

THE VOL. 65 NO. 12 DECEMBER, 1982 WITNESS

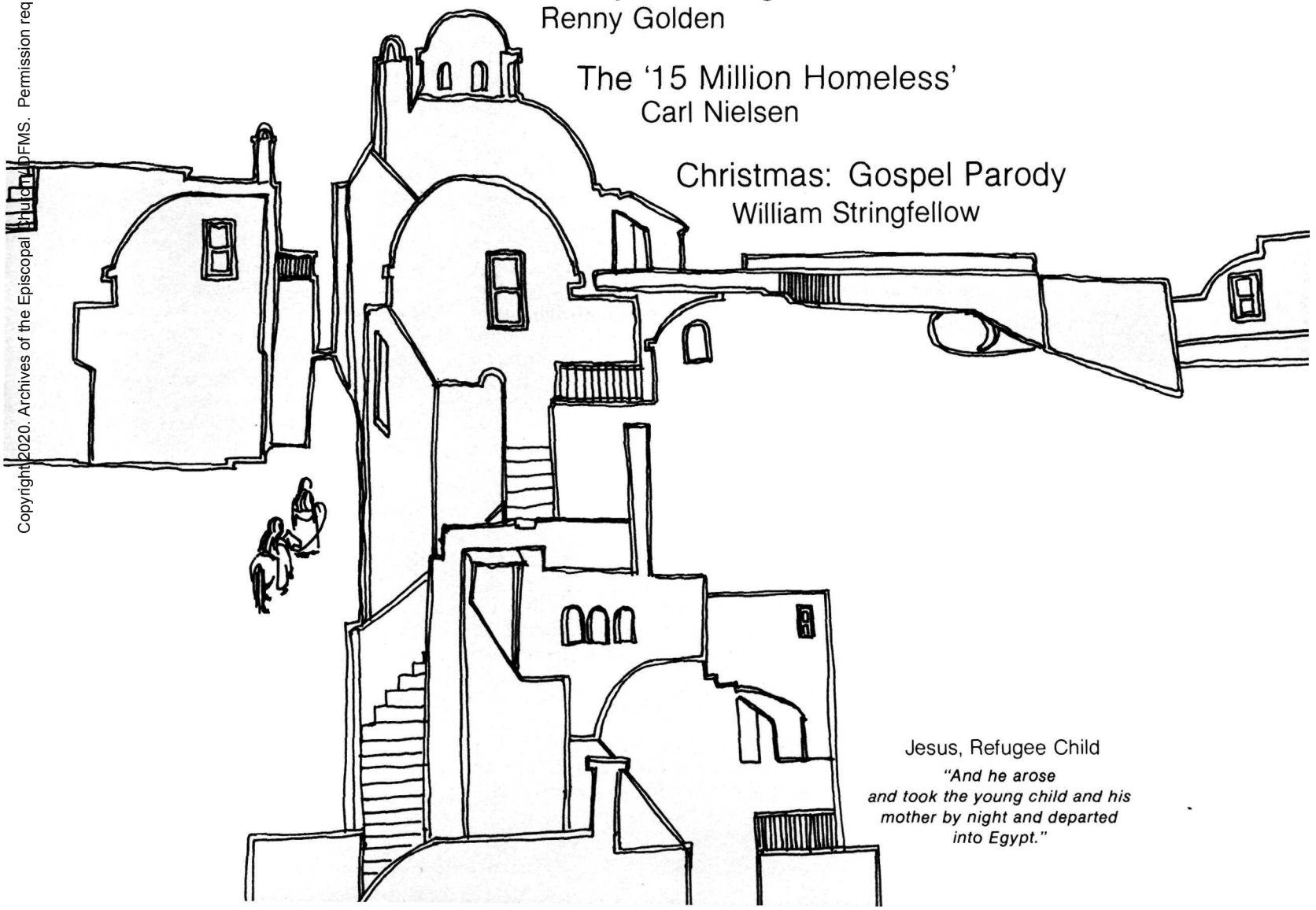
Sanctuary for Refugees
Renny Golden

The '15 Million Homeless'
Carl Nielsen

Christmas: Gospel Parody
William Stringfellow

Jesus, Refugee Child

*"And he arose
and took the young child and his
mother by night and departed
into Egypt."*



LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Twisted Journalism

I have long admired THE WITNESS as an organ of reasoned criticism, and a vehicle by which the manipulations of a powerful Establishment are called into question. But your September editorial contributes nothing to a clarification of the troubled situation in the Middle East, beyond merely parroting the standard PLO line.

Having just returned from my 11th trip to Jerusalem, and my first trip to Southern Lebanon and Beirut, during which I spent nearly a month talking to Israelis, Palestinians and Lebanese, I am convinced that the U.S. public has been gravely deluded concerning the Israeli incursion into Lebanon. Your statements to the contrary, "every Palestinian man, woman and child" has *not* become "an Israeli military target"; indeed, such a statement borders so closely on anti-Semitism that I am embarrassed by the Episcopal connection of your magazine.

Beirut is not a "mini-Hiroshima," nor a study "in absurdity, scandal and horror." In August I was in Tyre, Sidon, Damour and Beirut. Without exception, every Lebanese man and woman to whom I talked referred to the Israeli army, *not* the Palestinian, as "the army of liberation," happy that at last Southern Lebanon had been freed from an eight-year nightmare of rape, torture, brutality and senseless murder, under the direction of that same Arafat who is so liberally pictured in the American press kissing babies. Of course Lebanon

wishes to be free of all foreign armies, but it is only and specifically the Israelis that the people on the street hope are the *last* to leave, for it is only the Israelis that they trust to restore law and order. Thousands more people were killed in Lebanon by the PLO than have been killed in El Salvador, yet we paid them no mind, because they were Arab Christians. THE WITNESS maintained its damning silence, erupting in hypocritical indignation only when "the Jews" got involved.

In the same issue, Michael Hamilton's article exhibits much greater compassion, though again not without distortion. There is no time within the living memory of the Palestinians when "the land of Israel was largely theirs"; statistics simply cannot support that statement. Nor were Arabs "forced off their land in 1948"; it was the Arab countries who declared war on Israel that year, and then fled when they discovered they could not drive the Jews into the sea. The PLO is *not* seen by a majority of Palestinians living within Israel as "their symbol of hope." Education of Jews and Arabs is, yes, unequal in Israel, but that is by the insistence of the Arab authorities, which refuse all cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Education. The student population of Israel's university system is about 10% Palestinian, and government scholarships are available for Palestinian students to pursue graduate studies abroad. St. George's School, the official Anglican boys school in Jerusalem, provides a better education for Palestinian young men than do most of the Israeli public high schools for Jewish young men and women.

Never, in all my visits to the West Bank, have I seen Jewish settlers building swimming pools which drain Arab water supplies and thus ruin Arab farms; on the contrary, Palestinian agriculture has reached astonishing new heights, due to the Israeli willingness to share out their own miraculous agricultural technology. Nor is the Israeli Army active in "communal punishment" of the Palestinians.

Finally, Fr. Hamilton suggests that a UN mandate in a Palestinian state would enhance Jewish military security. Has he forgotten the heinous UN resolution equating Zionism with racism? Is he unaware of the negotiated cooperation between UNWRA and the PLO in Lebanon, by which elementary schools were used as storage for live ammunition, curricula limited to studies supportive of the Palestinian line, and classes shortened so that the students 10 years old and up could be trained to murder Zionists?

Twisted and irresponsible Christian journalism is a grave disservice to the faithful. Sadly, I have now learned that I can no longer trust THE WITNESS to tell the truth.

The Rev. Dr. Philip Culbertson
Oberlin, Ohio

Credits Courage

Your editorial in the September issue was the finest thing I have read on Menachem Begin's latest venture. Michael Hamilton's article brought information that we had not heard out here in the Midwest. You deserve much credit for your courage.

I suspect you will have your share of vituperation in response. A local Rabbi, noted for his ecumenic spirit, called on his erstwhile fellow admirers of Begin to reassess, to look at the action without blinders, the only Jewish voice in St. Louis disassociating himself from Israeli outrages in Beirut.

To the amazement of much of the Gentile community, the attack on the Rabbi from members of his own group was vicious. No one analyzed his statement and appraised it. In letter after letter to the newspaper that carried his original, they attacked him personally as "proud," "egocentric," and "in need of a psychiatrist."

As an admirer of the Rabbi, and as one who personally received two citations from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Denver for work as vice-

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THE WITNESS

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THE WITNESS EDITORIAL

Indelible Image of Christmas

“**A**nd so it goes,” shrugged the world-weary and numbed character in Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* as tragedies large and small passed before him. So with us. “Study shows 5-6% increase in suicide rate for every 1% increase in unemployment” . . . “Reagan Administration presses for limited nuclear capability in Western Europe” . . . “Mideast peace faces another setback” . . .

And so it goes.

This mood is a reaction to the slaughter of hope, with “cool” indifference cloaking a deep despair. But any attempt to put on a feigned attitude, such as indifference, inevitably reveals the concealed emotion. It is evident that ours is indeed not a cool nation, but one whose anxiety betrays its loss of hope.

Feeding this anxiety is the central paradigm of our time — the threat of nuclear annihilation. Other threats abound, but atomic holocaust gathers them all up. For generations people have argued over whether anyone wins a war. Debates have centered on the accounting of the debits and credits of various conflicts,

seeking to determine which party was able finally to survey the carnage with some sense of gain. No longer. In this nuclear age the statement, “No one wins a war,” is a simple statement of fact. There will be no one to survey the carnage.

True humility is knowing one’s place in the universe. This world and its affairs are, finally, not ours but God’s. We have overreached ourselves. We have forgotten who and what we are. As God said to the hapless Job: “Can you fasten the harness of the Pleiades, or untie Orion’s bands? Can you guide the morning star season by season and show the Bear and its cubs which way to go? . . . Will lightning flashes come at your command and answer, ‘Here we are’?”

Only God is God. And God’s ways are not our ways. Our little plans, our little schemes, collide mindlessly and tragically in the darkness of our hearts.

God chose, in taking on human flesh, to live with vulnerability. To live with faith means to take on that

Editorial . . . Continued on page 19



"When the church has to break the law to provide refuge for homeless people, the struggle for justice has reached a new stage."

Churches Confront INS, Offer Refugees Sanctuary

by Renny Golden

In December, the Midwest religious task force network of Central America committees will declare a public sanctuary for Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees in a number of cities in the Midwest in open challenge to U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) deportation policy.

Church sanctuary has already been established in Chicago and Tucson and other churches are expected to announce similar commitments soon in Evanston, Ill., Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

Last summer, Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ in Chicago became the first stop on an underground railroad extending from Guatemala through the Mexico/Arizona border to the Midwest. The

UCC community wrote an open letter to INS declaring their intention to break the law in order to harbor a young refugee named "Juan" (a pseudonym). If convicted of harboring a fugitive, the Rev. David Chevrier and two other UCC members of the Wellington Church community could receive a five year prison term and \$2,000 fine.

It was the decision to *act* that was the hard part for Juan and the congregation. The risk for Juan was deportation and possible death because he had been imprisoned in El Salvador. For the Wellington community the risk was felony. At the service where Juan was presented to the congregation, their thunderous applause was all the community was able to "say." For his part, Juan was only able to whisper to a translator his gratitude for their act of sanctuary. Then Juan also "spoke" without words, he lifted his fist in the traditional Latin American symbol of solidarity and resistance. It was hard to remember the community's previous

hesitancies, watching them answer Juan's salute with hundreds of raised fists.

The Sunday service was not typical for the Wellington community. There in their midst, blinking back tears, a young refugee faced TV cameras wearing a sombrero and bandana to conceal his identity, and still bearing scars and burns from six months of torture. For Wellington, the war in Central America had come home.

David Chevrier, sensing the community's deep recognition of the holiness of their action, all but shouted an invocation of the ancient tradition of sanctuary. "We live," Chevrier proclaimed, "in a time of *encroachment* . . . a violation of the holiness of even the most basic of human rights. A demonic domination has been unleashed that is profaning the human through torture and terror. It is time to provide a safe place and cry out *basta!* Enough! The blood stops here at our doors."

Renny Golden is a free-lance journalist and poet. She is a member of the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America and co-author with Sheila Collins of *Struggle is a Name for Hope* (West End Press).

According to Barbara Lagoni, chairperson of the church council and a potential felon, the congregation's decision to offer sanctuary had immersed them in a political and theological reflection on the plight of Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees. "We learned about immigration policy and law rapidly," said Lagoni. Even though Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees meet U.S. code requirements of the Refugee Act of 1980 and are recognized as refugees by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the U.S. State Department refuses to grant them status. Of the over 15,000 asylum applications by Salvadoran refugees in the past two years, only seven have been granted. INS continues to deport Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees to their homelands to face possible torture and death.

Recently, the Manzo Council (Ariz.) litigatory team filed a \$30 million lawsuit against INS and Harry Malone, Administrator of El Centro INS Detention Center, for unlawfully deporting two Salvadorans whose cases were under appeal. The Manzo complaint states that the men were "physically removed from the facility screaming and crying in fear." Manzo Council lawyers' attempts to contact the men's families have confirmed their fears. One of the men is presumed dead, the other has disappeared. Peter Schey, Director of the National Center for Immigrant Rights, claims, "hundreds of deportees are being murdered. They are put on planes here, but they never show up at home. They just disappear."

Currently, INS deports 1,000 Salvadorans and hundreds of Guatemalans *per month*.

In Chicago alone there are over 7,000 refugees, according to the Midwest Salvadoran Human Rights Commission. (An official number cannot be corroborated because refugees remain hidden, fearful of deportation.) INS law states that Guatemalan/Salvadoran

refugees are not eligible for political refugee status but are only considered economic refugees, in spite of a Civil War which has cost the lives of 34,000 Salvadorans in two years and 20,000 Guatemalans in the same period.

In response, the theology of sanctuary offers the church a concrete and direct way to challenge the policy of the U.S. Government in Central America and of the INS, as well as providing protection to refugees created by that policy. The presence of refugees in the church gives refugees themselves, the voiceless ones, the opportunity to offer living testimony about the war's effects. The Vargas family has become the community's teachers.

For two months now, volunteers have climbed the three flights of wooden stairs that snake their way to a small apartment off the church gym that houses the Vargas family. When entering the family's two-room apartment, a visitor is distracted by an open transom that looks over neighborhood rooftops. Ann Frank's hideaway comes to mind. In a far corner, Daniel Vargas hunches over a sewing machine repairing a church member's raincoat. He's a tailor by trade, but won't accept money for this work. Senora Vargas smiles now, offers a chair. When they first arrived she sat in the back, terrified of a machine gun attack. Because she and three of the children had come almost directly to

Wellington in one swing from Mexico through the underground railroad, she had not understood the new country's climate.

Daniel explains the family's sojourn as a decision to save their teenage sons from the National Guard. Daniel insists he isn't political. When asked about his work, however, he talks of taking part in a workers' strike which took over a power plant. When the government moved toward the plant, the workers were prepared to blow up the plant and themselves rather than surrender. He doesn't explain more, but drifts into talk of the incident which sent him forth on his preparatory journey to bring his family out of their village.

One night, after the usual round of gun shots had ceased, he found his grandson weeping. He held the boy thinking the noise had frightened him. But the 6-year-old was afraid for Daniel. "Soon," choked the child, "the soldiers will shoot you." Daniel's daughter and grandson still live in the village.

Reflecting on the 12 weeks of sanctuary among his congregation, the Rev. Chevrier considers the experience one of "overwhelming blessings." Testing Dave's propensity for enthusiasm, I asked for examples.

"There's been a rallying of the community. It was there before but it's there in different terms now. I don't know how to convey it. People would

**We will harvest
a nation from a graveyard
With every murder,
they grow another revolutionary
sweet and defiant as corn.**

—From a poem
by Renny Golden



have had to be at the service when we welcomed Juan, the first refugee, or when we said farewell to him, or when we received the Vargas family, to sense the depth of spirit. This has touched us very deeply. I think it is due to Christians feeling it really tested their faith. Sanctuary has brought people in saying, 'I've been looking for a church that has some integrity. I'm glad I found yours.' One of the most important things that happened to us is the connection being made between the faith and the political situation in Central America. The church is being tested there. It may be one of the most powerful pieces of church history."

The Rev. Sid Mohn, who officiated at the Vargas family's welcoming service, had his own interpretation of the congregation's newly discovered definition of such presumed concepts as pastoral work. "When the church has to break the law in order to provide refuge for homeless people, the struggle for justice has reached a new stage. Now the pastoral has merged with the political, service is prophetic and love a subversive activity." Such a conviction, according to Mohn, is no longer the theological expression of the Church of Central America or the prerogative of liberation theologians but the discovery of an Anglo Church through the lived experience of giving sanctuary.

For food co-ordinator Connie Peterson, offering sanctuary has created a new confidence in the congregation. "In terms of fear, being able to say, 'This is where the violence stops,' to be able to say that following God's law and not that of the superpowers — these things all come together. They just sort of dissolve fear away. I feel much stronger now in terms of how far I would go. I've tested my willingness, as lots of people in this church have done, to help somebody else out."

The unfolding of a national sanctuary campaign was the conception of the

Rev. John Fife of the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Ariz. and Jim Corbett — the Quaker "coyote" (a coyote is exorbitantly paid for his expertise as a border sneak). Fife and Corbett became "coyotes" for the people, not profit. They began the underground railroad out of necessity because their sanctuary project was so successful that the deluge of refugees was swamping the community's capacity to provide social services, housing, "cover," etc. The Southside Presbyterian Church has brought over and harbored 1,600 Salvadorans.

What they needed was a larger network to absorb the rescued refugees and a national religious witness standing against INS practice which would have the objective of publicly

"To be a Salvadoran is to be half-dead; the thing that moves is the half lives they left us."

educating North Americans about the root cause of this exodus — the State Department support of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan military. Fife stressed the importance of this political objective lest religious groups perceive the sanctuary project as church-sponsored resettlement programs such as were offered to Chilean and Vietnamese refugees. According to Fife, such a humanitarian effort accomplishes little since the number rescued are miniscule compared to the almost 25,000 refugees the INS has returned to El Salvador and Guatemala in the last two years.

Jim Corbett underscores Fife's insistence on the political and moral objectives of the sanctuary project — it must involve people at the base church level and the moral witness must pressure the State Department. Corbett, who had worked with the

Tucson Ecumenical Council's impressive legal advocacy efforts, which bailed out many refugees from El Centro detention camp, despaired of affecting masses of base church persons in this country through the legal route.

Corbett was convinced that the religious community must act directly, not simply advocate, when the stakes were the lives of poor peasants. In a plea before the National Council of Churches, he said, "the refugees are right here at our door pleading for help to avoid capture. Actively asserting the right to aid fugitives from terror means doing it — not just preaching at a government that's capturing and deporting them, not just urging legislation that might help future refugees. With people in our midst being hunted down and shipped back, denouncing terror while ignoring the victims simply teaches the public how to live with atrocity."

Hard words, hard demands. But Jim Corbett isn't what you'd expect — that intense sort of macho prophet who demands righteousness. He's the opposite — shy, soft-spoken, a slight, bespectacled man who came out of retirement to do this work. He appeals, all but begs, for refugee aid.

Corbett is not modest when he claims his own "coyote" activity pales before the courage of the refugees and Mexican church communities who harbor them. He has heard so many refugee stories of lives sacrificed for others that he's come to experience the meaning of the cross — a preoccupation among Catholics that Jim's Quaker sensitivities once found morbid. "Recently as I struggled to cope emotionally with having become a peripheral witness to the crucifixion of the Salvadoran people, a suspicion grew that the cross opens a way beyond breakdown. This kind of meaning one discovers only in meeting those who share it, much the same way a language lives among a people rather than in a

dictionary. It is also the kind of meaning that is accessible to children and the unsophisticated, a meaning that is here among us, historically and communally, rather than being the invention of clever minds."

Corbett's arrest may be simply a matter of time. His rescue of refugees brings him across two borders as far down as Guatemala. He's run the Mexican border so many times that he fears his presence will draw too much surveillance against the refugees. The "relays" take him away from home for days at a time. Even at home in Tucson, he's often called out in the deep of night to make a starlit run. His wife's only birthday request was a night with the phone off the hook.

Both Fife and Corbett worry about the INS' next move, the possibility of their breaking sanctuary as the national campaign gains momentum. Currently INS dismisses the sanctuary project as insignificant and a ploy of the churches for publicity. "We're not about to send investigators into a church and start dragging people out in front of TV cameras," said Bill Joyce, assistant general council to the INS. "We'll just wait them out, wait until they leave the

church. This is just a political thing dreamed up by the churches to get publicity — a game to pressure the government to allow Salvadorans to stay here. If we thought it was a significant problem, then maybe we'd look at it. But there are plenty of illegal aliens out there." (*Christian Science Monitor*, 8/30/82)

There are plenty out there and the increase in Guatemalan Indians fleeing wholesale slaughter in the country is taxing the church underground railroad to its limit. For the Tucson community, the glut of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees increases. "Each week," says Corbett, "we must turn our backs on refugees who desperately need help but for whom there's just not enough time or money. And there are hundreds of thousands in El Salvador whose agonies far exceed the sufferings of those reaching the U.S."

For those who are safe here, like the Vargas family, the underground railroad and sanctuary are a protection and opportunity for refugees, the invisible ones, to educate us about the price of U.S. intervention. When the press asked Senor Vargas if he felt his family was being "used" in order to

draw attention to the plight of the refugees, he gave this response, "That is the wrong question. People should be asking, 'Why are we fleeing?' The answer to that would be because of the genocide in my country. This extermination of our people is being made possible with the aid that this government is sending to El Salvador." The final reason Senor Vargas gave for coming to this country resonated with the poetry of Salvadoran Rogue Dalton. Vargas said they left "because we are all walking around like dead people and we don't know where to go." The slain Rogue Dalton wrote, "*To be a Salvadoran is to be half-dead, the thing that moves is the half-lives they left us.*"

Resources

Information packets on *How to Do Sanctuary* can be obtained from Lee Holstein, Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, 407 South Dearborn, #320, Chicago, IL 60605, or call (312) 427-2553. Packets cost \$6.

"*We Shall Rise Again*," the 1983 Calendar of the Religious Task Force. A weekly datebook of contemporary inspiration and struggle from Central America. \$4.50. Religious Task Force Calendar, 1747 Connecticut Ave. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009.





15 Million People Refugees at Christmas

by Carl F. Nielsen



It's as if the entire population of Holland, or Malaysia, or Australia, or the three biggest cities of the United States — New York, Chicago and Los Angeles — were made homeless and then scattered around the world.

The size of the world refugee crisis, with up to 15 million people who have had to flee their homes, means that few countries remain untouched. But there are five main groupings of people who make up the larger part of this unwilling movement of humanity.

1. Afghans: Following a *coup d'etat* in 1978, the Soviet invasion of 1979 and subsequent warfare, Afghans have fled by the millions to two neighboring countries.

About 2.7 million Afghans are reported to be in Pakistan, while the estimate of Afghan refugees in Iran is between 500,000 and 1.5 million. This means that of Afghanistan's 15 million population four years ago, approximately a quarter have since become refugees.

The solution to this problem lies in a political settlement that will enable the refugees to go back home voluntarily. Until this happens — a remote prospect at present — nearly all these refugees

will stay where they are.

2. Indochinese: An estimated two million people have fled the wars and turmoil over several years in the three countries of Indochina. Either they have crossed a border and become refugees in the usual sense of the word, or they have been displaced within their own country.

Since the American withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 and the ensuing internal political and economic difficulties there, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese have left by sea ("boat people") or by land.

Thailand became the haven for large numbers of people fleeing both Vietnam and its neighboring countries of Laos and Kampuchea. Since 1975 about 750,000 Indochinese have been resettled abroad while some 220,000 still await resettlement from several countries in Southeast Asia. Many more remain as internally displaced refugees, hoping that one day conditions may allow them to return home.

Greater stability throughout the Indochinese peninsula is necessary if people are not to be forced to quit their homes, but there is unfortunately little evidence that such an improvement is likely soon.

3. Central Americans: In the Central American region, including Mexico, there are now probably more

than one million refugees and internally displaced people, mainly from the conflicts in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

For decades, people have been leaving Central American countries ruled by repressive regimes, but in relatively small numbers. What is new in recent years is the growing scale of official violence. This has been countered by popular insurgency to the point where war conditions prevail and non-combatants flee for their lives.

The situation in Central America, and particularly in El Salvador, poses an ironic dilemma for the United States. The Salvadoran government's repression and military operations against its own people continue to produce many refugees.

Yet the United States which is deeply involved in supporting this government, refuses to grant refugee status to Salvadorans reaching the United States. Instead it designates them as "economic migrants" and deports them back to El Salvador, which merely perpetuates the problem.

4. Africans: Africa is the continent which, according to the estimate of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has half the world's refugees.

Conflicts in Ethiopia have produced hundreds of thousands of refugees. An estimated 700,000 have gone to Somalia

Carl F. Nielsen, a U.S. Lutheran, is study and interpretation secretary with the Refugee Service of the World Council of Churches.

and another 550,000 to Sudan. Zaire, which has itself produced more than a quarter of a million refugees, also has up to 400,000 who have fled there from neighboring countries.

Throughout the whole continent there are masses of people who have fled wars and oppressive regimes or, in southern Africa, apartheid and its consequences. As elsewhere, these refugees have either crossed borders or been displaced within their own countries.

Collectively, the refugees of Africa demonstrate the instability, conflict and tension that beset both domestic and regional politics in the continent.

The provision and observation of human rights for all in Africa, not just those suffering under white minority regimes, is recognized as the ideal — but probably distant — solution to Africa's refugee problem.

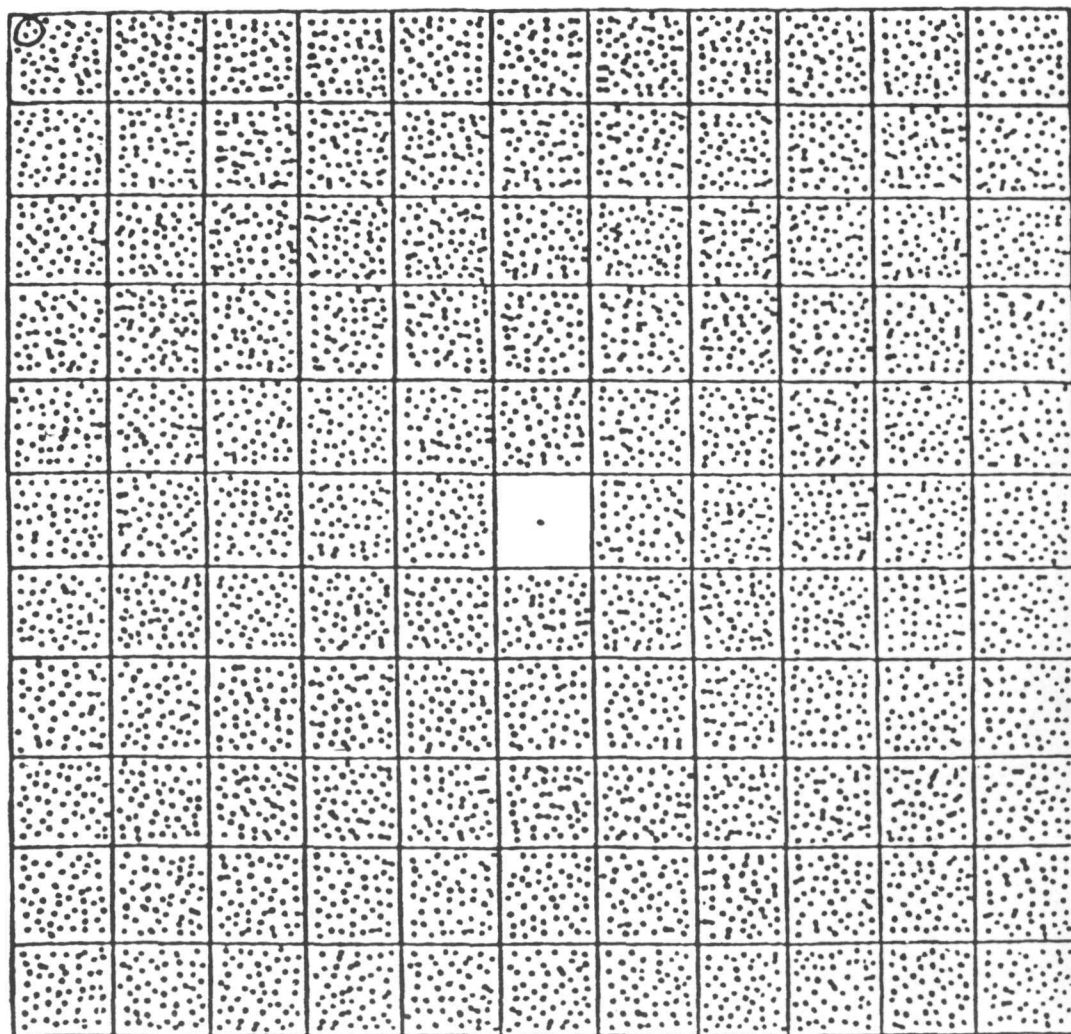
5. Palestinians and Lebanese: The recent Israeli invasion of Lebanon has underscored more than ever before the vital necessity of finding a comprehensive and fair solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

Barring such a solution, continuing strife and the creation of new waves of refugees and displaced people throughout the Middle East is virtually guaranteed.

The events of July and August 1982 have not solved the Palestinian problem, merely intensified it. Approximately 1.7 million Palestinians, more widely scattered than ever before, still await a determination of their claim to statehood.

A large number of Lebanese have had to suffer homelessness and the near-destruction of their country because this claim by the Palestinians has not yet been addressed. □

(Reprinted with permission from *One World*, publication of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, October 1982.)



Firepower to Destroy a World

The dot in the center square represents all the firepower of World War II—3 megatons. The other dots represent the firepower in existing nuclear weapons—18,000 megatons (equal to 6,000 WW IIs). About half belong to the Soviet Union, the other half to the U.S.

The top left circle represents the weapons on just

one Poseidon submarine—9 megatons (equal to the firepower of 3 WW IIs)—enough to destroy over 200 of the largest Soviet cities. The U.S. has 31 such subs and 10 similar Polaris subs. The lower left circle represents one new Trident sub—24 megatons (equal to the firepower of 8 WW IIs)—enough to destroy every

major city in the northern hemisphere. The Soviets have similar levels of destructive power.

Place a dime on the chart; the covered dots represent enough firepower to destroy all the large and medium-size cities in the entire world. What are you going to do with the rest of your coins?

(The above graphic by James Geier with Sharyl Green is from *Nuclear War In Vermont* by Parents and Teachers for Social Responsibility, and appeared on the Nov. 1 cover of *Friends Journal*. Reprinted with permission.)

The Political Character

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the

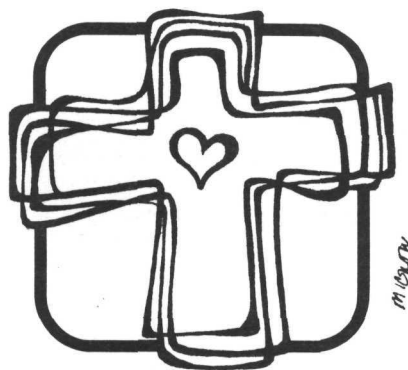
people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom
he is pleased!"*

Luke 2: 1-14

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, appointed the heir of all things, through whom also God created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of God's nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at

Christmas as Parody



Among the Scriptural passages traditionally in liturgical use during the Christmas season are certain excerpts so variegated in style or syntax that it presses the imagination to affirm that they concern the same event — the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is not that one account or commentary refutes others, but rather that one variation amounts to satire of another. This circumstance is, manifestly, further complicated by the assortment of pagan and secular versions of Christmas which abound under commercial, political and cultural auspices. Thus the bewilderment of church people — to mention no one else — about the significance of Christmas is immeasurably multiplied.

This parody of Christmas which emerges from the contrasts among the various Christmas texts is illustrated by

the two citations set forth above — the story of the manger scene and the visit of the shepherds from the Gospel according to Luke, on one hand, compared with the discourse on cosmic aspects of the birth of Jesus Christ which opens the Letter to the Hebrews. Other passages might as readily be mentioned in the same connection (cf. Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-12, and John 1:1-14). Superficially, the dissimilarities between the Luke story and the Hebrews sermon are pronounced; Luke is quaint, Hebrews is majestic; the former pastoral, the latter esoteric; the one homely, the other awesome. I think these distinctions between the two passages are superficial. That is, they represent literary differences rather than those of substantive content. Yet, at the same time, they signify the very incongruity of the Incarnation. They partake of the mystery of the Word of

of the Birth of Christ

the right hand of the Majesty on High, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

For to what angel did God ever say,

*"Thou art my Son,
today I have begotten thee"?*

Or again,

*"I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son"?*

And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

Of the angels he says,

*"Who makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."*

But of the Son he says,

*"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,
the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom.*

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

*therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee
with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades."*

And,

*"Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning
and the heavens are the work of thy hands;
they will perish, but thou remainest;
they will all grow old like a garment
like a mantle thou wilt roll them up,
and they will be changed.*

*But thou art the same,
and thy years will never end."*

But to what angel has he ever said,

*"Sit at my right hand,
till I make thy enemies
a stool for thy feet"?*

Hebrews 1: 1-13

of the Gospel

by William Stringfellow

God beheld in human life. In that purview the formulations of Hebrews are as appropriate as the narrative of Luke, while the concrete report of Luke is as essential as the expansive apologetic of Hebrews. In short, these passages seem in parody because the Christmas event itself is a parody — both apt and good — of how the Word of God elects to redeem fallen creation. Or, as the Luke text reminds, the manger is a sign in the midst of what Hebrews names as the final age (See Luke 2:12; Hebrews 1:2).

When I say that the substantive message of Christmas in both Luke and Hebrews is similar, despite noticeable literary contrasts between the two passages, I refer to the political character of the Christmas event itself, as each text bespeaks that, albeit each in its own manner. The politics of Christmas does not have narrow, self

serving, mean connotations like those associated with common politics as the politics of Quirinius the governor, or Herod the king, or, for what it matters, Reagan the president. Moreover, the politics of Christmas categorically has nothing to do with either ecclesiastical politics or with the politics of the churches as a faction in society. Instead, the politics of the birth of Jesus Christ concern the comprehensive, versatile, ecumenical and resilient governance of this universe, and the totality and diversity of created life within this universe, in the Word of God imminently as well as consummately. In short, the politics of the Christmas event has to do with the *active* sovereignty of the Word of God in common history in this world here and now.

I realize that the association of politics with Christmas seems curious,

perchance offensive, to some who have supposed all along that Christmas is, in spite of the biblical reports, somehow nonpolitical or even antipolitical. So I beg you not to heed me in this issue, but to be open to the witness of the passages themselves.

Consider, for example, that the most poignant part of the Luke account — "*And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*" (Luke 2:7) — constitutes, within itself, a political statement identifying Jesus with those who have no shelter or who are homeless, vagrant, destitute or otherwise deprived. That, and more audacious identifications with human need, become redundant during the historic ministry of Jesus.

Then notice that this simple aspect of the birth of Jesus — he was laid in a

manger — political statement as it is on its face — is exposed by the angel of the Lord as a sign to the shepherds of the coming of the Savior or Messiah (Luke 2:10-12).

Meanwhile, in the context of Hebrews, it becomes clear that the realm of Christ's authority politically is not merely that of a liberator, as one who delivers Israel from Rome's oppression, or some kindred secular revolutionary capacity. The political status of Jesus Christ is far more radical and durable than that. He is named the Son of God; he is elected heir to the universe; he is the one through whom God created the world; he reveals the very glory of God (Hebrews 1:2-3). The political claim, according to Hebrews, for Jesus, at Christmas, is that he is *Lord*, that he exercises the sovereignty of the Word of God in this world.

That same extraordinary political claim that Christ is Son of God or Lord of history, exercising dominion over the whole of creation is further attested in Luke when the angel, which has brought this good news to the shepherds, is suddenly attended by "*a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.*" (Luke 2:13). The heavenly host signifies all created life in assembly before the throne of God in adoration. What the shepherds behold in that scene, which prompts them to journey to Bethlehem to find the child in the manger, is a preview of the court of the Kingdom of God. The parallel reference in Hebrews is the sixth verse of the first chapter: "*when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'*"

It is part of the integrity of the worship of God in the Kingdom, on the part of the whole of created life, that every confusion concerning worship and idolatry is undone and finally ended. It is to the dissipelling of just such confusion that much of the issue of the superiority of Christ to the angelic

powers, in the Hebrews discourse, is addressed. Biblically, angels have many associations and the name is attributed to a diversity of created life. In the Book of Daniel, for instance, the connection of angels as guardians or patrons of nations, and of the ethos of nations, is mentioned (Daniel 4:13-23; 10:10-21). At the same time, there are New Testament references to fallen angels or rebellious angels (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6) and a remark about "*the devil and his angels*" is attributed directly to Jesus in Matthew (Matthew 25:41). Thus the concern in Hebrews about the status of angels in relation to the office of Christ is not esoteric or poetic, but concretely political, having to do with upholding the authenticity of the worship of God and with that not being corrupted by or confused with the idolatry of rebellious angels, including any associated with nations or other principalities.

In both Luke and Hebrews, the political character of the birth of Jesus Christ becomes most explicit in anticipation of judgment. If, in a manger, the office and authority of Christ is, to some, obscure, in the Kingdom his identity and vocation as judge of all life is eschatologically notorious. Thus, the peace on earth — so famous as a Christmas slogan — is, according to Luke, bestowed in the judgment "*among those with whom he is pleased.*" (Luke 2:14b). In Hebrews, in much the same vein, the question is posed: "*But to what angel has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?'*" (Hebrews 1:13).

I do not suppose that it is tenable to observe Christmas without taking seriously the truth, verified in Luke and Hebrews and elsewhere, that the message of Christmas is political — that it concerns the incumbency of the Word of God sovereign over the life of the whole fallen creation. If that message is heard as good news, as it was by the

shepherds, it is also to be heeded as an admonition since the Lord who reigns now comes, in the end, as judge. □

William Stringfellow is a theologian, social critic, author and attorney.

Friendly Persuasion

Back in the old days the Quaker master of a Quaker ship was in a quandary. The ship was under attack by pirates, and his crew was busily defending things — badly.

The problem here was his testimonies. They wouldn't let him fight. So he sat there holding a long knife, but holding back from jumping into the fray.

Finally he saw a pirate swarming up a rope which hung over the ship's edge. The Quaker master rushed over with his knife. Swiftly he cut the rope.

"There," he exclaimed, "if thee wants that rope so badly, thee may have it." (Charles Thomas)

Quoted in "Come Laughing," by Paul Blanchard, Jr., in *Friends Journal*, 11/15/82).

The Bus for Old People

No fare is charged them; the Episcopalians pay for the ride into town and back. The old bus rattles and moans along the thin asphalt and dry concrete — but the riders fancy they ride in fashion, alert and brisk to be expeditious, accelerating to the shopping center

Once again they are allowed to visit the busy hive of action, commotion, sound; once more permitted the celebration of breath beyond mere gentleness — of longevity shorn of soft murmurings and devoid of rumors for more survival. Crowds sweep round; multitudes swarm; armies of strangers jostle and elbow and push. But life is motion, gesture, change — antithesis to death's ghastly fixity.

How easily their stiff joints move — how spry those lean limbs, suddenly nimble! Ancient eyes darting at window-displays — that traditional glitter for Christmastime. They shall seethe with an hour in agitation, bubbling with wonder, rolling with delight, before the free bus carries them home; they shall concoct a brew to ferment on, and boil through their rising, yeasty dreams.

— William Dauenhauer



by John Ambelang

The shepherds in the colder months gathered together on a hillside to share a fire as they guarded their flocks. This was one of those dark nights when one could hardly see in front of one's face.

Amos sat with his leg nearly in the fire. The leg had been injured in a fall several years earlier and the cold caused it to ache terribly. His older cousin, David, was seated across the fire and it was these two who carried on the principal conversation.

Amos spoke, "You wouldn't believe the crowding in town. It is worse than Passover. My wife just told me about a couple from the north staying in the outshed of Jacob's inn with his animals. That's not so bad, but she is pregnant. Due almost anytime."

"Wouldn't be the worst place to be born," David slowly responded, almost as if he were reading the words. "Wouldn't even have to be, if we were our

own masters." Amos scowled as he awaited the familiar tirade against the Romans. "They claim to bring peace to the world, but they can't even maintain peace in their own city," David continued. "Happy I was to hear that Caesar had been murdered. I only hope that they keep slicing each other up." There was a general murmur of assent as he went on. Eventually, he stopped and they all sank into their own thoughts.

Suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to them and God's glory was everywhere. The men were frightened, but the angel announced to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you. For tonight in Bethlehem, your Savior is born, Christ the Lord! You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And then there was the host of angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men." Then they were gone.

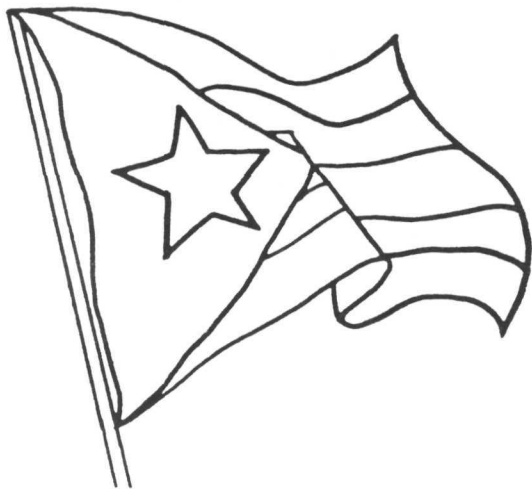
It took the shepherds a moment to come out of shock. They quickly decided that they would all go into Bethlehem to see the

child except for lame Amos who would stay with the sheep. So they hurried off into the dark.

While waiting anxiously for them to return Amos cursed the leg which prevented him from joining them. Then his thoughts turned to what the birth would mean for the future. They would have to be patient of course, for it would take time for the child to grow into manhood. But his boys at least would see the glory of old return to Israel. The hated Romans with their sacrilege would be driven out by the Messiah and his armies. The temple would be rebuilt in all the glory that man and God could give it. "If only I were younger, I could be a part of this," he muttered aloud to himself.

He heard David and the others returning up the hill. They were more subdued than he expected. In the now dim firelight, he could see no joy on their faces, no excitement. Something was wrong. David threw himself down in his accustomed place, stared across the fire at Amos and with a look of utter disgust, growled, "It's a girl." □

The Rev. John E. Ambelang is Rector of St. Michael's Church in Racine, Wisc.



Signs of Colonialism Jar Public Hearings In Puerto Rico

by James Lewis

An ecumenical team of North Americans and Puerto Ricans heard five days of testimony about key social issues during public hearings Sept. 27 to Oct. 1.

The hearings, sponsored by the Ecumenical Committee on the Future of Puerto Rico, brought forth some 50 individuals and groups to testify on the issues of militarism, economics, environment, immigration and emigration, theology, and repression.

Panelists from North America were Sister Maureen Larkin, of the Sisters of St. Martha, Prince Edward Island, Canada, who spent three years in the Dominican Republic as an organizer among farmworkers; Dr. Karl D. Gregory, professor of economics at Oakland University, Southfield, Mich.; the Rev. James Lewis, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Sue Sullivan of the Haitian Refugee Project, Washington, D.C.; and Robert Potter, treasurer of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

Puerto Rican panelists were the Rt. Rev. Francisco Reus Froylan, Episcopal Bishop of Puerto Rico; Luis Nieves Falcon, professor of sociology at the University of Puerto Rico; the Rev. Fabian Rodriguez, a Jesuit parish priest who serves in Ponce; and Federico Cintron, chair of the Committee Against Oppression in Puerto Rico.

The accompanying article on the hearings represents a personal reflection by one of the panelists: the Rev. James Lewis. A full report on the event will be available in January from Hugh C. White, ECPC program staff coordinator for the project, at 4800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201.

As I was growing up in Baltimore in the late '40s and early '50s, one of the delights I still remember was a Sunday family ride to the country.

Sometimes that ride was up Route 40 into Frederick. The signs along that road always intrigued me. They appeared every five miles and pointed the way to Frederick by advertising Barbara Fritchie candy.

Barbara Fritchie, I came to know, was an elderly woman who, when the Confederate troops passed through Frederick during the Civil War, ignored a warning to stay indoors. Obstinate in her rebellion, she stuck her head out of an upstairs window in her home and waved a U.S. flag.

The tiny gray-haired woman who interrupted our first day of ecumenically-sponsored hearings in San Juan, was a Puerto Rican Barbara Fritchie.

A panel of nine — five North Americans and four Puerto Ricans — had come together for three days of public hearings. Those hearings were to be the culmination of almost two years of work by a broad cross section of U.S. and Puerto Rican people concerned about possible repressive conditions in Puerto Rico.

As a panel, we had been selected to listen to anyone from Puerto Rico who was willing to come forward with testimony concerning repression on

that island south of Florida and east of Cuba. Forty-nine people representing organizations and their own personal concerns signed up to testify.

Isabel Rosado's name was not on our list. No one knew that she would come forward spontaneously just as we were about to take a break.

Standing at the microphone, and with a fiery look in her eye, she waved a U.S. flag in front of us. It was attached to a plastic tube full of candy. She had taken it away from a child. Her anger flared as she recounted the incident.

"Why an American flag?" she had asked the child. "Why not a Puerto Rican flag?"

"No," replied the child, "give me back my candy."

Like a teacher denying a passing grade to an ill-prepared student, Isabel Rosado withheld the candy. Her country would not be sold for sugar. Her children would not be allowed to sell their birthright for a tube of candy.

I learned later, when the break finally did come, that Isabel Rosado had been arrested in the '50s for carrying and displaying a Puerto Rican flag.

Barbara Fritchie and Isabel Rosado had been linked across the years and miles by their willingness to express their independence in the face of oppression. Barbara Fritchie is remembered in poetry and through a candy which bears her name.

Isabel Rosado keeps her identity alive by carrying still a Puerto Rican flag in her purse and taking candy from a generation of children who are easy prey to the seductive powers of a colonial mentality that threatens to deprive them of their rich heritage.

In all the testimony that I heard, it seemed apparent that a fundamental relationship between one generation and the next is in danger of being jeopardized.

Jose Ortiz illustrated this point graphically as he told his story. He had driven northwest from Yabucoa to San Juan to represent the Committee for the Conservation of the Environment.

Yabucoa is an area much like the part of Appalachia I had just recently come from. Nestled in between the mountains to the west and the sea on the east, it resembles Charleston, W. Va., in its valley-like setting and by the fact that Union Carbide has a plant in both of those locations.

Over 1,400 people in that valley are effected by the Union Carbide graphite plant. The children are particularly victimized by the heavy layer of black graphite dust which forms a veil of soot and hangs heavily upon the residents of Yabucoa.

Jose Ortiz described the human cost of that graphite cloud.

The dust is easily visible on the clothes of the children who go to school. And even the rice served at lunch is peppered with graphite fallout. The black dust is breathed freely by the children during the day. At night it is spewed out of their noses and throats on white bed sheets.

The people of Yabucoa have carried those sheets to the management at Union Carbide. They have pleaded, protested and fought, through every legal means possible, to stop the fallout in their valley. But it continues and the parents fear for the lives of their children.

Apparent throughout the hearings,

was the concern expressed by testifiers about the apathy among the people. A certain fatalism is being passed on from one generation to the next and the result is a deadly impotence.

About 60% of the people in Puerto Rico are forced to accept food stamps in order to eat.

Unemployment ranges from a reported 20% to a more realistic figure somewhere around 40%. At least 280,000 Puerto Ricans are looking for work.

A whole wave of poor people unable to exist in Puerto Rico have fled to the United States. A new generation of middle class, well-educated and potential contributors to the welfare of Puerto Rico, are now being forced to leave their country in order to survive. Described by some as a "brain drain," this phenomenon leaves those behind even more hopeless in facing the future than they have been in the past.

The inevitable pathology resulting from such social upheaval is documented by personal stories of tragedy and layers and layers of depressing statistics.

- There are 83,000 known drug addicts in Puerto Rico.
- An average of 42 couples are divorced daily.
- Close to 600 people die in highway accidents per year.
- There is one prison death per week. The majority of those deaths are people who are young and poor.
- Alcoholism is of epidemic proportions with very few families left untouched.

The front page of *El Mundo*, the daily paper, says it all. A feature article claims that 52% of the children in secondary school have used drugs. Next to this is a story about the village of Penuelas where unemployment is 50%.

As one person testified, "We are witnessing the deterioration of the Puerto Rican personality."

At the heart of that deterioration is

the inability of the people of Puerto Rico to regain control over the very land which could deliver them from this oppression. Since the American invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898, the people have been literally losing ground. With that invasion came the dream of progress for Puerto Ricans. Progress equaled a more highly technical and urbanized life. Rural culture and values were uprooted to make way for economic development. Farming, as a way of life, was discouraged by U.S. companies like Kennecott which wanted the land for the rich copper that lies beneath the soil.

Valuable crop land was converted to sugar and confiscated by the large drug and petro-chemical companies in a post-World War II rescue attempt labeled "Operation Bootstrap." Scores of people were displaced by this economic venture.

Puerto Rico, once dreamed of as a showcase for U.S. entrepreneurial ingenuity, has now turned into a nightmare as business interests search out new Caribbean lands for cheap labor and tax credits while Puerto Ricans are unable to find room to live or land to produce food.

Once again it is the children who are forced to bear the brunt of land loss. Villa Sin Miedo illustrates that point.

Outside of San Juan, near the old Comandante Race Course, there is a 65-acre tract. It once supported about 40 cattle. Up until May, this piece of land has been home for over 1,000 Puerto Ricans.

Unable to find jobs or places to live, a number of people began to build small homes along the hillside. That was in November of 1980. Since then, 250 families have moved into this area. The people have built roads, laid water pipe, planted a cooperative garden, built a free health clinic and school, and even established a church. The village was given the name "Villa Sin Miedo" — "Village Without Fear." Inside the



Graphic above from a mural by the Puerto Rican Independentista artist, Fran Cervoni. The principal figure of this portion of the mural, which deals with the struggle for independence from the United States, is Don Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Nationalist Party and noted Puerto Rican patriot.

village, people were taught to read and were given vocational training. An internal governing committee of 31 was elected and decisions for the community were made by majority vote.

This past Spring, the government police and special forces went into Villa Sin Miedo, drove out all the residents, and burned their homes and possessions. The panel was able to see the video tapes of that destruction on a TV set carried into the hall where our hearings were held. The room was filled with former residents of Villa Sin Miedo. As we watched the tapes, they cried and turned their heads away.

One young man, Julio, had been carried into the hall on a stretcher. His leg had been broken during the raid. A

social worker who testified on behalf of the people had lost her job because of the advocacy work she had done for them. It struck me that even though these people had lost their homes and Julio had lost a piece of his leg and Anna Maria had lost her job, they had not lost their spirit.

Villa Sin Miedo was a threat to the government because it represented a communal spirit, a collective mind, that was able to question and challenge the colonial mentality. It had not been diminished by persecution.

During a break, I walked outside for some sun and air. How I would have loved to soak in the sea that surrounds Puerto Rico and be washed clean — renewed. A cat ran from the street into a

yard where children played. In the gutter was a discarded soft drink can. The brand name was “Old Colony.”

There is a more fully conscious awareness growing among people that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. The Decolonization Committee of the United Nations has come to that conclusion and has attempted to bring the matter before the General Assembly.

A week before our hearings began the General Assembly voted not to consider the status of Puerto Rico. *The Washington Post*, in a front page story, reported that U.S. officials at the highest level had done one of the most aggressive lobbying efforts ever undertaken by this country in the

United Nations to keep Puerto Rican status off the agenda.

Washington is worried.

The concern being generated in Washington seems directly related to the military significance of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is destined to become more important as a military base in the Caribbean as the United States struggles to maintain control in Latin America. The signs are clear.

Military drills in the area are numerous. Ocean Venture '81, which involved Navy and Marine landings in Puerto Rico, was the most massive military maneuver conducted by the United States since World War II.

In the last decade, the United States has assisted the Puerto Rican National Guard. That force has nearly doubled from the '70s when it was 7,000 to 12,400 in 1980. Its commander, Gen. Orlando Ilenze is currently the president of the National Association of National Guards of the United States.

As the economy worsens, Puerto Rican youth are being recruited into the U.S. armed forces in greater numbers. Junior ROTC programs are being established for children in high school and the unemployed are easy prey for recruiters.

Since Ronald Reagan became President, CETA cuts have cost the Island 25,000 jobs and funds for food and nutrition have been cut 25%.

Despite these cuts, funds for military purposes have increased to Puerto Rico to a record \$404 million, more than double the military aid to the entire Caribbean area, including El Salvador.

The last hearing sponsored by our Ecumenical team was conducted in Adjuntas, "City of the Sleeping Child," in the central-western hills of Puerto Rico.

The panel drove from Ponce north across a narrow, winding road into the tiny mountain community. The road was slick from a blinding rain storm.

In a small meeting hall in the town

square, dozens of people gathered to add their testimony to what had already been given in San Juan. We listened from 4:30 p.m. until almost midnight.

The people of Adjuntas are a proud people. Many are farmers. All are related to their Indian ancestors who fought last-ditch battles against the Spanish. They are not afraid to fight again, this time against Kennecott and Amax Corporation.

Elvin Perez, 16, spoke about his future. Protesting possible mining exploitation he said, "I am incapable of seeing our land die."

Ethel Rullan, a young Catholic woman, expressed her concern about the drug addiction among her peers and lack of concern by Puerto Rican youth about the future.

Don Francisco Santos, a farmer, read from Genesis and reminded his listeners that Puerto Ricans have a contract with the land and with God — a contract to create.

But it was Pedro Matos, a 70-year-old life-long member of the community who brought all ages together.

Matos has had no formal schooling. He is self-taught. He speaks resistance to any plan to mine the area and destroy the community. He reminded everyone that the real problem revolves around power. Puerto Ricans have no power. Until independence is won, Puerto Rico will continue to be raped of her resources and be a dumping ground of colonial ideas.

Matos abandoned the microphone, but only after he had reminded the U.S. members of the panel of the American Revolution necessary 200 years ago to achieve freedom. Ultimately, he said, it will not be what Puerto Ricans know in their heads that counts but what they are willing to risk in their lives through action resulting in freedom.

A final report is now being prepared by the committee in Puerto Rico that organized the hearings. I await it eagerly. Already I have come to a few

conclusions on my own.

- Most United States citizens do not know where Puerto Rico is geographically. It is a place in need of rediscovery.

- To rediscover Puerto Rico will be to see that country as a part of the entire Caribbean and Latin American complex. It will result in a heightened awareness of the reality of Puerto Rico.

- The reality of Puerto Rico is a colonial reality. U.S. citizens, basically desirous of doing good around the world, would be horrified and discouraged by the way our government is keeping Puerto Rico dependent and impotent.

- The roots of this dependency and impotence are grounded in the economical, political and military interests of the United States in the area.

- The price that Puerto Ricans have to pay for U.S. control is overwhelming. In terms of the health and welfare of a rich culture, Puerto Ricans are suffering immeasurably.

- The present Reagan policy, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, offers no hope for Puerto Ricans. If carried out, it can result only in more poverty, more pain and the increased emigration of large numbers of people to the mainland in search of employment. Such abandonment of their native land will only make it easier for the economic and military interest of the United States to exploit and further destroy Puerto Rico.

- In the midst of all of this the religious community, both in Puerto Rico and in the United States, must become more actively involved in standing with those oppressed and with those who are working toward a more autonomous Puerto Rico. The churches in both places will be challenged to focus upon theological realities of the Puerto Rican reality. The relationship of Puerto Rican economic, political and cultural life will have to be focused through the lens of liberation theology.

Letters . . . Continued from page 2

chairman, at different times, of the Colorado Committee for Civil Rights Legislation and of the Colorado Unity Council, I was especially disturbed.

We need more of the Rabbi's magnanimity and less vituperation to bring peace with justice.

**William B. Faherty, S.J., President
St. Louis County Historical Society
Florissant, Mo.**

Balm for Souls

Michael Hamilton's "The Peace of Jerusalem" was balm to the souls of those who yearn for peace among our estranged Semitic brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and beyond.

As I stood overlooking the valley of Migiddo in '78, it looked so peaceful. I could not even imagine that this place could become "the beginning of the end" ("the fire next time"). Today I know it is a possibility which is only a button away . . . any moment . . . from numerous stockpiles.

By nationalistic myopia, Israel seems to be laying that nation (and planet Earth) on the nuclear altar of fire, as if with a self-destructive complex. This view ignores the reality of our age in which our planet has become a neighborhood with no security for any nation in military might.

We in the United States come under God's judgment in providing Israel the means for their warring madness; for our being the first to drop an atomic bomb; for our tragic participation in Vietnam . . . The punishment is in the nuclear "package."

Our hope for peace is in God's mercy and grace. May we come together and sacrifice for peace now while we have time.

**Mary Eunice Oliver
San Diego, Cal.**

(First, we should clarify that our editorial, Canon Hamilton's article and the responses above were written before the massacre of Palestinian men, women and children in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Obviously, THE

WITNESS anguishes over this new body count and stands equally against the sanctioning Israelis and those Christian Phalangists who take their name and models from the Catholic Fascist movement of the '30's. The question arises, are those Phalangists really Christian and are those Israelis truly Jews, in the great traditions of those faiths? And then we must choose sides. We side with those Jews and those Christians who are working at other strategies for a viable peace in the area. In our view that peace, as stated in our editorial, will come when both the Israelis and the Palestinians are assured of a homeland with secure borders, and when Lebanon is once again autonomous.

Dr. Culbertson wants to "taint" THE WITNESS statistics by labeling them as coming from the PLO. That is irrelevant, since the figures must stand on their own, but THE WITNESS had no contact — perhaps regrettably — with the PLO. We corroborated those figures with a number of foreign publications unfettered by U.S. political pressures and measured them against the reports and slides from the World Council of Churches investigating team which had visited Beirut. — Eds.)

Hamilton Responds

To the Rev. Philip Culbertson . . . eyes that see not, ears that hear not:

Prior to 1948 the population of the land of Palestine was 500,000 Jews and 1,300,000 Arabs (Information Peace Almanac). Arabs were in a clear majority. Today there are 4,900,000 Jews and 480,000 Arabs in Israel. Most of the Arabs have been displaced and you will find 1,150 of them scratching a living on the narrow portions of land called the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. I submit as a distinction without a difference whether Palestinians were "forced off their land in 1948" or "fled" when they lost the war with the Israelis.

I did not say "A majority of Palestinians living within Israel see the PLO as their symbol of hope" but rather that the PLO was the "only national

expression of Palestinian Arabs." Most of the Palestinian Arabs are now in exile and the PLO represents their unchallenged leadership. It is a criminal offense for the Arabs still residing in Israel to express their support for the PLO; if they do they are either exiled, as many of their mayors have been, or jailed. Perhaps that is why Dr. Culbertson did not hear.

Dr. Culbertson did not see an Israeli swimming pool on his visits to the West Bank. If he had stayed at home and looked at an ABC documentary in August 1982 he would have. If he had read the *British Middle East Journal* (7/31/81) or the *Washington Post* (10/3/79) or indeed any of many other sources, he would have known that the Arabs have been forbidden to build new wells or increase their water intake from their existing wells since 1967. On the other hand, the Israelis have vastly increased the number of their wells to supply their expanded new agricultural acreage. This has often occurred to the detriment of traditional Arab water sources.

Communal punishment of Arabs is frequent. For instance, 1,500 houses of Arab families have been blown up since 1967. The reason? One of their family may be a terrorist, or a child may have thrown a rock at an Israeli tank. The Israeli military officials say this is a "policy of deterrence" (*Washington Post*, 11/29/79). Arab school children in Israel have to learn Hebrew (Jews do not have to learn Arabic), Arab schools are not allowed to receive outside financial assistance to improve their schools or subsidize the cost of text books (the United Jewish Appeal gives considerable money to Jewish schools for similar purposes), Arabs have an inferior teacher/student ratio. Additional information on this topic was in the *New York Times* (11/21/81).

I did not advocate a United Nations mandate in a new Palestinian state, only the possibility of stationing UN troops on Israeli/Palestinian borders.

**The Rev. Michael P. Hamilton
Canon, Washington Cathedral
Washington, D.C.**

Editorial . . . Continued from page 3

vulnerability, even to the point of risking "bold initiatives in nuclear disarmament." (*Episcopal Bishops Pastoral*)

And if, with a clap of thunder, or with the whimper of the final deterioration, our little human era does in fact fix its final punctuation mark? Then, to quote Scripture, "Then are the judgments of our Lord true and righteous altogether."

But it need not be. And such is the message of Christmas. It marks a visitation from the Eternal One, the Infinite One, the True One, the Righteous One. It is as when we are groping in a storm and a flash of lightning reveals the lost way, then disappears, leaving us the task of working out the steps which follow that vivid glimpse of reality. We must then try to make our way through the thickets, puzzling at forks in the road, but with an indelible image of the destination.

"Christ is born in Bethlehem." And so it goes? No. The depths have been revealed! The will of God, which was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, has been shown forth. Thus saith the Lord.

(R.L.D. and the editors)

CREDITS

Cover, Beth Seka; p. 4, Latin America Task Force, Detroit; p. 5, Religious Task Force, Washington, D.C.; cartoon, p. 7, Bulbul; pp. 8, 10, 13 Margaret Longdon; p. 9, as attributed, courtesy *Friends Journal*; p. 16, as attributed, courtesy Latin America Division-USCC Puerto Rican packet. Correction: THE WITNESS inadvertently omitted the credit for the peace dove on p. 16 in the October issue. It was designed by the Society of St. Francis, American Province, Mt. Sinai, N.Y.



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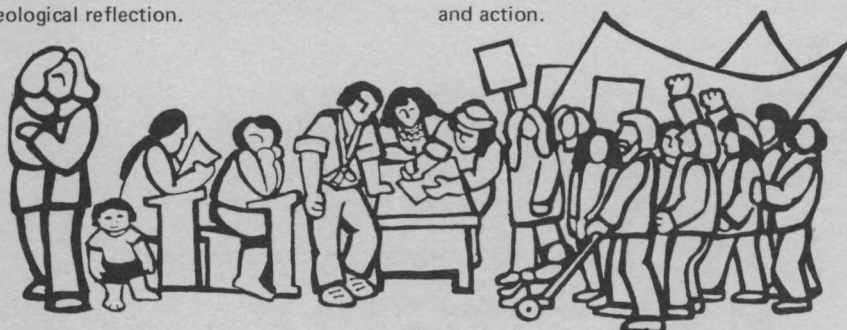
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