

SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS: HARBINGERS OF HOPE IN ASIA

- A. A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS
- B. SOCIAL ANALYSIS: CONCEPT AND METHOD
- C. A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS

A. THE CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE**FOR THE CHURCH**

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In this paper we treat directly of our own country, India. However, we are convinced that, while situations vary in Asia, the principles are true — and applicable — for the Church in every Asian country.

A great challenge before the Church in India is to become truly a local Church. Church does not exist in the abstract but as local Churches in the concrete.¹ To be a local Church is, evidently, not a question of mere geographical presence. It implies also the task of continuous involvement in the life and problems of the people of the country. Though the Church is one and universal in its nature, yet the Church in India is different from the Church in Italy, United States, Brazil or Philippines, because the history we live and the problems we face are quite different from those countries.

The local character of the Church in India will become more and more evident according to its growth in the perception of the problems, yearnings and aspirations of our people living in cities and thousands of villages, and according to the depth of its commitment to the task and challenges posed by our situation in India.

In order to fulfil concretely and effectively its call and mission in the particular circumstances and conditions obtaining in the country today, the local Church in India should read the signs of the times², not only from a general and universal plane, but should be very attentive to the signs of the times that manifest themselves concretely in the milieu of its existence, and be sensitive to the stirrings of the Spirit among the people.

One of the signs of the times in our country which calls for the attention of the Church today is the phenomenon of numbers of educated young men and women leaving cities and towns to go to the poor in the villages or to marginalized groups, to be with them and to commit themselves to their cause. This phenomenon began appearing already in the late Sixties, and the number of educated youth who settle down in small localities to undertake various programs for the promotion of the villagers or other target groups has been since then on the increase. These activists work in small groups and are generally called action groups.³

Areas of Involvement

The main objective of action groups is to free and defend the poor, the marginalized, the underprivileged and the victims of various types of exploitation, by effecting change or transformation in the existing social, political and economic structures. According to them, unless the present power-relationships, both at the macro- and at the microlevel, undergo a real mutation, the oppression of the poor and the exploitation of the weaker sections will continue unabated.

To realize their objectives in the concrete, they involve themselves in a wide range of activities. They help the poor and other target groups to understand their situation and the causes for it, and they give legal aid so that the defenceless may obtain justice through the courts. They facilitate the formation of co-operative societies among the farmers, landless laborers, etc. They organize the people in various ways, sometimes forming associations like village development leagues, women's associations.⁴ Often they take up very concrete issues, like houses for the houseless, land for the landless laborers, roads and drinking water facilities in villages where these are lacking. By mobilizing the people and organizing them, the activists bring to the attention of the concerned public authorities the situation of the poor and the defenceless, so that they are not deprived of their legitimate rights relating to the basic necessities of life.

The landless, the dalits, adivasis, women and harijans, given their low social position, become the object of the activists' special attention. The action groups make use of the national mass media for bringing to the notice of the general public long-standing oppressive situations of various groups and the poor in the villages. Besides, some action groups have their own small publications and periodicals through which they conscientize the people and share their experiences. What is characteristic of these activists is the way they have been trying to identify themselves with the life of the poor and the downtrodden, sharing their food,

learning to speak their dialects and following their customs. There are considerable differences between various action groups, yet they are all united in their emphasis on certain important values, like self-respect of the poor, human dignity and rights, people's participation, equal opportunities for all, and common actions.

Along with those activities of action groups at the grassroots level we should mention also the wide range of areas covered by many movements that have emerged in the past few years: the women's movements, the peasants' movements, movements for civil liberties and peace, movements for the protection of the natural environment against massive deforestation and depletion of natural resources, and others. They are engaged, each one, with the problems of its own field. The orientation of these movements is similar to that of action groups. Further, like action groups, these movements too are non-party and non-political and they both focus their attention especially on the plight of the poor and the downtrodden, whose legitimate rights they promote and defend.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF ACTION GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS

a) Political Disillusionment

The emergence of action groups and movements is to be accounted for by starting with the disillusionment over the political process that has been taking place in India. The functioning of a democratic society and the promotion of justice as intended by the Preamble of the Constitution⁵ entail the effective participation of the people in the political process. But, unfortunately, in the course of time politics have developed into an arena where the dominant elites, the urban industrial and business class, the rural landlords and other traditional feudal forces operate in collusion to ensure their vested interests.

Instead of being people-based and oriented towards their welfare and the transformation of society, the functioning of politics and democracy has become more and more alienated from the people and has progressively reduced their participation. As Gandhi said, "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the center. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village."⁶ But even structures, like Panchayat Raj, which were established with a view to ensure and increase the participation of the people in the democratic process have now turned out to be practically non-entities; and where they function, they have been dominated by the rural elites. In some of the states, Panchayat elections have been postponed for over a decade.

While on the one hand the participation of the people has been declining, there has come about on the other hand a predominance of bureaucracy. Given the middle-class nature of bureaucracy, it has not concerned itself primarily with the service of the poor and the oppressed masses but has preferred to be instruments in the hands of the elites who dominate the political and economic field in order to reap its own share of benefits and advantages from the system. While traditional feudal elements in the villages — landlords, moneylenders, rich merchants and other similar groups — increase their political and economic power, the masses of the poor, particularly the marginalized sections, like harijans, women or tribals, have been pushed to the periphery of the political and economic system, to be only a vote bank to be exploited by the politicians and the powerful through populist rhetoric, especially at the time of elections.

Even the leftist parties which pose themselves as the champions of the poor and the downtrodden have been sucked into the vortex of party politics and they are motivated in their concrete options and style of functioning by immediate political and electoral considerations.⁷

In short, instead of a democracy built up from the grassroots, there has come about an authoritarianism from above exercised through a corrupt bureaucracy and with the help of a mass media which pacifies the people rather than giving expression to their aspirations. The result is that millions of people have been rendered powerless and left to the mercy of those who manipulate the political and economic system.

This marginalization of the masses from the political and economic mainstream and their growing powerlessness have shattered the ideals of a democratic and just society which India wanted to be at the time of Independence. The disillusionment and a sense of vacuum felt in the late Sixties and early Seventies led to a spontaneous emergence of groups, movements and organizations with a view to affirm the legitimate democratic rights of the poor and the powerless in the face of a system which came to betray their interests. It is in this context that the middle-class and upper-middle-class youth of the urban areas, joined by some educated rural youth, appeared on the scene as activists to give expression to the aspirations of a disillusioned people.

b) Disenchantment with a Particular Development Model

In accounting for the emergence of action groups, besides the political disillusionment mentioned above, we should also add the disenchantment with a certain development model that has failed to improve the lot of the poor masses.

In independent India there was no dearth of plans and programs for the economic growth of the nation. The dream was to transform India from its condition of underdevelopment into a modern developed state after the pattern of the Western nations. At the same time, according to the original vision, India would have to be also socialistic in the sense that the benefits of the development should be shared equitably and ways, means and opportunities should be created for all citizens to have access to them.⁸ The plans and policies adopted by the state⁹ and the way in which they have been executed have not, as has been confirmed by various analyses in these years, led to any significant improvement in the lot of the poor and the marginalized, but on the contrary have only aggravated the misery of the poor.¹⁰

The reasons for this apparently paradoxical development of things are not far to seek. The same forces which dominate the political arena and alienate the people from real democratic participation and the political process are mainly responsible for this state of affairs too. In fact, the introduction of a technocratic and economic approach to development, without taking into account the prevailing traditional village power structures and social relationships, has given the already dominant groups a lion's share of the benefits of the development programs. The various state undertakings for development, like the Community Development Program¹¹ and the more recent Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), are all executed through the channel of its bureaucrats who work in collusion with the affluent to draw for themselves profit out of them, leaving the poor and the destitutes to have, ironically, only some fringe benefits from the colossal development programs and policies adopted manifestedly in their favor.

To this we should also add the fact that the concept of development viewed primarily as economic growth through technology and modernization has led to a concentration of attention on the urban areas. This has very serious repercussions in a country like India where the overwhelming majority of the people lives in villages. The rural economy has been virtually made to depend on the needs and demands of the cities and towns and has been controlled by the urban industry and business. Besides breaking the traditional village economy based on land and cottage industries, this has strengthened the hands of the already powerful rural groups.

c) Disappointment with the Orientation of the Development Agencies

We should mention also a word about the voluntary agencies and organizations that have been involved in the development of the poor.

They have been viewed very sympathetically by the state and have been encouraged and supported insofar as they are non-political and they carry out relief and developmental programs contributing to the growth of the nation. They also enjoy the support of the people for whom they work "because they are much more efficient and less arrogant than the lower echelons of the bureaucracy that the vast masses of the people encounter."¹²

Though most of these agencies are under religious inspiration and manifest great zeal and dedication to the cause of the poor, and the schemes and projects they plan are meant for the overall betterment of the deprived, their approach, by and large, has been directed to economic growth. The development works pursued by them have had little impact in terms of social change or transformation which is a very indispensable condition for the advancement of the community. The planning and executing of development programs were directed to the benefit of individuals. What is most deplorable is the lack of any serious attempt to study and analyze the power structures and social inter-relations in the locality or among the target groups.

Development is not a neutral process to be achieved through technology, science and skills, but is very much conditioned by the local social relations and power structures. Any amount of investment of money and personnel for development may not bring any significant results unless one is attentive to the traditional power structures in the village. Though the international collaboration through foreign funding agencies is to be appreciated, yet one should be aware of the fact that these agencies have their own ideology of development which may not always correspond to the intricate local situation.

Further, these development agencies did not respect the potentialities inherent in the people themselves for their own development; nor did they enlist in any significant way the participation of the people in the various projects. It is true that some voluntary agencies have grown out of these deficiencies by learning from their experiences and have been attempting new approaches. However, by and large, it is this above-mentioned basic orientation which is being followed even today.

To sum up, the action groups and other movements have appeared on the contemporary Indian scene as a corrective to the present political and economic order which has miserably failed to respond to the aspirations of the poor and the weaker sections of society. These activist groups are born out of a disillusionment with the approach of the voluntary agencies of relief and development which have not proved

themselves suitable to effect real social transformations. Some of the groups have gone far ahead in thinking and experimenting and they are not content being simply a corrective mechanism but are in search of an alternative to the present political and economic order.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACTION GROUPS FOR THE LIFE OF THE COUNTRY

a) The Strengthening of Democracy

These action groups and movements are not political, if by politics is meant, as is generally understood today, party or electoral politics.¹³ But at the same time we must point out that they are political in a deeper and perhaps in a more genuine sense insofar as they are committed to the *polis* (city), to the welfare of the country and the people. Precisely because of their concern for the welfare of the country, the activists attempt to induct the marginalized and the oppressed citizens into the political process, and thereby contribute to the evolving of a different type of politics than the one at work, in which some dominant groups seem to be eroding the democratic institutions and organs meant to safeguard the interests of all.

In this respect the contribution these groups and movements can make and are trying to make becomes very significant. They help to strengthen democracy by empowering the powerless — construction workers, weavers, salt-workers, coolies and vendors, domestics and hotel workers, women, tribals, harijans — to have their own effective part to play. The arduous task of leading a country like India into the democratic path needs the support of such activists and movements who constantly try to bring to the mainstream people and groups who are being marginalized by the corruption and intrigues that plague democratic ways and institutions.

It is imperative that democracy does not remain any longer a farce but becomes a reality. For the failure of the democratic system, with the marginalization of masses of people, causes the rise of *communalism* on the basis of ethnic origin, language, caste, etc. There is an internal logic in it. When people are not able to express their political will effectively (except exercising the right to vote once in a while) and to obtain the benefits of development, inevitably they tend to organize themselves on a communal basis to fight for benefits and privileges, and thus they come into clash with the interests of other communal groups. Thus, instead of true democracy, free from all considerations of caste, language, ethnic origin, coming into existence, various groupings on communal basis

begin to appear. In this connection we should mention the emergence of many caste associations in the past few years in various states. The real remedy in this situation is to reinforce the democratic process and make it really function so that the interests and rights of every citizen are guaranteed. The action groups are gearing their activities towards this goal.

b) Upholding the Secular Ideal

Another contribution of the activists is related to the upholding of the secular ideal which seems to be very momentous for the life of the country today in the face of growing communal tendencies. Secularism in our context has a different meaning from what is generally understood by it. When India is said to be a secular state, it does not mean that the state is indifferent to religion or that it is anti-religious or that there is a wall erected between the state which is profane and the religions which are sacred. Secularism rather means that the state respects all religions and faiths and, precisely because of that, it does not favor one religion over another or discriminate one religion against the others. The state guarantees the rights of every religious group and fosters the harmony of all religions.

The rise of communalism in India, as in other Asian countries, has brought about a serious *crisis of secularism*. There are politico-religious groups and movements, like RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Jammal-Islamai, Khalistan, which are fundamentalistic in their ideology and approach. The unleashing of communal forces has cost thousands of innocent lives in recent years. It is enough to think of the riots of Aligarh (1978), Biharsharif (1981), Kanyakumari (1981), Baroda (1982), Hyderabad (1983) and Bhiwandi (1984).¹⁴

All these communal forces have been reached their peak in the assassination of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. For the survival of India, for the unity of the country and harmony among various groups, cultures and races, and for the reinforcing of democratic structures, it is vital that we not only hold to the ideal of secularism but also devise appropriate ways and means to put this ideal into practice.

Now, it is simply impossible that the state by itself can ensure the secular character of India, so to say, from above without the support of the people from below. There needs to be a strong secular base among the people at the grassroots level, where they interact in day-to-day life. The action groups are precisely trying to *create at the grassroots a secular*

force to counter the breeding of communal tendencies. The activists not only encourage among the people intercaste marriages but some of them bear witness by their own personal example, by marrying harijan partners. The action groups in their very composition of members cut across regional, linguistic and caste factors. The members of the groups belong to different religions and yet all of them are united in the same commitment and in the profession of certain values which transcend communal considerations. *By their very style of functioning they work against communalism.*

c) Education through Awareness Building

The significance of action groups derives also from their work for people's education. The formal educational system, operating in the context of the present political and economic order, facilitates the elites through special knowledge and skills to draw maximum benefits from the system. It leaves out of its scope millions of men and women whose literacy does not go beyond thumbprints. The massive National Adult Education Program launched by the Government in 1978 and the goals that were set have been subverted by the political powers and the bureaucracy.

Education is of paramount importance for the development of the people and their progressive liberation from the clutches of the powers and forces that hold them in bondage. However, education is not to be equated with literacy, namely, the capacity to read and write. Even by non-formal education one often means literacy for adults, imparted outside regular school hours and syllabus.

The activists who work at the grassroots are involved in a much deeper form of education than the formal and the non-formal education, understood in the sense above. Since these groups believe in the capacity of the people to develop themselves, they concentrate their attention on building awareness in the people and enabling them not so much to read words as to read the world. It is an education to reality — to the reality of people's daily lives; by analyzing and reflecting they are led to take steps to change their own situation. This is a slow but lasting form of education.¹⁵

The approach of critical consciousness-building, or conscientization, often starts from a concrete incident in the locality or from a concrete problem experienced by the people. It could be the plight of a poor farmer who is exploited by a rapacious moneylender. It could be

the situation of a landless or a bonded laborer. It could be that a group of underprivileged faces the threat of its land being grabbed through the intrigues and maneuvers of the powerful.

Through analysis and group discussion the people are led to see by themselves the various factors and forces at work in the locality to which they have been long subjected without their realizing it. The method of awareness-building frees the people from their attitude of resignation to their present social, cultural and economic condition, generates in them self-confidence and instils the hope that the oppressive situation can be changed through a common and united effort. It creates a great sense of community and a feeling of solidarity among them. There takes place a participatory learning. From being mere objects in the hands of manipulative powers they are made to become the subjects of their own history.

In the programs of conscientization and participatory learning, the traditional forms of dramas, folklore songs, *villupattus*, *kathakal-shepams*, street theaters are made use of with great effect. They also promote peoples' theaters in which villagers themselves are the actors.¹⁶ In their publications they encourage the people to write, and thus they form also local leadership.

Sometimes the impression is created that awareness-building, or awakening the masses to free themselves from their state of oppression, is the exclusive monopoly of Communists and Marxists. But the fact is that even Gandhi built up great awareness among the various sections of the Indian rural population and underprivileged sections of the people. Did he not conscientize the poor peasants of Kheda in the Bombay Presidency to the indignation of British authorities? Did he not create awareness among the poor tenants of Champaran to the great fury of the powerful planters? He told the people in Kheda: "It is true that the collector is going to attach your property, your plots, if you do not pay the land revenue dues. Your plots will be auctioned. But what can he do if no one bids at the auction? Tell the collector when he next comes to your village that he should put your plot in his pockets and take it to England."¹⁷ The lesson he imparted thereby was that if they stood together, the force of injustice would not be able to subdue them, and that it is impossible to govern men without their consent.

Creating awareness among the people need not be always at the macrolevel. Very often the work of conscientization done at the microlevel, by taking up some crucial problems of the people in the villages, can have tremendous impact on the whole area. In the case of

Gandhi, Champaran was but a small dot on the map of India. Rajkumar Shukla was a simple peasant, at whose request Gandhi visited the locality and experienced himself the plight of the poor indigo tenants and the planter-tenant conflict. The British authorities considered his presence as disturbing peace and order and wanted him to leave the place by the next available train. Gandhi's efforts to obtain justice for the poor tenants of Champaran and to conscientize them of their situation of exploitation by the planters had its repercussion in the whole country.¹⁸

The goal of awareness-building or conscientization is ultimately to help the people to regain their human dignity and rights of which they are stripped by the local exploitative forces. The role of action groups, then, is a service to *the cause of establishing human, civil and constitutional rights among the least*, among the groups which are most vulnerable by their very low social position, meager economic resources and bleak political possibilities.

The dignity of the people, their freedom for self-determination and decision-making are respected in the approach followed by the activists. Through this process of education, as we mentioned earlier, the people themselves are made to participate in their development and made agents of their own liberation. Thus development and liberation do not become the work of some outside agents with their favorite ideologies, but are realized by the people awakened to their selfhood. This means that the leadership should be more and more from among the people. The significance of action groups can also be seen in this respect, namely, in their effort to create *local leadership* as a condition for the participation of the people in their own development and liberation.

Many of the activists are careful not to substitute for the role of the people and the local leadership by doing what the people themselves should be doing, but rather they function as catalysts, as animators and facilitators. Any ready-made solutions and prefabricated models will not suit the local conditions and its specific characteristics. Though in the initial stage there was a tendency to do the analysis for the people, today many action groups tend to be only facilitating in making the people do their own analysis of the situation. There is hope that from various local experiences of such analysis some common methodology and approach may result which will be very much Indian in its nature

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF ACTION GROUPS FOR THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

In the first part of this paper we saw how important the grassroots movements and actions are at the present juncture of the history of our country. Though exteriorly not very impressive, they play a significant role in nation building, in strengthening democratic values and in upholding the secular character of the country through their involvement in the education, development and liberation of the poor and the exploited. These cannot but also be the concern of a Church that wants to be deeply rooted in the Indian soil and wants to insert itself into the life and problems of the people of this country.

Some of these concerns come through very clearly in the statements of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. In fact, in their communication to the Synod of 1974 the bishops expressed the "need to see her (Church) task of evangelization within the context of the total situation of the country and her people"¹⁹; and they perceived the need for the Christian community "to be fully involved in the plan of God which is at work in the struggles and aspirations of the country's people liberating from all forms of material, social and spiritual alienation."²⁰ In this service of justice and liberation to the people of the country, which is at the same time part of her evangelizing mission, the Church can find dedicated collaborators in the action groups and movements.

a) From the Perspective of the Kingdom of God

In order to understand the various movements and groups working for the welfare of the poor and for their liberation, it is not enough that we start from the Church as an institution with its well-defined structures, doctrines, laws, etc. If we start from this point of view, we may miss the significance and import of these movements. Nor may we adopt, so to say, a two-tier perspective, namely, to consider the works of development and liberation effected by these groups and movements as humanistic, as something belonging to the natural order, in contrast to the Church and its activities which are of the supernatural order. Any dichotomic thinking, with neat compartmentilizations, does not do justice to the truth.

The perspective we need to adopt, and the starting point for our understanding of these groups, should be the reality, of which the Church itself is only a sign and instrument, namely, the Kingdom of God, which

encompasses the totality of human reality in its relation to God, to men among themselves, and to the world and the whole creation. When we start from the Kingdom of God, there is no place for any impoverishing dichotomy, because there is nothing genuinely human which is outside the Kingdom of God and which can be distinguished and separated from the Kingdom of God. The whole of human life, with its social, political and economic dimensions, is under the rule of God.

God's Kingdom is not a land or a territory but a reality of relationships, or communion — *koinonia* — a fellowship of men and women with God as Father and men and women among themselves as brothers and sisters. This communion requires a new mode of being, thinking and acting (conversion), to which Jesus appealed right from the beginning of his ministry (Mk 1,15). The precepts of the love of God and the love of neighbor, as illustrated in the teachings of Jesus and exemplified in the witness of his life, are meant to foster and sustain the reality of communion which the Kingdom of God represents.

The Kingdom of God as communion and fellowship is not an abstract reality existing in itself but a reality that is present *among the people*, and manifested in their day-to-day life.²¹ This new communion and fellowship with God as Father and men and women as brothers and sisters breaks into the life of the people through the words Jesus speaks and the concrete deeds he performs. For Jesus, Kingdom is not something which bypasses human life and its realities but something which dawns and breaks right into the middle of the life of the people.

We may draw a certain parallel between the mystery of Jesus and the mystery of the Kingdom of God. In Jesus the human and the divine exist without the one being confused with the other. Similarly, the Kingdom in its definite form and stage is not to be confused or simply equated with development and liberation. At the same time, just as in Jesus the divine could not be seen, known and experienced except in its incarnate form, that is to say, in and through his historical incarnate existence, so too, though the Kingdom of God is transcendent and therefore cannot be identified with development and liberation, yet it can be experienced by us only in and through the historical realities. We experience the Kingdom of God when it incarnates itself as love, communion, freedom and hope in interhuman relationships in all their dimensions through the work of development and liberation. In this way the Kingdom of God is not something that happens by itself, side by side our human experiences and history, but it breaks into our experience, into our history.

Kingdom means the fostering of fellowship in all its dimensions and at all levels of human existence—social, economic and political. Therefore, anything that stands in the way of the flow of communion in human life and its realities is against the Kingdom. The injustices meted out through discrimination, the violation of the dignity of man — the image of God — and the exploitation and oppression of the poor, lowly and the downtrodden is a refusal of communion and the denial of brotherhood, and therefore also the denial of the rule of God.²²

The Good News of the Kingdom is a gift to humanity. Yet the collaboration of all is needed so that every sphere of human life and action may come under the rule of God. The co-operation that is required of us for the arrival of the Kingdom in the life of people, society and world is in the first place that we work to remove all that in the concrete hinders or arrests the flow of communion. Working for the establishment of justice, for liberating the poor and the oppressed, is working to promote communion so that no one is excluded, no one is marginalized, but that every one can be truly the image of God and every one can relate with the other as brother and sister.

When we say that the Church is a sign and instrument of the Kingdom, it means that the Church has to render its co-operation for the coming of God's Kingdom — which as we said is a gift — by working for the liberation of the poor, the marginalized and the exploited from their bondages, so that the obstacles to the Kingdom be removed, so that the power of darkness be dispelled. This is an essential part of the mission and ministry of the Church which understands its *raison d'être* in terms of the Kingdom and its promotion, not only by its words of proclamation but in its deeds of witness.

From what we have said, it follows that the Church in India as a local Church, namely, as a Church that wants to be incarnate in the milieu and insert itself in the life and problems of the people of this country, and as a sign and instrument of the Kingdom in the concrete situation of the life of the people in India, should feel at home with every movement and group that strives to liberate the downtrodden and the marginalized from all oppressions and bondages. For these movements and groups are doing what the Church itself is called to do by its vocation to be the sign and instrument of the Kingdom. Through their commitment to justice for the exploited: women, tribals, dalits, scheduled castes and other weaker sections, the activists contribute greatly to create fellowship, equality and brotherhood, and thus become through their deeds proclaimers of the Kingdom which is promised to the least, to the poor and the lowly. The work of various movements and

action groups, therefore, cannot be considered simply as humanistic and philanthropic but *it falls within the purview of the Kingdom of God and of the mystery of salvation*. Evangelization is nothing but making present the reality of the Kingdom of God in the life of the people through word, deed and witness.

The tree is known by its fruits (Mt 7,16), and the presence of the Kingdom of God among his people is known by the transformation it effects in their lives and in their environment. One is often struck by the asceticism, self-denial, self-sacrifice and simplicity of life of the members of action groups. There are many of them who commit themselves to the cause of the poor and to the defenceless at the cost of serious risks to their health, and work courageously even in circumstances of great insecurity, harassment and danger to their lives. There are activists who are beaten up for the work they do and there are activists against whom false charges are filed. The demands of their commitment have led some members to decide not to marry so that they can spend themselves in the services of liberating the poor and help them live with human dignity.

b) Human Rights — A Common Concern

The significance of the action groups and movements has also to be viewed from the angle of the contribution they are making to the establishment of human rights today — human rights to which the Church has given much focus and attention in these years.²³ Speaking of human rights, we must distinguish two trends which differ from each other according to the stress they place. There is an understanding of human rights, we must distinguish two trends, which differ from each century Europe and the French Revolution, which spoke of *droits de l'homme* — rights of man.²⁴ They are centered on the individual person and the rights meant are, for example, freedom of thought, speech, movement, freedom to marry, to found a family, to form associations. The second trend goes beyond this conception of human rights as civil liberties, without however denying these. Human rights are understood more as the right of the poor and the oppressed, the marginalized and the defenceless to have food, shelter, health care and other basic necessities of life. This latter understanding of human rights is very close to the Bible and early Christian tradition.

The Church's accent has been not on the claims of one's own rights or even the rights of the Church itself, but rather on the concern for the violation of the rights of others — particularly the weak and the poor and the defenceless. It is here that "rights" are most clearly identified . . . We have a record of early Christian concern with the rights of those who were oppressed and unable to defend their own rights.²⁵

The concern of the Church today with the issue of human rights, understood especially in the sense of protecting the poor and the lowly and the powerless and promoting their life and dignity, is not a concern divorced from its vocation to be sign and instrument of the Kingdom, to be sign of unity and fellowship in the world. In this respect the different works in which the action groups are engaged, their commitment to the cause of the poor and their staunch defence of their rights are not alien to the concerns of the Church itself.

c) Promotion of Leadership

In order to carry out the evangelizing mission of the Church not only in geographically ever wider areas but to bring the Kingdom of God and make its power felt in the depth of human and societal life and its various spheres, it is indispensable that we have in the Church people who work at the grassroots level, namely, a *committed laity*. The action groups become very significant for the Church insofar as they constantly remind it of the urgent need in our society today of committed men and women who will work at the grassroots for the transformation of the present state of things — social, economic and political.

The Vatican II document, “the Church in the Modern World,” has expressed in emphatic terms the Christian responsibility for the temporal realities, the negligence of which could endanger salvation. It has also reminded us that there should be no dichotomy between religious life and temporal involvement.

Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties towards his neighbor and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation.²⁶

The laity who through their particular vocation are in the midst of the world and its social, political and economic realities to involve themselves to create a better ordering of these spheres so that the poor and the weak do not continue to be victims of injustice and exploitation. This would imply that the laity fulfil their prophetic role in the world — a role to which they are called more than ever before by the crying needs of the present situation of oppression, reminiscent of the times of the prophets of the Old Testament.

The works of development, education and liberation done by the action groups right in the midst of the people and, as we mentioned, in

spite of heavy odds and at the cost of many personal risks, should be an invitation to the laity in the Church to fulfil their Christian responsibility, especially to play their prophetic role.²⁷ The Church should promote the involvement of the laity in the social, political and economic fields. The Church's proscription of the involvement of clergy and religious in the political field may become a matter of derision and ridicule as long as the Church does not positively promote what it should be doing, fostering the active participation of the laity in the political field in the face of a situation where the oppressed groups are denied their rights and human dignity.

d) Action Groups — Are They Marxists?

Categorizing summarily action groups as Communist and Marxist would be a gross distortion of the truth. Interestingly, the Marxists themselves have accused the grassroots movements as being new imperialist strategies of capitalist countries and even of being CIA agents! The action groups are said to diffuse tension and thus delay the revolution. We should note that some of these groups were formed precisely because of the disillusionment with the practices of leftist parties which seem to be moved by opportunist election concerns like all other political parties, leaving aside the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

The action groups are often caught between two criticisms. On the one hand, the Marxists criticize these activist groups and feel very much threatened by them because the sector of the poor and the oppressed in whom they feel that they have an exclusive monopoly is being invaded by new movements and groups who at the same time do not share their ideology.²⁸ On the other hand, these action groups come under heavy criticism from certain Church circles for being Marxists and for following their ideology of class struggle and advocating violence and revolution. But a closer study of these groups will reveal how both these criticisms lack substance and do not correspond with the truth.

That these groups do not blindly espouse Marxist ideology is clear from the fact that these groups are very respectful of and sensitive to the religious dimension and cultural ethos of the people. From their active involvement they have come to understand that the Indian masses do not move merely by economic considerations but that religious and cultural realities are interwoven into the very fabric of their existence and world-vision. In fact, by their very style of life and identification with the people—living with them, sharing their food, their concerns, etc.—they have acquired a greater sense of the culture of the people. They make use

of the artistic and traditional cultural expressions of the people to conscientize them on various problems, casteism, dowry, superstitions, etc.

e) Action Groups and Analysis of Society

Over the years the Church has come to understand that the poverty, misery and squalor of millions of people are not due simply to lack of development, understood as modernization and technological advancement, but are more deeply rooted in the present system with its unjust and exploitative structures. Numerous texts both from the universal magisterium and from the statements of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India can be cited which clearly speak of structural evils and the situation of the oppressed, and call for the transformation of structures.²⁹ Now, it is undeniable that it is the Marxist analysis of society and its functioning that has brought to light the mechanism behind the unjust functioning of society and has unveiled the interconnections between the various systems, the political, social, cultural and religious. The use by the magisterium of terms and concepts like "unjust structures," "oppressor," "oppressed," "exploitation," shows that certain aspects of Marxian analysis have indeed helped the Church to understand the situation of the poor and interpret its root causes. Evidently, the use of this scientific analysis is not the same as espousing Marxist ideology.

Rightly did John XXIII, and still more explicitly Paul VI, point out a distinction between Marxism as ideology and as historical movement.³⁰ With an historical movement committed to alleviate the plight of the poor and the dispossessed the Church can enter into dialogue and even collaboration with it insofar as the Church shares with it the same concerns for the poor, the weak and the powerless. It is at this level that a certain critical use of Marxist analysis can be very helpful, especially when in the concrete day-to-day life at the microlevel we have to study and analyze the conditions of the weaker sections in all its complexities to be able to adopt appropriate ways and means, approaches and strategies to remedy it.

The action groups are precisely doing this analysis in the concrete situation of life in the village, identifying the causes of the oppressive situation of the poor, the landless, the harijans and other marginalized groups. Many of the activists today do not want to make such an analysis for the people, but attempt to facilitate the people themselves to be critically aware of the social realities of their experience and

the various forces and mechanisms at work to keep them enslaved. In other words, they are helping the people to discover what the documents of the Church speak of as “unjust structures.” Such analysis seems to be very basic today for an effective proclamation of the Gospel message of liberation. If as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says, “salvation is liberation from everything that oppresses man,”³¹ the ways in which this oppression is taking place is to be studied and analyzed by all committed Christians so that through their word and action they become effective witnesses of the power of the Gospel to free men from all bondages.

f) The Fact of Conflicts

When these groups work at grassroots for the promotion of the weaker sections, they come as a matter of fact into conflict with local interests. Sin is embodied in various structures of today — social, political, cultural and economic. They are faced with the power of sin crushing the life of the poor. Facilitating the arrival of God’s rule and Kingdom in their life entails opposing, and thereby coming into conflict with, the socially and politically embodied power of sin against them. A Christian cannot compromise with these structures of sin but has to confront it with the courage of true Christian faith and conviction. Refusing to compromise with the power of evil is something very Christian, and the confrontation that results from it at times should not be interpreted as though these groups are promoting in principle class struggle and inciting people to violence. This is one of the accusations levelled against the action groups to discredit their work. Many of these groups do not believe at all in the capture of state power through class struggle — a central dogma of Marxism — but are deeply concerned in promoting the integral development of the human person and his liberation.

h) Bridging the Hiatus Between Documents and Practice

It is over two decades (1971) since the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India issued a very important statement on poverty and development in which the bishops strongly condemned the situation of injustice prevailing in the country.³²

The bishops said:

The Church in India . . . is deeply concerned about the deep-rooted causes of poverty and unemployment in our own land. Because we are firmly convinced of the fundamental Christian truth that

“every man is my brother,” we also hope that we can respond to the times which reveal themselves so eloquently in the cries for justice and liberation from fetters of an exploitative society, that by its social structures perpetuates the enslavement of millions. The Church is very much with the prevailing movement in India to do away with the root causes of poverty through the concern and active participation in programs geared to this cause.³³

Since then, time and time again, in its general meetings and in the meetings of various commissions, the problems of justice and the need on the part of the Church to engage in transformation of structures have been emphasized. At the Mangalore meeting of 1978 when the theme “the Church’s Response to the Urgent Needs of the Country” was taken up, the bishops stated:

Poverty, stratification and malnutrition characterize the lives of our countrymen and any attempt to work for justice must begin by enabling people to realize what is most basic in the rights of men. In the achievement of a just society, the entire Christian community is involved, working in collaboration with all men of goodwill . . . we encourage our committed laymen, imbued with the correct attitude towards society, to move into such fields where they can influence the change of unjust structures.³⁴

These words assume great weight from the fact that they were reiterated verbatim in the final statement of Nagpur (1984).³⁵ It is important that we note a few basic points which the above citation contains: i) In the work of justice peoples’ participation is underlined when the statement speaks of “enabling the people to realize what is most basic in the rights of men”; ii) It reminds us of the responsibility of the whole community to work for justice; iii) The need for “collaboration with all men of goodwill” is pointed out; iv) Finally it reminds the Christian laymen of his duty to involve himself in society so that “he can influence the change of unjust structures.”

If these words mean anything, one cannot be indifferent to the various movements and groups that are working at various levels in our country for the promotion of justice. But what concrete efforts have followed in practice? One of the serious charges against the Church is that its involvement and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized do not cross the confines of statements, declarations and resolutions where they are enshrined. Many people have become sceptical about the seriousness of such verbal exercises and phantom fights by the leaders of the Church against injustice, inequality and oppressive structures. There

is no doubt that these statements and declarations of the bishops come out of a sincere desire to contribute to the life of the nation, and especially of its poor, by removing the constraints which stand in the way of genuine development. But the unfortunate lacuna is that concrete ways and means, methods and approaches have been wanting to translate these ideals into the concrete. In such a situation the Church cannot but be happy and rejoice over the fact that there exist movements and groups which, though not consciously but in reality, take the substance of these statements closer to the people and give it flesh and blood through their own solidarity with them and their commitment to the cause of their development.

To take just one example. The Church documents have explicitly taught during almost one hundred years that the right of ownership is not an absolute right but that there is a social mortgage to it, namely, it is conditioned by the needs of others. The teaching is contained already in the *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII, and more recently in *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II.³⁰ But how does one put this teaching into practice so that the life of many people without land and the means of sustenance be not endangered by the deprivation of what is due to them? A greater awareness of their own rights empowers the poor so that they can collectively claim their rights in the situation of a village where the lands are owned by one or more feudal lords. The action groups and peoples' movements through awareness-building are bringing people to realize their own legitimate rights so bound up with the question of survival.

i) Not Institutional Means Alone

It would be illusory to believe that the mission of the Church could be fulfilled through its present structures and other means of operation alone. After all, the totality of the mission of the Church cannot be exhausted simply by its structures and organs. The situation in which we live today poses challenges and demands on the Church which simply surpass the limits of the capabilities of its present structural and institutional means. To be faithful to the Gospel, the Church needs today to show greater openness and relate itself to the various movements and stirrings of the Spirit at the grassroots level. The effective way of being a sign and instrument of the Kingdom and of fulfilling its mission in the world now as well as in the future will be not so much the Church doing all works of development and liberation by itself or relying solely on its resources, structures and other means of operation, but more and more by recognizing, acknowledging, promoting and encouraging the various initiatives taken by groups and movements as spontaneous responses to concrete issues and problems.

Today the Church is called upon more and more to *reveal the power of God's Kingdom* operating through various movements and groups among the people and outside its institutional apparatus and visible structures. All this implies that the official Church transcend its proclivities to sit in judgment or to categorize too quickly whatever happens outside the realm of its control. It should rather study with sympathy whether through these movements and groups the mission of Jesus is not carried out. Where the mission of Jesus takes place, the Church cannot be an alien but should find itself being reflected.

The Church needs to resist the tendency to a backward-looking stabilization, namely, the tendency to incapsulate within its ready-made frames of reference, familiar categories and modes of operation whatever happens and emerges outside its visible structures. There is a tendency to reduce everything to terms of what is already known, what is already experienced. But the new stirrings and impulses of the Spirit are very often surprising and they demand that the Church, instead of reducing them to its known ways, forms and categories, be open to the surprises of the Spirit. This attitude of openness of search is very fundamental to understand the new movements and the emergence of various action groups for the cause of justice, equality and brotherhood. The pilgrim nature of the Church should become real, and it becomes so when the Church does not recoil on itself but readily recognizes a frontier in its evangelizing mission. These pioneering groups would be very much encouraged by the sympathetic understanding of what they are attempting to do.

That these movements and groups do not come under the *control* of the official Church, its organs and its structures — parish, diocese, etc. — is not reason enough to deny the merit of their work and their import for the life of the country and for the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Many of the activist groups in fact are not against the Church but are deeply interested in dialoguing with it, and they follow with interest the developments in the Church, especially its commitment to the poor. They are very much disappointed when they find that the official Church is suspicious of them and labels are attached to their works.

j) Support and Collaboration Despite Limitations

It is also true that often the activist groups are quite critical of the Church. Their criticism is directed mainly against the chasm they find between the teaching and the practice, the disproportionate attention given to certain secondary matters to the neglect of more serious ones

affecting the life of the people. They are genuinely concerned about the way the institutional Church functions and relates itself to the problems of the people. They desire that the bishops, priests and religious become living witnesses to the Gospel of the Kingdom by their simplicity of life. The fact that they are critical should not exclude dialogue and collaboration with them, but rather should provoke us to self-renewal and deeper commitment to the Kingdom of God.

While speaking of the significance of action groups and the collaboration of the Church with them, we do not want to ignore that there are certain limitations. Some of the groups are in search of clarity with regard to their orientations; some others are groping as to whether their role should be a corrective mechanism or should provide a new alternative; still some others are considering whether and to what extent they can relate themselves, while not losing their identity, to some of the existing political parties. Besides, we should also point out that there are splits in some groups owing to conflicts of personalities, differences in ideologies and the use of foreign funds received to support their work. Finally there are a few fake groups which take advantage of the name of "action groups," while not committed to the cause of the poor.

While being conscious of these and other limitations, we should not forget the fact that the action groups and movements are still in *process of growth* and maturation. In a sociopolitical process the time factor is very important. Therefore, magnifying the limitations and defects of the action groups without attempting to see the growth process and the positive contribution they are making would be a narrow and short-sighted view of things. Despite their limitations, the hope they represent is so overweighing that one can ignore them or be indifferent or assume an attitude of hostility towards them only at the cost of disbelieving in the continuing presence and action of the Spirit in history. The Spirit, after all, does not wait for ideal situations, free from all limitations, in order to work among people. Very often he works in spite of human limitations, in a world where good and evil exist intermingled (Mt 13,24ff). The presence of cockles in the grainfield should not lead us to abandon the field altogether.

These groups and movements are very flexible in their approach. There is a lot of thinking and evaluation going on within many groups, partly also on the basis of their concrete experiences. They are open to change and ready to collaborate with individuals and groups which share the same concerns. Inasmuch as the Church has the same concerns, they are not averse to dialogue with it, and as we mentioned, most groups warmly welcome it for their organization and education. However, they

are not in favor of a mere paternalistic, condescending or moralizing role on the part of the Church and its institutions. They wish that the relation of the Church with them be more in the form of a mature collaboration and on the basis of concrete issues and problems which people face at the microlevel.

Now, given the great significance of these groups for the life of the country and for the mission of the Church, and given the common concerns the action groups and Church share, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India would be taking a step in the right direction at this important historic moment in the life of the country and the Church to enter into dialogue and collaboration with these groups through Caritas, its organ of human development, which by the very nature of its work and the scope of its operation is in a position to fulfil this task. Besides its relief and development works, Caritas of India has among its aims "the promotion of justice, peace and the animation and education of people at all levels for total human developments."³⁷

The very nature and mode of functioning of the action groups indicate that the dialogue and collaboration should take place not at a general plane or at macrolevel but at the grassroots level. Our Caritas could promote through diocesan social service societies and other means collaboration with the action groups of the locality or region and also involve itself in training of more personnel to be able to work jointly with these groups for the cause of the poorest of the poor, their education and total development.

While saying this, we should also take note of the fact that already there are some individuals and groups of priests, religious and laity in the Church who are very sympathetically disposed towards these action groups, with whom they have been trying to forge closer links. These efforts which take place, so to say, at the periphery of the Church today could be greatly strengthened and their works could be made more effective through the support, inspiration and encouragement of the official Church through its organization, Caritas.

In conclusion, India is still a fragmented society. The divisions on the basis of caste, language and religion continue to create ever greater fragmentations. Effective remedies to the manifold social evils affecting the lives of the people cannot be prepared in general and at the macrolevel. Working for the development of people and freeing them from oppression and exploitation today need also from the strategic point of view an approach from the grassroots. Small movements and groups with their flexibility and immediate contact with reality can today play a

greater and effective role than what could be achieved by macrolevel initiatives. These action groups as small units can penetrate the milieu and effect social transformations. Though each one in itself would make little difference when compared with the enormity of the problem affecting the nation, these groups have begun to have a certain cumulative effect on the life of the nation. Their success is not so much the concrete achievements — which however are not negligible compared to the constraints and limited resources with which they work — as the *qualitative* change they are bringing into the life of the people and, above all, the hope they represent for the future of the country and for the mission of the Church.

Footnotes:

1. H. de Lubac, *Les Eglises Particuliers dans L'Eglise Universelle*, Aubier Montaigne, Paris 1971; B. Neuenheuser, *Eglise Universelle et Eglise Locale, L'Eglise de Vatican II*, vol. II, ed. by G. Barauna, Paris 1966, pp. 607-638; A. Grea, *L'Eglise et sa Divine Constitution*, (1885), Tournai 1965²
2. *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.
To this world of our times, to the India of today, the Good News has to be proclaimed, in this vast society the new creation must be born in Jesus Christ. This must take place in the local Church which is not merely a branch of the Universal Church, but the true realization of Christ in a locality. It is entrusted with the mission of Jesus Christ. *Communication from CBCI to the Synod of Bishops in Rome*, 1974. Text as found in *Minutes of the General Meeting of CBCI*, Calcutta, 1974, 159.
3. S. Pendse, A.K. Roy, H. Seth, "A Look at Non-Party Political Formation," *How*, May 1982, 16-21; Senuit Roy, "Non-Aligned Activists," *Seminar*, November 1983, 23-26; D.L. Sheth, "Movements," *Seminar*, October 1982, 42-52; Id., "Grassroots Initiatives in India. Attempts at Delegitimizing a Creative Process Vested interests at Work," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 11, 1983, 259-262; H. Volken, "Action Groups: Beginning or End of a Dream?," *Social Action*, 34 (1984) 115-131; W. Fernandes, "Some Dilemmas Facing Action Groups," *Social Action*, 34 (1984) 197-215; Rajni Kothari, "Grassroots," *Seminar*, January 1984, 47-52; Id., "The Non-Party Political Process," *The Non-Party Political Process. Uncertain Alternative*, ed. by Harish Sethi—Rajni Kothari, Lokayan, Delhi, 1983, pp. 18-46; Harish Sethi, "Redefinitions: Groups in a New Politics of Transformation," *The Non-Party Political Process, op. cit.*, pp. 92-134. Ansur Rahman, *Some Dimensions of People's Participation in the Bhoomi Sena Movement*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, 1981; H. Volken, Ajoy Kumar, Sara Kaithathara, *Learning from the Rural Poor*, Shared Experiences of the Mobile Orientation and Training Team, Indian Social Institute, Delhi, 1982.
4. Sujata Ghotoskar, Vijay Kanhere, "The Role of Women in Social Change and People's Movements," *Social Action*, 34 (1984), 132-144.
5. *Constitution of India*, Text and Commentary by P. Diwan, P. Rajput, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1980, 12.

6. *Harijan*, January 18, 1948.
7. Ghose Sarkar, *Socialism Democracy and Nationalism in India*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1971; Hiro Dilip, *Inside India Today*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976; D.C. Gupta, *Indian Government and Politics*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1972.
8. Preamble of the Constitution. Though the word "socialist" was introduced into the preamble with the 42nd amendment (1976), however, the idea was implicit from the beginning in the Constitution. P. Diwan, P. Rajput, (ed.), *Constitution of India, op.cit.*, 13.
9. It is true that the Five Year Plans according to the original vision did not envisage development as mere economic growth, but emphasized social progress too. "Economic planning has to be viewed as an integral part of a wider process aiming not merely at the development of resources, but at the development of human faculties and the 'building up of an institutional framework adequate to the needs and aspirations of the people'." Government of India, *The First Five Year Plan*, New Delhi 1952, 2. But this has been belied in the concrete and immediate plans and practice.
10. For an understanding of various models of development and discussions on development strategies, cf. C. Elliott, *The Development Debate*, SCM Press, London, 1971; C.T. Kurien, *Proverty and Development*, CLS, Madras, 1974. This is a collection of the various contributions of the author published elsewhere. A.R. Desai, *Essays on Modernization and Underdeveloped Societies*, Tahcker and Co., Bombay, 1971; Kusum Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust*, The Human Factor in Indian Development, Praeger Paperbacks, New York, 1969; G.R. Madan, Tara Maln, *Village Development in India. Sociological Approach*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1983; G.R. Madan, *India's Social Transformation. Problems of Economic Development*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1979; G. Myrdal, *The Challenge of World Poverty*, Penguin Books, London, 1971. M.P.T. Daro, *Economic Development in the Third World*, New York, 1981; P.D.N. Dickinson, *To Set At Liberty the Oppressed*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1978.
11. The Community Development Program was launched on October 2, 1952. S. Mukherjee, *Community Development in India*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961.
12. Harish Sethi, "Redefining Politics, Power and Development: Some Reflections on Voluntary Agencies and Social Change," *Bulletin, Madras Development Seminar Series, December 1982*, 176-185.
13. Rajni Kothari, "The Non-Party Political Process," *art. cit.*; Id., "Grassroots," *art. cit.*
14. For an analysis of some of the incidents cf. the contributions in *Social Action*, 33 (1983) No. 4. Contributions from Surindar Suri, Joseph Velacherry, George Mathew and others.
15. Cf. H. Volken, *Learning from the Rural Poor, op. cit.*; J.M. Heredero, *Rural Development and Social Change. An Experiment in Non-Formal Education*, Manohar, 1978; W. Fernandes, (ed.), *People's Participation in Development. Approaches to Non-Formal Education in India*, Indian Social Institute, Delhi, 1980.

16. People's Theaters are widely made use of in the Third World countries to conscientize the people. For a case study with ample bibliographical indication cf. Ross Kidd, Mamunur Rashid, "Theatres by the People, for the People and of the People, People's Theatre and Landless Organising in Bangladesh," *Social Action*, 34 (1984), 157-188.
17. Quoted in Arun Shourie, "Reasons for Hope," *New Quest* No. 34, July-August 1982, 205.
18. B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi. A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982², especially chapter 20: Peasants and Workers, 156 ff.
19. Quotation from the text as found in the *Minutes of the General Meeting of CBCI*, Calcutta, 1974, 156.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Cf. G. Bornkan, *Jesus von Nazareth*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1975¹⁰; E. Schweizer, *Jesus*, SCM Press, London, 1971, 22-26.
22. The Reports and Reflections of Melbourne Conference on the Kingdom of God, *International Review of Mission*, vol. 69 (1980-1981), 377 ff.
23. The document of the Synod on *Justice in the World*, November 30, 1971. *A Call to Action*, Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI to Cardinal Maurice Roy, President of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, on the occasion of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, May 14, 1971; *The Church and Human Rights. A Document of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace*, December 10, 1974. Cf. also O. Hoffe, "Papst Johannes Paul II und die Menschenrechte," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 27 (1980), 36-55.
24. For the question of Church and human rights at that period cf. B. Plongueron, "L'Eglise et les Déclarations des Droits de l'Homme au XVIII siècle," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 1979, pp. 358-377. Cf. also D.F. Polish, "Human Rights in Roman Catholicism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 19 (1982) No. 3, pp. 25-39.
25. SS. Harakas, "Human Rights. An Eastern Orthodox Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 19 (1982) No. 3, 17.
26. *Gaudium et Spes*, 43.
27. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* chapter IV; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.
28. Cf. Prakash Kara, "Action Group/Voluntary Organization: A Factor in Imperialist Strategy," *The Marxist Review*, April-June 1984, 19-54. Speaking of Christian action groups, the author states that they view Communists as manipulators. "The Christian Action groups which claim to be radical seek to pit their following against the organised left because of a profound ideological incompatibility which emanates from the very theory they propagate. They view the Communist party and its mass organizations as manipulators of the masses, creating dependent groups leading to bureaucratic control and imitating the culture of

- repression of the rightists. What is sought to be offered instead is an individualistic variety of Christian reformism." Cf. also J. John, "Critique of Action Groups," *The Marxist Review*, August 1982, 67-77. See also "Report of CPI (M) Central Committee, *Political Development*, Calcutta, June 1981. It is very critical of action groups. A reply to the report by B. Wielenga, *The Marxist Review*, Oct.-Nov., 1981.
29. Cf. *Justice in the World*, Synodal Document of 1971; *Octogesima Adveniens*. In this connection we wish to recall some of the important CBCI documents: Poverty and Development, in *Report of the General Meeting of CBCI*, Bombay, April 15 & 16, 1971, pp. 42-46; "To achieve this aim, the Church must accept that while personal services and relief work will always have their importance, the more relevant and meaningful efforts will concentrate on change of atmosphere, transformation of structures, creation of new relationships and fresh value systems . . ." *Ibid*, pp. 43-44. The Memorandum to the 1971 Synod of Bishops, in *Report of the Standing Committee*, Bangalore, August 1-3, 1971, i-iv. "Existing structures which are inherently unjust need to be changed." *Ibid*. An Appeal to the People of India, in *Report of the General Meeting*, Madras, April 6-14, 1971, 48-52; Communication and Recommendations on Evangelization in *Minutes of the General Meeting*, Calcutta, January 6-14, 1974, 156-175; The Church's Response to the Urgent Needs of the Country, in *Report of the General Meeting of Mangalore*, January 9-17, 1978, 78-85; Final Statement of the General Meeting, Nagpur, January 31-February 6 1984, in *the Report of the General Meeting*, 75-84.
 30. *Pacem in Terris*; *Octogesima Adveniens*, Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI to Cardinal Maurice Roy, May 11, 1971, Nos. 31-37.
 31. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9.
 32. Poverty and Development, in *Report of General Meeting of the CBCI*, Bombay, April 15-16, 1971, 42-46.
 33. *Ibid*.
 34. Cf. *Report of the General Meeting*, Mangalore, 1978, Nos. 2, 4, 13.
 35. *Final Statement of the General Meeting*, Nagpur, January 31-February 6, 1984; *Report*, 75-76.
 36. *Rerum Novarum*, No. 7, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 69.
 37. Rules and Regulations, Article 1.3.

B. SOCIAL ANALYSIS: CONCEPT AND METHOD*

by Karl Leveque

In many a Christian milieu and in groups of people, this phrase "social analysis" has become widely used. And the thing itself is also more and more put in practice. We hope that it is not the case of a passing fad but rather a serious need Christians have discovered as they look upon the world. In this sense, we would like to reflect on that which in our own practice we would like to see emerging as a privileged kind of approach.

We have decided that the more helpful approach in exploring the concept and method of social analysis is a concrete and practical one, one which draws from the experience of the formational sessions of the Entraide missionnaire (EMI). We shall not focus on the content or particular instruments of these sessions, but rather we want simply to reflect generally on the concept of social analysis which is used in the formational sessions.

One of the goals of the EMI is "... to get to know through a critical reading the social reality in which the Church evangelizes today, so that its involvement in the world and proclamation of the Gospel might be relevant."

The analysis and the analytical methods which the EMI developed were the response to particular circumstances and the specific needs of the people in those circumstances. Simply to adopt another social analytical method is very risky. Rather, what is key is to be able to develop an analysis which emerges from the particular situation, although adaptation of another method is permissible. At EMI, the method of social analysis grew in an incremental fashion, though the phrase "social analysis" was itself not used because we had not yet named what we were doing. We are now in a position, and certainly it is important for us to do so, to reflect consciously on the analytical method we have developed at EMI in order to systematize it in some way.

It is to this concept of social analysis, then, which we would like to turn and explore more fully, in order that we might dispel any misgiving or misunderstanding which people have about it. As with the metho-

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dological preference of social analysis itself, our way of proceeding will be from the actual experience of doing social analysis.

Social analysis is not a popularization of sociology for the benefit of those radicals who cannot afford the time and money to go to university. Nor is it a particular creed or theory of a group which is determined to change the world. It is not, nor should it be, an easy, oversimplified justification of some kind of utopia. Still further, social analysis is not the study of society by professional social scientists, no matter how competent, whose sole aim is to understand the social world for its own sake, but who have no intention whatever of becoming personally involved in working for the transformation of society.

Between the extremes of pure activism on the one hand, and pure social scientific research on the other, is a third and middle way. This is the way of social analysis, which involves the attempt to understand society with a view to further action. For example, people who are involved in advertising research various aspects of our social world in order to influence the market, but such efforts do not constitute authentic social analysis. Social analysis, rather, seeks to transform society so that the balance of power will be altered in a way that will permit people a greater degree of freedom and self-determination. There is a time, between the awareness of the need for change and the taking of concrete steps on behalf of change, when study, reflection and analysis of society is required in order to judge the most effective course of action. Social analysis, then, far from implying a naive utopianism, attempts to probe the logic of the social system which is being questioned as well as the logic of the action of those who are questioning the system.

Now that we have described somewhat both the general direction and proper perspective of social analysis, we shall attempt to explore more fully its characteristics.

Social Analysis is Partial

Social analysis is not and does not claim for itself the value-neutral objectivity of the social sciences, but instead sees itself as exercising certain preferences. The social analyst, in other words, states explicitly that his analysis is guided by a definite set of values and a clearly defined project. This contrasts with the alleged value-neutrality of many social scientists, such as economists and sociologists. Social analysis is done on some very controverted issues, and those who engage in analysis as part of their commitment to social change do not feign neutrality. Rather,

they know that they are standing in the midst of the situation, often a very ambiguous situation, which they are seeking both to understand and to change. As social analysts they are called not to stand above the fray, but to be closely involved in order to shed the light of their analysis on the situation and illuminate possible options of change.

Put another way, it was often the case at EMI that the people who came to the sessions did so because they felt that their involvement in social struggle was insufficient. And so they would come to EMI in order to develop those analytical skills necessary to read the situations in which they found themselves, enabling them to make more intelligent judgments concerning the course of action they should take. What is important to remember is that the people who do social analysis are already involved on a particular side in a social struggle or are seeking to be involved.

An interesting and important point to remember about the social sciences is that their commitment to objectivity often obscures more fundamental choices which the researcher makes and which influence significantly the content and focus of his research. In other words, the commitment to objectivity creates an illusion which hides the ideological assumptions that influence the researcher's analysis and from which the researcher never completely frees himself. The prejudices and biases of sociologists and economists often dictate what it is that will be analysed, how it will be analysed, what variables will be included, and what will be omitted. More often than not, these social scientists are not even conscious of their prejudices and the influence they exert on their research. In short, more and more the social sciences are becoming normative disciplines as they choose to focus on certain social issues and ignore others. No longer are the social sciences content simply to describe the social world, as increasingly their conclusions include prescriptive statements which attempt to picture the social world as it should be. So for example, it is well known that choices which are made around issues of economic priorities, social control, and social change all involve policies in the face of which social scientists never remain fully neutral. Social scientists make decisions, decisions which involve choosing certain values, and even to remain neutral in the face of a particular policy it to make a choice. Absolute neutrality does not exist in the social sciences.

We at EMI, as Christians, adopted a definitive option which favored the poor of society, the little ones, the victims of the system. We decided that our analysis, in order to reveal the truth of the social situation, must focus on the logic of those who maintain the social structures in a way that serves their interests exclusively (i.e., the interests

of the rich and the powerful). What we wanted to avoid was a subjective moralizing approach to the social world which was preoccupied with the hidden motives of the rich. In addition, our preferential option for the poor led us to listen to those voiceless ones whom our society ignores. We have often been challenged and criticized on this choice that we have made. Why, we are asked, listen to the prisoner instead of the prison director? the unemployed instead of the P.D.G.? the social welfare recipient instead of the banker? Yet that has been and continues to be our choice, our preferential option. For once those voiceless many whose story we never hear on television or in any other mass media will have a chance to speak and will be listened to. Our choice did not involve us, however, in simply listening to the poor; rather, our desire was to take up as our very own their needs and interests, a task which required that their needs and interests be clearly identified.

This choice, this desire to identify ourselves with the poor in their struggle and to understand their needs and interests, required a careful and discriminating reading of their situation, from the perspective of both our faith and social analysis.

The Subjects Of Social Analysis

At EMI, it is the participants themselves, those who come to a session from a particular situation, who engage in the process of social analysis, not being satisfied with relying on experts and specialists from the outside to conduct the analysis for them. This is not to say they do not require help from those with a particular expertise. In fact, the participants do have occasion and need to resort to specialists, such as economists, historians, sociologists, or theologians, who provide them with analytical tools that allow them to analyze their situation themselves. What becomes terribly important, then, is that the people be very selective in their choice of experts whom they call on for assistance, making sure that the experts are at least sympathetic to their fundamental aspirations. Reluctantly, and only when there is no alternative, will the participants who are doing social analysis resort to a purely academic approach, divorced from their own struggles.

This insistence on being very selective of the experts who are allowed to work with the participants in the formational sessions does create problems for the organizers, because it is not always easy to find competent social scientists who also have experience in social struggles. We do not want to convey the impression that the participants in the session dismiss out of hand academic competence. In fact, many of them have attended or will attend school. There is no question that they all

have a genuine desire to learn from any kind of teacher, but this receptive attitude is tempered by a healthy critical approach to learning. So, at the EMI sessions, though the participants arrive with differing expectations, they do share a rather high expectation of the intellectual integrity and rigor of their teachers. This is most clearly evidenced when their teachers do not answer their questions. During the sessions, people seek an understanding of their social world, an understanding, for example, of the mechanisms which drive the economy or the influence and weight of political forces, in order to establish a strategy of action. They are, in other words, as much concerned about the rational basis of their decisions as they are about the logic of the social world in which those decisions are made. Above all, the participants in EMI sessions come not only to understand their social situation but also to learn how to do a social analysis of that situation. They are seeking not only to see what is going on in society but also how to see what is going on. Hence, one can understand their critical spirit, a spirit born of a desire to discover and learn how to use the instruments of analysis which enable them to develop a more critical and rigorous perspective on society.

The Object Of Social Analysis

The object of social analysis is not, as is the case with sociology, a study of society under all its aspects; rather the focus of social analysis is social conflict, that deep-rooted antagonism between the rich and the poor which is a stumbling block to our Christian consciousness. This antagonism is such a scandal that at times we would prefer to conceal it or wish that it did not exist. How else can one explain why it requires so much effort, so much energy, to prove and demonstrate to certain groups of people that there is a "social problem"? At EMI sessions, in addition to a set of prepared questions, we use a pyramidal schema of society, as well as a game of "power and conflict." These instruments are intended to increase the participants' awareness that the dice are loaded, and that the poor are poor because they have been dispossessed by the accumulation of wealth on the part of a few people. It is terribly important for us to understand and appreciate our earlier proposition, namely, that social analysis shows us how to see and how to make others see that indeed there is a social problem, that poverty is not an accident or the result of blind fate which befalls an unlucky and dimwitted few. Our experience has revealed to us the following paradox: on the one hand, there are today Christians who see the deep suffering which social structures cause in people's lives, and recognize that such a situation contradicts the message of the Gospel; yet on the other hand, traditional Christianity strongly rejects any idea of conflict and creates a false awareness which undermines the effort of social analysis to expose the

roots of contemporary social conflict. Our attempts to understand more deeply the rich-poor antagonism which constitutes social conflict is often labelled an obsession of malcontents who always seek solace in the dark side of human experience: "Things are bad enough without deliberately focusing on the worst aspects of society." With such characterizations of our efforts, we are branded ungrateful troublemakers for our attempts to expose the causes of the inequality and injustice which are features of our society.

Analysis Leads To Action

It is precisely this element of action which is the most important in the entire process of analysis. All other elements converge upon and receive their justification from a desire to change the unjust structures of our social world. In order to clarify this most important dimension, action on behalf of change, social analysis is deliberately rooted in the reality of the social situation and avoids any sort of abstractions. In other words, social analysis is not merely a speculative enterprise, but instead is centered on the poor and oriented to the struggle for justice and human rights. Let us recall Puebla's definition of the poor person — the one who is deprived of certain rights!

At this point, it would be important to recall the alleged objectivity of academic social science. Most research at university level is subsidized and financed either by large corporations or by the government. The intent of each is to find the best strategies of action by means of a scientific analysis. When we engage in social analysis, it is at the request of the poor and of popular groups who, no less than governments and corporations, need to improve and ensure the rationality of their decisions. These popular groups, as well as the Christians involved in the struggle for social change, need to ground their activity on a realistic and scientific vision of society where local conflicts are analytically situated within a large social context. This is the only way of avoiding utopia.

This concern for effective action is not, in itself, opposed to a scientific analysis of society. However, it might contradict certain attitudes of those social scientists who are so isolated from the exigencies of social conflict that they feel no sense of urgency for social change. In the name of science and the proper scientific attitude, they will dismiss as pragmatic and idealistic a social analysis which includes the imperative of social change.

Social analysis, which is to a certain extent constrained by the exigencies of change and action, cannot afford the time to look into all social phenomena and consider every nuance of the social world. Rather, its concern is singular and clearly oriented in the direction of social conflict, attempting to understand its logic and the conditions for its resolution. Because its goal is action and change, social analysis does not preoccupy itself with class analysis in any academic sense, but rather adopts a more expansively global perspective.

Unlike functionalist social theory, social analysis does not try to dissolve social conflict and disorder in a benignly holistic social vision which highlights the equilibrium of the *status quo*. Social analysis looks critically at the social pyramid and its attendant structural inequalities which permit a minority to control the world's wealth at the expense of the majority of people. Such a view of social organization is no less a simplification than American functionalist sociology. However, social analysis has this advantage — we concede that even here we are biased, perhaps because our stance forces us to read things this way — of being more realistic, that is to say, our social analysis is more consistent with what we see and observe in the world around us.

Multidisciplinary Approach

Again, because it is geared to action, social analysis refuses to be compartmental like the various branches of the social sciences. Economics, politics, special interests and power are, for social analysis, two approaches to the same reality. And one cannot overlook the quarrel about the jurisdiction of history and sociology. The social sciences never cease to overlap one another, and social analysis will make use of every one of them. But another science, one very much out of favor in Marxist circles, is used quite a bit in social analysis: we refer to social psychology.

Those who do social action — and this applies not only to Christians with their Churches — often are required to do institutional analysis. The tools and methods of social psychology are very useful in studying the diverse levels of awareness and the different kinds of attitudes peculiar to each professional grouping within society. It is as useful and important to determine the hierarchical structures of society (administration, teaching, churches, army, linguistic and ethnic groups) as it is to get a cross-sectional look at a particular social class. Friere's own experiences owe their success — and we'll not enter here into the legitimate process of revision his work demands — to a carefully crafted pedagogical strategy which attempts to tailor the presentation of social analysis to the level of awareness of one's audience.

In this sense, social analysis is a far cry from any simplistic, mechanistic Marxist caricature; nobody wants to reduce social analysis to that. Confusion of the two stems only from a profound ignorance of both . . . and the irrational fear of those who take sides could lead to such unfortunate confusion.

The Results Of Social Analysis

To this point in our consideration, we have described the method of social analysis rather than its content. We would like to shift our focus now and begin to look at the fruit of doing social analysis. Ultimately, social analysis involves people in a process of questioning which leads them to a deeper awareness and understanding of their social situation, and finally to a decision and action on behalf of change. Social analysis fosters and encourages in people a suspicious attitude toward their social experience, an attitude which dispels any sort of naivete. Instead of responding to a given situation with simplistic moralizing which couches its analysis in the stark terms of good and evil, and attempts to look at the hidden intentions of the individuals within the situation, social analysis tries to raise the complex of social questions which will help explain the situation as social.

Examples of the sorts of social questions which might be raised in any given situation include: Who makes the decisions? Who controls the information? What interests are involved? What are the opposing forces in this situation? What rights are being violated? Why speak of "masses" instead of naming classes or particular groups defined by their specific interests?

It is important that we, as Christians who are rediscovering the privileged place of the poor in salvation history, be able to "read the signs of the times" and recognize in social unrest the expression of the aspirations of the poor and marginated in our society. Whether or not these expressions of their claims are justified or not, the fact remains that they constitute a significant shift in the organizational structure of society.

It is also a wholesome exercise to reflect on where we personally stand in this social structure. Whether we like it or not, we are there somewhere. Awareness of one's class origin helps weigh all the pressures one is subjected to simply by being of one sex or the other, from the North or from the South, of a given race or ethnic group. This brings out our primary reactions and explains the conflicting polarizations of society from which we have to choose. Moreover, it is important to

distinguish between class origin and class allegiance, for one may be a male and not a chauvinist! The difference being in the choice that is made and the ensuing result. The crucial question for a correct social analysis is: Where do I stand? — Can our feet be in one spot and our hearts in another?

There are those who fear any talk about a balance of power and strategies for action when that talk comes from the lower classes (subversive). They argue that such talk is the fruit of resentment. It is important for them to realize, though, that it is precisely the powerful, those with access to resources, who are the first to think in terms of the balance of power and strategies for preserving the power in their favor. The powerful and the rich know all about social analysis and use it very effectively. How true and relevant is the slogan: "Steinberg is on your side." We should hope that Christians who claim to side with the poor would use as their own Metro's slogan: "We know our people."

A number of years ago, at the time of the renewal of catechism within the Church, in order to justify the use of psychology and anthropology as aids for our evangelizing, we argued that to evangelize a person we must know that person. Similarly, to evangelize our society, we must know our society. The Christian attitude towards conflict must not involve flight, but rather a critical and courageous stance in order to understand its logic. When a Christian becomes aware that the mechanisms of society generate exploitation and injustice, his faith urges him to struggle for justice and a transformation of the very structures which are responsible for the misery and death of his brothers and sisters.

C. A CASE STUDY OF NORTH ARCOT RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

It was in March of 1981 that the idea to conduct non-formal education clicked in this area with Fr. José Enchakal. This new dawn reached only five sub-stations of Tirumalai Parish, Vellore diocese. So too the program was limited to literacy classes for the illiterates of the village, especially the weaker section — the harijans.

Towards the end of the same year Philip Dayanand and Peter Raj started similar programs at Perunthuraipattu and Semmiamangalam respectively.

A society was registered in March of 1982, under the Societies Registration Act, named North Arcot Rural Development Society

operating in three areas and different units: POLL at Semmiamangalam, APPL at Perunthuraipattu, WAVES at Tirumalai.

Circumstances

With only one year of experience after ordination, we were appointed as parish priests in remote and undeveloped areas. Our first attempt was to study the area — a door-to-door survey. This brought the people closer and their problems clearer.

A common ideology, aptitude and similar problems to be faced brought us three priests together to evolve a common strategy and tactics of work.

And we started non-formal education in our parish area. As the awareness of the people grew, the demand to organize them to get their rights was felt. Meanwhile, we had chances of getting more experience and ideas by study, reflection, sharing of other groups' experience, etc.

Our Struggles

The expectation of the Christian community with whom we started to work was financial assistance, as they were used to it, especially from the missionaries.

The harijans by nature have a character of depending and finding a model in others. Since we were working mostly among the harijans, our attempts to educate them to fight for their rights by themselves was like swimming against the current.

As we extended our area to non-Christian villages we were suspected of conducting an indirect conversion drive; a priest had never entered a village but for conversions or other religious purposes.

We had financial problems to run the day-to-day business.

Political parties, especially the leftists, were looking upon us with a pinch of suspicion, since we are Christians and must be getting funds from capitalist countries. They were also slightly envious because we could enter the rural unorganized sector, where they could not do much. The rightists were against our option for the oppressed class and the awareness created among them. They branded us leftists.

The divisions among the people based on caste, religion and political parties were well encouraged by the dominant class for their own favor. So it is very difficult to organize the people for a common cause.

Many of our companions, staunch in their traditional idea of ministry, could not understand us, though we do enjoy the silent support of our superiors. This situation, besides the problems of the area, brought us three priests closer to each other. We meet frequently for sharing and discussion.

As time went on, we succeeded in getting more and more co-operation from the people. Some of our priest-companions try to understand us, while a few support and start similar work in their own parish areas.

At present, our programs are spread to 21 villages around Semmiamangalam, 22 villages around Perunthuraipattu and 40 villages around Tirumalai. Each of these areas has its own team of full-time and village animators.

Our target group is 70% harijan, the socially, economically, politically and culturally most exploited and oppressed sections; the other 30%, the economically poor rural high caste people whose fate is no better, even worse.

Changes Noticed

The literacy level of the people has increased. We can say that soon there won't be anybody in our area who cannot write his name and there is an increase of 20% who can read and write.

The people of the area have become more and more conscious of their dignity, rights, the nature and operation of exploitation, the power they are and they have, the weakness they have, the immediate steps to be taken and the goal to be achieved.

The people, especially the youth, women and students, organized at the village level, are getting co-ordinated. Though this movement grows by involving itself in simple matters, like basic facilities, fight against corruption, etc., we have to go a long way to free the people from the clutches of exploitation and oppression.

Our Role as Priests

In this land of ours, with so many injustices and inequalities, communal fights, nasty political games, economic instability, where human freedom, dignity and love are tarnished, we priests have a unique role to play. As prophets we point our fingers at the evil forces of the day. We have to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God. All

our activities — our personal life, ministry of sacraments, spirituality and what not — are to be integrated and concentrated to achieve the same goal — the Kingdom of God.

As leaders, we have to organize people to achieve the goal, to create genuine leaders who will lead the people, and walk along with the people to the new land, as Moses did. This is Christian life, priestly ministry, response to the challenges of the time. Hence, our social education program is not an extra or independent activity of priestly ministry.

We wish that the tremendous manpower, money and institutions could be directed to achieve the very work of Christ — to realize the Kingdom of God on earth. We feel sorry for the tragic flight of the Church, building monuments of mockery and tombs for itself, a contradictory force to the very plan of God.

FABC Papers:

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 - b. Forms of Christian Community Living in Asia
 - c. The Diocese and Parish as Communities of Faith
 - d. Total Human Development and the Church as a Community of Faith in Asia
 - e. The Dialogue of Communities of Faith in Asia
 - f. Is the Laity the "Marginalized Majority" in the Church?
 - g. The Role of Women in the Church as a Community of Faith in Asia
 - h. Seminaries and Religious Houses as Centers of Formation of Church as Community of Faith in Asia
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 - j. The Roman Catholic Church in Asia and the Media of Mass Communication — Press, Film, Radio and Television
 - k. Laity in the Church of Asia
34. Summons to Dialogue, by Archbishop Angelo Fernandes. A National Seminar on Dialogue and Evangelization, 1983
35. Challenges to Human Development in the 1980s: Response of the Church in Asia. The Sixth Bishops' Institute for Social Action, 1983
36. Lead Me to the Real: The Hindu-Christian Dialogue. The Third Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs, 1984
37. Our Quest for Justice. The Second Consultation on Justice and Peace, 1984.
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