

November/December 1986

## The Methodist Bishops and "Peacemaking": Poor Theology Serving Naive Politics

With their bishops leading the way, some United Methodists have turned to "peacemaking" with a vengeance this year. This peace activism is being felt from the choir room and nursery to, presumably, the halls of government. Even the Soviet *Pravda*, while it delayed reporting the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident to Soviet citizens, gave prompt attention to the UM bishops' pastoral letter "In Defense of Creation: A Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace." The peace activists have known no bounds. One regional UM conference adopted a resolution on "Warnography" in which church nurseries were declared "war-toy-free zones."

Ironically, it may have been the effort to delete from the new Methodist hymnal old favorites such as the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers" which ignited the greatest protest in Methodist churches. The flood of letters and phone calls from outraged United Methodists threatened to shut down the UM Publishing House for several days last spring until a wise hymnal committee reversed its decision and the popular hymns were saved.

### The Bishops Enter the Fray

The United Methodist bishops, alas, declined to abandon their peacemaking project. Meeting last April in Morristown, New Jersey, the bishops adopted "In Defense of Creation." Their work includes a generalized four-page pastoral letter (intended to be read before each congregation) and an 87-page foundation document, which more clearly reveals the dismaying positions of the bishops.

The quest for peace -- and especially for deliverance from the threat of nuclear weapons -- is, of course, a very serious matter. Unfortunately, "In Defense of Creation" is so imbalanced and carelessly conceived that it cannot play a constructive role in contemporary ethical and policy debates. (According to the United Methodist Reporter, Senator Richard Lugar, an active Methodist and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, pointedly observed that "if the bishops really want an open discussion, they will invite people who know more about foreign policy than the bishops to write alternative letters.")

### A Fundamental Flaw: Ignoring Soviet Realities

The bishops' analysis focuses on weapons as the source of the nuclear crisis, and not surprisingly concludes that the solution is simply to do away with the weapons. They do not understand that weapons in the possession of, say, the French, are not a threat to U.S. citizens. The reason, of course, is that the U.S. and France share basic democratic and human rights values. It is nuclear weapons in the hands of an imperialist and totalitarian nation which threaten.

The major omission of the UM bishops' letter -- one largely neglected in much of the media analysis -- is a recognition of these root causes of the conflict between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Nowhere is the nature of the Soviet system realistically discussed. The bishops make only a token acknowledgment of Soviet "authoritarianism," repression and brutality. In nearly 100 pages, there is no mention of Leninism or, for that matter, of democratic values. The bishops, who advocate a "just" peace, simply do not understand that the plight of Soviet Christians and Jews and the denial of elemental personal and civil liberties in the Soviet Union are central elements in

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Armando Valladares, left, with translator, addresses an IRD reception in his honor on September 23 in Washington, DC. Story on page two.

photo by Rebecca Hammet

# A Bishop Dissents

It was widely, but erroneously, reported in the media that the UM bishops' pastoral letter was adopted unanimously. No formal count of the vote was taken, but at least one bishop, Louis Schowengerdt of New Mexico, has publicly announced his abstention. In a statement to United Methodists in his area, Bishop Schowengerdt cited several concerns with the document, including the letter's sweeping opposition to nuclear deterrence and the more frequent condemnation of the U.S. than the U.S.S.R. "We must find a way," said Bishop Schowengerdt, "to avoid an exchange of nuclear weapons without leaving the free societies of the world vulnerable to destruction."

Regarding his efforts to amend the documents, Bishop Schowengerdt wrote, "In the end, all efforts to make the document more acceptable to those sincere Christians who want peace, but are not pacifists, were defeated. The few of us who had wanted more alterations in the text, especially those supporting international deterrence, felt it necessary to abstain from accepting the document in its present form." United Methodists in his area are preparing an expanded study guide to supplement the official study materials.

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the U.S.-U.S.S.R. conflict. Indeed, our bishops uncharitably suggest that those who raise these embarrassing human rights questions are manipulating anti-Soviet fears for sinister "political and ideological purposes" in order to hinder arms control.

Over and over, the bishops exhibit the now-familiar habit of seeing the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as morally equivalent.<sup>1</sup> In one remarkable passage illustrating how "each government has given the other abundant cause for grievance," the bishops cite examples on the U.S. side which include our brief and long-past unwillingness to recognize the Soviet government, our refusal of a 1945 Soviet request for a \$6 billion loan, and our refusal to acknowledge U-2 overflights in 1960. These are compared with examples from the Soviet side which include Soviet aggression against Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. The bishops are unwilling to make moral distinctions in these examples, distinctions we

<sup>1</sup> Richard John Neuhaus has suggested that this charge of moral equivalence is, as he puts it, "unfair" to the UM bishops. His interpretation of the bishops' position is that "on balance, the Soviet Union (certainly the Soviet people) has the moral edge."

might have expected from those who have set out to raise "moral dimensions."

Why do the bishops refuse to deal with the bitter truth about the Soviet system? They, like all of us, are faced with a terrible dilemma. On one hand, we have the awesome power of nuclear weapons; on the other hand, we have an implacable enemy. The bishops try to solve the problem of nuclear weapons by denying the nature and the threat of totalitarianism. Then they can frame the choice before us simply as one between "growing trust or mutual destruction." But in the real world, to choose an illustration from the very week in which the bishops released their pastoral letter, how does one trust a government that does not have the human decency promptly to warn its citizens and its neighbors that a radioactive cloud is headed their way?

The fundamental flaw in the bishops' letter is a failure to face reality. The bishops act as if difficult choices in a fallen world cease to exist if we simply refuse to acknowledge their presence. It is at this point that traditional pacifists exhibit a great deal more hard-headed realism than the bishops. Genuine pacifists refuse to duck the consequences of the policies they promote. They acknowledge that renouncing use of force may lead to the loss of liberty and the coming of tyranny. But the UM bishops tell us we can have it all -- we can abandon deterrence, achieve peace and maintain freedom. The concern for many U.S. Christians, however, is that the kind of "peace" which the bishops would produce may well bring much more death and suffering than that likely to be produced by maintaining deterrence.

## "The Ethic of Reciprocity"

Much the UM bishops had to say -- supporting a comprehensive Test Ban, nuclear freeze, and no-first-use agreement (but explicitly opposing a conventional force buildup, which is usually viewed within the NATO alliance as a precondition for a no-first-use pledge) -- is old hat in the peace movement. But the bishops believe that they have made a new contribution to the debate: introducing an "ethic of reciprocity" to replace nuclear deterrence. According to the bishops "Deterrence must no longer receive the churches' blessing, even as a temporary warrant for the maintenance of nuclear weapons. The interim possession of such weapons for a strictly limited time requires a different justification -- an **ethic of reciprocity** as nuclear-weapon states act together in agreed stages to reduce and ultimately to eliminate their nuclear arms. Such an ethic is shaped by an acceptance of mutual vulnerability, a vision of common security, and the escalation of mutual trust rather than mutual terror."

This bold "new" contribution to the Church's historic teaching on war and peace has not gotten a

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# The Triumph of Hope Over Despair: Armando Valladares in Castro's Prisons

In 1977 eight Protestant leaders, including former National Council of Churches President James Armstrong, wrote in a report after a trip to Cuba:

A political revolution that is in the process of creating a society without beggars, starvation or illiteracy is a revolution that deserves our respect and support.... In the process of change in Cuba it is freely acknowledged by the Cubans that there have been arrests, trials and sentences, not for verbal dissent but for specific acts directed against the government.... It should be more freely acknowledged by us that there have not been the type of charges of the torture of political prisoners or the "disappearance" of political dissidents that have been commonplace in relation to many other Latin American countries.

When these words were written, Armando Valladares already had spent 17 years in Castro's prisons simply for speaking out against communism. In his prison memoirs, *Against All Hope*, Valladares relates his excruciating 22-year journey through part of the Cuban gulag, which consists of more than 200 penal institutions. Arrested at the age of 23, Valladares was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment, not for any political involvement or for "specific acts directed against the government," but rather for the intellectual sin of disagreeing with communism.

Valladares describes in painstaking detail the horrors and cynical brutality of Castro's prison system. Those, like Valladares, who refused to submit to "political rehabilitation" or to wear the uniform of the common criminals, were frequently beaten, shot, and thrown into isolation cells where they were kept in total darkness. Guards constantly awoke them with long prods so that sleep was impossible. Feces and urine were dumped on them daily. Not allowed to wash, Valladares became encrusted with fungus, and his cell filled with rats and roaches. Along with other prisoners, Valladares was subjected to biological experiments on malnutrition conducted by Czech, Soviet, and Cuban doctors -- experiments which left him paralyzed for many months.

As Valladares graphically describes one horrifying degradation after another, the reader's senses tend to become dulled; it is almost too much to comprehend. And yet, at the same time, one's spirit is uplifted by the courage, ingenuity and the indomitable faith and love of Valladares and his fellow prisoners. This gentle man survived all the torture, all the humiliation, all of Castro's best attempts to destroy him physically and spiritually, because of his deep Christian faith and the love of his wife.

In step with the insane fury of the soldiers, a deep consciousness was growing inside of us, an inflexible determination to resist, not to give in. We grew harder and harder, convinced that we were a symbol of resistance for the entire country. They couldn't make

us give up or give in. It was not a dark, fanatical resistance, but light and premeditated, the product of our very beings, of faith and love of God and of freedom.... These values are inexhaustible sustenance for the man who holds them.

Through the efforts of his wife, Valladares' case was eventually taken up by several human rights groups. He was released in late 1982 after the personal intervention of President Mitterand of France.

Armando Valladares was not the first to tell the brutal truth about the nature of Castro's Cuba. Twelve years ago indisputable evidence of prison atrocities was presented to the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Nothing was done, and the documentation simply disappeared without being circulated.

Despite the massive evidence of organized brutality within Cuba, Castro continues to deny its existence: "From our point of view, we have no human-rights problem--there have been no 'disappeareds' here, there have been no tortures here, there have been no murders here. In twenty-five years of revolution, in spite of the difficulties and dangers we have passed through, torture has never been committed, a crime has never been committed" (July, 1983).

Why were the stories smuggled out of the Cuban gulag dismissed so easily, especially by church people? Why are some church people still more inclined to believe Castro than Valladares? Perhaps it is difficult to admit that one's romantic notion of the promise of an ideal society on earth not only has not been fulfilled, but has been betrayed.

(Valladares, Cont'd on p. 4)



Newark Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick, left, welcomes Cuban political prisoner Antolin Diaz Espinoza, right, who spent 26 years in Cuban jails and was one of 69 political prisoners released this fall. Mr. Diaz Espinosa's sister stands in the center.

Religious News Service photo

(Valladares, Cont'd from page 3)

On September 23, 1986, the Institute on Religion and Democracy honored Mr. Valladares at a reception attended by about 150 religious and human rights activists in Washington, D.C. Honorary co-sponsors of the event included Catholic Archbishop James A. Hickey, Episcopal Bishop John T. Walker, Rabbi Joshua Haberman, Dr. Robert P. Dugan, Jr., of the National Association of Evangelicals, Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Representative Dante Fascell (D-FL).

In introducing Valladares, IRD Executive Director Kent Hill said: "Against all hope and sustained by the grace of God, Armando Valladares regained his freedom. And, more importantly, he found that peace which comes only from God.... He will not let us relish his own survival at the expense of not feeling the pain of those who are languishing in punishment cells at this very moment, separated from loved ones and physically abused."

In his remarks Valladares said the Religious Liberty Award presented to him by the IRD in 1983 served as a stimulus to writing his memoirs. "My book is not only a product of my experiences, but was

also motivated by your support and faith. I could not let you down, and I don't believe that I have."

Valladares went on to say that today "there is a selective silence about people who are suffering. Because of my sensitivity to these matters and my deeply held Christian principles, my struggle aims to denounce crime and barbarism no matter where they occur.... Crime and torture is exactly the same whether it is committed in Central America, the Soviet Union or in South Africa. All men with similar sensitivities must be willing to condemn these crimes."

In answer to a question about Protestant and Catholic church people being manipulated by Cuba, and now Nicaragua, Mr. Valladares said: "All of the guards were very happy to keep us informed about the glowing statements by U.S. Catholics and Protestants who had visited Cuba as guests of Castro. One of the great sources of suffering which we felt in prison was to realize that this was going on. We had hoped to receive solidarity from our Christian brothers in the U.S., and it was inconceivable to us that instead these people were actually our hangmen."

— Maria H. Thomas

## Betrayal of the Church: A Challenge to Reform

The Betrayal of the Church: Apostasy and Renewal in the Mainline Denominations (Crossway Books, 1986), the collective work of the Rev. Edmund W. Robb, Jr., and his daughter, Julia Robb, describes and critiques the left-of-center orientation of the mainline church elites.

Although the work will most certainly dismay those who are criticized by it, no one in the church should dare to ignore the impressive documentation of the political orientation of a church bureaucracy out of step with the bulk of the laity. In the wake of the steady decline of mainline church membership, a continued refusal by church leaders to engage in serious discussion with their critics could be fatal. Those who tire of being importuned by internal critics should remember that at least this group has not jumped ship; they still sufficiently believe in the future of the denominations in question not to abandon them to political currents they consider unwise. But critics such as the Robbs do insist that theology and spiritual renewal, not partisan politics, must once again become the central focus of the church.

The book is arranged topically. Individual chapters discuss the religious Left's views on disarmament, free enterprise, totalitarianism, religious persecution in the USSR, liberation theology, Nicaragua, and African terrorism. The book further discusses possible motivations for those who advance the Leftist agenda.

In the final analysis, of course, whether one is Left, Right, or Middle, what really matters is whether one's positions actually advance objectives to which all Christians should be committed: peace, freedom, justice, and, ultimately, the will of God. A

central thesis of the book is that the agenda of the Left, regardless of what the intentions of its proponents might be, undermines these goals.

The Betrayal of the Church should certainly stimulate debate. Carl F.H. Henry, noted evangelical theologian and author, contends that "it ought to be read in every congregation for its timely factual data and penetrating insights." Pastor Richard John Neuhaus is hopeful that "far from fueling partisan recriminations, their thoughtful analysis should invite a fresh deliberation on the proper role of the churches in the search for public justice."

If an open, honest and civil debate results from the publication of this book, the authors' hope for renewal may be advanced.

— Kent R. Hill

Copies of The Betrayal of the Church may be obtained from the IRD for \$8.95.



Carl F. H. Henry, left, congratulates authors Edmund W. Robb, Jr., and Julia Robb.

photo: Rebecca Hammet

great deal of attention -- perhaps because it is less than clear what the bishops really mean.

At first one might suppose that by "ethic of reciprocity" the bishops mean a "bluff" (or some call it "clergy") deterrence. (This view assumes that to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons is immoral, but we can continue to possess nuclear weapons while we negotiate reductions. This "bluff" has a latent deterrent effect because the Soviets would never really be sure that we wouldn't use them.) This is apparently not what the bishops mean, however, because they discuss, and disavow, such an "ambiguous" and "inconsistent" position.

So then one might assume that the bishops are simply advocating a negotiated, mutual, and verifiable<sup>2</sup> arms reduction. (And if this is what they meant, most Americans would undoubtedly agree.) But the bishops' "ethic of reciprocity" means support for a reduction of nuclear weapons -- while at the same time adamantly declaring that one could never, under any circumstances, use such weapons. Wouldn't it be more honest if unilateral nuclear disarmament were frankly endorsed?<sup>3</sup>

### A Trendy and Questionable Theology

There are other points at which the bishops do more harm than good in their letter and foundation document. Although they are unwilling to deal objectively with the threat of Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism, they are willing to fan the flames of a trendy nuclear hysteria. Such hysteria is provoked by their unquestioning acceptance of the most extreme -- and scientifically disputed -- "nuclear winter" scenarios promulgated by the guru of the "peace movement," television astronomer Carl Sagan. Indeed, Catholic writer George Weigel has caustically observed, "Absent the Wesleyan confessions and the occasional biblical reference, the Methodist bishops' pastoral could have been written by Carl Sagan or Helen Caldicott. Maybe that's considered a blind ecumenical triumph, since Sagan and Caldicott are secular survivalists."

The pre-eminent United Methodist social ethi-

<sup>2</sup>The one battle which more moderate bishops successfully fought, in amending the pastoral letter, was that treaties should be "verifiable." This was a positive contribution, but one incompatible with the tenor and assumptions of the letter as a whole.

<sup>3</sup>In fact, some might argue that unilateral disarmament would be safer than such a "psychological" disarmament because with the latter you have the worst of both worlds -- the expense and risk of maintaining a nuclear arsenal without the benefits of deterrence.



Religious News Service photo

While UM congregations read their bishops' pastoral letter, Pope John Paul II, right, organized a different kind of peace initiative -- a World Day of Prayer for Peace, Oct. 27 in Assisi, Italy. From left, Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and His Eminence Methodios hold olive trees symbolizing peace at the final service.

cist, Paul Ramsey, points out that the UM bishops propose "a new theology for a just peace." But Ramsey rightly warns that "in theology the truth is not new, nor is the new apt to be true."

Writing in the UM publication for clergy, Circuit Rider (September 1986), Ramsey finds the bishops' pastoral flawed theologically in three ways:

1. A misunderstanding of Creation and Creator. Ramsey explains: "We who believe in God, however, should not suggest by thought, word or deed that the end of planet earth would be the end of the world, the end of God's purpose for his creatures, the end of his creation...." The point here is not to challenge those who believe it is a high calling to be faithful stewards of God's creation, but rather to insist that the fate of this earth is only one part of a divine drama where the finite exists within the context of the infinite.

2. A faulty doctrine of Last Things or eschatology. "The 'already' and the 'not yet' of Christ, our peace, have been leveled into a possible continuity on planet earth," Ramsey charges. He concludes, "It is dismaying beyond measure that our bishops chose this ecology to replace theology...as a strategy to awaken United Methodist people from their 'nuclear numbness' and arouse them to speak and act for nuclear disarmament. We Methodists should not be among those for whom 'fear is a constant if unacknowledged presence because everyone has glimpsed the specter of the end of all things.' Indeed, we have glimpsed the end of all things and seen there no 'specter' but the face of Jesus Christ."

3. Inadequate moral reasoning. Ramsey points out that "no degree of competence bestows 'competent moral authority' on a Council of Bishops, acting as such, to say anything without clear Christian warrants." Rather than counseling the bishops to avoid speaking about war and peace, he posits the notion that "when the Light of the World no longer

# BRIEFS

■ A self-described "grizzled ecumaniac," the Rev. Albert Outler, had some disappointing observations at a recent St. Louis convention for the leadership of American Catholic priests. Dr. Outler, one of United Methodism's most respected scholars, told the priests that "official ecumenism seems to be dead in the water." The death of ecumenism seems to have been caused by what Dr. Outler described as "preoccupations with the bewildering range of social, economic, political causes confronting us all."

■ "Long live the South African Communist Party (SACP)! Long live the anti-fascist alliance between the ANC and the SACP!" So ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo closed his speech to the South African Communist Party marking their 65th anniversary in late July. The Secretary-General of the ANC, himself a member of the South African Communist Party, reminded his comrades that "both the ANC and the SACP are emerging as defiant standard-bearers marching at the head of a militant formation. The banners of our two organizations constantly

flutter defiantly at the head of the revolutionary columns proclaiming the imminent demise of the hated and dying apartheid system."

It may be remembered that just prior to this oration, Nzo addressed the Churches' Emergency Committee on Southern Africa (CECSA) in Washington, DC. Secretary-General Nzo was the only South African to address the CECSA "briefing session" on Capitol Hill in June. CECSA is a coalition of major U.S. denominations supported in part by the National Council of Churches.

In fact, church support for the ANC continues unabated. This fall, the World Council of Churches, through its Program to Combat Racism, made an \$80,000 grant to the ANC (and another \$110,000 to the South West Africa People's Organization). Earlier this year, the Directors of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) voted to send \$1,000 to the Program to Combat Racism. Although Disciples of Christ congregations had voiced their objections (48% opposed the funding, 15% in favor) the board decided it had to ignore the

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distinguishes between two or more choices we have as a nation" then churches, and bishops, ought fully to present all sides.

The UM bishops imply that peace, shalom, may be constructed primarily by human effort rather than be received as the gift of God through Jesus Christ. On the political level, the secular press accurately has judged the bishops' document to be radical. One could argue that Ramsey's theology is even more radical -- radically Christian.

While theologians will debate the bishops' use of scripture and ethical reasoning, any reader will readily discern the arrogance that has tempted the bishops. They say they do not speak for the church, but then they assure us that "nuclear deterrence is a position which cannot receive the church's blessing." And though the bishops say that they are seeking full and fair discussion and honest consideration of different and critical opinions, they consistently demean those who disagree with them by their frequent references to the "idolatry" of deterrence and by attributing to other Christians "idolatrous loyalties to special interests and ideologies."

In their pastoral letter, the United Methodist bishops have often succumbed to rhetoric and polemics. The church deserves much more. The bishops' confidence in their competence to make detailed strategic prescriptions suggests a profound confusion about the Church's primary role in the foreign policy debate. The bishops have become just one political faction in an already polarized argument. This does grave damage to both the Church and the cause of peace.

— Diane L. Knippers

## Religious Liberty Alert

The plight of Alexander Ogorodnikov, an orthodox Christian imprisoned since 1978, has long been a matter of concern to those monitoring religious liberty in the Soviet Union. That concern has been heightened by a letter smuggled out of camp to his mother in which Ogorodnikov tells of despair so deep that it has even led him to attempt suicide.

Ogorodnikov, the founder of the "Christian Seminar" movement in the Soviet Union, was first arrested in 1978 and sentenced to one year in a prison camp on charges of "parasitism." Before the expiration of his sentence, he was rearrested, charged with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and sentenced to six years of strict-regime camp, to be followed by five years of internal exile. Before the expiration of that sentence, Ogorodnikov was arrested a third time and sentenced to three more years of strict regime camps for "malicious disobedience of orders of camp personnel." This tactic of "re-sentencing" a prisoner before his last term is complete is a Soviet innovation designed to break the spirit and influence of prisoners of conscience.

Since his first arrest Ogorodnikov has been allowed only one meeting with relatives, has been deprived of his right to receive any packages and has had virtually all his mail, outgoing and incoming, confiscated, along with his books and handwritten notes. Between January 1980 and March 1986 he has spent 659 days on hunger strikes to protest refusals to allow him a Bible and 411 days in solitary confinement. He has been forbidden to pray and his cross has been torn from his neck on numerous occasions. He writes: "It seems to me that the outside Christian world knows nothing about my protest



congregational recommendation and instead "be faithful to the call God has placed on us."

■ A national survey of Catholic priests and lay people has found a wide gap in opinions on whether bishops should take stands on political issues, with lay people registering a high rate of disapproval.

The huge gap between laity and clergy surfaced in response to the statement, "The Catholic bishops should take public stands on some political issues such as the arms race or the American economic system." While 80 percent of the priests agreed with this statement, only 39 percent of lay people expressed approval.

"We were surprised by the size of the gap, especially when considering the lack of any gap on the ~~issues of women's ordination or the ordination of married men,~~" said Dean R. Hoge, a Catholic University of America sociologist who conducted the survey. "If the pattern here is borne out in other tests, it can be concluded that the greatest threat to future unity in the American Catholic Church will come

from disagreements over the bishops' social and political stands, not over the issue of women's ordination and celibacy," the report added. "This does not seem to be widely recognized today."

■ On September 22, IRD officials wrote the Chilean President, General Augusto Pinochet, forcefully protesting the increasing violations of individual rights and threats to religious liberty by Chile's right-wing military government. The IRD letter called for "restoration of full civil liberties and democracy" and an end to the Chilean President's "policy of arbitrary arrests, expulsions, censorship and violence." The letter, signed by Edmund Robb and Kent Hill on behalf of the IRD board, followed the September 11 expulsion from Chile of three Roman Catholic priests-- Pierre DuBois, Daniel Caruette, and Jaime Lancelot. The priests were detained after General Pinochet accused certain religious groups of "confusing their pastoral mission with politics." Both

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fasts, which I have conducted not to secure release from prison! No! Their aim was to have a Bible at my disposal, a prayer book and a cross to enable me to draw forth from the source of Divine Revelation. All of Patriarch Pimen's declarations that there is freedom of religion in our country are negated by the fact that I am denied these things...."

In his letter, Ogorodnikov pleads with his mother to appeal to the Supreme Soviet to show him mercy by ordering his execution, in order to put an end to "slow torture by deprivation of living conditions fit for a human being, deprivation of books, culture, torture by hunger, cold, humiliation, total lack of rights...." In 1984 he tried to commit suicide three times, even though he admits it is a mortal sin.

If you have wondered at times what effect letters of protest to the Soviet government and letters of support to prisoners have, consider Ogorodnikov's perspective: "Those prisoners, whose relatives are active on their behalf and don't let the world forget about their plight, are the ones who are not only released when their sentences expire, but who get better treatment in the camps because the KGB is forced to take some notice of international public opinion.... Occasionally it seems to me that I should...accept the idea that my welfare does not interest anyone but God.... I feel so alone, so forgotten...."

"Will not the universal Christian Church say at least a word in support of one of her persecuted sons -- errant and sinful, but still her son?"

The IRD has just learned that Ogorodnikov is currently in transit between camps, and it may be months before the West knows his new address. You

can show your support for Ogorodnikov by prayers and by writing letters demanding his release to:

Prosecutor Shchukin  
g. Perm.  
uchr. IZ-57/1  
Soviet Union

Mikhail Gorbachev  
President of the Presidium  
The Kremlin  
Moscow  
Soviet Union

**LIBERTY UPDATE:** On the eve of the Reykjavik summit, Irina Ratushinskaya, the Orthodox Christian poet who was the subject of a recent IRD "religious liberty alert," was unexpectedly and unconditionally released from Kiev prison on October 9, by decree of the Supreme Soviet. Her primary concern now is to get medical treatment in Britain, but, to date, Soviet authorities have refused to grant her a visa.

Irina has repeatedly expressed her deepest gratitude and thanks to all those who have campaigned and prayed for her. In a statement released by Keston College, she says: "My mother was the first to give me life. But that life, and the possibility to go on working, was returned to me by a vast number of people from all over the world. Now, as never before, I feel my kinship with all mankind." Irina urges all who worked on her behalf to continue to pray and support all other prisoners of conscience.

— Maria H. Thomas

(Briefs, Cont'd from p. 7)

Pope John Paul II and Santiago's Juan Francisco Cardinal Fresno have protested the charges of "subversive activities." Cardinal Fresno, calling on General Pinochet to rescind the expulsions, said he can "give witness to this fact" — that the three priests in question are publicly committed to non-violent solutions to Chile's internal problems. The IRD letter expressed support for Cardinal Fresno's actions and called the expulsions "a direct attack on the freedom of the Church to carry out its reconciling mission within Chilean society."

■ The IRD has joined with other human rights groups to form an Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty to sponsor a 10-day tour of the United States by the newly appointed United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

In 1981, after 21 difficult years of debate, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights finally passed the resolution on "Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief." IRD board member Michael Novak, who served as the U.S. representative to the commission, called it the "single greatest achievement of the 37th Session" of the commission:

In March of this year, the commission took another significant step on behalf of religious liberty by passing a resolution creating the position of Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, to serve for one year. The resolution directs the rapporteur to investigate instances of religious repression around the world and to recommend remedial actions. It further specifies that he seek reliable information from governments, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including religious communities.

The chairman of the Human Rights Commission has appointed Mr. Angelo Vidal d' Almeida Ribeiro of Portugal as the rapporteur. Mr. Ribeiro, a leader of the Portuguese bar, has served as his country's dele-



Religious News Service photo

During his October trip to Lyons, France, Pope John Paul II greets the Revs. Pierre Dubois and Jacques Lancelot, right, two French priests expelled from Chile by the Pinochet regime.

gation chairman to the Human Rights Commission, and as chairman of the Portuguese League of Human Rights.

Because of our conviction that religious liberty is the cornerstone of human rights, the IRD fully supports the mission of the rapporteur, including the extension of his term beyond the present one-year authorization. The tour will help to familiarize Mr. Ribeiro with various religious and human rights groups in Chicago, New York City and Washington, DC, and also to present the groups with the opportunity to express their concerns to him.

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