 85
(1) A Manila slum
(2) Indian villages
- (4) WITNESS : CHILDREN'S VOICES p. 92
(1) Mohammed Halif - Bombay
(2) Keshar - Nagpur
(3) Vinton Faulkener - Jamaica
- (5) APPEAL : EXTREME POVERTY p. 97
- (6) PUBLICATIONS p. 101
Post-Puebla
Other

This Issue

More than a year ago we published a special issue of PJ devoted to Solidarity with the Poor. (see PJ 7 - May, 1978) It became one of our best sellers and, though occasional requests for it still come in, is now out of print. The current issue returns to the same theme, or rather part of it: exposure to or insertion among the poor. We are taking it up because, as many will be aware, it formed the subject of one of the special questions asked by Father General in the 1979 ex officio letters.

The first item is an interview with Father General himself. Why did he ask this question? Why is it so important and what have reactions been? Are such experiments for everyone? How should they be carried out? What about those in formation, major superiors, the Curia itself?

The second item consists in a synthetic report of all the replies that came in to the ex officio letters. It was drawn up for discussion by Father General and his councillors at their bi-annual study session in Villa Cavalletti last June.

Thirdly, two simple accounts of recent experiences by Jesuits, one Indian, the other Italian working in Taiwan.

Next we listen to the voices of the poor themselves as they speak through the mouths of three "street" children, two in India and one in Jamaica.

Finally, an appeal from a fellow-Jesuit working in an organisation dedicated to helping the extreme poor.

The regular items of PJ (EXCHANGE, NEWS) will be held over till the next issue which is due to appear in October.

Happy and useful holidays - if this reaches in time !

EXPOSURE TO AND EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

AN INTERVIEW WITH FATHER GENERAL

Question: FATHER GENERAL, IN THE EX OFFICIO LETTERS FOR 1979 YOU ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON TWO SPECIFIC POINTS: CONTACT WITH NON-BELIEVERS AND EXPOSURE TO OR EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY. WHY DID YOU ASK THIS SECOND QUESTION AND WHAT SORT OF INFORMATION WERE YOU LOOKING FOR ?

Reply:

I asked the question because I think it touches on a point we still have difficulties with. GC 32 put much emphasis on the fact that "too often we are insulated from any real contact with unbelief and with the hard, everyday consequences of injustice and oppression." (4:35) In spite of obvious exceptions and some new initiatives, I think this observation still holds true for most Jesuits. In much of the work we do, especially if it is within institutions, there is a constant danger of being cut off from the outside world or at least losing interest in wider problems. This means that our apostolate as a whole also runs the risk of becoming limited or confined to issues that, while valid in themselves, do not perhaps answer more serious priorities. St. Ignatius gave much importance to the universal dimension of our apostolate and the need to seek always the maius Dei obsequium. Today more than ever this means keeping in close touch with a world that is much more complex and changing so rapidly.

There is also a second reason. Even those of us who do remain in touch often have only a conceptual knowledge of the world and its problems. We see things from a distance, often through our TV screens or the press. Consequently we become detached and problems seem unreal, remote, less urgent. This is why GC 32 insists on 'real contact' and 'experience'. I believe there are many who do not yet understand the need for this, who undervalue experience as a genuine source of knowledge and inspiration. As a result, some don't know what is being asked or why it is being asked. Others don't know how to set about it or to whom it applies. By putting this question in the ex officio letters, I hope to have promoted some reflection and discussion on this matter.

What type of information am I looking for ? Above all, I want to know what is being done in the different Provinces of the Society as a result of this

request by GC 32. I asked the regional secretaries to note the replies from each Assistancy and make a summary of them. Then we made a synthetic report of the summaries and spent some time discussing it at our recent bi-annual working session in Villa Cavalletti. I now have a much more accurate picture of how the Society stands in this matter and what we need to do to improve.

(NB: The synthetic report mentioned by Fr. General follows this interview - Ed.)

Question: GC 32 SAID THAT AN EXPERIENCE OF LIVING WITH THE POOR FOR AT LEAST A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME WILL BE NECESSARY FOR ALL. (6:10) IN YOUR FINAL ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION OF PROCURATORS, YOU RETURNED TO THIS POINT, EVEN SPEAKING OF A CERTAIN ANNUAL PERCENTAGE OF JESUITS WHO SHOULD 'IDENTIFY WITH THE POOR'. (# 10) WHY DO YOU GIVE SO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THIS AND WHAT HAVE BEEN THE REACTIONS AND PRACTICAL RESULTS ?

Reply:

I insist on this point because I think it is a fundamental one. In the Address to the Procurators which you mention, I stressed that the conversion needed by the Society today is a spiritual one, but not only a spiritual one. "It includes a process of 'conscientization' and on-going education to help us open up to the outside world and cross the mental barriers which shackle so many of us." (# 10) This is one of the main reasons for insisting on exposure or insertion experiments. They enable us, at least for a time, to get away from a world in which we feel secure, perhaps even comfortable, and experience in our own flesh something of the insecurity, oppression and misery that is the lot of so many people today. Without such an experience, we cannot really claim to know what poverty is. Still less could we seriously maintain we had made a preferential option for the poor. To some this may seem novel and difficult, even though throughout our history many Jesuits have been and still are closely identified with the poor.

Reactions have differed widely, ranging from enthusiastic acceptance to rejection and strong criticism. Some think too much emphasis is being given to questions of poverty and justice, and not enough to questions of faith. Others recognise the need to do something, but don't know what to do. Some complain about excessive guilt feelings, while others feel that too much is being asked. A few argue that such experiments go against 'our way of proceeding' as Jesuits. There are also objections to the terminology used and a fear that any insertion experiment is bound to be artificial.

What have the results been ? The replies to the 1979 letters suggest that, though there has been some increase in concern for poverty with visible effects in the lives of some individuals and communities, the importance of a genuine experience of exposure/insertion has been understood by few and acted upon by less. I think this is an accurate assessment. A few excellent experiments have been undertaken. But they have usually been isolated examples and certainly not yet sufficient to indicate any significant results on a wide scale. The 'Horizons for Justice' programme, for instance, is well planned and carried out. But so far it has only reached a little over 100 American Jesuits, far too small a number to have much influence on the remaining 5,000 or more. However, experiments that have been carried out on an individual basis have often been very successful in changing the attitudes and values of the person involved. So, in spite of some progress, overall results have been meagre and a lot more remains to be done.

Question: DO YOU THINK THAT SUCH EXPERIENCES OR EXPERIMENTS ARE NECESSARY OR EVEN POSSIBLE FOR ALL JESUITS AND IN ALL COUNTRIES ?

Reply:

Mathematically speaking, obviously not everybody either can or should undertake such an experience. Allowances must be made for health, age, mental state and occupation. However the person himself is not always the best judge in his own case. I would certainly like all Jesuits to discuss this matter with their Provincial during their annual account of conscience.

I think myself many more Jesuits than might at first seem possible both can have such experiences and profit from them. Reasons against are often more apparent than real and can be overcome on reflection and prayer.

There will also be some Jesuits who don't really need a new experience since they will have already had in their lives or work sufficient contact with poverty and injustice to remain well aware what they mean. For example, in my own case I can look back and reflect on the following experiences: being expelled from Spain, working among Puerto Ricans in New York, working among the poor in Tokyo Settlement, helping the sick and dying in Hiroshima after the atom bomb was dropped, being imprisoned in Yamaguchi jail and accused of spying. These experiences are still alive in me and influence the way I think and feel.

You ask also about different countries. Obviously there are many, especially in Africa, India or other Third World regions, where Jesuits are in daily contact with extreme poverty. Many lead lives full of hardship and

poor - at least, if they are missionaries, by the standards of their home country. But I would like to emphasise that the mere fact of being in a poor nation or region is not the same thing as actually going out and trying to share the life of the people and learn from their experience and culture. It would be wrong to think that in some places what GC 32 has to say about insertion or exposure simply does not apply.

The same consideration also holds for Jesuits living in countries where austere conditions or other repressive measures are imposed from without. Many have no other choice than to live among and just as ordinary people and are therefore only too well aware of what they have to put up with. But even in these countries, it is not impossible to become cut off and insulated from the rigours of every day life.

I conclude therefore that, if not 100 %, at least a high proportion of Jesuits can and should benefit from some experience of exposure or insertion.

Question: HOW OR UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS SHOULD THESE EXPERIMENTS BE CONDUCTED ? WHAT RESULTS CAN BE EXPECTED FROM THEM ?

Reply:

It is hard to draw up a list of requirements that would be valid everywhere. Also, as I have already said, these experiments are something new and not yet sufficiently widespread to draw general conclusions regarding either methods or results. However I will take the two parts of your question separately and try to give a few indications drawn from experiences and models already tried.

HOW TO CONDUCT

- Careful preparation should precede the experiment. For the participant this means, in addition to willing acceptance, a determined effort to overcome mental limitations and prejudices so as to be more open and receptive to other people and unfamiliar situations.
- If the experiment is in a foreign country, language study and background reading on culture and customs may also be necessary.
- This preparation should be accompanied by the sort of prayer suited to the contemplations of the second week of the Exercises and the meditations on the Kingdom and the Two Standards.
- Though some elements of artificiality are unavoidable, every effort must be made to ensure that the exposure/insertion is as complete

as possible. A minimum requirement for this will be a change from ordinary working/living conditions.

- The participant must be convinced he will profit from the experiment to the extent he is able to observe and listen to those he meets. He must be persuaded he has much of value to learn from them.
- For this reason, he should not normally, at least during the experiment, be in a situation of working for or helping other people, unless he is serving them in a purely subordinate and humble capacity. Otherwise people will be looking up to him and this will create distances.
- For the same reason, the experiment should be carried out normally alone or, at most, with one other. A larger group could shield the participant from experiencing directly the helplessness and insecurity of the poor.
- The participant must be ready to accept some physical hardship and to experience real poverty.
- As far as possible and especially in its final stages, the experiment should be accompanied by prayer, reflection and discussion.
- When feasible, the experiment should be concluded by an evaluation session, also accompanied by prayer and discussion.

RESULTS TO EXPECT

- Those who have had exposure experiments are unanimous in stating that what is learnt cannot be adequately communicated. It has to be experienced personally.
- This is because it concerns more an understanding of the heart than an increase in knowledge, what GC 32 calls a "deeper sensitivity." (4:49)
- It should however show itself in a keener awareness of the sufferings and vulnerability of the poor and also of their riches.
- Conversely it should also lead to a new critical awareness of the participant's own cultural background as well as of the disorder in individual and social relationships at national and international levels.
- This double awareness should, in turn, bring about a conversion that expresses itself in new attitudes and values.
- These will hopefully lead in practice to a greater dedication and commitment to the poor, a closer solidarity affecting all aspects of the apostolate.
- Even though it cannot be fully communicated, a visible change in attitudes and commitment will be the most effective way of sharing this experience with others and encouraging them to undergo something similar.
- Finally, because the fruits of such an experience need to be

strengthened and renewed, it will be helpful to maintain contacts with others who have also had it. Nor must it be thought that one such experience can necessarily last a lifetime.

Question: THE DECREES OF GC 32 GIVE MUCH IMPORTANCE TO FORMATION. HOW CAN THESE EXPERIMENTS BE INTEGRATED INTO THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF OUR TRAINING ?

Reply:

It is true that the period of formation is especially suited for these types of experiments. They are an essential part in the training of today's apostle if he is to preach a gospel that meets modern problems. Thus no formation programme can be considered complete unless it includes some direct experience of poverty, injustice or powerlessness among slum-dwellers, rural peasants, immigrants, the abandoned, or any other group of underprivileged people.

However these experiments should be even more carefully planned than the general ones already mentioned. A priest engaged in formation should either accompany them himself or direct them so closely that his guidance is always available to those taking part. Special attention is to be paid to the prayer and reflection that should accompany all stages of the experiment so that it can become a truly positive and integrating factor in the participant's life. Only in this way will the experiment be "free of illusions and productive of an inner conversion." (6:10)

Not all experiments will be suited to all stages of formation. Care must be taken to draw up a balanced programme that does not conflict with other aims in formation, spiritual, academic or religious. For example, the young Jesuit must be helped to realise that the priority given to prayer and spiritual growth during noviceship and tertianship or to a solid academic grounding during studies cannot be waived in favour of some exposure or insertion experiment that could easily jeopardise one or the other. In fact the opposite should take place. The experiments should confirm his desire for spiritual and intellectual growth since he will see these not only as necessary for himself but also as means to make his very solidarity with the poor more real and effective.

There will also be certain formation periods more suitable for experiments than others. The noviceship and tertianship make special allowances for them. At other times, much use can be made of vacations and week-ends. If all these opportunities are taken and fitted into some coherent plan, I believe our training will be greatly improved. In this way too we will be able to avoid

 EXPOSURE TO AND EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

A REPORT

(NB: It is important to bear in mind that the following report is merely a synthesis of what was written in the ex officio letters received up till May 1st. By that date some 3,600 had come in. This represents slightly more than 55%. Of that total around two-thirds answered Fr. General's special question on exposure to and experience of poverty. The picture given is therefore incomplete and does not claim to represent the whole Society).

.....

"What have you done since the 32nd. General Congregation (personally, in your community, on the Province level) in the area of exposure to and experience of poverty?" This was one of the two special questions asked by Father General for the ex officio letters of 1979.

It is important to remember that the question made specific reference to the following sections of GC 32:

- # 84: Contact with the consequences of injustice and oppression.
- # 85: New forms of apostolic involvement.
- # 142: Experience of living with the poor.
Radical standard of the Gospel should lead to critical vision of ourselves, world and society.
- # 266: Commitment to cause of justice as integral to poverty.
The insertion of communities among the poor.

The following synthesis attempts to give the main content of 13 reports covering all the Assistancies. This is not easy since the reports are themselves syntheses of letters received. They vary in both method and length, ranging from 2 to 40 pages. In all, they total 107 pages, 46 of reports and 61 of supporting documents. There is a great wealth of material that it would be

a pity to lose. Much of it is edifying in the best sense of the word. Hopefully the poverty of this synthesis will encourage the reader to refer to the originals.

After a brief general section, the synthesis follows the same 5 divisions proposed for the reports. Four reports did not follow this framework though it proved relatively easy to accommodate their comments within it. For the sake of convenience, Assistancies will be referred to by numbers as follows:

1	-	Africa	7	-	Gallia
2	-	America	8	-	Germania
3	-	Amer. Lat. Merid.	9	-	Hispania
4	-	Amer. Lat. Sept.	10	-	India
5	-	Anglia	11	-	Italia
6	-	Asia Orient.	12	-	Slavica

1 : GENERAL

All except 3 Assistancies (3, 7, 11) made some estimate of the percentage of replies received. It ranges from almost all (8 minus Holland) or 75-80% (2, 9) to 50% (10) or just under half (12). The overall proportion is probably somewhere around two-thirds.

However, 7 of the reports mention that the question was either not understood, or answered in a manner contrary to its primary intention. "Very few addressed the larger question of implementation of Decree 4 in our ministries and of contact with the poor. Most tended to read the question in terms of community budget." (2) "Only a small proportion met the questions posed, most writing of poverty in SJ houses." (5) "It was quite common to find that the question was taken to refer only to the practice of poverty among Jesuits in their community and private lives." (6) "Some only saw a question on individual or community poverty." (7)

One report made the pertinent observation that the fact that many had not understood the question is already, in a sense, a reply: "For it can mean that the word 'experience', crucial to the question, has not yet got through or is thought to be something merely for a few Jesuits." (9) And it goes on to point out that those who did understand the question confessed little had been done in the way of real experiences and quoted a few isolated and already well-known cases. This last comment would also apply to most of the Assistancies, though one or two Provinces might prove exceptions.

It must therefore be concluded that, although poverty is a growing concern

with visible effect in the lives of many individuals and communities, the new thrust of GC 32 has not yet been understood by or had little influence on the majority of Jesuits.

2 : CONCERN

Almost all the Assistancias note an increase of concern about questions of poverty, though some immediately qualify this statement with reservations. "There is a general dinámica de pobreza which has started with the more external and structural aspects, but is gradually reaching to greater depths... At the same time there is greater sensibility for the poor, though the with and like the poor has not gone very far. The theme of poverty arouses interest and concern. It is like an ideal rediscovered..." (9) "The subject 'poverty' has come up for very much consideration - too much so, in the view of some." (2) "There is a great deal of talk about poverty but little practice." (8) One report mentions that a Province-wide attempt to focus on poverty has probably reached saturation point and could even be having a counter effect. (5)

Special mention was made of concern for poverty among the young, though it was noted it can sometimes be ambiguous. "The young often seem to me more concerned about the public image of their poverty rather than with the private practice of poverty." (5) The young show concern, but it is not always deep or mature. There is need for a serious spirit of poverty and much reflection, not just emotional trips (5,9). But in spite of these qualifications, several mentioned that younger communities or groups seem more open and generous than older ones (3,11).

However, there can also be an excess of concern. It can range from general uneasiness to an unhealthy sense of guilt (5). There is much uneasiness because "we will always be rich in the eyes of the people... We are considered rich because we are organised, we foresee things and we have books." (1) It was pointed out that a Province can become too turned in on itself - but this seems a good example of failure to understand what true concern implies.

At the other end of the spectrum it is stated that there is very little concern for poverty in some places. The subject is described as "taboo" or never coming up for discussion in community meetings (12). A Third World commentator living in a First World Province mentions that he had not come across any awareness at all of how wealthy countries might be partly responsible for the problems of poorer ones (5). One report significantly mentions that "individual superiors, directors of apostolates and consultors (approx. 25%-30%) expressed awareness of the social context of our apostolate and concern at the lack of such awareness on the part of the community." (2) In some places there

is doubt or even scepticism owing to the General and/or Provincial Curias (11).

A wide range of methods are mentioned for increasing concern: direct action by Provincials on visitation (2), Province programmes of education/animation, Father General's talks - especially to the Congregation of Procurators (2, 5), Contact with Third World and other students (8, 11), community meetings and special experiments. It was also noted that concern necessarily rises through close contact with injustice (3).

Various obstacles were identified: our mentality, training and origins do not favour radical experiences of poverty (9); the formation we have had makes us view the poor in a purely paternalistic or assistential way (9); it is very hard to avoid taking on the mentality of the students or families we work with (11); the ascetic mentality can lead to a bourgeois life-style while the 'new' mentality is often ideologised (11).

In view of the above, much emphasis is placed on the need for re-education and conversion, the latter calling for a genuine break in life (9). The point was also made that those who have concern should be generous in sharing their experiences with more traditional works or groups which don't have it. This presupposes that their manner attracts rather than repels (9). Finally, concern means real love for the poor as people (8).

3 : LIFE - STYLE

Differences between the various reports are so great on this count that it is hard to summarize them. Apart from regional differences familiar to all, changes in life-style seem to depend a lot on the type of apostolate being carried out. Perhaps all that can be done is to list some of the positive achievements and then the obstacles or difficulties, without attempting much of an assessment.

Among the achievements are:

- Separation between community and institution has often led to a simpler, if not poorer, life (3, 5, 9).
- Communities have refused gifts and cash donations: some have no car or television (11).
- Private bank accounts have been suppressed and each gives a personal account each month (11).
- The community must live on a budget approved by the Provincial (4).
- Any excess is given to a common fund such as FACSI (4, 7).
- Much greater justice towards lay collaborators (3, 4).

- "Nothing extravagant, but we don't lack anything either" (5).
 - "This is the first community I have been in where I feel each has responsibility for the level of life of the others." (5)
 - "We have done away with all domestics and cook ourselves." (7)
 - Sharing between houses to avoid great differences (1).
 - Houses are much more open, rooms, space and other services being offered free (7).
 - Many in Third World situations mentioned putting up cheerfully with shortages, even of basic commodities (1).
 - Uncertainty about income or the future in general is another dimension of poverty in some countries (1).
 - We gave up our television set for the sick in a hospital (3).
- This list could obviously be extended, nor is mention made of a personal poverty that many practice unseen - "pauvreté en cachette" (7).

Among negative comments were the following:

- Many pointed out that, though we may practice some degree of poverty, it is very relative because we are usually "well organised and secure." (5)
- Alternatively "we are often not seen to be poor because we are separate from the people." (8)
- An honest admission was that "we only practice real poverty rarely and then through obligation." (9)
- In some situations, especially in Third World countries, our claim to be poor men has little credibility: "We live poorly but better than the local population," (1) or "Our life-style belongs to the upper 20% of the population (10).
- Some spoke of open resistance to greater poverty with, in one instance, Jesuits refusing to meet the Provincial (5).
- Instances of clear consumerism were mentioned: excessive travel, use of credit cards, new luxury car each year... (2, 5).
- Also seen as abuses were a lack of control by superior and situations where each is left free to fend for himself (12).
- It was pointed out that poverty is not squalor and more attention should be placed on hard work than on skimping (9).
- There were complaints of a new Jesuit image of someone slovenly, uncouth and badly trained (11).
- New community practices of poverty are often hard for older/sick Jesuits (11): conversely where such are present, it is hard for a community to change much (2).
- It is unfair to dismiss domestics who often rely on us (6).

How to assess all this ? In one Assistancy, a third of the letters speak of acceptance of the surrounding consumer mentality (2). In another, our life

corresponds to the middle layers - "because there are no classes" - of society and we live from our work (12). A third speaks of a generally poor level, especially for those in frontier apostolates (4).

And internal differences are also important. Some mention inequality between communities (12) and several emphasise that 'new small' communities are not necessarily poorer than traditional ones: "Some Jesuits living in experimental communities are not poorer than those in traditional ones" (4, 11); "the members of some small communities earn large salaries which they pool and enjoy a high standard of living." (9) Many, however, would perhaps agree that questions of life-style can have important consequences: "The main cause for our lack of vocations is our life-style which does not appeal, is not genuine and is too comfortable." (9)

4 : EXPOSURE / INSERTION

There were far fewer replies to this question than to the previous two. "In the large majority of responses (perhaps over 90%) there is nothing to report about the community as such introducing change to ensure exposure to poverty." (2) "There has been little real experience". (9) There is evidence of some desires and even plans to do something, but little action. (5) "There was not much enthusiasm for the Provincial's invitation to a summer experience with the poor". (11)

Reasons given for this lack are diverse. In some places, no need is recognised: "All are constantly exposed to very real poverty every time they step out of the front door" (10); "our exposure to poverty is permanent." (6) "We have contact with the poor through our work and there are no destitute." (12) Other difficulties mentioned are problems in organising programmes (6, 10), lack of time or energy (11), language barriers (6), difficulty in finding poor people (5), danger of seeming to proselytize in Muslim or other non-Christian areas (6), and so on.

Some difficulties also stem from a failure to understand what is required or why it is required. The following are two good examples: "Others are puzzled to know what exactly is meant; they fear anything temporary as a kind of self-conscious play-acting, even condescension; some are offended by the 'bourgeois' presuppositions of the terms we use." (6) The second raises the problem of stability and security which are essential to most forms of religious life and therefore make the latter incompatible with the kind of life led by the really poor. This is especially true of institutions, academic or otherwise. One frustrated Jesuit sees no solution to this dilemma: "The best way of being poor in this sense (i. e. GC 32) would be to leave the Society and thereby place

oneself in a position in which one would be forced to work for one's living. . and be exposed to the worries and uncertainties which are the common lot of the poor. However, if we all did this, there would be no Jesuits left to worry about poverty. . . " (5)

Special mention needs to be made of Jesuits in formation since this sector has both undertaken most experiments and, perhaps, experienced most difficulties. Several experiments are mentioned in the reports, covering about half the Assistancies and various stages of formation from noviceship onwards. Problems encountered include: psychological tensions (9), difficulty in making synthesis with spiritual life (9), problems in finding priests to accompany the experience (10), difficulty in maintaining spiritual dimension during the experience (9), danger of losing vocation (4). The desire was expressed to see some guidelines covering exposure/insertion during formation (10).

Yet in spite of all the above, many concrete examples of experiments or permanent conditions were quoted. They ranged from Horizons + Companions for Justice (2) to a priest living in a hostel for homeless men (6), a theology professor taking his sabbatical in a slum (6), and an old priest asking permission to spend his last days in a home for the poor aged. (5) Experiments in many colleges, universities and youth groups were also mentioned and it was pointed out that many individual Jesuits are in daily contact with the poor through work with the handicapped, immigrants, sick, beggars, unemployed, etc. Finally it was emphasised that mere experience of exposure is not enough. It must be accompanied by reflection and prayer so as to be a genuine learning and converting experience. (6)

5 : APOSTOLATE

As already mentioned at the outset, few of the ex officio letters saw this problem in relation to poverty. The reports consequently have little to say. However, given the importance of this section, it seems preferable to summarize what they do have to say by Assistancies.

Africa - nothing

America

- Few new apostolates in number (e. g. Appalachian Ministry)
- Inner city SJ parishes now cater to poor and immigrants.
- The schools have developed more student involvement in community development projects, but many look on recent emphasis on poverty and social ministry as a threat.
- Some new studies at university level.

Amer. Lat. Merid.

- Same emphasis as above in some schools and also their democratisation.
- Small groups moving out to the poor and rural areas in some Provinces.
- Many taking on week-end apostolates among poor.

Amer. Lat. Sept.

- New forms of conscientization work leading to structural change being taken up by several groups.
- Some institutions have followed them in this (e. g. University in El Salvador).
- Important work in field of social publications.
- Some movement away from cities to rural areas.

Anglia

- Little change in the types of work being done and several difficulties mentioned with regard to planning new ones.
- Some evidence of planning to reorientate existing works.

Asia Orient.

- "Another common interpretation of the question was that it referred to work for the poor and underprivileged, and details of social works and activities were often described. "

Gallia

- Few changes to note.
- Mention made of new contact with groups like Amnesty International.

Germania

- Mention made of immigrant workers.

Hispania

- In the education sector (3/4's of the Jesuits), much emphasis has been placed on Escuelas Técnico-Laborales.
- Our colleges have voluntarily accepted to cease charging fees: "this constitutes a clear option for the poor".

India

- Mention is only made of "giving the poor, especially poor children, in our educational institutions, a better deal. "

Italia

- Greater variety and openness in types of apostolate mentioned.

LIVING WITH THE POOR : TWO EXPERIENCES

A MANILA SLUM

The following account was published in China Province News for March 1979. Its author is Fr. Eugenio MATIS, an Italian Jesuit born in Ferrara in 1926. For the past 30 years he has been a missionary in Taiwan. He has just finished a term as Rector of St. Aloysius Technical School at Hsinpu and is now Socius to the Provincial.

.....

"... An experience of living with the poor at least a certain period of time will be necessary for all, so that they may be helped to overcome the limitations of their own social background." (32 GC D. 6, n.10. Cfr. also resolutions of the Hongkong meeting of East Asian Provincials with Father General of 1968, and closing talk of Father General to the Congregation of Procurators, Oct. 5th., 1978, n.10).

In Manila between the tourists' belt of Roxas Blvd. and Taft Ave. there are two hectares of land occupied by squatters: 800 families - about 5,000 people - are living there. The majority of the houses are one story high, slightly elevated from the ground; made of a wooden frame, with walls of old cardboard or plywood, and roof of discarded galvanized iron.

The houses are dark inside, since the windows are small and the roadways between them are narrow. Some of the paths are cemented, still many are of dirt, and even in the dry season they are wet and muddy since there is a very poor drainage.

Children and youth play happily in the alleys; you find many playing guitar and singing. Radios at full volume fill the air with music. Small stores are everywhere.

In one of these houses a young Australian priest, Fr. Colin McClean, a Columban, first rented a 2m. by 2m. room, and started his apostolate there. Later the people built a second floor, roughly 5m. by 5m., subdivided into a central room, good for all purposes: meetings, dining room bedroom for occasional guests, and three small offices plus a corner for the kitchen.

I met Fr. McClean at the EAPI and I asked him whether I could pass the Christmas vacations - Dec. 26th. to Jan. 7th. - with him. He agreed. My bedroom is the floor of the multipurpose central room of the 2nd. floor, hence I am infinitely better than the tenants of the first floor, where, besides Fr. McClean, there are other four families: the one with the worst condition has a room about 1m. wide and 3m. long, no windows, and the wall of the neighbouring house is 50cm. in front of the door. In that "apartment" lives a family of three adults, a child and a baby. Not all the families are in a similar bad condition.

There is no running water, we buy the water at 10 centavos per bucket, no shower, no toilet. There are two common toilets in the area, but Fr. McClean discouraged me from trying them, since the scarcity of water makes the condition not too hygienic. I solved the problem using the toilets of the nearby Malate Church about 400m. distance, or I took the occasion of a visit to a hospital or to a house outside the area.

My only aim was to see as much as I could, and try to get some fruit out of the experience. I didn't intend to work, and it would have been quite difficult, since I cannot speak tagalog. It is not my character to go around trying to make friends, so I went seldom out just for sightseeing, but I had occasions of going around the area, or for the Rosary with the catechist, or for a reflection on the New Testament with the Father. But even staying in the house I could learn a lot of things.

The economic conditions of the people in the area are very varied. Some have a fixed income, if they have a stable job or a pension; some are street vendors, some do the laundry of nearby restaurants; some are street sweepers, some of the girls are prostitutes; the percentage of unemployed is about 20%, three times the national average.

The sense of community which exists, mostly among the active Catholics of the Basic Christian Community, impressed me very much. A helping hand is always given; whenever something is needed. It is very normal to ask and to find somebody willing to lend.

I attended many meetings of the BCC: Staff Meeting, Liturgy Committee, Coordinating Board, Christian Family Movement, Formation Meeting and I was impressed by the strong commitment all the members had to the community, the high level of respect for the democratic process, and of competence in group

dynamics and the willingness to give all the time needed. One day when the Father was out, the City Hall sent a couple of policemen to investigate the building of an illegal roof over the main street, to be used as a chapel on Sundays. All the matter was handled by the ladies of the Liturgy Committee very efficiently. When Father came back they had a first meeting after supper, after a long day of work, and since they didn't finish the discussion, they decided to go next Sunday from 10 a. m. to 6 p. m. ! But I am not going to go into the details of what happened in the days I was there. I'll say only what happened to me.

First let me state very clearly that I was very much aware of the limitations of such an experience: 1) the experience was outside Taiwan, hence I cannot relate it directly to our apostolate. 2) The experience was a temporary and very partial sharing of the life of the poor, knowing very clearly that in couple of days I will be back to the privacy of my comfortable and clean room at the EAPI, my bed, a chair and a table that suit my size, running water in the room, hot water in the nearby clean showers, the toilets close at hand, the abundant food served at fixed times, and the wide spaces of green grass of the Ateneo campus, conducive to contemplation. 3) Finally I didn't plan carefully the experience, I just jumped on the first occasion I met.

Still there has been some fruit, and I pray that the fruit be durable. The fruit is a change of internal attitude, the fruit is a new understanding, the fruit is more in the heart than in the mind, I was reading the documents of the 32GC and eventually the idea that the promotion of justice is an integral part of the service of faith made a lot of sense to me. "There are millions of men and women in our world - the Philippine Caritas put one million and a half as the number of squatters in Metro Manila - specific people with names and faces - like Elmer, Ted, Morong, Ising, Teth, Dingh... - who are suffering from poverty and hunger, from the unjust distribution of wealth..." (32GC, D. 4, n. 20). Hence "the struggle to transform these structures in the interest of the spiritual and material liberation of fellow human beings is intimately connected to the work of evangelization." (32GC, D. 4, n. 40).

And I understand better the implications for my personal life. "The Society cannot meet the demands of today's apostolate without reform of its practice of poverty. Jesuits will be unable to hear the 'cry of the poor' unless they have greater personal experience of the miseries and distress of the poor". (32GC, D. 12, n. 5). The Philippine poor do not cry, the children play in the mud, the young play their guitars, the old smile friendly. But I could hear within myself a cry: Why? I could feel within myself the impatience: "How long must thy servant endure?" (Ps 119, 84.) What is being done to improve the lot of these people? It became forcefully evident to me that "despite the opportunities offered by an ever more serviceable technology, we are simply not willing to pay the price of a more just and human society." (32GC, D. 4, n. 20)

Some moments I felt like getting out of that place, to go to wider places, to fresher air, to enjoy the sun. It was like putting a distance between myself and that painful reality, and get it out of my mind. But it is not just a reality: it is people, it is the body of Christ !

I think I can understand better now the temptations of the poor and of those who work for them. I felt that the institutional Church was distant and irrelevant. I know how to apply the necessary distinctions, still more ground for the temptation remains: it is not easy for the poor, in many instances, to see what we dare to call the "Church of the poor": efficient administration and religious devotion do not express always the criterion of Mt. 25, 35: "I was hungry and you gave me food. . ."

I was looking at the airconditioned cars passing by, or at the tourists buses coming from the grand hotels, and I felt as if those people were not my brothers and sisters. I was able to become aware of the temptation and to pray for them, that the Lord might give to all a keen awareness of the need for more social justice.

I could go on quoting the 32GC, or telling about my feelings. But I will not, because I feel that what the 32GC, and Father General say is 100% right. It is not reading the most attractive reports that we might obtain the fruit expected by an experience of living with the poor, it is only through personal experience. I ask your prayers so that the fruit I hope I did get may be more lasting than some resolutions of a retreat. And try the experience yourselves.

INDIAN VILLAGES

This second account was written at the request of Father General. Its author is a young Indian Jesuit, recently ordained.

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I am a young Jesuit priest coming from India. I'm writing the following

memories at the request of Father General, just two years after my ordination.

My desire to belong to the Society of Jesus dates back to my high school days. I had listened to a dull sermon of a priest in our parish one day and wondered why people feel bored to participate in the church liturgies but feel thrilled in cinema houses and are prepared to wait long hours in front of them. Of course, they know it well enough that cinema houses offer APPEARANCES, while the church offers something vital in their life. I felt then that nothing could be wrong with THE WORD, but something need to be different with the Speakers and Messengers of THE WORD. That day my life style was set to prepare myself to be a good COMMUNICATOR and I chose or rather was led to be a Jesuit. Communication mission has played a vital role in my formation and mission as a Jesuit.

For a long time I busied myself in more and more sophisticated mass media techniques, and I frequented film-makers, photographers and designers. However, when my superiors suggested to me special studies in mass media, I preferred and was allowed to start living the mission first and learn thus of the specific need area of my studies in mass communications. This waiting and living have contributed richly to my life. Experience has shaped me more real than concepts.

During my theology years, my companion and myself used to meet often and discuss about our immediate future mission in our Province. There was to be a timely opening for us to start off with development concern in the villages in our District. Both of us, immediately after our ordination, started living in this District. It is roughly one year and a half now.

It will be a different story to narrate how we both entered the villages like strangers (reaching these places by local buses, or walking, or on bicycle - to avoid the prestige image, we had decided not to use motorbikes) but came out as friends. We have wandered through more than forty villages, but decided finally to operate in sixteen villages, from three main units. We organise evening literacy classes, get-togethers for the youth through youth clubs, and meetings for the elders of the village for deciding major moves and roles in the village. Our function is to bring in as much of information as possible in required matters and through participatory media create a healthy social atmosphere that enables individuals to become self-reliant in communities organised to struggle towards their fulness. In such an atmosphere, people begin to reflect on their situation, plan out an action programme and take each their responsible role. They also tend to appreciate and rely at first on their own resources, before going out for foreign aid. This life has been an enriching one for me as the man who programmes media for the motivation sessions. It has been an exciting SEARCHING and FINDING more and more clearly for my-

self my own identity as a Jesuit in a living media mission. It is also true, more than what we have brought to our people, they have made us grow a lot in living situations, purifying our own perspectives, values, faith and the image and implications of being a true Jesuit in commitment.

Living in the villages, I have spoilt my health a little, because of unavoidable irregular diet. A Hindu doctor friend of mine, after six months of treating me, told me at the end: "Now, my friend, giving you directions for health is of no avail to you. I think now is the time you must make your option clear, either you choose your mission or your health." Hesitatingly and yet somewhat firmly I replied: "I go with my mission." The Hindu doctor replied: "Now I believe in your God."

One day I had been cycling in the hot sun with a hungry stomach along a narrow, high-up mud road. There were thorny bushes on my right and muddy waters on my left. I stumbled down and fell along the road, slipping near the waters. Alone in that jungle I almost fainted when I saw a snake right in front of me. I questioned myself then: must I allow myself to be wasted like this after such a long Jesuit formation? Then I experienced the meaning of FAITH and I felt a closer grip to Him with that lonely experience in my mission.

In the villages where we mix with Christian communities, our liturgy is also a living expression. Sometimes we go to such villages in the evening, have a lot of fun and recreation that ends the day with discussion on key-issues of our people's concern. We sleep in some common places in the village, like in the chapel. The next morning, the celebration of the Mass is centred around the theme of the previous night's reflections. People participate in the liturgy praying aloud, sharing their reflections on the Scripture readings and bringing symbolic offerings like rice, vegetables, eggs etc...

The villages who hesitated to accept us with our popular and somewhat unusual style of mingling with them, rather than keeping ourselves in dignity inside our clergy houses, slowly have come to feel and appreciate our participatory role within their own life and struggle. They find the new identity of liturgy, soaked with life, and sometimes surprise us with their more developed notions of religious practices and symbols. I remember, once I was sitting in one of our villages chapels in my normal lay dress and was praying. There came an old lady to me, asking me to hear her confession right there. Definitely, it is not easy to expect this acceptance in towns.

In the process of motivation and community building here and there, there are new experiences of liberation as people stand together. As these come to light, as could be expected, there comes also a reaction from those who have used these poor and ignorant brothers of ours. We are already tasting the con-

frontation of the oppressing groups. There are a number of elements that frighten us, make us feel uncertain about a safe future. But I believe, it is precisely through this confrontation and the way we bear ourselves during this struggle for justice that we are going to be proved in our faith in and commitment to the True and the Just One and his people. Security is at risk, but it is in the cross even unto death that resurrection and life is going to be realised. We stand for Truth, and it's normal we'll be hit again and again by unjust and untrue elements. Faith and hope is to be realised thus, rather than when I believe just mentally.

One of the scholastics with us says, after living for one year in this mission he finds a gripping meaning in his prayer life.

We had taken some fifteen novices of our Province for a fortnight of living and working with our villagers. They are no more the same. The superiors have found this experiment rewarding, so that there is a proposal to send the next set of novices for this experiment, before they begin their long retreat.

When my companion and myself come to share in various types of groups, we find people get disturbed and enflamed. May be we are stimulating this, because we come to them warm and authentic, as we are shaped in living the situations of those to whom we are sent, namely the poor and the oppressed. Our values and spirituality and reflections come alive, because we are rubbing shoulders with living people rather than with clever concepts.

When we started this life, we were looked upon with not much appreciation. Today, we are called in for "sharing" our experiences with many communities. Personally I have shared with "communications" people, university students, religious communities and organisations of various kinds, such as medical societies. But we constantly warn ourselves, not to become talkers, and we programme ourselves in such a way that we live as a team. Personally, I have cut short my talking sessions to only once in three months.

We wish not to publish or advertise our style of mission (excepting this note, at the request of Father General), till after two years. Thus we hope to be saved from criticism on a merely conceptual level, before we have lived our vision and critically evaluated it.

There are a number of other revealing experiences which I hesitate to narrate here, to avoid exposing the identities of some people and groups. Also it must be noted that here I have not explained how I am operating as a media man, creating low cost group media materials for the village use and a little sophisticated media materials for such structural groups in the urban situation, to invite them for a discussion on the issue of Social Justice.

1 : MOHAMMED HALIF - BOMBAY (15 yrs)

I'm Mohammed Halif. I'm maybe fifteen. I live here (Bombay) on my own.

I look after myself now. When I first came I was just a kid. I came on the train. I was frightened when I got off the train on my own, Bombay is big.

I just wandered around for a while. Then I met Barbat. He was on his own too. He was older than me, and he showed me a few things. I watched him beg and I copied what he did. Sometimes we beg for money. Other times we begged for scraps of food from the cafes.

He was a good friend. If I didn't get enough to buy food Barbat gave me some of his. Once I got very sick and Barbat took me to St. George's near Victoria Street Station. It's a free hospital by the government and I got well again. Barbat always knew what to do.

Barbat made one mistake though. He had a good business. He had a shoeshine box on VT Station. But then he threw it in. He said it was better to do bootlegging. He sold me his shoeshine box for half the price. I paid him as much as I could each day until it was mine. I earn 3 rupees a day with it. Sometimes 6. Barbat wanted more. He said he could get twice as much bootlegging, being a lookout, running messages, and booze delivering. He got booze free as well. The cops caught him. Took him away. I never saw him again.

I once had a dog. I loved that dog. It came everywhere with me. It really liked me. It's always followed me around, everywhere with me. One day it ran across the road and a car went over it. I cried, I was only a kid then.

I had something else. I once bought a toy train from a man selling things on the pavement. The next day some bigger boys beat me and took it. I had some money left and they took that too. That's the trouble when you are too small to look after yourself. They wouldn't try it now.

I'm still shoeshining. There are eight of us with spots at VT Station. We sit banging our box and shouting "p'leece, p'leece". I get 15 paise for an ordinary polish, 30 paise if cream. When there's no business we mess around, have a good joke, smoke bidies. If the cops come we scarper quick. The cops don't need anything to take you. If they have had a bad day, if they have not had enough people in their book, they pick up a few street boys to fill it up.

One time I got picked up. I went to Dongri. That's the worst place you can ever go. All the boys will tell you that. (Dongri is the children's jail in Bombay. Originally built for 80 prisoners, it now houses 400 children.) It happened soon after I came. I got picked up. I hate Dongri. The monitors are bastards. They beat me with bars. All we did was marching and school work. From Dongri you go to court. The magistrate sent me to a home. I hated that so I ran away. They never found me. They never will. There are

too many boys for them to find one. So they don't bother to look.

They'll never get me again. I know too much now. One way to stay out of Dongri is to wear good clothes if you can. An Arab gave me a shirt and trousers, they got dirty so I took them to the laundry. I need 4 rupees (50 cents) to get them back. When I have saved 5 rupees I will go and get the good clothes back and go to the public baths and spend 1 rupee on a proper bath with soap and towels. Then I'll look good and cops won't bother me. Other people treat you better if you are well dressed. My clothes are not so good at the moment.

If I get any extra I go to the cinema. The guy at the desk treats you better if your clothes are good. Sometimes I pretend to be one of the stars I see in the film. It's good fun.

I come from Nagpur. My mother lives there with my two little sisters and my older brother. I send home money when I can. She does not live with my father because he used to beat her. She does washing which is quite good work. She lives in a hut with two rooms with my sisters and brother. A couple of times I have been home. I get the train at VT Station about ten o'clock at night and I get to Nagpur at eight o'clock in the morning. I never pay on the train. It's easy to dodge the ticket man. The first time I went, my mother was thrilled, but my sisters didn't know who I was. I stayed two or three days. My mother didn't mind when I left. There isn't room for me at home and she can't feed me. Besides, she knows I can look after myself.

I did go to school for a while when I was a kid. But my mother didn't get enough money to buy food every day so I left to do washing dishes in the cafe to help get money. That was before I left because of my brother. He used to beat me a lot. I didn't mind too much. But one time I did. In the cafe I collected the dishes to wash them. I dropped the whole tray and they all broke. The man wouldn't pay me for three months. I had to tell my brother. He burnt my back with red hot irons. I've still got the marks. Look. That finished me. I ran to the train.

I remember I beat up my little sister once. She cried. I remember that sometimes. But I know I can't do anything about it now.

It's hard, especially when it's cold. Boys have a good time together. I will be happy when the monsoon is over. Then I go back to shoeshining. Now I am cleaning taxis. Mud gets all over you. You get filthy. I get washed at the street taps. Shoeshining is better. Sometimes no-one wants shoes shining and I can't buy anything to eat. But you can always find scraps in garbage cans and drink tea that people leave over at cafes on the road. Just now I am sleeping on landing of the building at the VT Station.

I sleep anywhere sheltered, under a bridge or a bus stand. In the monsoons I sleep on this landing. An empty garage is good.

If I get extra money I give it to the paan-wallah. He keeps money for boys. I can get it back when I need it. I am saving up with him at the moment to get my good clothes back from laundry. When I'm older I'm going into business. I'll sell fruit and vegetables. You buy fruit for 20 rupees and sell it

for 40 rupees. It's good business. I'll be a good business man because I have learnt to look after myself.

2 : KESHAR - NAGPUR, INDIA (9 yrs)

I am looking through all this rubbish every day. It is my work. I am 9 years old. I look for glass, paper, old iron things, plastic sandals. My brothers showed me how. They have done it for long time. They know what is good for selling. I sell to man who comes. I give money to my father and keep 3 paise (4 cents) for myself.

I don't like this work. You work in sun all day. You get dirty. You get sick easy. There is no other work to get money for family. I have four brothers, all sorting through this rubbish. (Note that Keshar is a girl - Ed.)

I eat twice. Chapatis and potatoes in morning. Chapatis and cereal at night.

My mother died two months ago. She was sick. She had T. B. She had no sisters. My father was with her. She had no doctor. No medicine at all. She died at home.

We sleep outside. If it rains we sleep inside hut. Roof leaks onto sacking. We put tins to collect water.

I would like to go to school. I like to see small girls going to school with books and slate. I don't know why I want to go with them.

We get water from tap. There is queue every morning. We have to wait one hour We get one pitcher of water. We carry it home and we bathe. When I finish working at night there is only water left for hands and face. So we stay dirty from rubbish at night. These are only clothes I wear.

Life will be better when I am older. I will work on building site and earn money. I would like to have a house and two sets of clothes.

Now we stay in room which will be for night watchman when building is finished. My father works on building site. When work is finished we will move. We make house where my father works. We make house from things we find around. We have many houses. Changing water make you sick. I would like to have proper house so we can always stay there. I do not like keep moving.

3 : VINTON FAULKENER - JAMAICA (14 yrs)

I live in King Street, Kingston. My father is over foreign island.

I stopped school for some fighting thing. I sittin' in a class and somebody come and box me, box me up. Every day them they do that. A bigger boy than me taking advantage. So one day I go up my yard after twelve and put a knife in my back pocket. And he come and I juk one on his hand and I run. Then I got back to school and they suspend me till September. I didn't hurt him. I only juk him on the hand and they suspend me. One bigger boy come to try to hold little one, tried to take away dollar, say. So he stab him and kill him. You must try defend yourself.

If I have a friend I will beg of him, you know. If I have something he will beg me one, if he has something I will beg him. But I can't go on the road and say 'begga this begga that'. They say 'for shame'. They make you small. I can't do that. Not like some boys on the road who see somebody and just get up and beg, beg, beg. They don't try to see if them can't work somewhere to earn some money. Everybody the same, just walk around and beg, beg, beg.

There are ships that bring corn from foreign. Some of the corn overflow the truckies so we could take it and bag up. We can use it to maintain some sense. Sometimes some special man comes and say he don't want you to pick it up. Sometimes police run after and try to hold we. But we run off.

In Jamaica now, only certain man pick up money. That's a man at work. So I try to do all jobs for them I can. When the rain are falling and somebody's cart is stuck we give it good push and we get paid.

I want to go back to school and get myself a trade. I learn welding, woodwork, and learn to fix electric. You have some boys and they get trade, but they follow their friends. They go robbin' and the police kill them. Them idiots. If I get a trade, I cool.

My mother and grannie and brothers and sisters live in my yard with me. I like what my mother treat me. She make feel happy. My mother love me and I love my mother.

Everybody must have a children but some people not ready yet. When I reach twenties I have children. When you are old your children can come and help you after. When you old and you don't have a children to help you, you reach poor house and sufferation and those things.

Right now I don't have no shoes and we go hungry. I feel better must come one day. I just have a mind that better will come one day. I must look forward. In four years or five years I would try to make myself more happier. In twenty years time I wish I'm in nice job with my wife and children and house, you know. You have the mind to go up further ahead you must go further ahead, but if you have mind to go down, if you don't think of future time to come, you will never have no better to come.

You know that Africa people suffer more than Jamaicans. Don't have pants to wear, clothes to wear. Children in Africa have worse time. I'm suffering right now but I am still trying to put out my best. To make people see me out clean.

Me not a politician. Me a revolutionist. I fight for my rights. Politicians fight for money.

APPEAL

EXTREME POVERTY : AN APPEAL

PJ has received the following appeal from Daniel FAYARD, a French Jesuit working with an international movement called 'ATD Fourth World'. In a brief introduction, he explains the nature of the movement. Then follows a statement announcing an international forum to be held in Paris in 1980 and some suggestions on how to cooperate. We invite any of our readers interested to contact Fr. Fayard directly at the address he gives.

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This appeal is addressed especially to those Jesuits most committed to fighting extreme poverty so that they can offer their experiences, their analyses and their reflections. Those interested are invited to make immediate contact with the General Secretariat of Forum 1980:

International Movement ATD Fourth World,
107 Avenue du Général Leclerc,
95480 PIERRELAYE,
FRANCE.
(Tel: 037.11.11 or 464.69.63)

The ATD Fourth World Movement brings together some 230 people (including some Jesuits) fully dedicated to seeking a true solidarity with the poorest and most abandoned groups in different countries. Its aim is to help them become self-reliant, to fight for the recognition of their rights and aspirations, to find hope in a future without misery or disgrace, to be able to read and write, learn a trade and defend the interests of their people.

These most abandoned groups constitute one of the greatest challenges in today's world. It is not enough for just a few people here and there to get involved in this struggle. No real progress will be made without new forms of cooperation and solidarity aimed at building a different type of society.

A FORUM ABOUT EXTREME POVERTY IN THE
WORLD

We are writing to you because we know that you work with the very poor. We believe that you may be interested in what we propose to do, and that you may wish to work with us, either directly or indirectly.

We intend to hold a public Forum in October of 1980. This Forum will be international; its subject will be the existence of extreme poverty in the world. We would like you to participate in the preparation of this Forum by telling about your experience, and by giving us the benefit of your thoughts and ideas. We propose a few questions at the end of this paper.

Our aim in organizing this Forum is to provide a meeting place for all those who are committed to the fight against extreme poverty and who see this fight as an indispensable component of any genuine development effort. We aim to bring together those active in the day-to-day struggle and those who are studying the condition of extreme poverty and social exclusion, what brings it about, and what perpetuates it.

Our hope is that the Forum will strengthen the ties of solidarity and mutual help among those who are fighting extreme poverty. Cooperation could begin with a simple exchange of information and knowledge, and proceed,

for those who wish it, to a coordination of research and actions. The Forum could lead the way for such common action by alerting the world to the persistence of extreme poverty and social exclusion in all societies, and making it more difficult for public opinion to remain ignorant of the depth of destitution with which entire population groups are afflicted; by devising common programs of action to wipe out destitution, and to liberate the poorest from their most onerous burdens; and by getting the largest possible participation in this effort.

FOURTH WORLD AND EXTREME

POVERTY

You will note that we speak not only of poverty, but of extreme poverty. We do this because the great mass of conventional research, work and discussion on this subject does not deal with poverty in its extreme forms. Yet it is a fact that in a world where poverty is not uncommon, there exist pockets of the most extreme poverty. They are found even among the great masses of the poor and in regions of economic blight where everyone is commonly assumed to suffer the same degree of deprivation.

It is the people afflicted by this extreme poverty whom we call the FOURTH WORLD. It is a people that is barely known to the general public; Fourth World people are marginal to the concerns of society. They are excluded from the political, socioeconomic and cultural life of the nations of which they are part. They make up a social group which hardly ever enters the consciousness of most people. Yet their number in every country is substantial. In Western Europe and North America, they amount to 4 to 7% of each country's population.

FOURTH WORLD AND THIRD

WORLD

And about the Third World, where does it stand with regard to extreme poverty ?

Is it perhaps possible that Third World societies, currently in the throes of profound change, will wake up one day and find themselves saddled with the same problem ? Will they not also, if they are not watchful, create a whole new group of economic and social outcasts ? Is not the emergence of such social outcasts an indication of flaws and imperfections in the development plan ?

It would be worthwhile knowing who in each country in the Third World are the marginals, i. e. those excluded from industrialization, urbanization, from democratic process, from literacy, from cultural growth. Where are they found ? on the outskirts of the large urban agglomerations ? or in remote villages ?

There are certain forms of development which, far from eliminating poverty, can actually create poverty in its most extreme forms. By "targeting" development programs at "average" population groups, by looking for efficiency without carefully considering consequences, by counting on benefits "trickling down" to the poor, no matter what policies are followed, one can create havoc with entire strata of the population. "Trickle down" has always been a dubious proposition at best.

It is the position of the Movement that the lot of the poorest should be considered and taken as reference point for any development program, or face the risk of creating a new group of economic and social outcasts.

QUESTIONS

If you wish to join a common effort against extreme poverty, tell us about the people among whom you live, about your research and action program, and your thoughts and observations. Perhaps the following outlines can be helpful to you.

- 1- Who are the poorest ?
Who are the poorest, the most excluded, or despised in your country or region ?
Among the traditionally most excluded groups (the illiterate, immigrants, old people, the women, the young or unemployed, the "taboo" deceased. . .) are there some individuals or families still worse off than the rest, and looked down upon by their own group, or left aside when the condition of the others is improving ?
- 2- To what do you ascribe the reasons of this condition ?
- 3- How do poverty and social exclusion affect family life and social, economic, educational and health conditions of the individuals and families ?
- 4- Can you pinpoint geographic areas where such poverty is most endemic ? (If possible, include map or statistical tables)

position papers written, often at the request of different Bishops, by some of the social scientists and experts present in Puebla during the Conference. They are grouped round 8 main themes and followed by 4 commentaries of the Puebla Document and a series of interviews and letters.

- (3) PUEBLA: crónica y análisis (CHRISTUS, Apartado 19213, México 19, D. F. : No. 520-521, March-April 1979, pp. 124). Special double issue with articles by Jon SOBRINO, González FAUS, Alfonso CASTILLO, Luís del VALLE, Javier JIMENEZ LIMON, etc.
- (4) Os Avanços de Puebla (REVISTA ECLESIASTICA BRASILEIRA, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil: No. 39, Fas. 155, March 1979, pp. 367). A special issue with articles by João B. LIBÂNIO, Luis A. GOMEZ DE SOUZA, Leonardo BOFF, Ricardo ANTONCICH, Clovis BOFF, Ronaldo MUÑOZ, etc. Followed by a documentation section.
- (5) Puebla optó por el pueblo (SIC, Apartado 40.225, Caracas, Venezuela: No. 413, March 1979, pp. 97-144). Articles by Pedro TRIGO, Eduardo ORTIZ, Luis UGALDE, etc.
- (6) Puebla 79: primeras reflexiones (DIAKONIA, Apartado 807, Panamá 1, Panamá: No. 9, April 1979, pp. 88). Special issue of bulletin published by CICA (Ignatian Centre of Central America) with articles by Jon SOBRINO, Juan R. MORENO, Juan HERNANDEZ PICO, etc.
- (7) Puebla 79: Selección de Comentarios (DIAKONIA, as above. . : No. 10, July 1979, pp. 88). A second special issue with articles by Pablo RICHARD, Gustavo GUTIERREZ, Alexandro von RECHNITZ, etc.
- (8) Diário de Puebla, Frei BETTO (Editora Civilização Brasileira, Rua Muniz Barreto 91-93, Rio de Janeiro: 1979, pp. 262). A very readable account of Puebla seen from the outside by well-known Brazilian Franciscan. The second part of the book contains full text of all the Pope's speeches in Mexico and other documents.
- (9) Hablan los Delegados a Puebla (CELAM, Apdo. Aéreo 51086, Bogotá, Colombia: 1978, pp. 332). Though put together before the Conference, this book contains 100 short interviews given by a wide cross-section of Bishops who took part in Puebla and explain beforehand what they hoped it would achieve.

OTHER

- (10) Social Analysis According to Gospel Values: A Resource Manual for Planners (Maryknoll, New York, USA: 1979, pp. 160). A collection of notes and materials put together by the Mission Research and Planning Department of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers for private use by Regional and Unit Research Coordinators.
- (11) Catholicism and the World Order: Some Reflections on the 1978 Reith Lectures, Professor Michael DUMMETT (Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 4JL, UK: 1979, pp. 35). Text of a talk given by a well-known academic and leader against racial discrimination on Dr. Edward Norman's controversial views on the church and social action.
- (12) Iglesia de los Pobres y Organizaciones Populares, Mons. Oscar A. ROMERO and others (UCA/EDITORES, Apartado 668, San Salvador, Central America: 1978, pp. 254). An important publication containing the text of the 3rd. Joint Pastoral Letter by the Archbishop of San Salvador and Mons. Arturo RIVERA DAMAS, Bishop of Santiago de María. It is followed by commentaries and analyses from Ignacio ELLACURIA and Jon SOBRINO.
- (13) Cruz y Resurrección: presencia y anuncio de una iglesia nueva (CRT, Apartado 19213, México, 19 D. F. : 1978, pp. 356). A collection of studies written in preparation for Puebla and published by the Centre of Theological Reflection of the Mexican Jesuits. Among the authors are Gustavo GUTIERREZ, Ignacio ELLACURIA, Jon SOBRINO, Miguel CONCHA, Luis del VALLE, Rogelio SEGUNDO, Arnaldo ZENTENO, Hugo ASSMAN and Raúl VIDALES.
- (14) Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, Ronald J. SIDER (Hodder + Stoughton, P. O. Box 702, Sevenoaks, Kent, UK: 1979). A short but radical response to world poverty and Western affluence with concrete suggestions for the individual, the Church and society.
- (15) The Security Trap: Arms Race, Militarism and Disarmament - a Concern for Christians, Edited by José-Antonio VIERA GALLO (Idoc International, Via S. Maria dell'Anima 30, 00186 Rome, Italy: 1979, pp. 266). A useful collection of studies and statements by the Holy See, the World Council of Churches and several experts on disarmament and military problems.

- (16) Los Centros Financieros Internacionales en los Países Subdesarrollados, Xabier GOROSTIAGA (ILET, Apartado 85-025, México 20, D. F. : 1978, pp. 149). With special reference to Panama, the author, Director of CEASPA (Centro de Estudios y Acción Social de Panamá), examines the effects on poor countries of international financial institutions.

- (17) Follow-up of the World Employment Conference: Basic Needs (International Labour Organisation, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland: 1979, pp. 145). A report based on a questionnaire sent to 70 countries and drawn up for the 65th. Session of the ILO Conference held in June 1979.

- (18) Quiché Rebelde, Ricardo FALLA (Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, Colección "Realidad Nuestra" Vol. No. 7, Guatemala: 1978, pp. 574). A study of how religious conversion among indigenous Quiché Indians affected traditional beliefs. The autor is an anthropologist and also member of CIASCA, the Jesuit social institute in Guatemala.
