

These instances show it is not too late to protest his atrocities, not too late to protest them in Rome, in the councils of the Third World countries, and in the U.N. The document on the Church and Human Rights offers pertinent suggestions about paths that one could well follow.

JF

## EXCURSUS II

### The World Council at Nairobi

As this issue of *Worldview* comes from the press, delegates to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches are packing their bags to go to Nairobi. But longer than the journey that most of the 750 representatives of 241 member churches must make to the Kenyan capital is the journey the Council itself has made since its inauguration in Amsterdam in 1948.

The mostly North Atlantic founding fathers, establishment to the core, met in solemnity to celebrate the tenuous, fragile, yet joyous sense of oneness in faith they had discerned beyond the national, cultural, and racial barriers that divided and often ravaged the quarrelsome family of man. Yet like the Americans of 1776 and 1781, and the delegates to San Francisco in 1945, they seem to have planned more wisely than they knew. Along with the American Republic and the United Nations, ecumenism as exemplified in the World Council not only survived but thrived. The Second Assembly in Evanston, Illinois, in 1956 expanded and solidified the Council as a major counterforce to the religious rancor and scandalous disunity that had persisted so tragically long.

New Delhi, 1961, brought the integration of the International Missionary Council and the massive accession of the principal Orthodox churches, including the Russian. This pale harbinger of détente earned the Council the permanent enmity of religious cold warriors, mostly American, who proceeded to parlay their paranoia into fame and fortune as professional Council-baiters. Unfortunately, they managed to snare numbers of sincere and simple Christians along with their full quota of the gullible, the unstable, and the natural-born chauvinists who leaped to seize their bait.

Sometimes irritated, but not deterred, the WCC made its way to the Fourth Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, 1968, by way of the Geneva conference on Church and Society. There the voices of Third World Christians sounded loud and clear, and a plea for the much greater involvement of the churches in helping to meet the real physical and

social needs of real persons was heeded. "Development" was the watchword. But development in the context of the knowledge that all human systems are imperfect and tend to embody and perpetuate injustice. And there was the wise reminder of the former General Secretary Willem A. Visser 't Hooft at Uppsala that the vertical, transcendent dimension of Christianity must always accompany (and judge) the horizontal, social dimension that was being stressed both as a corrective to past neglect and as a response to the vast needs of humanity.

It is intriguing to compare the development of the World Council of Churches with that of the United Nations, its slightly older sibling on the international scene. Both represent at least the partial incarnation of large dreams, both began with a high degree of Western sponsorship and control, both in essence and in program tried to counteract the harmful effect of centuries of rivalry, suspicion, and unilateralism among their members. Both fostered the independence of the previously dependent (colonies or "missions"), and both, despite the fears and warnings of their more timid supporters, survived the tensions and traumas related to their rapid growth in numbers and diversity.



Now both are facing an aroused world for which they themselves have been alarm clocks. The legitimate, indeed essential, demands of the world's poorer peoples have coalesced under the banner of a new international economic order in the one case and in the cry for liberation in the other.

Perhaps particularly significant just now, both have suffered from massive public inattention to the 90 per cent or more of their work in relieving suffering and advancing the general welfare while the spotlight has played nervously on geographical and ideological confrontations in the political arena. There is no doubt that some of the confrontations were and are genuine and deep, but it is equally true that some of them have been grossly exaggerated for whatever open or devious reasons of the exaggerators.

The World Council has not been quite so prone as the U.N. to designating special years and emphases. These have often been criticized for being shallow and contrived, yet they have a way of transcending their limitations and thus perhaps pleasantly surprising their critics.

Prior to the Seventh Special Session of the U.N. on the New International Economic Order there was wide apprehension about disastrous confrontation and perhaps the disintegration of the organization itself as a consequence. Wise statesmanship prevailed, and a way ahead was opened.

As the World Council meets in Africa under the theme "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites," it is likely that the underlying unity of faith and of participation in a common humanity will see the Council safely through the theological and ideological tensions that will and should surface. It should emerge stronger and better, giving its member churches a clearer view of their tasks and guidance and courage in carrying them out.

**Philip A. Johnson**

*President of the Council on Religion and International Affairs.*

## **EXCURSUS III**

### **The Illusion of "Maturity" & Who Should Be the Next President**

The continuing nostalgia boom has not yet got around to replaying some of the golden oldies of American public madness. Perhaps it is just as well. Nobody wants to pick up on the nineteen fifties' debate about whether one is morally justified in shooting the improvident neighbor who seeks refuge in your family bomb shelter. The public hysteria about things nuclear, it is said, is well forgotten. It is even suggested by some that Americans have attained a new "maturity" about the balance of terror. The more likely explanation is that we have been persuaded to resign ourselves to the apparently insoluble. It is but an example of the syndrome so brilliantly described by Ernest Becker in his *The Denial of Death*. Ours is a determined complacency reinforced by denial and deceit. J.V. Cunningham's epitaph for one man may be the future's judgment of our generation: "An old dissembler who lived out his lie/Lies here as if he did not fear to die."

Our dissembling may not be able to prevail, however, against recent signals from the Ford Administration. From time to time the Secretary of State calls for a new "great debate" about U.S. foreign policy. At the same time, his penchant for

secrecy about the crucial issues makes it hard to know what we are to debate. It is by no means clear that the Administration would welcome a great debate about America's nuclear strategy. Nonetheless, evidence accumulates that such a debate is urgently needed, if it is not already too late. In truth, the signals of recent months have the feel of decisions already made. Perhaps the American people are simply being informed belatedly of the fate our leaders have chosen for us. We must hope that is not the case.

The troubling signals are in the form of recent statements about nuclear "first use," "flexible response," and "civil preparedness." The three are tightly linked. We begin with the last. A few months ago there surfaced a very important study by the Defense Department's Civil Preparedness Agency (DCPA). Subsequent statements by the Secretary of Defense make clear that the study is not simply an instance of Pentagon bureaucrats whiling away their time in the infinite elaboration of Dr. Strangelove scenarios. They apparently want it known that they are deadly serious about this one.

The DCPA "feasibility study" has to do with putting millions of Americans into mine shafts in the event of a "limited" or all-out nuclear war. "Our estimates now," says a DCPA official, "are that under Crisis Relocation Planning criteria, there is a potential for sheltering 50 million people in level, dry and readily accessible mines." In reading the study one should keep in mind how such a program would actually be implemented and what it would mean for the character of American society.

DCPA says it has already discovered space for six million people in some two thousand mines. Places like Montana, Utah, and Missouri offer great possibilities. Seventy per cent of Missouri's population, for example, could be fitted into that state's mines and caves. Pennsylvanians are also lucky because of their state's many coal mines. "The entire population of Pittsburgh could be sheltered in mines within 70 miles of the city." Under "Crisis Relocation" people in "high risk" areas such as major cities or near military installations would be evacuated to "low risk" areas during times of "international tension."

Of course, all this would take more time than the thirty minutes nuclear missiles need to reach their targets. "Most authorities have concluded," says the DCPA study, "that it is probable that a period of increased international tension will provide a period of strategic warning prior to an attack. Given two or three days and good plans, a successful relocation of population could be achieved." Defense Secretary Schlesinger says he agrees this is the most likely scenario for the outbreak of nuclear war.

As we move to nuclear "flexibility," the key thing is having "options." Schlesinger informed Con-