



President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.
Rich Lipski/REUTER.

IRD Outlines Concerns for President Clinton on International Matters

In early January, IRD sent a memo summarizing its concerns to now-President Bill Clinton regarding his foreign policy team and the formulation of specific policies. Excerpts follow:

1. **Appointments.** It is vital that you appoint men and women to key positions who are committed to the pursuit of democracy and human rights, not only to pragmatic relationships among nations. These positions include the significant ones in the Human Rights Bureau at the State Department. But other positions should also reflect these concerns, especially the Assistant Secretaries responsible for Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Inter-American Affairs and International Organizations. As well, we would recommend that an office for Human Rights and → see *Clinton Memo*, page 6

Sending Troops to Save Lives?

Churches and Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina

By Fredrick P. Jones

Few can turn a blind eye to chaos in distant parts of the world when the news media flash daily pictures of suffering -- and even genocide. One result is that even the people most suspicious of using military force to intervene in other countries -- including church leaders -- have shown themselves more open to uses of force that have as their primary mission saving the lives of civilians. This is often called "humanitarian intervention." Issues concerning humanitarian intervention emerge in two ways: first, as church agencies engage in relief efforts, and second, as church leaders offer policy counsel to governments.

Such use of force for direct humanitarian purposes is relatively rare, and international standards for deploying it are not well-established. Many U.S. churches have supported, with qualifications, the use of force in Somalia. But in Bosnia-Herzegovina, location of what the just-released 1992 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report called the worst human rights abuses since the Nazi era, the use of force to deter further aggression and support relief efforts during the bleak winter months appears beyond consideration by many churches.

Sovereignty and the Politics of Aid

In the modern era of nation-states, the trump card has been for governments, when seeking to resist unwanted or dubious involvement in their affairs, to say that their sovereignty ought to be inviolable. The Iraqi government, for example, has asserted this right repeatedly even as the United Nations maintains sanctions against Iraq and with force protects that country's threatened Kurdish enclave.

The ascent of universal standards for human rights inevitably threatens absolute notions of sovereignty. Further, the Geneva Convention and its protocols specify clearly the rights of civilians in war, including their right to sustenance. For some rights, compliance is sought by governments, individually or collectively, through public shaming, economic sanctions, or arms embargoes. *But what if those* → see *Troops*, page 4

Religious Liberty Alert

Sudan Civil War Fuels Persecution amid Famine

By Lawrence E. Adams and Stan De Boe

While the attention of human rights organizations and humanitarian aid efforts are directed at the atrocities of war in Bosnia and famine relief in Somalia, an equally explosive and potentially more destructive situation rages in Sudan. Thousands have died as a result of civil war, famine, direct torture, and persecution. Many of those have died because they are Christians or Muslims who oppose the imposition of a fundamentalist Islamic regime.

Recent reports from Sudan indicate the desperate nature of the situation:

- 250,000 Sudanese (mostly non-Muslims) are being held hostage by government forces in the southern city of Juba, crammed into churches and a football stadium, with inadequate food, medicine, or sanitation. The surrounding area has been mined to prevent entry or exit, and mass starvation is imminent.
- A large number of southern Sudanese who had fled to the Muslim north have been forced out of the cities into the desert away from sources of food, water, and shelter. The government has prevented relief organizations from reaching these people.
- The National Defence Militia has destroyed some 140 villages in an area in the Nuba Mountains inhabited by Christians. Shootings, burnings and other tortures have been practiced. Some reports indicate that many men have been crucified in these towns, and thousands have been placed in concentration camps.
- Many foreign workers, missionaries, journalists and international officials have been expelled from Sudan by the Khartoum government in order to prevent independent reporting.
- Since 1989 the military, civil service, judicial and educational systems have been purged of non-Muslims. Students must pass exams in Islamic studies and Arabic for graduation, and Christian schools are now required to use Islamic texts and hire Muslim teachers or be closed down. All trade unions, opposition newspapers and political parties have been banned.

Why such horrific reports from this land? Sudan is one of Africa's many colonial-era compilations of diverse tribal, ethnic, and religious groups. When it became independent in 1954, conflicts between the north (primarily Muslim Arab) and the south (primarily black African Christian and

traditional religion) began immediately. The Muslim Arab of the north dominated the government from the beginning. Christians and other southerners reacted violently to efforts to impose Arabic as the official language and other integrative efforts, quickly leading to civil war between north and south.

Periods of civil war were interspersed with various periods of autonomy for the south until the early 1980s. Since then, also with a few brief periods of loosening, the Khartoum government has been steadily imposing greater control on the south. Of greater concern has been the institution of Shari'a law and its increasing enforcement, especially since 1991. While the Sudanese constitution recognizes religious freedom for all and even acknowledges the legitimacy of Christianity, it gives priority of place to the "Islamic Law and custom [as the] main sources of



Refugees who have fled into Kenya to escape the civil war in Sudan. REUTERS.

legislation." Reaction to the hegemony of the north has been led since 1983 by the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army under Col. John Garang — a group not without its own record of atrocities and human rights violations.

Reports of repression and official violence have increased markedly since the current government under President Omar el Bashir took power by military coup in 1989. Primary power and influence in the government is apparently exercised by Hassan Turabi, leader of the strict fundamentalist National Islamic Front (NIF). Most government officials are NIF members. Turabi has indicated that his vision is for Sudan to become the new center of the global Islamic movement; he has formed the Popular International Organization as a fundamentalist rival to the Saudi-led Organization of the Islamic Conference, currently the primary means of cooperation among Muslim nations.

Under Turabi, two national goals have intensified: "Arabization," under which Arabic language, customs, dress, laws, etc. are to become the singular culture in Sudan; and "Islamization," under which Sudan becomes a thoroughly

Islamic state and unified population. The results are similar in type to those seen throughout the Islamic world, only magnified in scope and number. Strict controls on Christian activity, surveillance, harassment, and executions abound. The recent deprivations and forced evacuations, as illustrated above, have amplified the effects of civil war and famine, and millions are affected.

Catholic Bishop Macram Max Gassis has characterized the current situation in Sudan as nothing less than the "genocide of the non-Arab, non-Muslim population and the moderate Muslims." Non-Muslim practice is repressed, and relief from starvation or imprisonment is made contingent on conversion to Islam. Indeed, the prospects seem grim, unless major changes occur.

Visitors with Christians in Sudan report remarkable resilience of the people in spite of the bleak conditions. According to one pastor: "We are strong in Christ, in faith, although we are hungry and thirsty, and dying of disease, and we will take our cross to show the world that we are Christians. But the people who are killing us do so in the name of Islam. We will show you we are serious in our faith." Many Christians in Sudan see themselves as suffering for the name of Christ and as the principal bulwark against the expansion of militant Islam into the rest of Africa. "They believe their fate may determine the destiny of the African continent," according to one report.

Yet Sudanese Christians also ask why the rest of the world pays so little attention to their desperate needs. The same pastor quoted above also asked, "Why doesn't the Christian community in the rest of the world raise [its] voice on our behalf?" He continued, "Why are we left alone? Why are we dying like this? Many, many people are dying in southern Sudan but the world pretends it doesn't know. We appeal for food and peace."

Food and peace are indeed the most immediate needs of the people of Sudan. And in the long term Sudan needs even more: a regime which safeguards the rights of all Sudanese to sustenance, civil order, and the practices of faith and conscience. Contacts with the Sudanese government should insist on relief to Juba, unhindered passage of emergency aid to all regions, cease-fire in the civil war, UN peacekeeping efforts, and ultimately full political rights and participation for all currently marginalized groups. Finally, Sudanese groups are urging prayer and material support for Christians in the south and in the Nuba Mountains.

Aid can be channelled through the New Sudan Council Churches, now based in Nairobi, Kenya (contact IRD for connections). Appeals to the Sudanese government can be addressed to: The Hon. Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla, Embassy of Sudan, 2210 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008. U.S. government attention to the situation should be urged through: The Hon. Warren Christopher, Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520.

Filipino Christian Leaders Avoid Execution in Saudi Arabia

On December 22, Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) staff received an urgent report that two Filipino Christian leaders charged with blasphemy were to be executed in Saudi Arabia on Christmas Day. Oswaldo Magdangal and Renato Posedio were guest workers in Saudi Arabia; thousands of Filipinos, Koreans, Pakistanis, and Westerners work in various industries in that country. A small fellowship of Filipino Christians that Magdangal and Posedio led had been broken up in January 1991, with many members arrested and imprisoned, though at the time the two leaders went into hiding. They were finally arrested in October by "matewah," or religious police.

IRD staff joined other human rights groups in distributing the information widely. Many news outlets reported the story, and U.S. government officials inquired with the Saudi government about the men. Concern in the Philippines went all the way to President Fidel Ramos, who appealed for their lives. Some European officials also responded. The IRD and many others presented the case to the Saudi embassy in Washington.

The Saudi government responded in very short time, reporting on December 23 that the pastors would be deported, and that no execution was ever planned. Amnesty International, among other human rights organizations and official agencies, maintained that the execution had been planned, and international attention saved the men. The disparity might be explained by differences in intention between the religious radicals and the Saudi government. Whatever the case, the men were deported and reached their homes in the Philippines on Christmas.

The incident points to the severe restrictions throughout Saudi Arabia experienced by non-Muslims. The Saudi government maintains that Magdangal and Posedio were violating the laws of the Saudi Kingdom by practicing their faith. Indeed, Christian worship is prohibited there, even by non-Muslims; punishment is serious for violations. In some similar cases in the past executions have occurred. The real issue is not the willingness of the Saudi government to show mercy on Christmas or at other times; it is the nature of that regime, its laws and understanding of the rights of those who are under its protection and governance.

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prove insufficient as innocent lives are being lost, and lost in large numbers? What if traditional "peacekeeping" forces can't move in because no permanent cease-fire can be negotiated? Is any country, or group of countries collectively (perhaps through the UN), responsible to intervene?

Answering this last question requires overcoming difficulties left over from the most recent colonial era and the Cold War. One difficulty was the resistance from leaders in the many awkwardly assembled Third World states to anything -- internal or external -- that threatened what they saw as the necessary nation-building process. In addition, it was practically impossible for the Cold War-deadlocked UN Security Council to consider international military intervention to help civilians.

Unfortunately, it is not unusual for governments and factions at war with governments to restrict basic means of sustenance to civilians as part of their strategies. In the case of Sudan (see p. 2), for example, both the Islamic government and the rebel groups in the South have restricted famine relief to areas controlled by the other. It took extensive negotiations in the late 1980s by the UN, working with many non-governmental organizations, to bring both sides to accept the right of the Sudanese people to humanitarian assistance and to allow the aid operation to stem the tide of hundreds of thousands of deaths. Even so, the first "Operation Lifeline" program in 1989 lasted only six months before all sides resumed their deprivation strategies.

"Operation Lifeline" was made more possible, according to Thomas G. Weiss and Larry Minear in *Ethics & International Affairs*, by thawed superpower tensions, a hopeful sign for the future with the Cold War fully over.



A U.S. Marine staff sergeant jokes with a young Somali orphan after his first food convoy delivery. Jim Hollander/REUTER.

Yet, they confess, "Lifeline at its best demonstrated the creative potential for concerted humanitarian intervention in a civil war, given the consent of warring parties. It is less helpful in suggesting how the international community should proceed in the absence of consent."

Weiss and Minear also identify factors in Sudan which

raise knotty questions for non-governmental (including church) aid organizations. They said that impartiality, neutrality, transparency (non-concealment of activities from either party), and public accountability were important in establishing the trustworthiness of aid organizations.

Yet sometimes churches are not neutral parties. The politicization of aid ran rampant in the Central American civil wars of the 1980s. Many oldline U.S. agencies channeled aid toward pro-guerrilla groups in El Salvador, while they gave preference to pro-government groups in Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua. This creates a quandary for church leaders: If they appear to take sides in conflict, they may undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of their relief units in administering aid.

What can churches say and do to help protect citizens used as pawns in conflict? If they advocate intervention, will that jeopardize their relief work? What about cases in which the failure to intervene means the relief work cannot be done adequately, leaving many to suffer and die?

For those who labored long to keep the United States out of others' affairs, the possibility now is not that antagonistic superpowers will intervene in far-away places vying for Cold War satellites, but that no country will want or be able to intervene at all where "national interests" are not directly at stake and the chance of casualties may run high.

Somalia: Send the Troops

The Somali tragedy appears to be a relatively easy place to begin fresh thinking by public officials and church leaders alike about using or the threat of using force. According to Gunnar Staalsett, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, "The UN-mandated operation contains many risks and dangers. Yet these must be weighed against the brutal fact that in the present situation over a thousand people die each day." Even professed pacifists have seen the complete breakdown of civil order (many pacifists have no qualms with civil order being secured by police using limited force) in Somalia and have approved of using troops to secure the care of sick and starving civilians. In such conditions, as the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., told *The New York Times*, "Moral isolation is simply not a defensible position for those opposed to war."

Most statements by church leaders which approve the use of military force in Somalia carry roughly the same qualification offered by the Rev. Paul Sherry and the Rev. William Nichols, respective Presidents of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): "For the plan to succeed it must recognize that solutions cannot be imposed from outside but must be conceived, embraced and implemented by Somalis." The Roman Catholic group Pax Christi USA specified that the military should only protect aid efforts and not disarm conflicting clans or subclans of Somalis. Nevertheless, disarmament has been considered by United Nations Secretary General Boutros

Boutros-Ghali as crucial to the mission's success.

The other condition advocated by some church leaders is that the force should be truly multinational and under the direction of the UN. The concern here is for accountability and some guarantee of disinterestedness on the part of those who have intervened. This would seem like a fairly simple matter in Somalia where there are virtually no strategic interests at stake. Nevertheless, it is easy to forget that the UN is not itself disinterested; the UN Security Council is made up of nation-states which, on the whole, tend to support the status quo. Parties in conflict -- some of which are trying to disrupt the status quo -- may not find the UN to be the unbiased facilitator of peace that many idealists in the church have tended to imagine it should be. Factions in both Somalia and Bosnia have voiced their displeasure with the UN, and Boutros-Ghali has been jeered in both places.

The United States, it seems, remains the key player in resolving several global conflicts, and the church world is giving it more room to operate. The Rev. Robert McClean, Assistant Secretary for the United Nations ministry of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, in a *Christian Social Action* article considered various purely self-interested reasons for U.S. intervention in Somalia, and crossed them off: a tendency to support one political group over another, the need for military basing, and oil interests.

McClean, who in the past could have been counted on to oppose much U.S. military intervention, wondered if the Somali intervention would receive the long-term support of Americans "who are in an economic crisis" and "have a growing fear of the future." But another question must be faced by McClean and others in the church leadership: whether their support for intervention would wane if the military has not only to defend food shipments (taking Somali lives along the way) but also maintain a longer-term policing presence? Both U.S. and UN officials have been negotiating with Somali leaders toward the goal of re-establishing some kind of civil order. Yet what if, because Somalia at present is unable to form a viable government, a long period of involvement by outside powers is necessary in order to tutor Somalia toward democratic stability? Would the churches accept this, or call it colonialism?

General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell spoke for the National Council of Churches in December in support of intervention, but added, "We pray that the situation does not degenerate into warfare." This is well-meaning, but a bit odd. The Somalis were at war among themselves long before foreign troops arrived, and it was certain that U.S.

and other troops would be in the line of fire.

Bosnia: Known Disasters Looming

The issue of humanitarian intervention becomes more difficult in the case of Bosnia. One basic reason has to do with the politics of deciding to intervene. Many in the United States believe that the problem of the former

Yugoslavia's fracture is first a European problem. Yet the European Community has had difficulty acting as one -- in part because its governments are neither disinterested or united in their interests. The Balkans have been the site of many conquests involving European powers. Consequently, the Europeans turned the crisis over to the UN, which has



Two Muslim clergy protect themselves from the rain as they pray in Sarajevo's central cemetery. Corinne Dufka/RUETER.

been leading the negotiating, placed a peacekeeping force in Croatia, and attempted to keep the airport at Sarajevo open to serve the relief effort in Bosnia.

Yet apparently less self-interested countries -- the United States, for example -- have proven more reluctant militarily to enter such a messy situation. Full-scale Bosnian intervention quite possibly would violate some of the post-Vietnam criteria for intervention (as applied by the Bush administration in the Persian Gulf): there must be a clear, limited, achievable mission; and troops must be able to get in and out successfully with little loss of life.

While world powers have been deliberating, Serbs and Croats respectively in Bosnia have conquered much of the territory where they are the majority of the population. Many areas have been ruthlessly "cleansed" of minorities, whether they be Serb, Croat, or Slavic Muslim. It is with regard to this cleansing, and the siege of cities remaining under Muslim control, that the term genocide has come into use. Aid organizations warned for months that the coming winter would add greatly to the death toll -- and it has. Aid workers, who are at the mercy of the Bosnian Serbs, have said that under current circumstances they cannot keep up with the needs or reach all of the affected areas.

Church leaders have said little about what the world's great powers should do to resolve the crisis beyond continuing negotiations toward a "political solution," as the NCC calls it. At this point, a "political solution" -- the one being negotiated by the UN -- means preserving, for a time, a very fragile Bosnia on paper. But, while it gives Muslims back some lost territory, it nevertheless unjustly rewards aggression by Bosnian Serbs and Croats. Whether it will be

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Democratic Institutions be part of the National Security Council structure, and that the intelligence community be charged with monitoring in these areas.

2. Religious Freedom as an international human right.

This is still a problem in many nations and regions, and needs attention at the international level. We would urge you to encourage the United Nations to convene a conference to review the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religious Belief, and compliance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. We also urge you to seek the designation of a vigorous, active UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance when the term of the current Rapporteur expires.

3. Religious intolerance in Islamic countries. Many nations which are ruled by Islamic majorities, and particularly those which have designated themselves as "Islamic states", e.g., members of the Organization of Islamic Countries, have very poor records for their treatment of non-Islamic religious believers. There are numerous incidents of imprisonment, death and persecution, as well as official restrictions enshrined in national law contrary to the international standards of human rights. These concerns cannot be overlooked in our dealings with Middle Eastern, African or Asian states, not even for energy, economic or security interests.

4. There are countries in other regions where regular conditions of both egregious and subtle **persecution occur against religious believers.** These include China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, the new Balkan states, India, and Burma, among others. These can take both official (as in China and Vietnam) and unofficial (as in India) forms. We urge your human rights monitoring and intervention efforts to include religious persecution concerns....

5. Democratic development. For democracies to survive and flourish, they must develop and sustain free institutions (economic, educational, informational, legal, etc.). New democracies need help from the United States in the forms of training and institutional support, as well as economic development aid. This long-term effort is as important to national security and international justice as any crisis management or treaty negotiation. Thus we urge you to support to the National Endowment for Democracy, the Citizens Democracy Corps, and USIA. The idea of consolidating this effort under an Undersecretary of State also has merit. But also be aware of private organizations which can carry on the primary work, but which need your support and sanction to operate. We strongly recommend that you give this arena continual public attention, and make it a priority in development aid. This emphasis is especially vital now in the new situations in Central

America, Southern Africa, and Russia and Eastern Europe.

6. We also urge responsible, **democratic participation in global institutions and organizations.** You will certainly receive pressure to emphasize "solving global problems," such as the environment, poverty, ... etc., by those who will offer anti-democratic, anti-participatory solutions. Unfortunately, many of these voices will come from some church and ecumenical bodies. It is vital, however, that as transnational institutions become even more important and powerful in an interdependent world, that they support and reflect the primacy of democracy rather than undercut it. We affirm the Christian principle of subsidiarity, which emphasizes finding the appropriate policy level, from local to global, to deal with matters at hand. This must be combined with a strong commitment to a flourishing "civil society": that is, the recognition that all institutions must flourish in a vigorous and healthy nation, and that government is one among many institutions which are necessary to justice. Such a commitment helps make possible participatory and democratic approaches.

Churches Develop Agendas for New Administration

By Kathryn Teapole Proctor

While Episcopalian George Bush has returned home to Texas, Bill Clinton and Al Gore, both Southern Baptists, are settling into their new Washington roles. What does this mean for churches and religious organizations who seek the President's ear? Because of the denominational link, can conservatives and evangelicals expect more from this administration and more liberal churches expect less?

According to Religious News Service, Southern Baptists "and other conservative religious groups lose an ally when Bush, the Episcopalian, leaves office. Bush, at the same time, was at variance with most of the social agenda adopted by the mostly liberal Episcopal church at its General Convention." For Bush, the conservative label held more significance than the denominational. The premise is the same for Clinton and Gore. Although members of a primarily conservative denomination, their liberal politics are expected to rule in their decision and policy making.

Already, officials from the National Council of Churches (NCC) met, upon invitation, with Clinton representatives. According to United Methodist News Service, United Methodist Bishop Melvin G. Talbert said the purpose was "to build a partnership between the NCC and the new administration." Discussed were urban issues, health care, and global affairs (with Somalia sited as an example of the need for better church-government cooperation). The NCC
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a positive step toward peace, or even lead to an improvement in the aid effort, is an open question.

Helpfully, U.S. church leaders and world ecumenical groups have concerned themselves with presenting a united front opposing the violence. The ecumenical community, with the help of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in

... it seems that the "non-violent" but somehow "coercive" means advocated by the ecumenical community were not enough to achieve peace in Bosnia.

New York, helped facilitate a meeting in September between those religious leaders with the most influence in ending the conflict: Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Pavle and Croatian Cardinal Franjo Kuharic (Muslim leader Jakub Selimoski appears to have worked in coordination with Pavle and Kuharic). Church leaders met again in November to continue dialogue on the crisis.

The two Christian leaders condemned "all of the crimes committed" during the war, regardless of who committed them and which faith the criminals claim. They called for an end to hostilities, and to "the blasphemous and insane destruction of places of prayer and holy places." They sought the liberation of prisoners of conscience, an end to ethnic cleansing, freedom for refugees and deportees to return to their homes, and assurance that all bishops and priests have access to their flocks and undisturbed exercise of their office. All people should be provided undisturbed and equal access to humanitarian aid, they said. Similar points were echoed by a united front of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders in the United States, and affirmed by the NCC General Board at its November 1992 meeting.

The declaration from Pavle and Kuharic stands against the backdrop of religious differences reinforcing historic ethnic animosities in the region. According to former NCC President Leonid Kishkovsky, even if the effects of such ecumenical declarations are difficult to gauge, the commitment to non-violence gives "hope ... and hope is a big thing." This helps preserve human dignity in the face of fear and hatred. The problem, he added, is that communism "froze and manipulated" old conflicts, while also encouraging a breakdown in the moral authority of the very religious leaders who are trying to encourage peace and tolerance.

Kishkovsky said he fears things in the former Yugoslavia will become worse. "It is hard to assess," he said, "what actions will help contain the conflict and encourage peace and what will provoke more violence."

In "A Joint Appeal of the American People," signed last

fall by Campbell of the NCC and Jewish, Muslim, and Catholic officials regarding Bosnia and Somalia, it was said that the "United States should act with other countries where possible, but alone when necessary" to bring "an immediate and lasting end to the violence." Further, "America is not the policeman to the world, but the mass murder of innocents is unacceptable. We cannot sit idly by as the cruelty and the killing persist."

Whether ensuring that relief supplies reach the needy or establishing "effective mechanisms for timely intervention wherever civilians are at risk of mass death" includes the use of force is unclear. Church leaders have said little specific about how to conduct humanitarian intervention. According to McClean, the new world order came faster than anyone imagined, and with regard to the nexus between security and humanitarian concerns, world leaders are still a long way from clarity on how to respond effectively. "Somalia is practice for the future," he said. With regard to Bosnia, he said significant action from the UN, perhaps in cooperation with NATO, was necessary six months ago.

McClean said that among political leaders "nobody knows what the rules will be tomorrow" regarding humanitarian intervention. He said the United Methodist Church would have to do a great deal of careful study, updating and applying past UM positions to new realities, before it will be in a place to offer any meaningful guidance. But it is difficult to see how the UM Church, for example, could apply its past opposition to "coersion, violence, or war" as "incompatible with the gospel" in any helpful way in Somalia or Bosnia.

In many ways it is much too late for Bosnia. The world community could have sent stronger signals to the Milosevic government by enforcing the no-fly zone over Bosnia and selectively ending the ban on arms transfers to besieged forces, and, perhaps, the bombing of Serbian artillery positions. Would the churches have resisted if such actions had been taken? Will they resist if the next round of the Yugoslav crisis brings even more extensive violence? What happens if Serbia begins its "cleansing" of the formerly autonomous region of Kosovo (mostly Albanian Muslim) and the declared-independent republic of Macedonia -- and possibly ignites conflict with Albania and Greece, and Turkey and others along the way?

The NCC General Board commended to its member churches last November a WCC Central Committee statement from last August for prayerful study regarding the former Yugoslavia. It is honest, albeit vague, about the churches' "weaknesses and shortcomings" in that region's conflict. It is clear in asserting that "military intervention is not the solution." Instead, "What is needed is the political will of the international community to oblige all parties to accept a non-violent settlement, accompanied by an effective ban on arms supplies enforced by political and

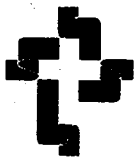
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economic coercive measures applied equally to all parties." Without this, "the conflict could easily escalate further and repeat itself elsewhere in the region...."

Escalation is not just possible but likely. Serbs have noted the impatience of world leaders over the crisis, and appear more conciliatory -- in part because they believe President Clinton will threaten to use force while President Bush did not. Such perceived threats may complicate matters (especially when the signals are as inconsistent as they have been in this crisis), but it seems clear that all of the "non-violent" yet somehow "coercive" means advocated by the ecumenical community were not enough to achieve peace in Bosnia.

Perhaps Milosevic will not risk a regional war. But if the world powers do not deter him and others with a credible use of force, there may be more weeping still for the innocents. Then the pressure will be even stronger for U.S. churches to dig out of their own Vietnam *cum* Persian Gulf syndrome and get on with a serious consideration of how the use of force fits with commitments to justice and peace in this not-so-new world order.

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has requested a conversation with President Clinton as soon as possible.

Bob Tiller, Washington representative of the American Baptist Churches (the Southern Baptists' more liberal cousin), said his office would work more closely with Clinton than it did with Bush or Reagan. We "will have a little bit more access to people in the administration and we will perhaps see a few more of our issues signed into law and not vetoed. I feel positive about that," he said. But Southern Baptist representative Jim Smith said he doesn't expect to be shut out. While Southern Baptist leaders oppose Clinton on some social issues, they will work with Clinton when possible. Smith argued that the notion that conservative Christians had preferential treatment from the Bush White House "was an intentionally promoted myth by the religious left and media critics who suggest that we had this wonderful access."

Almost all the church groups agree on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which most believe would strengthen freedom of religious practice in America. Along with domestic economic issues and health care reform, it tops the list of concerns of the oldline churches for the new administration.

According to Religious News Service, Mary Cooper, of the Washington office of the National Council of Churches (NCC), lists family leave legislation, full funding for the Head Start program, the urban crisis and the environment as crucial issues along with health care and passage of the above bill. Liberal church leaders concerned about economic reform, minority rights, and the environment were pleased by the appointment of the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., a leader in both the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the NCC, and an "environmental racism" activist, to the transition team in the area of natural resources.

While leaders of the UCC, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the United Methodist Church issued a joint letter asking Clinton to lift the ban on gays in the military, evangelical renewal leaders from those denominations have responded with their own letter stating their opposition. Tim Crater of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) also said abortion and gay rights are top issue areas for evangelicals.

Crater added that the NAE is concerned about religious minority rights in Muslim areas, and will urge the government to protest attacks on Christians and to apply pressure for religious liberty for all peoples.