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Journey to Central America

By PEGGY SCHERER

There has been so much said and written about the unceasing violence in Central America in recent years, that at times 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 better that 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 involved, who so often 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 Chamorro, 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 then, the fear of being relocated further into the interior of Honduras, had



Fritz Eichenberg

If we celebrate forgiveness, can we fight one another endlessly? Can we remain enemies while we invoke the same living God? If Christ's law of love is our law, shall we remain silent and inert while the wounded world looks to us to join the front ranks of those who are building peace?

Pope John Paul II
1984 World Day of Peace Message

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 relo-

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, Nekhlyudov, 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 unwittingly driven to a life of crime) from the malevolent grasp of the courts and prisons, he comes to the conclusion: society and order exist, 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 amaz-

ing 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 steer 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 not in the sense of wisdom or

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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 remarked 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 monthly welfare, 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 occasional abuse from passers-by. Many men save change to buy a bottle of Windex and a dishrag, and then stand in busy intersections, washing the wind-

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cated 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 soldiers, facilitating 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.

That the refugees do not want to be moved matters little, it seems, to those

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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 could only be grace 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 one whirlwind of 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 Pam were "making a list and checking it twice..." and gathering up presents, that "special something for that special someone" as the advertisers say. In no time at all, the back room was carpeted with bright wrapping paper, boxes, ribbons and buttons and bows. Then, I remember waking up one night to the glorious aroma of baking bread making its way up to the fourth floor. Christmas baking had begun.

Soon the tree arrived. Blanche's excitement was infectious. Bertha, with her lovely voice, sang carols, as Helgi, Annie, Sue, Pam, Paulette, George, Gabrielle, Kassie and I converted the dining-room into a little winter wonderland.

And into that wonderland, on Christmas Day, came none other than Santa and his two elves. Yes, Virginia, there was a Santa and with a red beard to boot! Tim scrounged up many pillows and a lot of talcum powder to turn out a near authentic look. Kassie, in her striped outfit, that Anna had found for her, and her jingling bells, made the perfect elf. Marj gave her credit, saying that none of the "girls" at St. Joseph House would have the nerve to dress up like that. Is that a compliment?

Some things become tradition here, and we would be hard pressed to part with them. Jeannette's pies would put any bakery to shame. What a labor of love to

make seventeen of them! And Geoff's turkeys have carved out a reputation all their own. He, Margaret and others put together a meal even Julia Child could learn from if she weren't too jealous. Even though the temperatures were at a record-breaking low, we were glad that our friends Dan Green and Helen Nebelson were able to make it to the house to share the repast with all of us.

Perhaps the height of the celebration was the Christmas Eve Mass. Fr. Martin Clark, an old-timer at the CW from the days when Peter Maurin was still alive, led us in Mass, 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 Trudy's daughter Rachel 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 follow His 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 after Mass. Annette also left for Minneapolis just before Christmas, and we miss her spontaneous ways. It is nice to know that she and Patty and Sharon can get together for coffee klatches and reminisce. Jane Brittain left just after Christmas for her live-in job in Queens. She was brimming over with excitement the day she came back to tell us how it was going. Peggy left for Nicaragua shortly after New Year's Day; we pray for her, for all those in the Witness for Peace and for the people of Nicaragua.

People leave and others come bringing

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 Promise and Our Response." The first draft, though, had a title which named the problem the bishops sought to address. It was called "God's Hope in a Time of Fear." Indeed, hope is perhaps the most difficult of the theological virtues now to preach. I was awakened to this difficulty as I watched "The Day After."

My initial reaction to the film, the statement by Secretary of State George Shultz, and the panel discussion afterward, was despair. I watched the cups rattle on the kitchen shelf in Kansas as a woman looked from her window to see the missiles, which for years had been planted in her back yard, rise out of the ground. It was over. All the weapons that were "built so that they would never have to be used," were now gone, on their way to their targets, prompting a like response from the Soviet Union. The number and kind of these weapons was not new to me, nor were the effects of a nuclear blast. These facts had been known to me for several years. What was new was the idea that it actually could happen. There was something about seeing a film of them taking off that awoke me from my psychic numbing to see what has always been quite plain; these weapons are simply waiting to be released. Today, or any day soon, people in Kansas may look up to

find the cups begin to rattle as the missiles rise from the ground.

This may come by accident as we and the Soviet Union soon adopt "launch on warning," which will leave up to a computer 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 predicted will be in 1988. During a tense political conflict, feeling there is a chance the Soviet Union will fire upon us, we will decide we must arrange a preemptive "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 will survive the Soviet retaliation with "minimal" casualties in what is left of our country. By this is meant perhaps 10 million people, to say nothing of the destruction to the land and our resources.

Too Strong a Momentum

I despaired. I saw the Secretary of State declare that, in order to prevent this from happening, we needed only to follow the military buildup laid out by the President. Follow orders, he counseled. The panel discussion among experts from various fields wasn't much better. No matter how well thought out their arguments, I felt that we were all just biding time until the cups began to rattle and the din of discussion was silenced. The momentum behind the arms race and the movement toward total war sometimes just seems too strong to break. The advance of technology is now so fast, our economy and politics are so dominated by the military, it seems impossible that we could stop this great war machine from actually doing what it is preparing, which is death.

From this conclusion it might well be argued that the powers of death are now in control of history. Evidence to support this may be found in various other forms of violence exhibited in our life and politics. The single issue, though, of the development and expansion 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 world, are subject to the powers of death. They seem to reign over both our lives and our history.

This is the arena 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 which we see approaching is one of the "signs" of the end of time, when God will bring this age to a close with fire and great bloodshed. Sometimes this is joined with the 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 to be impossible to resist this end that God and these nuclear weapons have prepared for us. The only possible response is resignation to the plan of God.

Even though Christians within the peace movement may be distressed at such resignation, they need to recognize how much they have in common with this view. It is in fact the same two principles: that both this view and much of the thinking of the Christian peace movement are trying to reconcile. One is the recognition that nuclear war is close at hand; the other is the declaration that God is in control.

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their own special gifts. Gabrielle has been here a month and lends a lively spirit to the house. We also welcome George who is actually a native New Yorker. (I never thought such people existed!) Nancy, in all fondness, has taken to calling him "Spike."

Tony and Bob came from Canada for a few weeks with very helping hands, and Nancy, also from Canada, joined us for five days. She and her community in Toronto welcomed Pam Noone and me during our visit there in October, and so we were glad to be able to return the hospitality.

There have been some small trips here and there. Sue and Paul went to Homewood, Illinois. This was no ordinary visit, for it was the first time Paul was to meet his future in-laws. Pam Q. spent time with her parents down south and Pam N. did the same in Philadelphia. Pauline had a good retreat in Ossining, NY and Mary Griffin took a not so pleasant trip to Bellevue Hospital after falling and breaking her pelvis. We hope she's home soon.

Nothing?

These have been the latest carryings on at Maryhouse. As the heightened excitement of the holidays dies down, as we enter the post-Christmas slump, we push on into 1984 and the usually grey months of February and March.

Sometimes, I get a phone call from my family and they ask, "What's new at Maryhouse?" Unless there's been a crisis or it's the holiday season, I find myself saying, "Oh, nothing." It is easy to forget the newness of each day, the festivity in the mundane: Anna's wisps of hair gathered in a barely visible bun, and her cheerful "Hello, babe"; Paulette's sitting by the radio singing with great gusto; Nancy's latest jokes; and yes, even mopping a floor.

So, I'll put another log on the fire and continue to remember our holidays, to remember, that is, to make the past part of the present, so that each day is a celebration in itself.

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 say they can make twenty to 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 often much of it goes to buy drugs or wine.

There are a number of places in the neighborhood that serve open meals: churches, missions, independently run soup kitchens such as ours at St. Joseph House, and the city-run shelters. These vary widely in size and practice. For example, several missions require people to participate in a religious service before being fed. A group from New York University began a Sunday afternoon meal program in the social hall at the Church of the Nativity around the corner from us on Second Avenue. They serve meatloaf or hotdogs and grilled cheese to some five hundred people. At St. Joseph House we serve a soupmeal Friday through Sunday mornings for anywhere from one hundred and fifty to four hundred people. With a number of places serving at different times on different days of the week, it can be confusing keeping track of who is serving where, and when. Only the city shelters serve three times a day, seven days a week. The City Men's Shelter on Third Street feeds several thousand men a day, in terribly oppressive conditions. Security guards patrol the dining area with nightsticks in hand, while fights continually break out on the waiting line. Severe injuries, even deaths, are not uncommon (a year ago at Thanksgiving, for example, a man was bludgeoned to death with a two-by-four while waiting for a meal), and it is no wonder that many men avoid eating at the Men's Shelter when at all possible.

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 money allotted to families in welfare payments, food stamps, and supplemental food checks is rarely enough to cover a family's monthly food needs adequately. Once out of food, families do not have the mobility to seek out meal programs that the individual person has. (It would now cost a family of four \$7.20 to make a single round trip excursion on New York City 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 hunger in our 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 soupmeal. Daily they come by, seeking a sandwich 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 buttered 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 an unusual question: "Do the people living on the street have much faith?" I had to stop and reflect for a moment, for I was accustomed to answering questions such as: how many homeless are there in New York?; where do they come from?; how do they eat?; where do they sleep? Perhaps I was also used to thinking only in those terms. My answer to her question was, "In many cases, yes." People on the street often 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 soupline last Palm Sunday, when fully half of the folks who came through the line were bearing palm leaves with them. They had all been to Church before coming by for soup.

A Sense of Community

I am continually surprised at how open people who come to our door are about spiritual matters. Sometimes answering the door takes on the air of hearing confession; people needing to talk about past misdeeds, about having moved away from 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 all it takes is an attempt to be an open community in an alienating neighborhood. One evening about a month ago, we were celebrating Mass at St. Joseph House, and a man I had never seen before came in to use the bathroom. He stayed for the rest of the Mass, and afterwards he came over and started talking with me. He said he hadn't been to Mass in years. He told me he had been raised a Catholic, and had been drafted, and served two years in Vietnam. While in the army he had had several bit-



Rita Corbin

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 corporal 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 soupline 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 at the Pax Christi USA Center on Conscience and War, he was jogging back to the Haley House, Boston's Catholic Worker soup kitchen where he lived and served 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 spiritual commitment to social justice and peace is almost beyond acceptance. Yet, accept it 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 peace movement had led me to see in John a leader that movement will need in the future. Painful though the bereavement has been, this tragic loss has reminded me once again of the difference one young and dedicated person can make. The tribute we pay his memory extends as well to those young people engaged in efforts similar to his. Perhaps, too, his story may awaken other young people to the potential that is theirs and inspire them to take up the tasks John's death left unfinished.

When I met John, barely three years before his death, he had already established himself as a major figure in the active Boston/Cambridge peace community. He had first arrived at Harvard as an 18-year-old freshman, having made something of a name

for himself in his home town of Vernon, Connecticut, as a teenager with political promise and ambition, but it was at Harvard that he shifted from a political to a religiously motivated involvement in a wide variety of social service projects. It began with his enrolling as a volunteer in a prison tutoring program and soon expanded into active opposition to war and conscription, oppression in Latin America, and economic and social injustice everywhere and in all its forms.

It reached the point that he decided to leave college and devote his life to more "significant" contributions to the needs of others. In any case, he returned after a year and went on to graduate with honors, as well as being named by his fellow graduates to receive Harvard's prestigious Ames Award for social service. At the time of his death his well-filled appointment calendar showed weeks in which he participated in as many as twenty or more meetings — this in addition to the countless hours devoted to the performance of spiritual and corporal works of mercy on a person-to-person basis.

From Many Walks of Life

John's striking achievements were accomplished in the incredibly short span of six years altogether. In that time, he reached and touched the lives of the hundreds who filed past the simple wood coffin made by his friends and attended his funeral service. It would be difficult to imagine a more diverse gathering than the steady stream of mourners at his

wake. Distinguished academics stood in line with street people; many races and religious faiths were represented and shared a common grief. Many had known him intimately as co-worker or fellow student; others had met him but once; still others had never met him but came to view and honor someone they had learned to respect from the second-hand reports from friends who had been more fortunate in this respect.

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 lost much of their force as young people become indifferent toward or turn away from the patterns and practices of their childhood formation. 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

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On Being My Brother's Keeper

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of learned understanding, or of rich experience, but knowledge as data. By attention to minute detail and by careful classification, controlling elements of our society gain the kind of knowledge that constitutes power. An essential element in reliable knowledge is constant surveillance—hence the original French title, *Surveiller et Punir*. Prison, with its various tentacles (parole, criminal records, informers and so on), is one focal point of control.

The success of the modern prison lies in its ability to transmute the offender into a delinquent. "The delinquent is to be distinguished from the offender by the fact that it is not so much his act as his life that is relevant in characterizing him. The penitentiary operation, if it is to be a genuine re-education, must become the sum total existence of the delinquent, making of the prison a sort of artificial and coercive theater in which his life will be examined from top to bottom." To Foucault the modern prison is an "observation point" whereby control (discipline) is exercised in our society. Other points include schools, hospitals, factories, and asylums, which he sees as fading imperceptibly into each other. The durability of the prison as an institution of our society has less to do with its role in the

criminal justice system than it does with its role as an instrument of social and political control.

It is not difficult to demonstrate to a person of good will that our prison systems are counterproductive, and that we would be exposed to fewer dangerous criminals without it. The inevitable question, then, is "What are the alternatives?" Part of the answer to this question involves taking a broader look at what is actually going on right now.

Informal Mechanisms

Most criminal activity is never reported to the authorities; there are figures suggesting that less than 2% of crimes receive the attention of law enforcement offices. Furthermore, of the crimes reported to the police, only a handful lead to charges and even a smaller number of those charged are actually convicted. We are left with the rather startling realization that our usual response to crime is either to ignore it or to depend on informal mechanisms, outside the structured judicial system, to deal with the criminal act and the criminal person. A dishonest butcher loses customers, a teacher who assaults students is quietly pushed out of the profession. Hospitals and clinics exist for those who voluntarily seek medical care to diagnose and treat their ailments. Such an option, for assisting persons with

illegal behavior problems, in fact, already exists for the wealthier segments of our society and it would seem that one alternative to putting a tiny fraction of our criminals into crowded, destructive prisons would be to look at the principles that presently govern the vast majority of cases, for those with the money and influence, to avoid prison.

Even if we were to succeed in depopulating our prisons in these ways,



Mary Mullins

we would still have to face the problem of how to respond to recalcitrant criminals and the most dangerous offenses which are irrational actions, few as they might be. One obvious solution is to isolate such people from society in walled cities or penal colonies, places very similar to ordinary towns with the exception that no convicted person could leave until the end of the sentence. Other people could be allowed to enter freely, to visit, to do business, or even to take up residence. We can hardly expect this idea to be accepted as a realistic response, however, because it is not likely to satisfy the public demand for retribution, for vengeance. This dilemma occurs over and over again in the history of the modern prison.

The discussion of the abolition of prisons, in the end, founders on the rock of human vengefulness, and so we are driven to an acknowledgement of deep, irrational drives. Irrational behavior and the lust for retribution, though demonstrably futile on any rational level, ultimately govern our political and social concepts of justice.

Biblical Forgiveness

At this point, anyone recognizing the biblical accounts of reality would do well to recall the opening pages of Scripture. Here we find the story of human estrangement from God, from Creation and the story of the first murder. The murderer, Cain, is also the founder of civilization. He is Everyman. Our search for alternatives to prisons is the same search we find described throughout the Bible. We begin with the first city built by a killer and end with a new city coming down from heaven. In between the establishment of these two cities, the long search for an adequate response to the dark human passions reveals only one answer: forgiveness. David, anointed as king, spares Saul and weeps over Absalom. Following the direction of Amos and

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

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 willingness to suffer injury, a willingness based on love and genuine forgiveness. In practical terms, this means a refusal to put offenders, especially 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 sanctioned, 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 and killing. Although the motive is usually fear rather than forgiveness, there are a variety of dangerous people exempted from the vengeance of society. We do tolerate them within our structures, and pay the price. In short, anyone who deliberately chooses to respond to a dangerous offender with forgiveness rather than vengeance cannot fairly be accused of promoting anarchy or lawlessness, at least not beyond the level which society now finds tolerable. Who knows what transformation would be brought about, if we were really serious about replacing a justice system based on fear with the alternative of costly forgiveness?

(Ernie Dyck, a Mennonite, works at La Maison De l'Amitié, in Montreal, Canada.)

One Example

On July 18, 1957, a young farmer was murdered in Ohio by an ex-convict. The reaction of the community, mostly Amish Mennonite, to the brutal deed of this intruder was not one of hostility but of forgiveness. Twenty-eight 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 conviction was final, 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 this act," some of them concluded. "We believe that God allowed this, especially to call us back to Him in the work of winning souls to His kingdom." Soon after the commutation, two ministers visited the murderer in the Ohio penitentiary, bearing a letter from which the above words were quoted. There they learned that he had become a Christian a few months earlier, and was deeply appreciative of letters he had received from Amish people, some of them as far away as Iowa, among them, the widow of his victim.

from Howard Yoder,

The Christian and Capital Punishment

Seeking Community

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 here ever since. At first 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 shampoo and a towel. Another woman tries on a coat from the clothing room, and a bearded young man bounds upstairs with a tray of food. Above the first floor auditorium, the house spreads cavernously. On the second floor, a TV soap opera comes to a climax, and Paulette declaims about the cooks. In one of the two hallways of the third floor, Nancy sits in her doorway focusing a magnifying glass on a newspaper.

The house is so big it's been hard to get to know people. Not so long ago, a polite woman in a straw hat and red coat surprised me at the front door — it turns out she lives upstairs but doesn't mingle much. Other women are more visible. Annie often appears on the bench near the front door, in her black coat and scarf, smoking a cigarette late at night. Lena sews skirts in a splendid grotto of clothes on the first floor landing. I'm grateful to the women who spend so much time on that stairwell — they provide a sort of instant community for every newcomer. Lena will talk to virtually anybody without waiting for them to start. The stairwell feels something like a living room, complete with familial shouting matches.

Unfortunately, community in the rest of the house has been as elusive as the cats in the auditorium. I say hello to people, and spend time in their near vicinity. Sometimes I glimpse community stirring

under the covers like a person just grunting and waking up on Monday. But so far it's been a struggle to feel the intangible touch of communion.

I wasn't at Maryhouse more than three days before I started feeling lonely. I felt the lack of someone who was interested in me. One night when I felt particularly bad, I went down to the dining room and 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



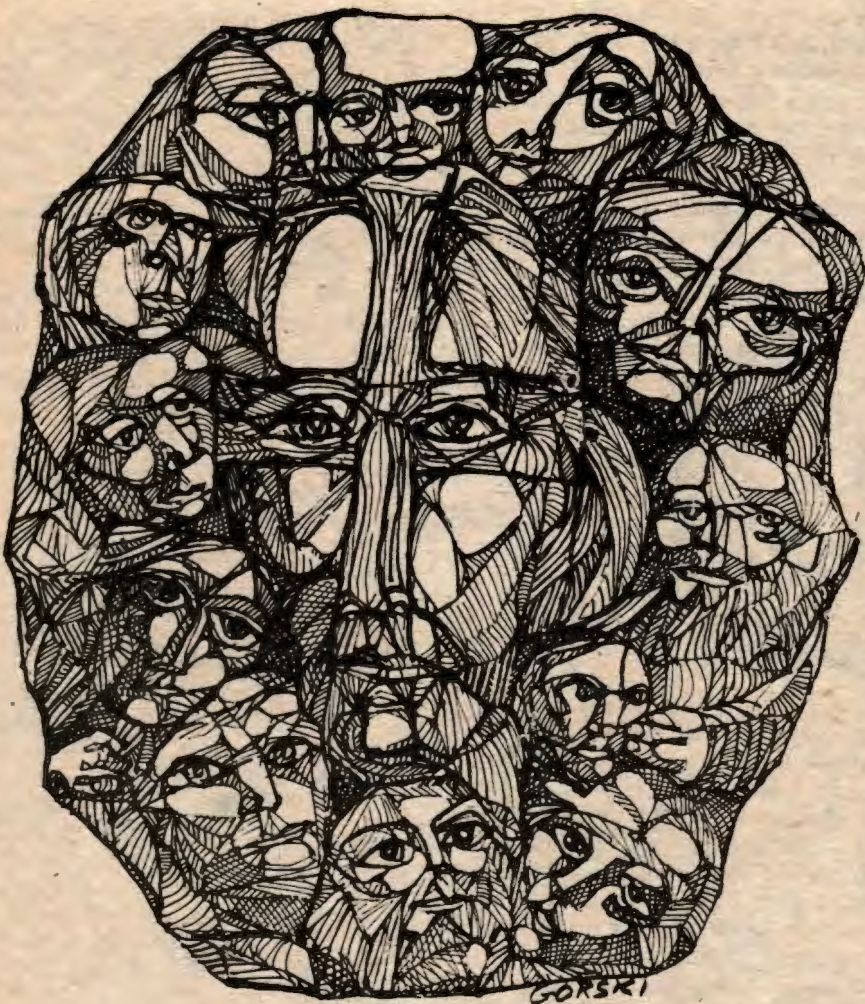
Maryhouse

Linda Buncer

full of excitement because it was so deeply hers. I didn't tell her much about me, but I felt as if I had — I felt communion. She was Christ for me that night. She kept me company, because she let me care about her.

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. I scramble eggs for breakfast, I mop the floor at night, I change the bandages on Anna's legs, because I want to do something for people, I want to make friends.

(Continued on page 7)



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 uncritical 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 'seamless garment' 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 'seamless garment'."

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 the nuclear relationship between the superpowers is not a stable one. . . . How we use the moral questions, that is, how we relate them to the strategic and political elements, is the key to our contribution to the "new moment."

Shift in Presumption

There has been a perceptible shift of emphasis in the teaching and pastoral practice of the Church in the last thirty years. 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

Book Review

THE BODY OF FAITH: JUDAISM AS CORPOREAL ELECTION. By Michael Wyschogrod. Seabury Press, 265 pp., 1983, \$24.95. Reviewed by Katharine Temple.

Reams are being written on the topic of "spirituality" and it seems to be the "in" word. In the midst of many a discussion, in a bit of a snit, I have been heard to opine that I don't know what the word means and that it has a vaguely pagan ring to it. Of course, the Holy Spirit is at the heart of Christian faith; yet, when talk moves to "the spiritual life," I seem to enter swirling mists more like Rousseau's religion of the heart or Heidegger's Being (whatever that is) than the Bible or even Greek philosophy (which usually takes the rap for separating body and soul). Despite all the pages being produced now, there really aren't too many places to turn for help in sorting out the very bases from which our spirituality springs.

That's why it is exciting when a provocative and thoughtful book does come along, one like Michael Wyschogrod's *The Body of Faith*. Michael, who is a friend of the *Catholic Worker*, approaches his work as an Orthodox Jew, influenced also by Martin Buber and the Protestant theologian Karl Barth, along with his own studies in modern philosophy—a rare and arresting combination.

His sub-title *Judaism as Corporeal Election*, shows that he is not here writing directly about Christianity (although it never seems far from his mind) and so he teaches us theology indirectly. The book invites us to re-think our positions with the same clarity. His insistence on the carnal election of the Jews as the body of faith forces the reader to come to terms with our notions of the Church as the body of Christ, witnessing, through a new birth, to the Incarnation—and then calling it a spiritual matter.

Not only does he push us on the theological front, but he also teaches us philosophy. A good philosopher is hard to find, especially someone who can help us with the business of "faith seeking understanding." The book is interspersed with a critique of philosophers such as Spinoza, Kant and Heidegger and, in this regard, it

(defense, recovery of property, and punishment) to the single reason of defending the innocent and protecting those values for decent human existence. Second, in the case of capital punishment, there has been a shift at the level of pastoral practice. While not denying the classical position, found in the writing of Thomas Aquinas, that the state has the right to employ capital punishment, the action of the Catholic bishops and Popes Paul VI and John Paul II has been directed against the exercise of that right by the state. The argument has been that more humane methods of defending the society exist and should be used.

Developing a Life Ethic

Asking questions 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 genetics, abortion, capital punishment, modern warfare, and the care of the terminally ill. . . . It is not my task, nor within my competence as a bishop, to spell out all the details of such an ethic. It is to that task that philosophers and poets, theologians and technicians, scientists and strategists, political leaders and plain citizens are called. I would, however, highlight a basic issue: the need for an attitude or atmosphere in society which is

can well be read along with Emil Fackenheim's *Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* and *To Mend the World* or Karl Barth's *Theology in the Nineteenth Century*. For me at least, technical philosophy does not come easily and these three men have helped to pose questions on 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 histrionic.

By holding firm to his own roots—with philosophic, apologetic, traditional, prophetic themes—he manages to break new ground for all of us who are a bit shaky on all these scores. I am somehow reminded of two other, quite different, writers—Elie Wiesel, the well-known story-teller, and André Neher, whose less known *The Exile of the Word* is an almost poetic examination of silence in the Bible and at Auschwitz. From their different experiences and formations, they bring together their traditions and present reality in ways that cut across boundaries and go beyond labels.

Karl 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 was continually threatened by a cancer in its very bones." He was also one of those who has pointed out that Judaism is the great bulwark against paganism, a danger Christians run into at every turn. I count it as a blessing that there is someone like Michael Wyschogrod, steeped in Hebrew Scriptures and familiar with Christianity, who can walk with us, even where we might not totally agree, and warn about the pitfalls 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.

* * *

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 pre-condition for sustaining a consistent ethic of life. The development of such an atmosphere has been the primary concern of the "Respect Life" program of the American bishops. We intend our opposition to abortion and our opposition to nuclear war to be seen as specific applications of this broader attitude. We have also opposed the death penalty because we do not think its use cultivates an attitude of respect for life in society.

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, political and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest 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 undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways: we cannot urge a compassionate society and vigorous public policy to protect the rights of the unborn and then argue that compassion and significant public programs on behalf of the needy undermine the moral fiber of the society or are beyond the proper scope of governmental responsibility.

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 5:1-2) It may well be that we, in our folly, 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 built, programmed and to which we handed over the ability to destroy our planet.

This is a case in which a human invention, the Bomb, has taken on characteristics of divinity. It is curious to note how divine attributes have been attached to the Bomb ever since its invention. From the first "Trinity" test to the recent references in The New York Times to Pen-

tagon war scenarios as "theology," we are given additional evidence to support the contention that the powers of death, incarnate in these weapons of enormous destruction and the plans to use them, are today sovereign over the earth. Military



March 6/4

Rita Corbin

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

sovereign over human history that presents the challenge of Christian hope. What, then, can be said?

If death is sovereign, then nothing can be said. If we can no longer honestly see God as sovereign over the earth, then our prayers, our liturgies, and life as a Church are quite hopeless. If God can truly be found to have abandoned the world and

The question cannot be answered only by an appeal to an "afterlife." This would be to admit that when God brings history to an end, He will judge the world and reign as Lord, but that in this life, here and now, death rules. If there is any hope left for a generation which sees itself being plunged toward complete death with no escape, and in which death is thought to reign as Lord over our history, then it has to be hope here and now, a hope found amidst the world in which we live. If there is any Good News left for this age bent on death it must concern the age we are living in, not some future time.

* * *

I find that I am on the road to Emmaus. There is great confusion and despair. The women have returned from the tomb with reports that it is empty, and that an angel says Jesus is risen from the dead. These are dismissed as "idle tales." A man comes up from behind to ask what troubles us. The facts are well known, but we repeat them: Jesus, a Man mighty in deed and word before God and man, whom we had hoped would redeem Israel, seems to have been in all ways defeated. Condemned to death by the chief priests and rulers, He was crucified and now has been dead for three days. This is a Man Who spoke and acted with the authority of God. If He was the Messiah, how could it be that He was swallowed up by death? Could it be that death has claimed victory over Him Who was Life itself? Is our God still sovereign Lord over all the earth, or has He been silenced by death?

As the One Who has followed us breaks bread with us our eyes are opened, but then He vanishes. Returning to the apostles we are greeted with the words, "He has risen indeed!" It is difficult to believe. He then appears, showing His hands and feet. Again He explains how God's promises have now been fulfilled. Death is not triumphant, death itself has been defeated in His rising. To all the world which trembles at the thought that the powers of death reign over creation, it is proclaimed, "He has risen indeed!" The Lord our God reigns over all, even death. Through Him all are made dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Death no longer has dominion over those alive to God. The powers of death are mighty, but in God there is resurrection from death, both when our bodies perish and here and now.

After promising to send the Spirit as our guide, Jesus ascends to heaven. There we are left, amidst the powers of death, with an invitation, in which we find our hope: follow and learn from Me the resurrected life freed from death's grasp.

... The majority of them asked the same questions, "How can you see Christ in people?" And we can only say, it is an act of faith, constantly repeated. It is an act of love, resulting from an act of faith. It is an act of hope, that we can awaken these same acts in their hearts too, with the help of God, and the works of mercy.

Dorothy Day
On Pilgrimage, April, 1964

News and Notes

HEALTH WORKERS SOUGHT

The National Farm Workers Health Group, affiliated with Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union, is seeking family practice doctors and nurse practitioners to increase the staffs 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. It will 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 book exhibits.

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

USSR 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 will seek to open dialogues with Soviet Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Armenian Christians, Russian Orthodox, and Muslims. The hope is to explore how

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 will also attempt to develop contacts in the U.S.S.R. for a group of Soviet people of faith to visit American church people here next year.

The trip will take place during the first three weeks in July, and include visits to five different Soviet cities: Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Vilnius (Lithuania), and Yerevan (Armenia). The cost of the tour will be approximately \$2000. For those interested in becoming part of this group, please write Michael Quinn, c/o The Catholic Worker, 36 East 1st St., New York, NY 10003.

SCOTT BOYCOTT

Friends in Nova Scotia have recently asked that we boycott all Scott products. The Scott Paper Company is a producer of the phenoxy herbicide 2,4,5-T, now used in Nova Scotia forests, which contains dioxin. Dioxin has been linked to cancer, suppression of the immune system, miscarriages and birth defects. Its effects have already been tragically documented in the lives of returning U.S. Vietnam veterans and in the mass evacuation and "selling out" of Times Beach, Missouri. The scientific community has issued statements that there is no "safe" or "acceptable" level of dioxin, and many countries have banned or restricted its use. Scott manufactures the following: Cashmere

Bathroom Tissue, Cottonell Bathroom Tissue, Duvet Bathroom Tissue, Viva Paper Towels, Scot Towels, Scot Family Napkins, Confidets Beltless Maxi Pads, Confidets Sanitary Napkins, Scott Cut



Jane Hildebrand

Rite Wax Paper, Baby Scot Newborn and Regular Diapers, and Scotties Tissues.

For more information, contact The Scott Paper Boycott Committee, R.R. 4, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, B0K 1V0.

GE BOYCOTT

The Boycott of General Electric products continues. GE is involved in mining and milling uranium fuel, fuel rod and reactor core fabrication and the handling of waste for nuclear power plants. GE is also a major defense contractor, and manufactures the Mark 12A nuclear warhead and engines for the B-1 bomber. In addition, GE is one of the top ten U.S. arms exporters in sales, selling their weapons to some of the most repressive governments in the world. GE's motto is, "We bring good things to life."

A broad range of appliances sold under the GE or Hot Point label are being boycotted. For more information, contact GE Boycott Committee, CARE, 3960 Winding Way, Cincinnati, OH 45229, (513) 861-4353.

WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

All gifts to the Catholic Worker go to a common fund which is used to meet the daily expenses of our work.

Gifts to our work are not tax-deductible. As a community, we have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation or reward. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the organizational structure required, and to maintain the paper-work necessary for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

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Something of the Light of the World

(Continued from page 3)

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 Catholic boy of 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 the world."

If few knew or could match the full extent of his involvement in activities devoted to the twin causes of social justice and peace, fewer still were aware of the depth of his commitment to the spiritual life. One sensed that everything he did had a religious, if not devotional, 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 hundreds of times a day. I had a hint of this, perhaps, some weeks before when I joked about his jogging. All scheduled exercise, I maintained, was boring, monotonous, and a waste of time. His response had been a chuckle and the admission that he, too, found it boring and monotonous — but to keep it from being a waste of time he kept saying the Jesus Prayer as he ran along. It is a great comfort to know that he probably died with this prayer on his lips, though not comfort enough to make up for the loss of his presence among us.

Life Issues

There was never the slightest suggestion of disappointment or disparagement if someone did not share, or even rejected, the moral values that meant so much to him. For their part, many who worked with him in opposing conscription, nuclear arms, etc. found it difficult to reconcile this "liberal" activity with his equally energetic participation in what they regarded as the "reactionary" anti-abortion movement. To John, however, all the "life issues" — war, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia — centered upon the sacredness of life and could not be separated. As a result, he found himself under arrest on several occasions — twice for handing out leaflets at the Draper Laboratory nuclear weapons research facility, and other times for sitting-in at abortion clinics.

The Draper activity was part of a weekly vigil conducted by Ailanthus, a self-styled "nonviolent witness for peace" in which John had been one of the earliest and more dedicated participants. Some of the leaflets distributed by the group were written by him and stressed the themes of reconciliation and invitation to the Draper employees to begin a dialogue as friends. In the last couple of years of his life, Ailanthus, the Haley House, and our Pax Christi Center (of which he was one of the founders) dominated his time and activity, but they could not exhaust either. John could always be counted on for any personal favor one might need; more often than not, his help would be volunteered before it was sought. The night before his death he had slept on the floor because he felt someone else had greater need of his bed.

Words are inadequate to express the overpowering sense of goodness one felt in his company. One young woman writes from India that the whole universe must move to make room for the fact that he is gone. Her pain of bereavement is made

sharper by the lack of someone near who knew him and could share her grief. Who, she asks, would ever believe a description of him?

That is a good question. It is easy enough to describe his boyish good looks, his bouncy good humor, his quick intelligence; but the spiritual qualities which set him apart defy expression. Daniel



Haley House

Beth Ingham

Berrigan writes, "How painful it is to try to say 'alleluia' for such a life, given so freely and joyfully to the world's victims in Christ's name."

John Leary was unique and, as we now know to our sorrow, irreplaceable. But he was not alone. For instance, there is another 24-year old man serving as a Jesuit lay volunteer in Nicaragua. Over and above his assigned tasks of teaching children and adults to read he has taken it upon himself to organize the villagers among whom he lives into a house-building cooperative. At Columbia University a group of students have formed a Pax Christi community to live and pray together while operating a soup kitchen and providing weekly religious

instruction to children from the surrounding neighborhood. This last summer they organized a "witness walk" from the Pentagon to the final assembly plant for nuclear weapons in Amarillo, Texas. Catholic Worker houses depend as they always have upon a continuing influx of young people to serve the needs of the increasing numbers of the unemployed and unemployable. The Peace Corps... various lay missionary societies... the list goes on and on. John may not be here to carry on his work, but there is hope in knowing that the same spirit which guided and motivated him still finds expression in the lives and activities of others.

Effective Action

John's story should have a special meaning for young people who are still in high school and, like John at 18, wondering what they will be doing with their lives. All around them they see evidence of the failure of their parents' generation to deal with poverty, with racial prejudice, with the threat of nuclear annihilation. Like John at 18 they are disillusioned by religions which preach social justice, charity, and peace but seldom, if ever, match their words with effective action. Because of this many have rejected and turned against their churches or are on the way to doing so.

This is where John "was at" when he arrived at Harvard as a freshman. In the six short years that followed until that awful moment when he stumbled to his death, he provided a model for others to follow now that he is gone. Once he realized that "the Church" was failing because ordinary Christians did not live up to its teachings and promise, he took it upon himself to do what he could as an individual to remedy some of the world's ills and injustices.

He had no grandiose dreams of remaking the world, however. When he graduated from Harvard his goals were modest; "finding people to live with, pray with, and work with, 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 to the young leader we have lost were 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.

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Rita Corbin

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 how many times does the sacrament of communion — in church or in the Maryhouse kitchen — really become a moment when you and I know that we are one? How many times, instead, is the work just a habit, something you hardly notice, a substitute for communion? It's good to keep busy, but the hole of loneliness, the feeling of being lost doesn't go away. The work even becomes a stumbling block, a line of battle. Sometimes Maryhouse seems only like a job rather than a way of life. Then I don't feel so much like a worker as management. Some of the people who receive my one-sided ministry begin to feel left out and ignored, because I'm not really listening to them, I'm listening to me. Me is a terrible community.

What can we do to make our work transcend itself? How do we coax community out of its hole? Sometimes it takes a crisis

to do it. In November, our housemate Sandra was hit by a car on Second Avenue. Some people spent the night and the morning in the hospital; others spent the night praying in the chapel. I woke up to relieve Sue, Pam woke up to relieve me, in the darkness before the candle while the streets began to get light. We couldn't end Sandra's coma, we couldn't keep her from dying. But in her dying she showed us the hidden community that wants to be born, not only in crisis but at all times.

Sign of Communion

What can I do to assist at this birth? The least I can do is stop blocking it so obstinately. I can stop avoiding the painful estrangement that makes me unwilling to trust you with the story of my life. Community can seem as fearful and unpleasant as the crises that evoke it. I may feel its presence only in a backhanded way. How do I commune with someone who is yelling at me? Do I yell back, do I conquer evil with good, do I walk away until we're calm enough to negotiate? It almost doesn't matter, as long as I don't give up on her. The yelling is the sign of our communion. The one thing that would kill us is if I simply avoid her, if we simply never touch each other, neither in anger nor in love.

I am learning, or trying to learn, not to avoid, learning to offer myself. When I come down to dinner every night the choice is there — whether to sit with a friend, or try someone who's alone, or try some whom I'm mad at. The choice makes dinner an adventure. I may never get to know everyone. Some speak a kind of cryptic poetry that I can't understand. Others start getting too personal, too close to the mark, so I pick up my macaroni and go sit with someone more pleasant. Obviously I am not very good yet at offering myself. But Maryhouse is a good teacher.

The other night I heard "Star Trek" music coming from the TV room, and I was delighted to go in and watch, not only because I'm an old "Star Trek" fan but because I'd found someone else who is too. Better yet was the night around eleven when Nancy got a craving for fried rice, and took me out to First Avenue to get some. Community wants to happen here, but sometimes it's hidden in forms as strange as the Catholic Worker colds that run through the house like feet down the stairs. I remember half-welcoming the first scratchiness in my throat two days after I got here, because it gave me a bond with all the other coughers in the house. I suppose I could put on a breathmask and rubber gloves to ward off the germs and the loneliness of my friends, but I can't do a thing to ward off my own. We need each other to get well.

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 will probably be moved by February.) And who does control their fate? While the Honduran government is cooperating with the relocation, they do not seem eager to have refugees they consider subversives further in the interior of their country. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) which administers the camps, 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 stance, as they want to stay 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-sanitation 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 spoke with people about why they had left El Salvador. A number of men and women, ranging in age from sixteen to sixty, related to us tragedies individual to them, yet so like what has been suffered by hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of them unsuccessfully seeking refugee status in our own country. They told us of the torture, the deaths, often the dismemberment—alive or dead—of friends, neighbors, loved ones, young and old. Children were neither spared the witnessing, nor the suffering, of such atrocities. It was hard to believe that human beings could do such things to each other. I found it quite painful to hear these poor men and women tell us that the crimes they had witnessed were committed by Salvadoran soldiers (those we met said nothing to us of the opposition forces), knowing that my government funds, equips, and trains officers of that army. The refugees spoke of how planes attacked not only their villages, but the fields where they tried to eke out a living. Again and again, they explained their flight from El Salvador simply, but pro-

foundly: "We could not live."

I was deeply moved by the fact that these refugees had survived with a sense of hope, and trust in other human beings. I found great hope myself in seeing that they were so gentle and welcoming, and that they directed their energies toward work for others. All of this was a testimony to their strength and courage, and to their faith in God. They have led me to think more deeply about the Gospel, of the love we are called to give, and that which we are given. Stripped of all, the refugees seemed, in their faith, to be



Rita Corbin

wealthy in ways that matter. Despite their realization that true security can only be found in God, I couldn't stop thinking of how senseless the violence waged against them is. Nor could I ignore their constant question, "People in 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 is 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 than name. Under the Sandinista-led government, though external aggression and a shortage of resources and trained people mean that there are still many hardships, great changes have been made. 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

much as 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 needs, and participate in decisions which affect their daily lives.

Most of the people I met identified very strongly with Christianity. Everyone 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, Marxist 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 citing 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 any government, 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 things as the acknowledgement by Sandinista officials that they have done wrong in relocating the Miskito Indians are heartening, as are their steps to redress those wrongs. Yet, that situation is a reminder that good efforts for the majority cannot justify or excuse oppression of minorities.

My whole trip reinforced for me the horror of violence—that no matter who is killing or being killed, regardless of their reasons for taking up arms, peace cannot

be built through means which increase hatred, polarization and distrust. My journey has raised many, many questions, and an awareness of personal and societal limitations. It leads me to study, to pray and reflect, on the situation in Central America, on the roots of violence, on how to respond to it. I find myself thinking about the words Dorothy Day wrote in *The Catholic Worker* in 1965, during the Vietnam War:

Unless we use the weapons of the Spirit, denying ourselves and taking up our cross and following Jesus, dying with Him and rising with Him, men will go on fighting, often from the highest motives, believing that they are fighting defensive wars for justice of others, and self-defense against present or future aggressions.

Seeing the strength, the generosity, and the deep faith of the Salvadoran refugees and the Nicaraguan poor, has given me hope and courage. I pray that we all can beg for an increase in love such as Jesus had, through which He taught us how to take suffering upon ourselves, rather than inflict it on others. May we think more deeply about how efforts to educate ourselves and others, to oppose militarization everywhere, nonviolently, may make the difference between life and death for others.

...

(As we go to press, Peggy has returned to Nicaragua to take part in the Witness for Peace, a project begun to provide a prayerful, nonviolent presence of U.S. citizens along the Honduran border, where Nicaraguans are being attacked frequently by U.S.-backed counter-revolutionaries based in Honduras. (For more on the Witness for Peace, see the article in the December, 1983 CW.) Peggy will be part of the long-term team, spending six months on the border, taking part in the daily work of the Nicaraguan residents of the border area, and attempting to open up dialogues with combatants on both sides of the border. Our prayers are with her, and with all who actively seek peace. Eds. note.)

An Appeal

A friend working in the refugee camps in Honduras has written to ask that people write to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees representative in Honduras, requesting that UNHCR protect the refugees and not relocate 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 the rights of refugees, and has signed the Geneva Convention and Protocol which guarantee human rights for refugees. Please ask UNHCR to consider this alternative. Write: Director UNHCR/ACNUR, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Please also send a copy of the letter to the UNHCR office in Geneva: Director L.A. Bureau, UNHCR, Palaise des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Our friend also asks that people write their Congressional Representative and Senators, expressing concern over the relocation of the Salvadoran refugees away from the border area, and the planned joint US-Honduran military maneuvers in the area, Big Pine III.

...

Force is as pitiless to those who possess it as to those it victimizes: the second it crushes, the first it intoxicates.

Simone Weil

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) 777-9617, and St. Joseph House—36 East First St., 254-1640. As much as we can see ahead, those we will hold at First St. will be marked with an asterisk (*). Both houses are between First and Second Avenues (2nd Ave. stop on the F train). Meetings begin at 8:00 p.m., and tea is served afterwards.

February 3—Bret Silverstein: Recognizing and Resisting Propaganda.*

February 10—Fr. Paul Morrissey: Gay Ministry and the Catholic Church.

February 17—Jean Dember: The Black Madonna.

February 24—Terry Egan: Home Schooling—Why and How.*

March 2—Robert Lauder: Ingmar Bergman: Still Asking the God-Question.*

March 9—Whose Memory Is It? A Round Table Discussion on Computer Technology.

March 16—Sandy Boyer: New Repression in Northern Ireland.*

March 23—Rosalie Bertell: Early War Crimes of World War III.

March 30—Lisa Gaylord: Africa—Assisting a Troubled Continent.

April 6—Eva Fleischner: The Life and Thought of Abraham Heschel.*

April 13—Evening of Lenten Prayer with the Brothers of Taizé.

April 20—Good Friday—No Meeting.

April 27—Alec Burton: Disease—A Way to Health in Mind and Body.*

May 4—Michael Peterkin, O.P.: Preaching Social Justice to the Middle Class.

May 11—A Round Table Discussion on Peter Maurin—Tom Sullivan & others.