THE CHRISTIAN RURAL MISSION IN THE 1980's -

A CALL TO LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES

Agricultural Missions Inc., 475 Riverside Drive, Room 725, New York, NY 10115

Agricultural Missions, Inc.
475 Riverside Drive, Room 725
New York, NY 10115

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

Agricultural Missions, Inc. was founded in 1934 under the leadership of Dr. John Mott. The corporation, according to its charter, was organized:

> *"To aid selected persons, institutions, and agencies in any part of the world which are in any way related to improved agriculture and country life; to facilitate the exchange of agricultural knowledge and experience among the nations; to foster coordination of thought and action among the agencies engaged in the rural missionary enterprise; and on request to afford counsel and other cooperation to the missionary societies and their councils in the development of their services to the rural population."*
>
> *By-laws of Agricultural Missions, Inc.*
> *New York, New York 1934*

The organization helped denominational boards select and send a growing corps of rural and agricultural missionaries to some fifty countries. It also supported the training of local pastors in rural churches and in the development of a theology of rural life and rural worship. It provided a forum in which the churches could clarify goals and choose methods for making the best possible use of personnel, funds and mission lands in the work of village improvement.

Though not an official part of the Federal Council of Churches, Agricultural Missions kept very close to developments in the ecumenical movement through a Rural Mission Cooperating Committee. In 1965, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. officially formed its division of Overseas Ministries. Agricultural Missions became a part of it, along with Church World Services and other inter-church agencies, while keeping its corporate identity and own style of work. At about the same time, several Roman Catholic societies became full participant members of Agricultural mission.

By 1970, the changing situation in foreign missions and the growing debate over Development caused Argicultural Missions to review its work and the assumptions on which the rural organization was founded. That year a special committee was named to study the "future job of Agricultural Missions." The stated options were "to find a more relevant role or go out of business." In its search, the committee found peasant movements and organizations growing in the poverty areas of the world, including the

U.S.A. As a consequence of this new awareness, the 1972 Annual Meeting decided to embark on an experiment in rural network building as a main emphasis of Agricultural Missions.

Five years later, the members of the organization made another evaluation of its work. The result was a reaffirming of three priorities, namely, network building, rural training and rural women's participation in development. But in addition, the members mandated the organization to: a) relate the program more solidly to church life in the Third World; b) facilitate an understanding of alternative models for rural development; c) study and possibly vary the style of staff work; d) explore possible increased involvement on the U.S.A.; and e) communicate the program more clearly to the North American churches.

The additional mandate led to the creation of a special task force on future directions. The efforts of the task force, culminating in the 1978 Annual Meeting, are embodied in the document entitled "The Christian Rural Mission in the 1980's — A Call to Liberation and Development of Peoples."

The document presents a critical analysis of the present context of rural mission, as well as the organization's self-understanding of the biblical basis of this mission. In order to discuss the ideas set forth in the document with its constituency in the churches and Third World people's organizations in North America and overseas, the board of Agricultural Missions decided to call a consultation on the theme of "Rural Mission in the 1980's". The consultation was held on April 16-19, 1979 in Jayuya, Puerto Rico, with 140 participants coming from Asia, Africa, North America, the Middle East, Latin America, the Carribean and the Pacific. Not only did the consultation unanimously approve the rural mission document, but it went further by specifying its findings to the churches in general and to Agricultural Missions in particular.

THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN RURAL MISSION TODAY

As members of Agricultural Missions, representing denominations of the North American churches, we are convinced that any serious commitments to the rural poor should begin by looking at the present reality as it is experienced by the poor themselves throughout the world. Although we have attempted to analyze certain facts which help to explain extreme poverty in the midst of ever-increasing production and wealth, we affirm that our understanding is conditioned by class. We recognize that we and the churches to which we belong are predominantly middle class with few having experienced directly the frustrations of poverty. This in itself does not make our efforts any less important. Indeed, as we think about the future of Christian Rural Mission, the great and widening gulf between the poor and unpoor makes these efforts to understand for ourselves and interpret to our churches all the more urgent.

THE SITUATION OF THE WORLD'S RURAL POOR

The epicenter of poverty and hunger is located in the rural areas where seventy percent of the people of the world live. In 1976, Robert McNamara, the President of the World Bank for Reconstruction, concluded: "After 20 years of effort for economic development, the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening. . . the battle against hunger is being lost."

To understand the present system of development and underdevelopment in the world today, it is necessary to refer to the history of colonial expansion by which conquering powers subverted whole nations and cultures by force of arms and usurped their resources to serve the interests of "colonial empires".[1] Traditional patterns of land use were disrupted and the plantation system came into being.[2] Rural people lost their land and became tenant farmers, share-croppers and migrant workers. With the decline of the plantation system, large corporate farms have taken over, displacing whatever has remained of the family size farms.[3] In the United States, one oil corporations holds nearly two million acres.[4]

The situation is even more acute in the Third World. In Brazil, multinational corporations are allowed to carve out "homesteads" from hundreds of square miles in the Amazon region.[5] For Latin America as a whole, less than one percent of the people hold seventy-two percent of all cropland. Today, transnational corporations from the industrially developed countries relocate their plants to underdeveloped countries in search of cheaper labor and higher profit rates, all too often in connivance with the government in these countries.[6] Dispossessed of their land,

the rural people faced with political and economic barriers against producing food for subsistence, or in finding access to the market for their surplus. Although they produce much of the world's food supply, the rural people are often hungry.[7]

Domination and exploitation today, which occur on an ever larger scale and with greater intensity, are tending to deny the human potential for justice and self-reliance, as well as to destroy the possibility for nurturing a spirit of solidarity within the human family. It is a world which has created political and economic systems which give preference to, and ensure the domination of:

the few over the many;
white people over non-white peoples;
the landed over the landless;
the urban over the rural;
the wealthy over the poor;
the big over the small; and
the powerful over the weak.

It is not difficult to see that the many, the non-white, the landless, the poor, the small, and the weak — who in many cases are the same individuals, communities or nations — will have less access to limited resources as competition becomes more intense. As power concentrates increasingly in the hands of fewer people, the poor majority will have little if any participation in shaping the forces that control their lives.[8] For millions of the world's rural inhabitants, and for those in urban slums, many of whom have come from disintegrated rural areas, this means a life of misery and a denial of their human and economic rights.[9]

DISCRIMINATION AND RURAL POVERTY

Racial Discrimination. Racism aggravates the situation for many of the rural poor. It so permeates society today that there is a high degree of correlation between race and underdevelopment. In the U.S., the poorer communities are more often the ones inhabited by Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, and other non-white ethnic groups. Taken on a larger scale, the poorest nations in the world are those which are non-white Taken on a larger scale, the poorest nations in the world are those which are non-white. The economic system, which is dominated by white people, perpetuates this inequality.[10]

Land-grabbing often goes hand-in-hand with racism, with non-whites losing their land more rapidly than poor whites. This is generally true

whether it is with the indigenous peoples of North and South America or the hill tribes of Taiwan or the Maro people of New Zealand. At the mercy of economic and political systems over which they have little or no control, southern rural Blacks in the U.S. are leaving the land at twice the rate of white farmers. According to the 1970 U.S. Agricultural Census, between 1950 and 1969 the amount of black-owned farm land declined from 12 million to 5.5 million acres — a loss of more than 50 percent. One of the hardest won victories in the battle against slavery was black-owned land; this is now being lost.

The land situation is only one aspect of the institutionalization of racism in the economic, political and social life of the rural poor. In general, the concentration of power in the hands of a few people, while not solely a result of racism, is intensified and justified by it. There is a direct connection between being powerless and being non-white.

Sexual Discrimination. Discrimination against women has long been one of the most ignored factors in rural poverty. As a group, women suffer most in poverty situations. Because of social and cultural restrictions on their food in-take, women are the first to suffer from famine and malnutrition. Because of modern technology and changes in land use patterns stressing cash crops, women have tended to be displaced from their traditional roles as food producers, leading to further diminution of their status in society. Because of their lower status and their lack of political and legal rights in many countries, they are generally excluded from the sphere of economic decision-making. Consistent underestimation of the significant role of women in developing their societies has resulted in development schemes which view women as one of the causes of poverty rather than as an important key to its solution. Women are still not accepted as equal partners with men in making and implementing decisions.[11]

TECHNOLOGY AND THE POOR

Rich countries have defined the cause of poverty and underdevelopment as the lack of capital and technology. "Developed" nations are those endowed with a huge surplus of capital and consumer goods. They measure economic growth in terms of gross national product, technological innovation and labor productivity. The solution of underdevelopment, according to present development vocabulary, rests in the transfer of capital and technology from developed to underdeveloped countries. As a consequence of this development strategy, governments of developed countries have asasigned large sums of money and personnel as foreign aid to under-

developed countries. In the area of research, food industries have concentrated their efforts in developing new techniques to produce higher yielding varieties of grains and other foods.[12]

However, a decade after this development strategy has been put into operation, no less than the United Nations pronounced it a failure. Even the much-heralded Green Revolution has failed to significantly improve the situation of the poor. What went wrong? "Green Revolution" technology was not developed with the poor in mind. Moreover, development of indigenous technologies which have the capacity to help low-income people has been largely ignored. The decision to promote new agricultural technologies that are beyond the means of the poor dislocated the rural people from their lands and engendered a new poverty. From past experience, it is evident that the choice of technology is not neutral.[13]

Foreign aid, with all its avowed purpose of helping the poor, has become the tool for maintaining the status of the wealthy elite. Economic assistance has been geared to promoting increasing production on large commercial farms. Increasingly, these large farms of the elite are planted to export crops such as sugar, bananas, coffee, rubber, etc., which guarantee the elite an immediate and secured source of foreign currency. As large farms swallow the small, small farmers and share-croppers are less and less able to produce their own food, placing the Third World in a more vulnerable predicament. Thorough-going land reform programs which are the sound basis for development remain radical proclamations on paper, but devoid of reality.[14] The poor have become more powerless as the wealthy elite have entrenched their power through repressive governments, enhanced by military assistance and arms sales from the developed countries.[15]

Faced with the demand to compete with industrialized nations, the most frequently employed development strategies in the Third World countries have stripped the fruits of agricultural production in the rural areas to fuel industrialization in the urban areas. This siphoning effect has undermined incentive for agricultural development and led to shrinking of the internal market. The result is not only reduced production but also increased migration from the rural to the urban areas.[16]

Rural emigration has become a growing problem among developed countries. In the United States, the prices which farmers receive for their products do not offset the increased costs of their energy-intensive and highly mechanized style of production. Consequently, many are forced to sell their farms and join the ranks of the job-hunters in the cities.[17]

The migration to the cities has tragic consequences. It depletes the needed supply of labor in rural areas and compounds the urban problems of over-crowding, squatting, unemployment and social services. In the United States, the family farm and the way of life it represents are giving

way to large agribusiness operations, many of which control the food industry from the seed in the ground to food in the supermarket. Food is grown with heavy outlays of petroleum-based pesticides and chemical fertilizers, a practice whose effectiveness is not only being questioned, but which extracts a tragic toll on the environment and the health of farm workers. The processing of foodstuffs becomes increasingly expensive, with costly packaging, dangerous additives, and food products with less taste and doubtful nutritional value. This food system is fast becoming the model exported to Third World countries.[18]

Large scale farming run by big corporations is not necessarily the most efficient. There is evidence to support the belief that the small farmer with sufficient land and access to other production resources is an efficient producer of food. As Green Revolution pioneer Norman Borlaugh was quoted in the *New York Times* (November 5, 1974): "I have a lot of respect for the small farmer. . . .although most invariably when you look at what he's doing with his land, you find he's producing the maximum under the situation he has to work with. The thing is that he doesn't have much to work with."

Most countries can produce sufficient food for their people if more land were used for that purpose instead of for export crops. But as long as profit is the primary consideration in food production, the reality of world hunger will remain and escalate into greater suffering for the poor majority. It is not too difficult to conclude that what has passed in the name of development has in fact been anti-development. A new approach to development must first have the interest of poor people as its main component if it is going to succeed.[19]

SYSTEMS, PEOPLES' MOVEMENTS AND THE CHURCH

The struggle of peoples against poverty and hunger has become the arena of contending political and economic systems. Although enviable possessors of wealth and technology, the position of the industrialized nations in this struggle has been compromised by their notable failure to eliminate hunger and poverty among their own people.[20]

Certain socialist countries have made significant advances in relieving hunger and poverty. As a result, a growing number of poor countries are rejecting the capitalist way and are looking to some form of socialism as a strategy for change, in hopes of making the welfare of all people the primary object of public policy.[21]

The Church is caught in this conflict among economic and political ideologies that divide the world. As an institution and as represented by the missionary movement, it has been ambivalent in its position. Often

it has identified itself and has been identified with the established order which militates against the interest of the poor. At other times it has been considered a welcome partner in the fight against poverty, but only when it has been willing to face oppression and exploitation with the oppressed. In many cases, it has been simply left aside as irrelevant to the development and liberation struggle of the poor.

The ambivalence of the Church poses a dilemma to those who would like to work for change within its structures. On one side, the Church's ambivalent posture is a source of distrust on the part of the poor and of those who work to support the struggle of the poor. Moreover, many of the Church's assumptions on assistance to the poor are being challenged by the very persons the Church thought it was helping. On the other side, it appears that any attempt on the part of the Church to ally itself on the side of the poor is considered a threat by many within and outside of the Church structures who prefer to maintain the existing class arrangements. The Church's promotion and interpretation to supporting constituency have often contradicted stated goals with respect to self-reliance and the integrity of the poor.[22]

A key element now affecting Christian Rural Mission is the rise of rural peoples' movements. Throughout the world, rural peoples' movements are emerging even under the most oppressive regimes. In the Americas, Indians and peasants are banding together to save their small plots. In Africa, certain freedom movements have been deeply rooted in rural transformation. Peasant movements in Asia are a major force for land reform.[23]

In the United States, farm workers have organized themselves into bargaining units to confront the established system of crewleaders and large growers. Black farmers are forming cooperatives to keep their land, and to develop appropriate agricultural techniques and effective marketing systems.

Native Americans have resisted the tempting offers and pressures of the large corporations in the attempt to keep their land for agriculture and the development of their own people.

In some cases it is the Christian faith which has inspired peoples' movements to strive for liberation. The leadership of dedicated Christians is evident in some of them. In recent times, churches (Catholic and Protestant) have taken progressive stands in such cases as the Medellin Conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops, Pacifique 1977, etc. But these progressive proclamations have to be tested each time with concrete actions if the Church is to become and remain a steadfast partner in the struggle of the rural poor to evolve more equitable political and economic alternatives.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF CHRISTIAN RURAL MISSION

As members of Agricultural Missions, the way we view the world grows out of our firm commitment to the biblical faith. Conversely, our understanding of the Bible and the way we read Scriptures is influenced by our economic and cultural experience. We have been helped by the experience and biblical insights of the rural poor and their leaders who are working to change conditions of extreme injustice and inequity.

We believe, upon prayerful reflection, that the Scriptures are giving us new insights today which will affect our work in the years ahead.

THE WORLD WAS MADE FOR EVERYONE

The first chapters of Genesis proclaim this truth which is echoed time and again in the Scripture. The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord and He is the ultimate owner of all things (Psalm 24:1). We are not the masters of the earth and its resources, but rather stewards accountable to God for use of His Creation (Leviticus 25:23). Every human being has inherent value as a person made in the image of God; therefore, the created world is to be used for the benefit of all (Genesis 1:27-29).

This conviction about creating is expressed by the Church of old as well as the Church in our time. Ambrose of Milan, in the fourth century, declared: "It is in common, for all, that the earth was created. Nature knows no rich, and she gives birth only to the poor. When you give to the poor, it is not from your own wealth. It is a fragment of the property you are returning to them, for it is common property, given for all to use, that you are keeping for yourself."

The Second Vatican Council stated: "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis. A man should regard his lawful possessions not merely as his own, but also as a common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit of not only himself but of others. The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone."

The land, God's first gift to man, was meant to be cared for and shared by all — not possessed by a few. Abraham was blessed of God for letting go of his claim to the land when his son-in-law, Lot, needed additional pasture land for his flocks (Genesis 13:14-18).

GOD IS ON THE SIDE OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

The Exodus story reveals God at work in history; He is the God who especially loves and cares for the poor, and delivers them out of their poverty and oppression (Exodus 3:7-10). He liberates them in order that they may be His people and serve Him with their whole heart and life (Exodus 6:5-7).

The liberation which God wrought for the people of Israel became the touchstone by which they were to live as they became a nation. They were to recognize that the poor have rights, and are not to be simply the objects of charity or voluntary benevolence of the rich, but rather are to be protected by law from exploitation by the rich (Exodus 22:25-27; Leviticus 19: 9-10, 13-15, 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 24:17-22).

When the Israelites entered the promised land, the land was parceled out to families so that each family had an inalienable patrimony. "No land shall be sold outright," said the law, "because you do not own it; it belongs to God, and you are like foreigners who are allowed to make use of it." (Leviticus 25:23). The land could be leased, or given as security for the loans, but on the jubilee year, the land was to revert to the original family (Leviticus 25:8-10; 24:34; Ezekiel 46:16-18). Thus no family was permanently poverty-stricken; it could live in the expectation of making a fresh start. The vicious circle of debt and poverty could be broken, and equality of opportunity reestablished. It was the jubilee year which Jesus proclaimed had come with his own coming (Luke 4:18-19).

GOD'S MESSAGE IS ONE OF JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION

The prophets announced God's judgment because justice had been perverted and the rights of the poor denied. Frequently the wrongs committed involved the oppression of rural folk (Amos 2:6-8; 5-11; 8:4-7). Land-grabbing was one of the wrongs denounced vehemently by the prophets (Micah 2:1-2; Isaiah 5:8-10). The explosive message of the prophets is that God destroyed Israel, and sent the people of Judah into captivity because of mistreatment and economic exploitation among their own people (Amos 6:1-7; Isaiah 3:13-15; 5:1-7; 10:1-4; Micah 6:9-13; Jeremiah 5:26-29).

The call of the prophets for social justice remained unheard; yet God's purpose did not fail. His last word is not condemnation, but redemption. The Psalmists looked to a future in which justice for the poor would prevail, through the coming of the One who would establish justice (Psalm 72: 12-14). Prophets proclaimed the hope of a future messianic kingdom when peace, righteousness and justice would abound in a new, redeemed society (Isaiah 11:15; 9:6-7; 61:1-2; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 34:17-24).

JESUS HAS BROUGHT GOOD NEWS PARTICULARLY TO THE POOR

Jesus' coming was seen as the fulfillment of the hope proclaimed by the prophets for one who would "put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalt those of low degree, . . .fill the hungry with good things, and send the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52-53).

He defined His own mission in words that throb with hope for the poor. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

The Gospels attest that Jesus spent most of his ministry not among the rich and powerful in Jerusalem, but among the poor in the culturally and economically depressed areas of Galilee. He identifies with the poor (Matthew 8:20) and called his disciples to do the same (Luke 9:3; 10:4).

Indeed, His identification with the poor was, He said, a sign that he was the Messiah (Matthew 11:2-6). He gave his strongest warning to the rich who were insensitive to the needs of the poor around them (Luke 12:16-21, 16:19-31; 18:16-24). His highest commendation was for those who reflected God's concern for the poor and needy (Luke 10:25-37; 19:1-10). The eternal destiny of persons and nations will be determined by their response to the plight of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, "the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 25:31-46).

"At the supreme moment of history when God took on human flesh, the God of Israel was still liberating the poor and oppressed and summoning his people to do the same. That it the central reason for Christian con cern for the poor." (Sider, *Rich Christians in a Hungry World,* p.66f).

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus demands of all who would be his disciples certain responses in regard to the wealth and resources of the earth. His demands, which may be costly to those of us who are posessors of wealth, make us uncomfortable (Matthew 6:19-21, 24). While each person has a right to food and other basic needs, Jesus insists that it is the primary concern of every Christian to seek first His kingdom (Matthew 6: 25-33). Those who give themselves to the pursuit of wealth are in danger of forgetting that their essential responsibility is to live in solidarity with the poor. Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and said to him "You lack one thing: Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure; and come, follow me"(Mark 10:21-22). The young man

went away sorrowful, unable to separate himself from his possessions – unable to find freedom. The liberation of the rich is inseparable from the liberation of the poor.

Christ's coming called for radical repentance (Luke 3:7-14). It is a call to turn away from lording it over others, and voluntarily to seek the servanthood which Jesus himself embodied (Mark 10:35-45). As Third World Christian leaders have expressed it, ". . .The Church knows that the Gospel calls for the first and most radical transformation from sin to grace, from egotism to love, from haughtiness to humble service. This conversion is not simply interior and spiritual; it involves the whole man socially as well as spiritually and personally. It has a communitarian aspect that is fraught with consequences for society as a whole." (Letters to Peoples of the Third World, signed by 18 Third World Catholic Bishops).

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE GIVEN A VISION OF THINGS TO COME

When Christ said "The poor you have always with you" (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8), He was not saying that it will always be so, or should be so. He was not baptising poverty. Poverty and inequity have no grounds in the Gospel. The biblical vision is of a time when "there will be no poor among you" (Deuteronomy 15:4). Our hope is in Him who "makes all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

God will see to the inauguration of a new order. The future is in His hands. He offers us the strength to struggle "against the principalities and powers, against the world rulers of his present darkness" (Ephesians 6:12). He offers us the hope that the cosmos will at least be set free from the bondage of systems that bring evil and death (Romans 8:18-25). His redemptive work finally will bring every knee to bow before the Christ who embodied the spirit of the servant (Philippians 2:5-11). Following this Christ, we participate now in His awaited Kingdom as we commit ourselves to justice, involve ourselves in the task of unmasking and overcoming evil in its many forms, and take our stand of those in need.

THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO STAND WITH THE POOR

As Jesus announced the startling news that the Kingdom of God was at hand, He established a community of disciples joined together by their commitment to Him.

The earliest Christian Church embodied the pattern which Jesus had established for his disciples. There was economic sharing, according to the

needs of its members (Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37). This brought about a phenomenal evangelistic impact, so that the word of God spread and the number of disciples increased day by day (Acts 2:47; 6:7).

The fellowship (Koinonia) of the Church brought an end to those divisions which had divided humankind and set people against one another (Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 2:13-22; I Corinthians 12:12-13).

The unity of this fellowship is to be the model for the entire world (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:4-10). As the Church stands with the poor in our time, we witness to the new creation which God is bringing about through Jesus Christ. "The vision that beckons the Churches forward is the vision of one human family, in which all members will have the opportunity to live truly human lives and so respond to the purposes of God" (Statement on the *Second Development Decade and the Task of the Churches* by the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development, World Council of Churches).

HIS MESSAGE IS ALSO FOR US NOW

God speaks at various times and places. His message is not static. He comes to us through Scriptures and through the events of history.

We have attempted to analyze and describe the conditions of the world affecting the rural poor. We have reflected anew on the Scriptures.

We believe He is speaking to us now through the voice of the poor.

We believe He is calling us to participate in the efforts of the poor to be free.

This has led us to redefine our mission and our goals.

MESSAGE OF THE PUERTO RICO CONSULTATION ON RURAL MISSION IN THE 1980'S

We recognize both the limitation and the possibilities of what the church can do in transformation of the life of the poor and oppressed in the rural areas of the world. Yet we rejoice that we hear God's word afresh through them and we pledge our solidarity with them. We trust that the church may rediscover its role as a sign and evidence of God's kingdom of justice and love, and through its own conversion to the spirit of the Lord, rediscover the poor who have been made invisible and marginal by the powers and principalities of this world, but for whom Christ came to bring good news of liberation.

GENERAL MESSAGE OF THE CONSULTATION

1. We have come together in Jayuya, Puerto Rico in April 1979 from Christian churches and peoples' movements around the world, at the invitation of Agricultural Missions, to consider the theme: "The Christian Rural Mission in the 1980's – A Call to Liberation and Development of Peoples." We have found ourselves thrilled by this dynamic and creative fellowship, which includes men and women from fifteen Protestant denominations and seven Roman Catholic agencies in the United States and Canada; ecumenical agencies in the United States and around the world; twenty-four Third World people's movements from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and North America; as well as members of the Agricultural Missions Board, Staff, Consultants and Guests.

2. We wish to express our deep gratitude to our hosts, the staff of PRISA, for so graciously caring for all our needs but even more for introducing us to the reality of Puerto Rico today in all its beauty and its agony. Through this experience we have been enabled to understand the context within which the Christian Rural Mission must be carried out today. We are profoundly grateful to those who have spoken to us from the Third World out of their experiences of suffering and oppression,

and who have enabled us to reconceptualize the task which faces the church in mission if it is to be faithful in its discipleship to its Lord.

3. We express our full support for the first two sections of the document prepared by the Board of Agricultural Missions, which has served as the basis of the consultation, and urge its wide distribution and full interpretation in the life of the participating churches.

   We would urge the Board of Agricultural Missions to spell out more fully its goals and strategies for the coming decade, in light of the following resolutions and recommendations.

4. We have heard the struggles of peoples' movements through the world: rural people fighting for dignity, independence and ownership of the land which, having been given for everyone, has now been taken from them. We have heard of the oppression of multi-national corporations who control economic markets and the productive resources of the world. In their greed they are destroying the water, the air, the land, the common wealth of the earth.

   We have heard of the repression of governments that deny to their own people in the most brutal fashion the rights that are theirs.

   We have heard of the complicity of Christian Churches throughout the world which unwittingly or wittingly support sinful institutions against the poor of Yahweh.

   These voices of the people lead us to commit ourselves to combat and eliminate colonialism in every form and to walk in solidarity with the poor as they speak to us the word of God.

   THEREFORE, we support people around the world who are struggling for liberation and development, especially mentioning those who have been presented so forcefully to us during this Consultation:

   We support the peoples' movement in Puerto Rico (see Resolution A).

   We support the American Indians who have steadfastly maintained their rights as a people and as nations for hundreds of years (see Resolution B).

   We support the suffering people of Guatemala and Nicaragua, where hundreds of campesinos have been assassinated during the past year.

   We support the Korean people in their ongoing struggle for genuine independence.

   We support the freedom fighters of Southern Africa.

We support the struggle of the Palestinian people for their legitimate rights for homeland. We recognize that there cannot be peace in the Middle East without it.

We support the continuing struggle of rural workers, textile workers and miners in the United States.

We are aware that those who suffer oppression in silence and whose voices we have not heard may well represent the majority of humankind.

We are enriched by the biblical message coming through the theological reflections and dialogue every morning, and by the call to peace. It was forcefully recognized that the dispute for the land and its resources has been one of the major causes of war. In that connection the consultation affirms its support for the SALT II negotiations in the spirit of the Biblical prophecy which calls for the transformation of swords into plowshares.

MESSAGE OF THE CONSULTATION TO THE CHURCHES

1. That the churches recognize the critical importance of taking a stand on controversial issues where the very survival of the poor and oppressed is at stake, and be ready to assume the risk. In this spirit, the churches should commit their resources to the support of decolonization efforts throughout the world, including the colonized areas and people within the territorial boundaries of the United States and Canada.

   While not intended to be an exhaustive list, we specify those areas and peoples whose struggles have been so forcefully presented at this Consultation:

   Antigua
   Appalachia
   Black Americans
   Dominica
   El Salvador
   Equador
   Guatemala
   Mexican Americans
   Micronesia
   Middle East
   Mesquito Indians of Honduras
   Namibia
   Native Americans
   Nicaragua
   Philippines
   Puerto Rico
   South Africa
   South Korea
   Zimbabwe

2. That the churches mount a serious education program designed to lead to a more active solidarity with peoples' movements and organizations struggling for decolonization and the liberation of the poor and

oppressed of the world, including those in the United States and Canada; that they draw on the peoples' movements for help with analysis and critique; and that they recognize the need for a continuing reflection/action process at all levels.

3. That the churches attempt to relate their efforts to similar movements among the major living faiths of Asia and other parts of the world.

4. That the churches examine and revise all aspects of their involvement and risk in mission, especially in the deployment of funds and personnel, in light of objects stated by this Consultation.

5. That the churches critically examine and radically change their domestic church life to express their solidarity with poor and oppressed peoples, particularly in relation to budgets for maintenance, land and property holdings, investments in multi-national corporations, elitist membership on church boards, vested interests in projects, clergy classism, a theology of neutrality and exemption from taxes.

6. That the churches support the struggle of Native Americans for justice; and enable interchange between Indian communities throughout the American continents, and programs which preserve and strengthen their culture and promote the possession and development of their land.

7. That the churches avoid supporting projects which are based on charity or which tend to re-enforce the status-quo, but that they direct their resources to those working for radical change in favor of human life.

8. That the churches set a special and urgent priority to halt the loss of poor peoples' lands; e.g. to intervene in the struggle of Native Americans to control the lands which are legally and historically theirs; to intervene in the struggle to stop the loss of Black-owned farm lands in the United States which threatens to eliminate black farms by 1985; and to counter-act the forces of racism, classism, sexism and corporate power which are usurping poor peoples' land throughout the world.

9. That the churches consider such areas as the following to be especially important as related to the Call to Liberation and Development:
   - Organizing among workers, especially farm workers, migrants and women workers.
   - Support for peoples' cooperatives.

- Legal assistance to obtain, achieve and protect land rights, opposing acquisition of land by foreign individuals and corporations.
- Legal assistance to victims of human rights violations from among the poor and oppressed in colonial and independent countries.
- Support for a New International Economic Order, Basic Needs and other emerging international cooperation strategies aimed at relieving structures of economic oppression both between nations and within nations.
- Opposition to the proliferation of weapons, and military bases, and support for the transfer of funds from war to peace and human development.
- Support for Third World Conferences to analyze the causes of oppression and strategies for liberation.

MESSAGE OF THE CONSULTATION TO AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS

We address the following recommendations to the Board of Agricultural Missions:

1. That Agricultural Missions add to its mandates the task of constituency education in the U.S. and Canada, that it assist in bringing critical information from Third World peoples, including those in the U.S.A. and Canada to the churches and any other groups for the purpose of consciousness-raising and bringing about action.

2. That Agricultural Missions deepen its commitment to peoples' movements at home and abroad through increasing financial and other forms of assistance such as support for networking, communication, exchange of persons and training.

3. That it facilitate the holding of workshops on social analysis of structures of oppression in the context of global struggle for liberation from colonialism.

4. That it give consideration to dealing with the negative impact of corporations upon land and rural development.

5. That Agricultural Missions consider changing its name to more clearly reflect what it is doing and what are its directions for the 1980's.

RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO

WHEREAS, We as Christians are committed to work for human and civil rights, justice and redemption of the oppressed; and,

WHEREAS, We are convinced that all peoples have the right to self-determination and independence, and that this right applies to the people of Puerto Rico with no less force than to the people of other colonial territories, and;

WHEREAS, The member nations of the United Nations in its meeting of December 1978 ratified the resolution approved by the Special Committee on Decolonization of the U.N. which reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to free determination and independence in accordance to Resolution 1514 (XV) of the General Assembly;

THEREFORE, We, the participants of the Consultation on Christian Rural Mission in the 1980's (A Call to the Liberation and Development of Peoples);

1. Express our support and solidarity in favor of the independence of Puerto Rico;
2. Condemn a) the presence of military bases on the Island of Vieques; b) the murder of the two young men killed at Cerro Maravilla; and c) the presence of industries such as the pharmaceutical and petro-chemical complex which destroy cultivated lands, poisons the air and water and damages the life of thousands of Puerto Ricans; and;
3. Condemn all actions which in any manner violate in Puerto Rico the principles of the resolution 1514 (XV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations;
4. Call upon this Consultation to accept the challenge presented by the Puerto Ricans during this meeting to respond to concrete actions to decolonizing process in Puerto Rico;

5. Call for the immediate unconditional release of the four oldest Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners: Lolita Lebron, Ruin Flores, Rafael Cancel Miranda, and Oscar Collazo.

Puerto Rico, April 18, 1979

RESOLUTION B

RESOLUTION ON AMERICAN INDIANS

WHEREAS, The struggle of the American Indians is the oldest and at the same time the most ignored land struggle in the U.S., the Indian People are forced to fight for land which is theirs legally and historically. Their land is necessary for their physical and cultural survival as well as being sacred to them;

WHEREAS, At present, the Carter administration and the multinational energy corporations are in the process of destroying the remaining land base of American Indians for the purpose of stealing the uranium, petroleum, natural gas, coal and water.

Indian people have found no redress through the U.S. legal system. Instead, they face severe and growing repression, including imprisonment, terrorism and assassination.

In particular, the American Indian Movement has been targeted for repression and destruction. Russel Means, the leader of the American Indian Movement, is presently in prison and in constant danger of assassination attempts. Ted Means, a brother of Russel Means and AIM coordinator for the State of South Dakota, is also to be imprisoned within the next two weeks. Agricultural Missions and the World Council of Churches have worked with Ted Means on agricultural and cattle projects. Agricultural Missions and the churches therefore have a special responsibility to support him and work for his release from prison and further repression;

THEREFORE, It is agreed by the Agricultural Missions Consultation (The Christian Rural Mission in the 1980's – A Call to Liberation and Development of Peoples) gathered in Jayuya, Puerto Rico on April 16-19, 1979, to support and call upon churches to support the Indian right to sovereignty and self-determination in ownership of their land and for redevelopment of their villages and economic systems.

It is also agreed to urge the release of all American Indian political prisoners.

Further it is agreed to call upon churches to share in the education of their congregations in regard to these issues.

Further it is agreed to request funds of Agricultural Missions and through Agricultural Missions of the churches for legal defense and development projects.

Puerto Rico, April 18, 1979

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES

1 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* London, Bogle L'Ouverture, 1972.

George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies in the Third World,* New York, Oxford University Press, 1972.

Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins in Latin America, Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent,* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973.

2 George L. Beckford, *op. cit.*

3 Joseph Collins and Frances M. Lappe, *Food First,* Houghton-Miflin, 1977.

Erich and Charlotte Jacoby, *Man and Land,* Knopf, New York, 1971.

Edgar Owens and Robert Shaw, *Development Reconsidered,* D.E. Heath & Co.

4 *Our Land and Water Resources,* United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 1974. Publication #1290

Handbook of Agricultural Charts, Agricultural Handbook #504, United States Department of Agriculture, 1976.

5 Fernando Fajnzylber, *Estrategia Industrial y Empresas Internacionales: Posicion relativ de America y Brazil,* Rio de Janeiro, United Nations, CEPAL, November 1970.

Barraclough and Collarte, *Agrarian Structure in Latin America,* Canadian International Development Agency, Land Tenure Studies.

Gerardo Mueller, "Companhias Transnacionais e Desenvolvimento na Agricultura Brasileira: O Sector das Oeaginosas," *CEBRAP,* Sao Paulo, 1977.

6 Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Mueller, *Global Reach, the Power of the Multi-National Corporation.* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1974.

7 International Labor Office, *Poverty and Landlessness in Asia,* 1977.

Ernest Feder, *Strawberry Imperialism,* Institute for Social Studies, The Hague; and Editorial Compesina, Mexico City.

NACLA, "Bitter Fruits," *Latin America and Empire Report,* September 1976, New York.

Robert Ledogar, *Hungry for Profits,* IDOC, New York, 1975.

Collins and Lappe, *op. cit.*

8 Barnet and Mueller, *op. cit.*

The World Bank, *The Assault on World Poverty,* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1975.

Owens and Shaw, *op cit.*

9 Michael Perelman, *Farming for Profit in a Hungry World,* Allanheld, Osmun & Co., Montclair, N.J., 1977.

Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Assistance Program: FY1978. 2 vols. Center for International Policy, Washington, D.C. 1978.

10 E.P. LaVeen, "Agricultural Poverty and Rural Development in California," manuscript, University of California, Department of Agricultural Economics, 1977.

Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1968.

Jacobs, Landau and Pell, *To Serve the Devil.* Vol. 1 and 2. Vintage Books, New York.

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery,* G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1966.

Samir Amin, "L'Afrique sous-peuplee," *Development et Civilisation,* Nos. 47-48, (March-June 1972).

11 Ingrid Palmer, *Women and Rural Poverty,* paper commissioned by Food and Agriculture Organization Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, July 1979.

Judith Van Allen, "African Women, Modernization and National Liberation," in *Women in the World,* Santa Barbara, Clio Books, 1976.

Frances Moore Lappe and Eleanor McCallie, "The Banana Industry in the Philippines," mimeo, Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1977.

Elizabeth Faulkner Baker, *Technology and Women's Work,* New York, 1964.

12 Andrew Pearse, *The Social and Economic Implications of Large Scale Introduction of New Varieties of Good Grain: Summary of Conclusions.* UNRISD. Geneva, 1975.

Keith Griffin, *The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: An Essay on the Green Revolution,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1974.

M. Schulter and John W. Meller, "New Seed Varieties and the Small Farm," *Economic and Political Weekly.* Vol. 7, No. 13, 1972.

Clive Bell, "The Acquisition of Agricultural Technology, Its Determiants and Effects," *Journal of Development Studies.* Vol. 9, No. 1, 1972.

13 Asian Development Bank, *Asian Agricultural Survey,* 1978.

"The Pace and Form of Farm Mechanization in Developing Countries," commissioned by the Massey-Ferguson Corporation, 1972.

K.C. Abercrombie, "Agricultural Mechanization and Employment in Latin America," for the International Labor Organization, in *Mechanization and Employment in Agriculture,* 1973.

Betsy Hartmann and Jim Boyce, "Bangladesh: Aid to the Needy?" *International Policy Report,* Center for International Policy, Washington, D.C. 1978.

14 Asian Development Bank, *Second Asian Agricultural Survey.*

Lappe and Collins, *op. cit.*

Yu-Hsi Chen, "Rural Transformation in Mainland China and Taiwan: A Comparative Study." Manuscript.

15 "International Human Rights and the Administration's Security Assistance Program for Fiscal Year 1978," Washington, D.C., March 1978.

Bill Goodfellow, "OPIC: Insuring the Status-Quo," *International Policy Report,* Center for International Policy, Washington, D.C., 1977.

Human Rights and the U.S. Foreign Assistance Program, *op. cit.*

Overseas Grants and Loans and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations and Loan Authorizations, U.S. Agency for International Development, July 1945 - September 1976, Washington, D.C.

Cheryl Payer, *The Debt Trap: The IMF and the Third World,* Penguin Books, 1974.

Theresa Hayter, *Aid as Imperialism, Penguin Books, 1971.*

16 John P. McInerney and Graham F. Donaldson, "The Consequences of Farm Tractors in Pakistan," World Bank Working Paper, No. 210, February 1975.

Perelman, *op. cit.*

K.C. Abercrombie, *op. cit.*

Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara, *Modernizing Mexican Agriculture: Socio-economic Implications of Technological Change, 1940-1970.*

Bell, *op. cit.*

17 USDA, #1290, *op. cit.*

USDA, #504, *op. cit.*

18 Thomas Horst, *At Home Abroad,* Ballinger, Cambridge, Mass. 1974.

Ledogar, *op. cit.*

Alan Berg, *The Nutrition Factor: Its Role in Development,* The Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C. 1973.

19 Food and Agriculture Organization, *Production Yearbooks,* 1973-1976.

The World Food Problem, A Report of the President's Science Advisory Committee, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1966.

Owen and Shaw, *op. cit.*

World Hunger, Health and Refugee Problems, summary of a Special Study Mission to Asia and the Middle East., U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

20 E.P. LaVeen, *op. cit.*

Abraham, Lowenstein and O'Connell, *Study on Nutritional Status,* prepared by the United States Center for Health Statistics, Rockville, Maryland, 1975.

21 *Learning from China,* A report on Agriculture and the Chinese People's Communes by an FAO Study Mission, 1977, Regional Office for Asia and the Far East, Bangkok.

Joseph B.W. Kuitenbrouwer, *Self-Reliance without Poverty,* U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 1976.

22 *The Second Development Decade and the Task of the Churches.* By the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development, World Council of Churches, Geneva.

23 Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama,* New York, Pantheon, 1966.

G.M. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1970.

George L. Beckford, *op. cit.*