Journey to Central America
By PEGGY SCHERER

There has been so much said and written about the unceasing violence in Central America in the past two years that I feel I am very clear and well-informed about the region. At other times, however, the very volume and the often conflicting nature of news stories and analyses leave me confused. I have come to realize that better knowledge of what is happening (and how hard it can be to find honest accounts) is not enough. An understanding of the roots of the violence is essential in shaping a response which might contribute to building and maintaining peace in Central America. I have learned in my years at the Catholic Worker that the personal experience of a situation can help bring clarity. There are dangers—the very intensity of a personal encounter can lead to emotional reaction, to “missing the forest for the trees.” Yet, a great advantage for me is that such an experience brings one face to face with some of the people living in order to get lost or forgotten in the flurry of facts and figures, of the maneuverings of governments and armies.

So, in October, I traveled to Honduras, where I spent two weeks visiting three refugee camps, and some of the 19,000 Salvadoran refugees who live in them. From there, I went to Nicaragua for two weeks, for an informal visit, in an attempt to learn something of the life and people of that land.

In 1978, my first and only other trip to Central America, I spent five months in Guatemala, and two months in Mexico. On this recent journey, like that first, my experiences had a deep impact on me.

Military Presence

From the moment I entered Honduras with Sr. Maria Pilar Chamerro, a Spanish Carmelite of the Sacred Heart who works in Washington, DC, I felt the fear which pervades that country. The airport was full of soldiers, many of them quite young, all armed—many with machine guns and Grenades. Soldiers were a constant sight throughout our stay in Honduras. Our experience of regular military road checks, of having to show our papers, explain where we were going, and register with local officials wherever we stayed, was mild compared to the harassment others have experienced. In this second poorest country of the hemisphere, the escalation of military power and presence (Honduran and U.S.) has been accompanied by increased repression against the people in that country. Hondurans are beginning to disappear, and be tortured and killed, as is the pattern in so many Latin American countries.

We spent two days in the camp of Mesa Grande, one week in Colomancagua, and one day in the small camp of San Antonio. In our September 1983 issue, Ernest Friar described these refugee camps in detail. Maria Pilar and I found that, since that article was written, the refugees main concern these days is the risk of being relocated further into the interior of Honduras, had intensified. The Salvadorans are against relocation for a number of reasons. Another move would be emotionally and physically difficult for people whose lives had already been so disrupted by the war in El Salvador. They dread the thought of building housing, sanitation systems, schools, workshops, and water systems all over again. Although building materials are provided to them, the refugees perform all the labor involved. They realize that poor Hondurans are constantly denied land, and the Salvadorans neither want to deprive them of resources nor face the antipathy that would be directed against them in a new area. The refugees have deep concern for the war still raging in El Salvador, where many have relatives and friends. They know that being relocated from the border area also means moving the international agency workers who assist them, thus ending an already limited neutral observation of the fighting that goes on near the border. The refugees fear that the camps they vacate will be used for a solution, and the staging of attacks on El Salvador from Honduras. Visits to the camps in the last few months by U.S. and Honduran military officials, the installation of a new water system in Colomancagua despite the relocation plans, and the initiation of repairs on the road to the border from Colomancagua, are signs that this last fear is well-grounded.

The last great work of Leo Tolstoy was the novel Resurrection, completed in 1889. Although primarily a book of broad creative genius, it is also an impassioned description of the Russian law courts and prisons. Tolstoy presents the courts in nineteenth century Russia as incapable of meting out justice, and the hero, Nekhludov, a wealthy nobleman, serves as the lens for viewing Russia’s entire criminal justice system. After attempting in vain to rescue a young woman (whom he himself had earlier unwisely driven to a life of crime) from the malevolent grasp of the courts and prisons, he comes to the conclusion that society exists not thanks to those “legalized criminals” who judge and punish other persons, but because, in spite of such depraving influences, people still pity and love one another.

In 1971, the American Friends Service Committee prepared a report on crime and punishment in America called Struggle for Justice. The first paragraph quotes three Philadelphia judges characterizing prison as “a cruel, degrading and disgusting place, likely to bring out the worst in man . . . Since the riots, the prison has, in addition, become a place ruled, as one of the prisoners certified, by ‘cold-blooded terror.’”

The Friends’ report, though far removed from Tolstoy’s account, bears an amazing resemblance to it. Tolstoy wrote in an absolutist society that had barely entered into the industrial era, while the Friends’ report is rooted in the third quarter of the twentieth century, well into the space age. Why they present such similar conclusions about criminal justice is a question asked by a writer exploring yet another criminal justice system (France), Michel Foucault in Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison.

Foucault’s observations overarch all modern criminal justice systems and the vocabulary he develops is an attempt to “step away from the language of liberalism. He argues that the modern era centers not around liberty and enlightened, but around power and control. The distinguishing mark of our age is the equation of power with knowledge, knowledge is power” (Continued on page 4)

The Abolition of Prisons:
Being My Brother’s Keeper
By ERNIE DYCK

The last great work of Leo Tolstoy was the novel Resurrection, completed in 1899. Although primarily a book of broad creative genius, it is also an impassioned description of the Russian law courts and prisons. Tolstoy presents the courts in nineteenth century Russia as incapable of meting out justice, and the hero, Nekhludov, a wealthy nobleman, serves as the lens for viewing Russia’s entire criminal justice system. After attempting in vain to rescue a young woman (whom he himself had earlier unwisely driven to a life of crime) from the malevolent grasp of the courts and prisons, he comes to the conclusion that society exists not thanks to those “legalized criminals” who judge and punish other persons, but because, in spite of such depraving influences, people still pity and love one another.

In 1971, the American Friends Service Committee prepared a report on crime and punishment in America called Struggle for Justice. The first paragraph quotes three Philadelphia judges characterizing prison as “a cruel, degrading and disgusting place, likely to bring out the worst in man . . . Since the riots, the prison has, in addition, become a place ruled, as one of the prisoners certified, by ‘cold-blooded terror.’”

The Friends’ report, though far removed from Tolstoy’s account, bears an amazing resemblance to it. Tolstoy wrote in an absolutist society that had barely entered into the industrial era, while the Friends’ report is rooted in the third quarter of the twentieth century, well into the space age. Why they present such similar conclusions about criminal justice is a question asked by a writer exploring yet another criminal justice system (France), Michel Foucault in Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison.

Foucault’s observations overarch all modern criminal justice systems and the vocabulary he develops is an attempt to “step away from the language of liberalism. He argues that the modern era centers not around liberty and enlightenment, but around power and control. The distinguishing mark of our age is the equation of power with knowledge, knowledge is power” (Continued on page 4)

Hunger in Our Neighborhood
By ROBBIE GAMBLE

There has been a lot of controversy generated in the last month over statements made by Presidential counselor Edwin Meese concerning the present nature of hunger in the United States. In an interview last December 8, Mr. Meese reported that he had not seen “authoritative” evidence of hungry children in the U.S. He further claimed that there was considerable evidence that many people were going to soup kitchens simply to take advantage of the free food being served, because, “that’s easier than paying for it.” Reflecting on how someone in Mr. Meese’s position would reach such conclusions and why he would make such callous remarks, has led me to look more closely at the experience of hunger among the poor and the homeless in our Lower East Side neighborhood, and to consider how we at the Catholic Worker try to meet their needs.

There are many different ways that homeless people feed themselves in New York. It might be difficult to starve in this great and powerful city, but the process of keeping oneself fed can often be degrading, painful, even dangerous. Many people receive welfare benefits, public assistance, disability, or other kinds of assistance checks, but the money often runs out before the end of the month, and they must seek other means to obtain food. One can always panhandle eighty cents or so for a slice of pizza or a chicken leg; if one can take contemptuous looks and ocasional abuse from passers-by. Many men save change to buy a bottle of Wine or a dishrag, and then stand in busy intersections, washing the wind-

(Continued on page 9)
January-February, 1984

Christian Hope

by TIM LAMBERT

The title finally approved for the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace was "The Challenge of Peace: God's Pro­ mise to the World." The letter "launched on warning," which will leave up to a com­ puter the decision whether to fire our nuclear weapons anytime it "thinks" we are under attack. Or, it may occur after our first strike capacity is in place, which nuclear weapons analyst Robert Aldridge has described as "brutal and dirty." If the Soviet Union fires the first strike, it will be a "race to the bottom." During the intense political conflict, feeling there is a chance the Soviet Union will fire upon us, we will decide we must arrange a preemp­ tive "decapitating" (Vice President Bush's term) strike against the Soviet arsenal to try to disarm them before they disarm us. U.S. planners tell us that with some luck we have a 100,000 people, to say nothing of the destruction to the land and our resources.

Too Strong a Momentum

I despise the recent decision of the Secretary of State to allow this, in order to prevent this from happening, we needed only to follow the military buildup laid out by the Presi­ dent, we would have achieved the same. The panel discussion among experts from various fields wasn't much better. No one could agree on putting a limit on the arms race, and the arguments, I felt we were all just biding time until the cups began to rattle and the din of discussion was silenced.

So, I'll put another log on the fire and try to do something to stop the nuclear war that may be distressing you. This may be found in various other forms of violence exhibited in our life and politics. There is a single issue, though, of the development of the means of our complete destruction would seem to demonstrate, like no other issue, the ex­ tend to which we, as a society and as a people, are by death.

They seem to reign over both our lives and our history.

Trying to be seen in which the question of Christian hope needs to be asked. A common response is despair, one form of which declares that our destruction by nuclear war can be comprehended as part of God's plan. Passages are cited from the Book of Revelation to show that the nuclear war will bring us to the "armageddon" of the end of the world, when God will bring to his age a close with fire and great bloodshed. Sometimes this belief that the faithful will be raptured, that is, taken up out of the way, before the greatest of suf­ ferings take place. In general it is thought the rapture will mean the end of God and these nuclear weapons have prepared for us. The only possible response is resignation to the plan of God.

Peace movement may be distressed at such resignation, they need to recognize how much the conflict with this view. It is in fact the same two principle: One that both this view and much of the think­ ing of the Christian peace movement ar1

Page Two

January-February, 1984

Vol. LI, No. 1

Published Monthly (Bi-monthly January-February, March-April, July-August, November-December)

ORGAN OF THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

DOROTHY DAY, PETER MAURIN, Founders

(1925-1950)

Rosalie Ganley, Pam Oliver, Editors

Associate Editors:

KATHLEEN CLARKSON, RITA CORBIN, GARY DONATELLI, FRANK DONOVAN, EILEEN EDGAR, EDGAR FORAND, GEOFFREY GEUNES, MARU HUMPHREY, JENNIFER INHOFF, ARTHUR J. LACEY, FRANK LEWIS, DANIEL MAUK, MARTHA MILLER, DEANE MOWRER, JEANNETTE NOEL, JAN NICHOLSON, KATHARINE TEMPLE.

Communication, new subscriptions and change of address: 38 East First St., NY, NY 10003, Second class postage paid at NY, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Catholic Worker, 38 East First St., NY, NY 10003.

Telephone (212) 254-1640

THE CATHOLIC WORKER ISSN 0009-5643 is published eight times a year: subscription rates: United States, 25¢ yearly, Foreign, 30¢ yearly, by The Catholic Worker, 38 East First St., NY, NY 10003, Second class postage paid at NY, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Catholic Worker, 38 East First St., NY, NY 10003.

55 EAST THIRD

by MARTHA MILLER

Some of us say, jokingly, that holidays serve a dual purpose. They wind us up and they glue us together. By that I mean they wind us up in frenzies of preparation and they bring us together in celebration. Of course, the two are not distinct—in the very preparations, we find celebration. (My mother would shake her head and say it would be great if that would let me find joy in scrubbing toilets, baking or any other domestic chores.) In any case, the holidays have a dual after-affect. We come out of them quite exhausted and we have many good memories. So, here I find myself at the beach-house with the wood stove churning out heat and with my cup of tea in hand. I come to rest. I come to remember.

Christmas through New Year's seems so whirled with busy-ness. I often wonder, in the rush, how much the quantity of activity replaces quality of time spent together. Then, I recall the special moments and I remember the gift of being together.

Boxes, Buttons, Bread

A good month before Christmas, Elaine, Tim and I began looking for a list and checking it twice... and gathering up presents, that "special something" for that special person, and saying, "Yes, Virginia, there was a Santa and with a red beard to boot!" I scrounged up many pillows and a lot of tea-crumbs to turn over to a near-aneurysm-atic look. Kassie, in her striped outfit, that Anna had found for her, and her jingling bells, made the perfect elf. Mary gave her credit, saying she and Patty and Sharon could get together for coffee kitches and reminiscence. Jane Brittain left just after Christmas, led us in as he has been doing once a week all autumn. We were delighted that Eileen Lawter arrived from Boston just in time to help with the music. The auditorium was hushed and many candles lit, warming the room and the faces of the many different people in it. In this quietness, Justin and Hannah Jordan read a poem from an old Spanish Carol, describing Jesus' birth.

And many children, God give the grace, Bringing tall candles to light Mary's face.

I thought of the many children—of my own nieces and nephews, of David and the children of friends, of David and new son, Jason, and of the thousands of Salvadoran and Guatemalan children living in fear in refugee camps. With the increasing speed of the arms' race and the terrible violence in Central America and elsewhere, it was important to give pause and remember His birth and the hope given to us. We need God's grace to face our way, so that the children may light their candles in peace.

During the holidays, I often felt the absence of certain people. Sharon Wilson is back in Minneapolis. In her usual, thoughtful manner, she sent a boxful of cookies and candies that we broke open during our visit there in October, and so I thought such people existed! Nancy, in all fondness, has taken to calling herself "Spike." , and for the people of Nicaragua.

So, I'll put another log on the fire and try to do something to stop the nuclear war that may be distressing you. This may be found in various other forms of violence exhibited in our life and politics. There is a single issue, though, of the development of the means of our complete destruction would seem to demonstrate, like no other issue, the extent to which we, as a society and as a people, are by death.

They seem to reign over both our lives and our history.

Trying to be seen in which the question of Christian hope needs to be asked. A common response is despair, one form of which declares that our destruction by nuclear war can be comprehended as part of God's plan. Passages are cited from the Book of Revelation to show that the nuclear war will bring us to the "armageddon" of the end of the world, when God will bring to his age a close with fire and great bloodshed. Sometimes this belief that the faithful will be raptured, that is, taken up out of the way, before the greatest of sufferings take place. In general it is thought the rapture will mean the end of God and these nuclear weapons have prepared for us. The only possible response is resignation to the plan of God.

Peace movement may be distressed at such resignation, they need to recognize how much the conflict with this view. It is in fact the same two principle: One that both this view and much of the thinking of the Christian peace movement are

(Continued on page 6)
Hunger (Continued from page 1)

shields of cars stopped for the light and asking the driver for change. "Washing cars" is a full-time occupation for some; folks I know have been making thirty dollars working at it twelve hours a day. Some work in teams, pooling their income to buy food or sometimes to rent a room — too much of it is going to buy drugs or wine.

There are a number of places in the neighborhood where the soup kitchens, missions, independently run soup kitchens such as ours at St. Joseph House, and the city-run shelters. These vary widely. In my work at St. Joseph's Shelter on Third Street feeds several thousand men a day, in terribly oppressive conditions. Security guards perform a variety of functions, with nightsticks in hand, while fights continually break out on the waiting line. Severe injuries, even deaths, are not uncommon. One evening a few months ago, a young man was blinded by death with a two-by-four while waiting for a meal, and it is now no wonder that many many avoid eating at the Men's Shelter when at feeding time.

Empty Pantry

In some ways more difficult than the plight of the homeless individual is that of poor families, particularly single mothers with small children, who run out of food. The amount of food available to families in welfare payments, food stamps, and supplemental food checks is rarely enough to cover a family's monthly food needs. Advanced as food stamp programs are, many families do not have the mobility to seek out meal programs that the individual person has. If we want to serve a family of four, $7.20 to make a single round trip excursion on New York subways.) At Maryhouse, we keep a food pantry with canned goods and staple foodstuffs, which we distribute to families coming to the door needing food. Although we have expanded the scope of the pantry, and replenish it each Thursday when we do our house food shopping, by early in the following week it is usually empty.

Yes, there is the neighborhood, not the dramatic, famine-level hunger seen in areas of the Third World, but hunger nonetheless. If people are eating enough, it is due to their own ingenuity and extreme patience. Every weekend they line up at our door for the soup kitchen. Some people are eating soup or sandwiches or perhaps a piece of fruit. If people are willing to stand for half an hour in the cold, driving rain for a bowl of soup, two slices of bread and a cup of coffee, it can't be for the convenience of obtaining food for free; it is because they are hungry.

There is another kind of hunger that needs to be alleviated. This is spiritual hunger, a hunger which comes from being alienated, helpless, alone. In many ways this is a far more serious problem for us to attend to than physical hunger. Recently a group of students visited the Worker for a day. I was talking with them, trying to describe some of the physical realities of homelessness in New York, when one of the students asked some perhaps unintended questions.

"Do the people living on the street have much faith?" I had to stop and reflect for a moment, for I was astonished by the question. The question was not that they do not have faith, but perhaps that I was answering questions such as: how many homeless are there in New York?; where do they come from?; how do they eat?; perhaps I was also accustomed to thinking only in those terms. My answer to her question was, "In many places they do." People on the street have a deep faith. Stripped of everything else, they retain their faith, and it is a tested faith, a faith without pretense. I remember working the soup kitchen Palm Sunday, when fully half of the folks who came through the line were bearing palm crosses, and we had been to Church before coming by for soup.

A Sense of Community

I am continually surprised at how open people are to people, to the sharing of spiritual matters. Sometimes answering the door takes on the air of hearing confession; people needing to talk about past offenses, to know about what others believe in organized religion but still retaining some kind of faith, and looking for ways to express it. It is this kind of spiritual hunger that we have to be aware of, and to be ready to feed with whatever resources we have, however inadequate we may feel we are in doing it. Sometimes it takes us by surprise and attempt to be an open community in a non-threatening neighborhood. One evening, a month ago, we were celebrating Mass at St. Joseph House, when a man I had never before seen had come in to use the bathroom. He stayed for the rest of the Mass, and afterward I met him at the door and started talking with him. He said he hadn't been to Mass in years. He told me he had been raised a Catholic, and had been married, and served two years in Vietnam. While in the army he had had several bit-
ter experiences with chaplains that had caused him to grow disillusioned and leave the Church. He was now living on the street, like so many other Vietnam veterans. Walking into St. Joseph House, he felt a warmth and a sense of community he had never felt in any Church setting before. We talked for some time about his war experience and his faith. Before he left he asked if we had a regular schedule of Masses, and he promised that he would come by for Mass again.

In trying to run a house of hospitality, so much of our lives are caught up in the corporeal works of mercy. The needs for these works are readily seen; one can easily assess how many beds there are in the house, how many mouths there are to feed, who needs clothes, who needs to be visited in the hospital. These needs can become so encompassing that it is all too easy to forget about the spiritual works of mercy. These are: to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to admonish sinners, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive offenses, to comfort the afflicted, and to pray for the living and the dead. We need to feed the spiritual hunger in our neighborhood, too. I sometimes think that the most important aspect of our soup line isn't that we give people a meal to eat (for they could get another, possibly better meal, at the shelter), but that we give it to them in a small, relatively comfortable setting; that we try to address people respectfully, by their names if we know them; and that we bring their meals to them as they are seated at a table, as one would be served in a restaurant. These seemingly minor things can do a lot to restore a person's sense of dignity, and it can be a lot harder to maintain one's dignity on the streets than it is to maintain a full belly.

We probably fail at the spiritual works of mercy more than anything else at the Catholic Worker. We grow tired and irritable, we say "no" prematurely, we surround ourselves with busy work so as not to have to face up to people's personal needs. But we pray that God will grant us an increase of heart, and that through His grace we will be able to feed both empty stomachs and empty spirits.

Something of the Light of the World

By GORDON C. ZAHN

John T. Leary died of a heart attack on August 31, 1982, at the age of 24. Having finished a full day of meetings and work in the Pax Christi USA Center on Connecticut Avenue, as a teenager with political and religious convictions and with a commitment to social justice and peace, he was being driven to the Haley House, Boston's Catholic Worker soup kitchen where he lived and worked the needs of the poor and elderly. It is never easy to come to terms with the death of one so young, but to lose someone so gifted and so profound in his religious faith and commitment to social justice and peace is almost beyond acceptance. Yet, in spite of this, we must, no matter how great a test of one's own faith the loss may be.

It has been a painful test of mine. My almost half-century involvement in the Catholic Worker movement, and especially in the work of the Peace Community, has given me a perspective that I see in John a leader that movement will not lose. He was a leader in our movement, who inspired faith and commitment to social justice and peace.

It is easy for my generation to find fault with today's youth, and most of the criticisms have some validity. What social scientists call "the youth culture" is characterized by values and behavior that in more innocent days would have been a source of shame and scandal. Experimentation with sex and drugs are commonplace for high-school and college age groups, and the restraints associated with religion and morality have last much of their force as young people become indifferent toward or turn away from the perversions and practices of their childhood formations. Like many other teenagers, John had been disillusioned by the Church in which he had been raised and left it for a time (though, he added, never abandoning his belief in God) but soon discovered, as he put it, there was no place else for him to go. His "return to the fold," however, was marked by the mature awareness that the failures of the Church which troubled him could be traced to the failure of the individual believer to assume the
On Being My Brother's Keeper

(Continued from page 1)

by GEORGE OCHOA

Maryhouse doesn't look like an institution — the halls are too dim. It looks more like a boarding house in a 1940's movie, particularly with the Christmas tree up and Frank Sinatra on the stereo. Meals are served more or less on schedule, and when people want to be social, they come and sit in the big dining room to roll cigarettes and drink tea.

I first walked into the house three months ago to talk about volunteering. I've been going two nights a week, though I couldn't tell who lives here and who was just visiting. There's no hotel register, no I.D. cards. Some people sit at the tables; one woman carries around pink Manolo and towel. Another woman tries on a coat from the clothing room, and a bearded young man washes dishes. She was Christ for me that night. She talked with a woman who was sitting alone. She told me about her life, the blues and rock scene in the '60s and '70s, electric guitars, and everything she said was full of excitement because it was so deep­ly her. I didn't tell her much about me, but I felt as if I had something to say.

Moments like that come and go like heartbeats that you occasionally over­hear. Often it's easy to find things that simulate community and seem to fill the hole inside. Work can be like that. Scramble eggs for breakfast, I mop the floor at night, I change the bandages on Anna's leg, because I want to do some­thing for people, I want to make friends.

Seeking Community

Maryhouse doesn't look like an institution — the halls are too dim. It looks more like a boarding house in a 1940's movie, particularly with the Christmas tree up and Frank Sinatra on the stereo. Meals are served more or less on schedule, and when people want to be social, they come and sit in the big dining room to roll cigarettes and drink tea.

I first walked into the house three months ago to talk about volunteering. I've been going two nights a week, though I couldn't tell who lives here and who was just visiting. There's no hotel register, no I.D. cards. Some people sit at the tables; one woman carries around pink Manolo and towel. Another woman tries on a coat from the clothing room, and a bearded young man washes dishes. She was Christ for me that night. She talked with a woman who was sitting alone. She told me about her life, the blues and rock scene in the '60s and '70s, electric guitars, and everything she said was full of excitement because it was so deep­ly her. I didn't tell her much about me, but I felt as if I had something to say.

Moments like that come and go like heartbeats that you occasionally over­hear. Often it's easy to find things that simulate community and seem to fill the hole inside. Work can be like that. Scramble eggs for breakfast, I mop the floor at night, I change the bandages on Anna's leg, because I want to do some­thing for people, I want to make friends.

(Continued on page 7)

The Catholic Worker

January-February, 1984

One Example

On July 18, 1857, a young farmer was murdered in Ohio by an ex­convict. The reaction of the community, mostly Amish Mennonite, to the brutal deed of this in­truder was a striking example to the question of forgiveness. Eighty­eight persons, most of them Amish, were refused for jury duty because of their conscientious unwilling­ness to inflict the death penalty. During the trial, numerous Amish families in­vited the murderer's parents into their homes. After the convicted murderer was ex­onerated, the Amish signed petitions and wrote to Governor C. William O'Neill requesting a commutation of the sentence, in such numbers as to surprise those who thought the Amish cared nothing for the outside world.

The commutation was granted by Governor O'Neill seven hours before the time scheduled for the execution. Meanwhile, a few Amish Mennonites had been attempting to draw a spiritual lesson from the event which had so deeply shaken their community. "God has been speaking to many of us Amish people through the Amish family," they told each other. "We learned to love our fellow human beings."

The Christian and Capital Punishment

Mary House

Linda Brown

Isaiah, Jesus taught that justice resides in the human heart in a relationship with the Creator and the response of Jesus to injustice and the manner of His death. The definitive response by God to outright challenge and defiance is to offer His suffering.

Surely this is our model for how we ought to respond to dangerous elements: without vengeance, not always able to turn aside the judgment brought down, and willing to pay a great price for salva­tion.

We are, of course, speaking of the will­fulness to suffer injury, a willingness based on love and genuine forgiveness. In practical terms, this means a refusal to put any so-called dangerous offenders, into a criminal justice system. Such a refusal is already common in our society. I am thinking of areas of society where violence is sacri­ficed, namely the military, police, prison guards or, moving over slightly on the spectrum, to kidnapping, arson and kill­ing in the name of freedom, socialism or anything else, and should I even mention those who knowingly produce devices for torture or weapons that will increase violence.

Isaiah, Jesus taught that justice resides in the human heart in a relationship with the Creator and the response of Jesus to injustice and the manner of His death. The definitive response by God to outright challenge and defiance is to offer His suffering.

Surely this is our model for how we ought to respond to dangerous elements: without vengeance, not always able to turn aside the judgment brought down, and willing to pay a great price for salva­tion.

We are, of course, speaking of the will­fulness to suffer injury, a willingness based on love and genuine forgiveness. In practical terms, this means a refusal to put any so-called dangerous offenders, into a criminal justice system. Such a refusal is already common in our society. I am thinking of areas of society where violence is sacri­ficed, namely the military, police, prison guards or, moving over slightly on the spectrum, to kidnapping, arson and kill­ing in the name of freedom, socialism or anything else, and should I even mention those who knowingly produce devices for torture or weapons that will increase violence.

Isaiah, Jesus taught that justice resides in the human heart in a relationship with the Creator and the response of Jesus to injustice and the manner of His death. The definitive response by God to outright challenge and defiance is to offer His suffering.

Surely this is our model for how we ought to respond to dangerous elements: without vengeance, not always able to turn aside the judgment brought down, and willing to pay a great price for salva­tion.

We are, of course, speaking of the will­fulness to suffer injury, a willingness based on love and genuine forgiveness. In practical terms, this means a refusal to put any so-called dangerous offenders, into a criminal justice system. Such a refusal is already common in our society. I am thinking of areas of society where violence is sacri­ficed, namely the military, police, prison guards or, moving over slightly on the spectrum, to kidnapping, arson and kill­ing in the name of freedom, socialism or anything else, and should I even mention those who knowingly produce devices for torture or weapons that will increase violence.
Cardinal Speaks on Life

The Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for the pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace." Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, has been named Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Pro-Life Activities Committee. In a policy statement in his new capacity, Cardinal Bernardin has taken a crucial step in broadening the perspective of Pro-Life activity. Many have perceived the Pro-Life movement as simply a narrow concentration on abortion and, in particular, on tax-supported abortion programs combined with an unrealistic attitude towards the nuclear arms race and capital punishment.

Cardinal Bernardin's statement of December 6, 1983 at Fordham University was entitled "A Consistent Ethic of Life: An American-Catholic Dialogue." In his opening statement, the Cardinal announced, "The Church position on nuclear arms, abortion and capital punishment make up a "team" that Catholics should address together rather than separately."

The position of the Catholic Worker movement and Pax Christi has been consistent in the support of the sanctity of human life as a gift of God. One of the editors of The Catholic Worker, Ammon Hennacy, used to fast and hold vigils outside of Sing Sing prison at the time of executions. Both groups have opposed the taking of human life in war and have advocated resistance to injustice by non-violent means. In a statement on the protection of life, Pax Christi recalled that the early Christians would not take part in judicial proceedings that involved capital punishment. It quoted Athenagoras, a theologian of the Second Century A.D., who asked, "How could we kill a man — we who say that women who take drugs to produce an abortion are guilty of homicide?"

The statement concluded, "Pax Christi, in common with the early followers of Jesus, views the protection of all life, from its conception to its end, as a "team"." The peace pastoral, in stressing the threat to human life from nuclear weaponry, drew attention to the fact that "Some understood the Gospel of Jesus to prohibit all killing." The statement of Cardinal Bernardin is an example of the fruits of the peace pastoral, and deserves the attention of Catholics and of all who may see inconsistency in a narrow approach to the issue of abortion. - Eileen Egan

The full transcript of the Cardinal's talk is printed in Origins, vol. 13, no. 29 (1312 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005). The following excerpts indicate some of the points made in the statement:

A New Moment

The letter [the bishops' pastoral, The Challenge of Peace] was written at a time called a "new moment" in the nuclear age. The "new moment" is a mix of public perceptions and policy proposals. The public sense of the fragility of our security is today a palpable reality... Another commentary, from The New Republic, identified the policy characteristics of the "new moment": "The ground is not steady beneath the nuclear forces of the United States. The problem is not modes of basing but modes of thinking. The traditional strategy for our nuclear arsenal is shaken by a war of ideas about its purpose, perhaps the most decisive war of ideas in its history." ... The "new moment" is filled with potential; it is also filled with danger. The dynamic of nuclear relationship between the superpowers is a nuclear war to be seen as specifically political. While not denying the classical position, found in the writing of Thomas Aquinas, that the state has the right to employ capital punishment, the author of the Catholic Worker's report on Paul VI and John Paul II has been directed against the exercise of that right to capital punishment.

(Defense, recovery of property, and punishment) to the single reason of defending the innocent and protecting those few human existences. Second, in the case of capital punishment, there has been a shift at the level of moral values. While not denying the classical position, found in the writing of Thomas Aquinas, that the state has the right to employ capital punishment, the author of the Catholic Worker's report on Paul VI and John Paul II has been directed against the exercise of that right by the state. The argument has been that moral values have changed. The need for the society exist and should be used.

Developing a Life Ethic

Asking where along the spectrum of life from womb to tomb creates the need for a consistent ethic of life. For the spectrum of life cuts across the issues of birth control, capital punishment, the rights of the unborn, the rights of the homeless, the rights of the poor, the rights of the unemployed worker. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways: we must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed, the immigrant, the poor, and the unemployed worker. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways: we must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed, the immigrant, the poor, and the unemployed worker. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways: we must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed, the immigrant, the poor, and the unemployed worker.

Consistent View of Life

If one contends, as we do, that the right of every fetus to be born should be protected, then our moral and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the unborn among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed, the immigrant, the poor, and the unemployed worker.

Michael wears his learning well and sets up a straight-forward style without wishful thinking," and suggest borrowing it from a library.

As for the price, I can only quote another reviewer of a different book, "I wish it could have been cheaper and more accessible which is, I suppose, bourgeois, wishful thinking," and suggest borrowing it from a library.

The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election

To summarize the shift succinctly, the presumption against taking human life has been strengthened and the exceptions made ever more restrictive. Two examples illustrate the shift. First, John Courtney Murray, S.J. demonstrated in 1959 that Pope Pius XII had reduced the traditional threefold justification for going to war can well be read along with Emil Fackenheim's Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy and To Defend the World or To Save the World in the Nineteenth Century. For me at least, technical philosophy does not come easily and these three men have helped to probe quickly the relationship between the Bible and modern philosophy, as a way of getting to the spiritual questions. And that's quite a feat. In fact, Michael wears his learning well and settles on a straight-forward style without becoming esoteric or historicist.

By holding us—that is, with philosophic, apologetic, traditional, prophetic themes—he manages to break new ground for all of us who are a bit shaky on these theological issues and need these insights of two other, quite different, writers—Elie Wiesel, the well-known story-teller, and Andrey Nehor, whose best known The Exile of the Word is an almost poetic examination of silence in the Bible and at Auschwitz. From their different experiences and forces together, their traditions and present reality in ways that cut across boundaries and go beyond labels.

Kari Barth once said that, for Christians: "The New Testament is concealed within the Old and the Old Testament is revealed by the New. As long as theology preferred to neglect this rule, as long as it was content to exist in a vacuum, by claiming exclusive orientation to the New Testament, it has been traumatized by a cancer in its very bones." He was also one of those who has pointed out that Judaism is the great foundation of the Christian religion, and that paganism, a danger Christians run into at every turn. I count it as a blessing that there is someone like Michael Wyschogrod, steeped in the riches and familiar with Christianity, who can walk with us, even where we might not totally agree about the issues on the path. The Body of Faith is not a manual of spiritual direction; it is an important examination of our deepest theological and philosophical mysteries.
Christian Hope

(Continued from page 2)

trol, that things are in His hands and that He will be triumphant. The problem with considering that this impending destruction is a sign of God's sovereignty is that it fails to distinguish between the end of the world as a human act, and the end of the world as an act of God. One thing about the end of history is clear; we will not be able to define when or how it will come. (Mark 13:32, Acts 1:6-7, 1 Thes 4:1-2) It may well be that, in our daily lives, we will destroy much of the earth; yet history will continue for thousands more years before God will bring this age, these "last days" to a close. We shall never know the day or the hour. If the missiles do rise from their silos it will be most definitely because human beings have ordered it. Even if war is occasioned by a computer which mistakenly "launches on warning" our arsenal, it will be due to machines we build, programmed and which we hand over the ability to destroy our planet. This is a case in which a human invention, the Bomb, has taken on characteristics of a deity. Some note that God-like divine attributes have been attached to the Bomb ever since its invention. From the first "Trinity test to the recent tests in the New York Times to Pentagon war scenarios as "theology," we are given additional evidence to support the contention that those who are incarnate in these weapons of enormous destruction and the plans to use them, are today sovereign over the earth. Military planners maintain this sovereignty is for the good, since if one nation, in particular ours, can control their use, we will rule over the earth so as to allow freedom to reign. This is not the reign which most people perceive. What is perceived is that there is no way out of these weapons being used to destroy the earth. It is this perception that the powers of death are left it to be subject to the powers of death, our preaching is in vain. If God has been silenced by death there is no hope. Even those who urge us to take up the cross and suffer the nonviolent way of Jesus at the hands of a violent world are speaking nonsense if, in fact, we know that death reigns over the earth, and death will be victorious.

Soviet people live out their religious faith and how it affects their international concerns about peace, and to find religious common ground between peoples of the two countries. The trip, which includes members of the National Farm Workers Union, is seeking family programs and social ministry projects to increase the staffing of three clinics in California which serve farm workers. If interested, you can contact Marion Moses, M.D., PO Box 62, Keene, CA 93531. Phone: (805) 822-5571, or 398-1823.

CONFERENCE

"1984: Conditioning for War and Christian Education" is the theme for the 14th annual meeting of the New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, 1018 Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

Health Workers Sought

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.

UGSS TRIP

One of our community members is planning a tour to the Soviet Union this July, for Americans interested in learning about religious life in the Soviet Union today. The American group seeks to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practitioners and nurses to work in the USSR. The trip would be held at the Holy Cross Center, Stonehill College, North Easton, Mass. on Saturday, April 14, 1984, 9:30 am to 7:30 pm. It will include several addresses, workshops, films and books exhibits.

For more information and registration, contact: New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Center for Reflective Action, Mont Marie, Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040.
full responsibilities associated with being a Christian.

Out of this awareness he fashioned his life of service and a thoroughgoing commitment to prayer and penance sustained by constant recourse to the Sacraments. In the end, as the minister of Harvard’s Memorial Church would put it, “... when this working-class Irish layman with no profession or fame died, hundreds of us filled a great church in Jamaica Plain to thank God that in this fellow we had seen something of the light of God.”

If few or no one could match the full extent of his involvement in activities devoted to the causes of social justice and peace, few, if any, were aware of the depth of his commitment to the spiritual life. One sensed that everything he did had a religious, if not doctrinal, dimension, but it was never “on display.”

Thus, close as I felt we were, it was only after his death that I learned he followed the Eastern practice of “continuous prayer,” reciting the Jesus Prayer over and over and hundreds of times a day. I had a hint of this, several times before, when I joked about his jogging. All scheduled exercise, I maintained, was boring, monotonous, and a waste of time. He would respond, monotonous is not a virtue, and above his assigned tasks of teaching children and adults to read he has taken it as his life’s work just a habit, something you hardly notice, a thing that becomes part of you.

Seeking Community

(Continued from page 4)

By giving I make myself vulnerable and therefore able to receive, able to see and love the other. Not long ago I was sick in bed with the flu, and a cup of orange juice suddenly appeared on my dresser. That was a work that made me feel loved, a little sacrament of communion, the kind of work I want to do but not at this time. But many times does the sacrament of communion—such as the Catholic Worker colds and coughs—seem to be just a habit, a line of battle. Sometimes Maryhouse seems only like a place to get well.

Draper employees to begin a dialogue as the founders dominated his time and activities. Some of the people who receive my leaflets distributed by the group were written by the DCAC. They regard the “life issues” — war, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia — centered upon the sacredness of life and can not be separated. As a result, he found himself without options, including Logan Circle, was a place where he often found something to work with, and with work, and see what comes from there.” His work continues today in the inspiration he provided others to take on their share of creating the better society by making themselves better men and women. The obituary published in The Pilot, Boston's diocesan paper, may have put it best, “If there is a new hunger for justice and peace on this planet, it is because of people like John Leary who stir human hearts with their sheer goodness.”

The American bishops in their pastoral letter, “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response,” declare that the very existence of this planet is under threat today; indeed, that nuclear war presents “a more menacing threat than any the world has known.” If the impending disaster is to be overcome, we will need many more “people like John Leary” to lead the way. In our search for them it might be well if everyone who reads this tribute can take time to use the skills and energy we have to make a personal assessment of his or her qualifications to take his place. If we are able to come even part of the way, it may be possible, with God’s help, to meet the challenge the bishops describe.

Gordon C. Zahn is the Director of the Pax Christi USA Center on Conscience and War, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This article first appeared in the October 1983 issue of PROFESSIONAL APPROACHES FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS.
A Journey to Central America

(Continued from page 1)

who control their fate. (As I write, word has come that those in Colomancagua and San Antonio, 25 miles away, were killed February.) And who does control their fate? While the Honduran government is cooperating with the U.N. in administering the camps, it is also cooperating; yet the fact that their very presence in Honduras depends upon their relationship with the Honduran government, and that some 30% of their budget comes from the U.S., seems to have great bearing on their actions, as well as with the refugees. By many accounts, it is the U.S. which is pressing relocation.

While the refugees await relocation with great fear, their work in the camps continues. Their organization is impressive, and is based on cooperation. Daily work includes the preparation of meals, mainly beans and tortillas, cooked on wood stoves, making furniture, tinware, hammocks, etc. needed by the residents, building and maintaining the latrine system and running kindergarten, primary and adult education programs.

Atrocities

There is an outward sense of peace and order in the camps that masks the tragedy which led the people to become refugees in the first place. During our visit, we talked a lot about what they had left El Salvador. A number of men and women, ranging in age from sixteen to forty-five, who for personal or political reasons or as members of guerrilla groups, were forced to leave their homes, were proud of in their country. hearterung to see so many Christians accept the truth of how senseless the violence waged against them is. Nor could I ignore my constant question, "Was the United States wouldn't support your government's policies if they really knew what was going on, would they?"

NICARAGUA

At the end of the two weeks, Sr. Maria Pilar returned to the United States, and I headed on alone to Nicaragua. What I saw there was in marked contrast to much of what I had just seen in Honduras. There was an atmosphere of youth, vitality and hope throughout Nicaragua. There was a presence of soldiers and militia, but many of the latter did not carry weapons, and all were friendly to me, unlike the soldiers in Honduras. There was clearly a determination among many to defend their country, and a sense of frustration and anger about U.S. government policy. These sentiments were heightened by the invasion of Grenada which occurred while I was in Nicaragua. Despite this, I found people to be very welcoming to me as a visitor from the States. I felt no restrictions on my movements. Those I met seemed eager for me to see their country, and what was happening to it. They openly told me of their complaints, as well as what they were proud of in their country.

Many in Nicaragua, especially poor people, see that the last four years have been a revolution, a turning point, in much more personal terms. The Sandinista government, though external aggression and a shortage of resources and trained people mean that there are still many hardships, great changes have been happening. Through the literacy campaign, over a million people have learned basic reading and writing skills, and continuing education is free and available to all; medical care is guaranteed; food—though sometimes scarce—is divided among all as equally possible. Many people have been given land to work, for the first time in their lives. Through unions, neighborhood and town organizations, and other forums, a number of people now find they have systems through which to express their grievances and participate in decisions which affect their daily lives.

Most of the people I met identified very strongly with the Sandinista government. They acknowledged deep problems in the Church, but said the problems were more complex than is often represented. Many who are supportive of the constructive programs the Sandinistas have implemented, especially for poor people, have problems with the statements and actions of particular members of the hierarchy, not with the institution and teaching of the Church itself. Some question the hierarchical structures. Some in the Church criticize some actions and policies of the Sandinistas, and support others. Some are totally critical of the Sandinistas, citing, for example, Mennonites, influence and censorship. I encountered much sadness that members of the hierarchy, priests, religious, and lay people couldn't work together better. There was a ciling of mistakes all around. The situation is serious, but not unique to Nicaragua. There are efforts being made to improve relations, and it was very heartening to see so many Christians actively involved in trying to shape a society which would serve the common good. Many Church people feel that this is their responsibility, and that there are many opportunities for them to participate.

Many Questions

The Sandinista government, as does the government in any country, deserves criticism. Just as I oppose militarization, manipulation of news, and the infringement of the rights of minorities in the United States, so do I oppose such steps in Nicaragua. Such is the root of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and An Appeal

A friend working in the refugee camps in Honduras has written to ask that people write to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Honduras, requesting that UNHCR protect the refugees and not remove them forcibly from the border area of Colomancagua, but to let them remain where they are. The refugees, if unable to remain in the camps along the border area, have also asked UNHCR to relocate them in another country in Central America, one that does respect their rights of refugees, and has signed the Geneva Convention and Protocol which guarantees human rights for refugees. Please ask UNHCR to take these Alternatives. Write: Director UNHCR/ACNUR, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Please also send a copy of your letter to: Peter Maurin, President, The Catholic Worker, 254 East First St., New York, N.Y. 10010. We have also asked UNHCR to recognize the refugee status of the Salvadoran refugees in the United States. See the Statement of the United States Catholic Conference and the National Catholic bishops of Central America.

FRIDAY NIGHT MEETINGS

In keeping with Peter Maurin's recognition of the need for ongoing clarification of thought, we invite you to join us for our weekly Friday night meetings. We are alternating between Maryhouse-55 East Third St., (212) 777-9017, and St. Joseph House-36 East First St., 254-1640. As much as we can see ahead, those we will hold are: