

# TAKE A LOOK AT OUR WORLD

**A partial perception of some aspects  
of the world today**

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When some months ago the World Alliance of YMCAs asked me to present a "World Overview" at the 1977 YMCA world Council, the hope that I would be able to summarize and clarify for myself my own present understanding of world reality led me to accept the invitation, almost gladly. But as I sat down to put my thoughts to writing, I found that it would take several hours of presentation to do anything like justice to my task. This is not, therefore, a World Overview. It is a mere glance — a partial perception of some of its realities.

In the English language, partial can mean either "relating to one part" or "one-sided". This presentation is intentionally both. Only a few aspects of world reality are treated. And that from a definite perspective — namely that of the suffering section of humanity, with a commitment to the cause of the victims of injustice in the world today.

"Enlisted in Reconciliation" is the theme for this World Council. It is a Christian theme,

taken directly out of St. Paul's writings (II Cor. 5:18). And yet, out of its context, it can be misleading. Did Jesus seek to reconcile the Roman Government and the Jewish leadership? Did he seek to reconcile the Scribes and Pharisees with the Jewish people? If he did, he would not have used such terms as "Go, tell that fox" about the Roman Ruler or "Woe unto you, hypocrites" to the Scribes and Pharisees. Not all reconciliation is necessarily Christian. Where there is injustice, one cannot simply reconcile the oppressor and the oppressed, before the injustice is removed. That is why quite often only struggle can lead to peace, why quite often cooperation is possible only after there has been a confrontation.

For that is the way the world is. An arena where good and evil confront each other. confront us. The Christian teaching is that history is a field where the wheat and the tares grow together, and can be finally separated only at the last time. But at the last time, good and evil are not reconciled to each other. The wheat is gathered together into the barns, the tares are burned in the fire. Thus it is not reconciliation that finally overcomes evil, but judgement and destruction.

Often Christians are afraid of the theme of judgement in the Biblical message. The Day of the Lord is always a day of mercy and redemption to the victims of oppression, as well as a day of doom to the oppressor. In taking a look at this world of ours, we shall keep both themes in mind — judgement and reconciliation.

The ultimate destiny of reality is what our Lord prayed for — That All May Be One. Taking all the first letters of that theme you get the word TAMBO. But let us not forget that we have to add one more letter — for the One who prayed for TAMBO, Christ; for the Way to

TAMBO, the Cross; for our own role as adopted sons and daughters of God, actors in the drama that ends up in TAMBO. If you add the letter C (for Christ, for the Cross, for the Church, for Christians, for Compassion, for Concern, for Conviction and Commitment, which are all necessary for the reconciliation that leads to TAMBO), and rearrange the letters of TAMBO, you get COMBAT, and that is a word which we as Christians should take seriously in a world where evil is forceful and regnant, (My apologies to listeners of Spanish and other languages — the TAMBO — COMBAT point cannot be easily translated.) We must clarify our vision, to recognize the presence of evil in us, outside us, in persons, in societies, and find ways and means of combatting that evil by the methods of the Cross. Our World Overview must therefore be concerned about the YMCA's own role in this Combat as well as in Reconciliation.

#### **I. Perception of the Universe — Some Philosophical and Theological Considerations.**

We are part of the universe. We cannot stand above it to get a bird's-eye view. We can transcend it in our minds. But never completely. For our minds are also conditioned by many limits.

(a) Our five senses are not equipped to take in all the data in the universe. A dog sees and hears different things which we don't see or hear. There are radio waves in this room which our sense-equipment does not pick up, but an ordinary radio can pick up and transmit to our ears as sound waves. In fact, with all our sophisticated scientific equipment and technology, we have access only to a very tiny segment of the spectrum of reality. We see reality only "as through a glass, darkly".

(b) Our culture limits our perception. Our ways of looking at and understanding reality is severely conditioned by our cultural traditions,

linguistic habits, our educational system by our historical experiences, by our geographical location, by our science and technology, by our religious heritage, and so on.

(c) Our perception is also limited by our interests. We perceive more readily what is useful to us. If there is a gold coin and a piece of tin lying on the floor, we are more likely to perceive the gold rather than the tin. If making money is our main interest, then we will readily perceive the easier ways of gaining profit, and our admiration will be for those who are making piles of money. If power is our main interest, the powerful and their acts will be the ready objects of our perception. If you are a capitalist, you are likely to see more easily the obstacles to the development of capital and profit, rather than the problems faced by the poor. Our interest determines our perception and we cannot see some things in the world, because to see them in their true light would demand some difficult and radical changes in our own attitudes and actions. My perception of the world may not agree in all respects with yours, for my cultural tradition as well as my interests may not be the same as those of some of you.

### **The basic structure**

We can see the universe as composed of inter-related objects in space, beginning with the galaxies of space coming to our own star, the sun, and our own planet, the earth, and our own continent, country, town, village, home, etc. This is the spatial view of the universe — the universe of physical scientists for the last several centuries.

More recently, especially as a result of the Hegelian philosophical tradition, we have come to see the universe, not as a series of objects, but as a series of inter-locking events. Each event is a unit of reality related to both past and future events. The event is the stage

in which the objects and persons play out the drama, and all events together constitute a process. This view has been popularized by thinkers like Bergson, Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin. We will call it the temporal view of the universe. Historical understanding and Process Philosophy prefer this framework for looking at the universe. This is the view today of the social sciences.

A Christian view must take into account the views of both the physical sciences and the social sciences. But that is not sufficient. In certain circles of western thought, there is growing up a new framework, which comes closer to the Christian understanding of reality. And this framework is of primary significance. Most of our world analyses, while sophisticated and complex within their own framework, show the limits of the framework which does not allow all the data being taken into account.

This new framework is provided by a confluence of several fields of new biological research. Prof. Burr of Yale was one of the early pioneers, much misunderstood by his contemporaries, of the line that life itself was a field of forces \* an interdependent system of force-fields. Many of these forces we do not as yet know very much about, but have evidence enough to suspect that they are impinging upon us.

A human being is not simply put together with three components called body, mind and spirit, but is himself or herself a force-field which inter-acts with other force-fields. But so are animals, plants, all living things. The development of Kirlian photography in the Soviet-Union and ongoing research in what they call 'Bioplasmic Energy' in the Soviet-Union, has made it possible to perceive that

\* Burr, *The Fields of Life*

there is in each living being a field of energy which grows and develops and changes in inter-action with other force-fields in the universe. The genes and chromosomes direct this energy in a particular direction of growth, but not the only determinant. The whole environment, with various known and unknown force-fields, inter-acts with the force-field of each unit in it. These force-field and their mutual interaction are not completely predetermined. The forces which we call consciousness and will are also components of this system of inter-action of force-fields.

It is very important to get this perception right, because it provides a more comprehensive framework for our 'World Overview'. I cannot go into detail here, but proceed from this to a Christian theological perspective which helps us to see the world from the perspective of the faith.

## **II. A Christian Perception of the World Reality**

Again one goes into short-hand to provide the rough outline of this Christian perception of reality. We posit the following basic force-fields which constitute reality.

### **1. The uncreated force-field which we Christians call the Triune God**

This is the fundamental reality from which all created reality flows and on which everything else is dependent. We say that it is God Who, without Himself being caused, is the cause and ground of all. He not only 'called' the creation into being from non-being; He directs its movement forward to its fulfilment, gives the energy for that forward movement, and takes the universe to its goal. Without the guiding and sustaining force-field of the *energeia* of God, nothing can exist, and all that exists will go back to nothing when it falls outside

this force-field of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

## **2. The created force-field of the process of creation and its evolution**

This is the realm where our science explores the reality and its inter-relationships. Science is also a growing and changing body of knowledge. No philosopher of science worth his salt can today say that it is a body of proved knowledge. All they can say is that this body of knowledge stands up fairly well to certain reality tests and are therefore helpful for our understanding of that reality and for the development of a technology that allows us to control, transform, manipulate and use that reality for our own purposes. Science does not reveal to us the whole of reality. It helps us to uncover certain hidden aspects of the inter-relation between various sub-fields of energy, (matter and life in there various manifestations). Matter, too, is a field of energy, we know now. So is life, as also consciousness and will.

## **3. The subsidiary force-field created by human purpose, will and action.**

As it expresses itself in person and community, in society and history. This human creation is the area where freedom, which is God-bestowed in creation, most clearly manifests itself, at least from our own perspective. The human mind or consciousness and will, which is itself more than just the activity of the brain, cannot be located in any part of the human body. It is an aspect of the force-field that constitutes us as human beings, and has its own freedom, within limits, to choose, to understand, to will, to image, to create, to transform. It is an important concern of Christians that all humanity is able to develop to the full this freedom. But it can be developed only when that which stands in its way is removed.

**4. The created force-field or anti-force, generated by created being in its freedom, the anti-force of non-being, non-truth, non-love, non-wisdom, non-freedom, which we call evil.**

This force of evil, generated in freedom by the creation itself, contradicts and seeks to countervail the power of being and the good given to the creation by its Creator. This force-field is operative, Christians believe, not only in each human being; it is operative also in the institutions and structures of society; it works even in organic and inorganic matter, for we see that everything in creation is subject to non-being, driving everything towards disintegration, decay and death. This universe now open to our senses is subject to death and decay. It is not permanent. If it is to endure, it has to be different, not subject to Carnot's Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that all things are energy-fields giving out the finite amount of energy contained in them and moving towards the "stable equilibrium" of death and inert non-being. St. Paul says the same thing in Romans 8:21, when he says that the creation itself shall be liberated from the slavery to decay and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We would be making a big mistake in our World Overview if we assumed that it is in this world of time as we now experience it that evil shall be finally overcome. The ultimate overcoming of evil demands a reconstitution of our world at all levels. Matter itself will have to be reconstituted in the New Heaven and the New Earth, so that it no longer obeys Carnot's Second Law, but is able to endure for ever as a non-disintegrating force-field.

We must also not make the other mistake in our World Overview that because in history the good will always be mixed with evil, therefore we can do nothing about it. Our business in history is to carry on the struggle against evil, to overcome evil by the good.



## **5. The force-field of the Incarnate, Crucified and Risen Christ**

The final overcoming of evil is, however, assured. It is assured because Christ is risen. Death, who ruled asking in our little world, has been overcome. He has lost his universal triumph. "Where, o death, is Thy victory?" "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15: 54) when Christ tasted death and broke its fetters by rising from the dead. The power of the Risen Christ is the place where we see the uncreated force-field of the Triune God, and the created force-field of the human energy come together into an ineffable union for the redemption of this death-bound universe. This new force-field of the Incarnate Christ is also operative in our world, redeeming it, saving it, taking it from death to life, from evil to good, from non-being to being. We Christians are privileged to be conscious of the mystery of the Incarnate Christ's presence in the world, and are (ought to be) ourselves manifestations of that Incarnate Presence. This is the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, where the life-giving, form-creating, liberating, personal power of God operates through a new divine-human community called the Church. Despite all her failures, despite all her atrocious betrayals of her Lord, despite all her lethargy and indifference, despite all her desire for power and glory, for comfort and popularity, she continues, in a mysterious way, to be the bearer of the redeeming power of Christ. Without any civil or economic power, or despite her misuse of civil and economic power, she is a force-field in which the power of the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Christ, the power of the new economy of the Spirit, operates in a mysterious way to bring the creation to its fulfillment and destiny. The mystery is in the ineffable way in which both the uncreated divine and created human force-fields work together in a synergism which we believe but cannot understand.

## **6. The created force-fields of the cosmic powers**

Our faith affirms that the drama of history is larger than the stage of history that we can see with our senses. The author of Ephesians tells us of powers and forces "in the heavens" (3:10) who are involved, negatively and positively, in our historical struggle. As the Jerusalem English Bible puts it: "The sovereignties and powers should learn, only now, through the Church, how comprehensive God's wisdom really is, exactly according to the plan which he had had from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). On the one hand, "it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the sovereignties and the powers who originate darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens" (Eph. 6:12). On the other hand, the heavenly 'cloud of witnesses on every side of us, invisible but operative, are engaged with us in the same struggle of good and evil, between being and non-being, between life and death. Christians can subscribe to no world overview that disregards or overlooks this dimension of the process of the universe.

This, I submit, is the hasty sketch of the framework within which we must view the world, neither a three-storey framework of hell, earth and heaven, nor a secular framework which takes history as self-contained, self-generating and autonomous. All six aspects are important.

## **III. The World of History Today**

I don't know how many of you were able to orbit with me in the universe in my flight into cosmic space for our World Overview. I am splashing down, landing in the sea of current history. Can you come with me for a quick glance at our earthly, historical world, the hard realities which you all know so well. I shall be brief, and touch on the four poles of that earthly historical reality today. Not that

I believe in the first, second, third and fourth worlds of which people frequently speak. But they are groupings which have much in common:

(a) The first for me, in degree of commitment, because of my own historical situation, is the world of the poor millions. They are the majority of humanity—the poor people of the non-oil exporting countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific and other islands.

(b) Then there are the people of the socialist countries—of China and the Soviet Union, of North Korea and Vietnam, of Laos and Kampuchea, of Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, of Cuba, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Albania, D.D.R., Yugoslavia and perhaps Tanzania, Mongolia and others. They are not all equally poor. But they have chosen a path which somehow threatens some and fascinates others, the path of socialist development. The YMCA cannot work in these countries. But they are also people, and their welfare is of concern to us.

(c) Then there are the peoples of the oil-exporting but industrially less developed countries—Venezuela, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. A very large part of these people are Muslims, and we Christians have to make an effort to identify ourselves with them as human beings.

(d) Finally, there are the richer industrially developed countries following the market economy system of development. The U.S.A. is at the head of this group, with West Germany and Japan as seconds-in-command. They are now-a-days referred to as the North. But some of their members are south of the equator, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Now some people, in their overview of the world, tend to see the polarization as North-South or Rich and Poor. Such terminology helps only to obscure the reality. The difference between Cuba and Chile is not between the rich and the poor, or North and South.

Let us stick to the four-fold classification of peoples—non-oil sub-industrialised, oil-exporting sub-industrialized, socialist sub-industrialized and industrialized. The lines of demarcation are not always so clear. For example India is the eighth largest industrial producer of the world, but I will put her in the first category, for she has still not begun to resolve her problems of poverty and employment despite a high degree of industrialization.

These four groups are sufficiently homogeneous, however, to permit us to regard each group as a corporate force-field, increasingly recognizing their common interest (despite internal competition) and often in confrontation with each other.

We should first take into account the fact that most of YMCA activity is in zone 1—non-oil sub-industrialized countries and in zone 4—the market economy industrialized. In fact many people regard the YMCA as an arm of the industrialized market economy countries and their economic and cultural interests operating in the sub-industrialized non-socialist world. For many of our leaders, the YMCA appears like a link between the middle-class interests in our country with similar interests in the industrialized capitalist countries. This impression is reinforced by the obscured fact that the YMCA seldom organizes a programme of action which can be regarded as revolutionary or radical. There are very few among the local YMCA leadership who would be regarded as exceptionally progressive. They are generally defenders of the status quo in most countries.

How much attention has the YMCA paid to the central fact of our time—the growing gap, despite great industrial progress, between the rich and the poor? Statistics can do no justice to the dimensions of the problem. But it is a fact that during the 20 years from 1952 to 1972 the total product of the developed market economy countries grew from \$ 1250 billion to \$ 3,070 billion, (i.e. by more than 145 percent). Their per capita income grew from \$ 2,000 a year to \$ 4,000 a year. The gap previously between the rich and the poor was \$ 1,825 in 1952. In 1972 it was \$ 3,700. That is, with the doubling of income in the rich countries, the gap between the rich and the poor has more than doubled, though poor countries' per capita income grew from \$ 175 per annum to \$ 300.

Remember that the figure of \$300 per annum is not yet realized for the millions of India and many other less developed countries. We in India are still staying at \$100 per annum, whereas some countries in Europe or America have gone up to \$ 6,000—the gap is thus 1 to 60.

Does the YMCA do anything to make young people aware of this problem? The YMCA has made development one of its priorities, and emphasizes the need for self-reliance and self-determination. I am glad to hear that the YMCA in the U.S.A., through its International Division, has organized some 25 groups to study the international linkage of economic problems, to study the New International Economic order and the activities of the Trans-National Corporations. There are perhaps a few other efforts here and there. But can the YMCA effectively serve the young unless it gives central priority to the question of the growing inequality of distribution of wealth in international human society?

The tragedy of the thing is that there is no

strategy developed so far which gives hope of eventually narrowing the gap. All strategies, including that of the U.N. at present, have been seen to be inadequate. Where then is the hope that the young people of today can live tomorrow in hope? If the latest report that is before the U.N.—the Leontieff Report—is to be believed, what people call the New International Economic Order will not be able to reduce the gap.

How many years longer of frustration will it take before we all wake up to the fact that the existing economic system in three out of our four zones is doomed and cannot be repaired beyond a certain point? That it is built in such a way as to go on increasing the inequality and therefore the look for an alternate system in all the three zones must be accelerated with all deliberate speed? That the ritual of conferences and commissions and reports and bureaus are inadequate to find a lasting solution to the problem of injustice in our world? That unless radical international solutions are found, the per capita income of Non-oil Asia and Africa will be below \$500 a year even in 2000 A.D.? That the poor countries in the world are in debt already to the tune of a 100 billion dollars, that this debt burden is going to double in a few years, that there is no way to reduce this burden at present, that it will go on growing at the rate of 10 to 14% every year?

How long will it be before we realize that

(A) we have to shift from a market economy system to a system where ownership of the means of production and decision-making on production and distribution rests with the people if justice is to be ensured both within and between nations?

(B) the proposed New International Economic Order is a false help before our eyes to make

us believe that the problems will eventually be resolved?

(C) without a New International Political Order, a New International Economic Order cannot be implemented effectively?

But what can the YMCA do to face this enormous problem facing humanity? The question needs to be tackled here. Youth has already become radicalized. If the YMCA still continues to be a middle-class bourgeois organization, it will only alienate itself from the young people it wants to serve.

#### **IV. The Poverty of Affluence**

A second major problem that the YMCA should be seriously concerned about in its World Overview is the growing dissatisfaction that young people feel about the consumerist affluent society we have created. This is a problem not only for the industrialized fourth zone, but also equally for the first three zones.

We have proceeded, especially in the second half of this century, after the Second World War, with the assumption that having is being. We have measured our growth and development in terms of the quantum of goods and services each nation is able to produce and consume. We have classified the world into developed and under-developed in terms of the degree of industrialization, in terms of how many cars and TV sets each family has, in terms of the goods we can see in our shop-windows.

Such a view helps only the cause of the industrial capitalists and leaders who make more money and thereby acquire power over others. Even the socialist countries are reduced into compromising their own basic humanism by getting into the rat-race of producing and consuming. The rich capitalist countries taunt the socialist countries for not

having achieved their level of industrial production and consumerism. Without wanting to do so, the socialist states also are forced, both by public demand and by the pressure to compete with the capitalists, to follow the way of consumerism.

The countries of the Two-Thirds World, which belong to our first and third zones, also enter the rat-race. Even India, with all its high spiritual values and rich religious traditions, the search in Government planning is almost exclusively for a higher GNP. Growth is still measured in terms of Gross National Product, and growthism, or the desire to keep up with the Joneses, makes us slaves of this mighty machine of producing and consuming. We refuse to ask the question: What are the human values and qualities that we need to promote in the very process of producing more.

When the question is raised among intellectuals in India about human values and qualities, the answer is: let us first solve the problem of poverty, then in the second stage only we can afford to worry about values and qualities. The quest for quantity and the quest for quality are thus divorced and separated into two stages, and the planners devote all attention to the question of quantity, paying only lip service to quality.

The fact of the matter is that quantity of goods produced and quality of human life are not two separate stages. It is in the very process of producing more goods that we make irreversible decisions about quality of life. If acquisitive greed and pursuit of power and profit are the motives for work, then even if we achieve the level of prosperity prevailing in Sweden or U.S.A., we will be no better off as human beings. Social values are produced, not after we have produced and consumed enough, but in the very process of production and consumption.



Gandhi may have been right in saying that for the hungry God must appear in the form of food. But that is not the whole truth. Man does not live by bread alone, but he does live by bread or rice. The point is that the way we produce and distribute bread is itself shaping our beings, our personalities, our societies. Therefore, in some countries the first priority, is not economic growth, but the social education of the people, in order to liberate them from the greed and selfishness that makes society unjust. Their GNP may not be as high as in some others, but they have achieved some significant human progress with regard to unemployment, illiteracy, educational opportunities, a more equitable distribution of wealth, a greater hope and vigour among the people rather than fatalistic despair, a belief that they can act as people to solve their problems, rather than look to the state to solve all their problems for the poor. The most radical change needed is in the selfish attitudes of people, for it is when people learn to work and to cooperate, not each for his or her own personal benefit but rather for the common good, for the benefit of all, that they are able to solve their problems.

A country like Tanzania still faces many tremendous difficulties. It still has to grow in industry and agriculture to ensure a better level of fulfilling human needs. But it is moving strenuously in the direction of the right to employment and work, the right to have a roof over your heads, the right to free education and health services, the right to participate in social decision-making under the over-all national plan, the right not to be exploited by foreign or national business interests — these are basic human rights necessary for the dignity of man and woman.

These rights are not affirmed with the same effectiveness in countries of the First, Third and Fourth zones. And since most of us in

this world Council meeting come from these three zones, we should see what we can do to sharpen our own understanding of these problems!

#### **V. Some Economic Issues which are Political**

Due to limits of time, I will have to be aphoristic in my statements. These brief sentences are meant to promote discussion in the groups:

1. The problem of poverty, want and suffering in the countries of the first zone can be solved only by a disciplined effort of all the people, in an internationally coordinated way, based on the principles that (a) equity of distribution, (b) self-reliance based on the social ownership of property and social participation in decision-making, and (c) social motivations for work are necessary conditions for such a development.

2. The international trade system, the international monetary system, and the international banking system will have to be brought under democratic world control in order to ensure justice between nations. There is no provision for this in the proposed New International Economic Order of the United Nations. The N.I.E.O. operates within the World Market Economy System and seeks only to remove some of its most glaring contradictions, so that the system of oppression and exploitation can go on, to the benefit of the already rich.

3. In a capitalist economy, both nationally and internationally, those who own large amounts of capital, including the Trans-National Corporations, are able to produce more and accumulate more. The system therefore enhances injustice fundamentally, though some injustices are removed from time to time. The system needs overhaul. The N.I.E.O. is unable to do so. It is therefore a false hope.

4. The right of every able-bodied human being to socially useful labour, and the right of every human being to food, shelter, clothing, health services, education and communication, are the two fundamental human rights. It is wrong to give priority to the freedom of speech over the two fundamental freedoms — the right to work and employment, and the right to live a dignified human life with basic needs met. The other freedoms, the so-called democratic freedoms, are necessary, but they should generally be given only second priority. However, in some situations it may be a first priority to fight for freedom from torture, freedom from extra-legal arrest and detention, freedom from oppressive oligarchical control, because these freedoms are brutally suppressed there.

5. In terms of many local conflicts, we need to realize both their economic basis and their international ramifications. For example, in Southern Africa, the white minority oppresses the black majority for the sake of economic dominance and exploitation. In the Middle East, Israel, given a free hand, can quickly dominate the Arab countries economically. The fight in Lebanon is to be explained partly in terms of the Christian Maronites dominating the economy and exploiting the Muslims. In Northern Ireland, the Protestants dominate the economy and exploit the Catholics. Even in Uganda, it is a fact that the Christians dominate the economy and oppress the Muslims. In all these areas, the conflict of interest between western nations of zone 4 and the nations of zone 2 play a large part. We should always look to see which nations are on the side of the oppressed, and how they use their influence.

6. New hot-beds of conflict are emerging. The most important is the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. This has to do with eventual control of the oil-producing areas, as well as

with military strategies for world domination. Israel, Iran and Southern Africa are also important keys to the control of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. The new conflict is in the Horn of Africa between Somalia and Ethiopia. The naval-nuclear base in Diego Garcia as well as bases in Somalia and South Africa also fit into this pattern of Indian Ocean — Red Sea domination for the sake of ensuring oil flow into zone 4, and for the domination of the world by military-economic power.

7. The alliance between Industrial Wealth and Military Power is a major hazard for humanity. Without breaking this alliance the oppressive force of exploitation in the world cannot be finally tackled. The arms trade is the biggest new development in this situation of the growing grip of the military-industrial complex. This trade must be restrained by some ground rules agreed upon by the nations of the world.

8. Disarmament is a major issue towards the resolution of which the YMCA must devote considerable attention and effort. Today world defence expenditure is over 300 billion US dollars a year. This works out to more than 820 million dollars a day. We need a gigantic effort on a world scale to re-channel human energy and resources for peaceful uses. World public opinion has to be raised on a massive scale to bring about the necessary pressures on all governments. The issue is not merely that of possible nuclear destruction of the world. It is the gross and totally pointless waste of human effort, its economic aspects, its contributions to generating a military culture, and its contribution to the growth of injustice in the world that should engage world attention.

9. The nuclear energy issue becomes the focus of an impassioned controversy in Europe — particularly in Sweden, Holland, France, etc. We should understand the issues involved.

(a) There is a formidable shortage of energy to be foreseen if industrial development is to continue.

(b) Fossil fuels and hydro-electric power cannot supply this need.

(c) Alternate energy sources like solar power and wind and wave energy are not, with present technology, adequate to meet the need.

(d) Nuclear energy is a feasible alternative, but the risks involved are so immense that we have no right, with the present scope of our scientific technical knowledge, to proceed further with the building of nuclear reactors, until safer waste disposal techniques are discovered. We have no right to expose present and future generations to a totally insecure world as a consequence of

(i) risky disposal of highly unstable nuclear wastes;

(ii) the possible risks of leakage due to human error or negligence in the construction of reactors;

(iii) the hazards of hi-jacking of nuclear fuel and the risks of radio-activity to which people can be subject as a result of such hi-jacking;

(iv) the risks of using nuclear technology for destructive purposes by states, by terrorists, etc.

The debate has two aspects. First if you ask me: Is it a sin to exploit nuclear energy, I would answer with an emphatic no. All power is under Christ and given to man. Second, if you ask me, is it right in the present time-scale of our knowledge of science and technology, to go ahead with the large-scale building of nuclear reactors all over the world, I would again answer with a "no", in the light of the dimension of the four risks mentioned above.'

10. That leads to an important point—the direction and orientation of research. Money for research now comes partly from government and partly from the corporations. The corporations are primarily interested in quick and easy profit, and their research is only incidentally directed to human welfare. Government decisions on research allocations are also disproportionately oriented to military technology. Little money is available for research on solar energy or appropriate technology, or for developing patterns of social organisation which enhance rather than reduce the quality of human life.

11. On the Ecological Problem, the main issues are

- (a) regulation of population increase and distribution
- (b) economic regulation of resource and energy use
- (c) control of pollution
- (d) regulation of industrial development in order not to take the risk of upsetting the eco-balance or exposing future generations to the risk of radio-active contamination
- (e) the debate on the tension between sustainability and justice in the world.

12. On Trans National Corporations, the position is as follows. Their defenders argue that

- (a) they increase effectiveness in large-scale production necessary for development;
- (b) they facilitate the transfer of technology;
- (c) they create some employment in a world where large-scale unemployment is a major problem;
- (d) they make generous contributions to education, culture and research; and

- (e) they show the way, by transcending national frontiers, towards a future world of international economic organisation, towards a new international economic order.

#### Their critics argue

- (a) the kind of technology they bring is not suited to the real needs of a country, but are geared only to their quick profit; Zone one needs labour-intensive technology; TNC technology is counter-productive;
- (b) they concentrate not on essential goods like food, housing, clothing, transport etc. but on frivolous or luxury goods like beverages, toilet articles and automobiles;
- (c) they create oligopolistic patterns in pricing (e.g. drug prices);
- (d) they provide unfair competition to smaller local entrepreneurs and drive them out of business;
- (e) they evade control by national governments;
- (f) they bribe and corrupt national governments;
- (g) they use their tremendous economic power and international contacts to bolster up reactionary regimes and to subvert the efforts of progressive forces;
- (h) they gain control of the news media through advertisement funds, through subsidies, and through international news agencies which are themselves Trans National Corporations; by information control they exert undue power in societies;
- (i) they spread an unhealthy consumerist culture, becoming major instruments in a cultural imperialism which is part of the white western domination of the world (technological and organizational power is now concentrated in the white

western world and TNC's are an expression of that concentration).

## **VI. Direct YMCA Issues**

I should like to conclude by raising some issues of direct importance to the YMCA.

1. How can resolute action be taken to ensure that people under 30 have a majority role in policy-making, in planning and execution of policy, and in local leadership in the YMCA? This is a high priority question. The YMCA cannot be revitalized unless the youth of the world comes to have a dominant role in YMCA affairs.

2. How can the YMCA foster not only personal growth in individuals, but also make young people see clearly that no genuine and just growth of persons can be achieved except through the commitment to the growth and development of society. How can YMCA programmes coordinate personal growth and social growth at the same time?

3. The YMCA, both on the world level and at the national level, must do a lot of fresh reflection on the question of its objectives and purpose. Does the YMCA still regard itself as a lay Christian movement, which through programmes of study, action and worship, seeks to extend the Kingdom of God in persons and societies? Or should it rather be a secular organization, a kind of youth club, professing some Christian values but in effect only another organisation for social service? It is of course less embarrassing not to make any religious claims, especially in our secular cultures. In a society like America, where the only significant non Christian religion is the Jewish faith, Christians can open the leadership to all comers and still retain majority control. But what about Bangladesh or Japan, Turkey or Indonesia? It is clear that one single policy cannot hold for all these situations.



Besides, to be Christian means both identity and openness. In different situations we must look for ways of maintaining both identity and openness.

The issue, however, is not just whether we keep the C in YMCA. You may find a formula that will allow selective admission of non-Christians into the membership and leadership of the YMCA without losing your identity as a historically Christian organisation. But that is only part of the problem. The real question is, in what form shall the Christianness of the YMCA be expressed? Having a rule that Christians should have a majority in the policy-making bodies of the YMCA will not ensure the Christian character of the Y, because

- (a) it is always questionable as to how Christian these so-called Christians are;
- (b) even if the leadership is more than nominally Christian, the policy and programme of a Y may not be based on a deeper and truer understanding of Christianity.

In the first place, it needs to be said that to be Christian is to be open to all humanity. To be united with Christ is to share Christ's love and concern for all humanity—for Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Communists, Atheists—all "Who is my neighbour". Christ's answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan is: "Don't ask that question. Rather you be a neighbour to anyone whom you find in need, anywhere, under any circumstances."

On the other hand, the Christian has also a closure to the world outside. In the early centuries, on Sunday morning when the Christians assembled for prayer and Bible study, all were welcome to their meetings. No one would be refused entrance to the Church whatever his religious background. But then always a moment came, when the Christians

asked the others to leave, and only the baptized entered into a secret meeting with the Lord called the Eucharist, which the unbeliever could not attend but in which he could only be prayed for.

This rhythm of total openness to all and partial closure for the encounter with God in worship should continue to be the pattern of the work of the YMCA. Where that partial closure for worship is abandoned, secularization results and the C becomes inoperative.

It is possible for the YMCA in a country to take the decision to take the C out. This can be done in a country like the USA, or in a country where the Christian community is weak, like Turkey or Bangladesh. What would be the consequence? In both situations, this would virtually be a decision to discontinue the YMCA as an entity after a few years. It is the C that gives the identity to the YM. Once you take that out, the identity disappears, and then you merge with the whole. If Christian identity is important, then the C must remain, both in name and in the character of the operation. Identity and openness are both equally essential to being Christian. It is from the identity that the openness comes, not from a blank. Openness does not mean open like a meadow, but open like a door.

But the C must also become real. There must be something behind the door that is worth coming to. Otherwise people will attach no meaning to the adjective Christian. But how do we make sure that the Christian element in YMCA is more than in a name? Three elements can be proposed:

- (a) *intellectual clarification*—through discussion groups, using the best spiritual and intellectual resource persons in the community;
- (b) *worship services* — using a maximum of

meaningful symbolism, people's participation and with richness and depth of meaning;

- (c) *outstanding sacrificial service*—unusual forms of service demanding a high degree of dedication and sacrifice as well as love have to be created in each situation.

The combination of the three elements of work, worship and study alone can sustain Christianity in a community in the YMCA or elsewhere.

4. In multi-religious contexts, especially in Asia, YMCA will have to make a conscious effort to promote deep dialogue with other religions, in order to learn from ancient Asian wisdom. The churches of Asia are afraid to do so. They believe only in a one-way mission and will therefore continue to be ignored or despised by the intelligent people of other religions.

Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism have much to teach us, whether we are Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, Europeans, Americans, Aussralians or whatever else. The new discoveries in nuclear physics bring the insights of those religions very close to the scientific understanding of reality as an inter-connected system of force-fields, where individual units cannot be separated from each other.

The YMCA now has the image of being the agent of western culture to the rest of the world. Can this image be reversed? Can the YMCA facilitate the culture of the world being transmitted to Christians? This is a big challenge.

5. The YMCA now seems to be a middle-class institution. Its relation to the poor of the world is in terms of "social service" in the sense of doing something for them—a blind school, an institution for the mentally retard-

ed, a clinic in a slum etc. This has two defects —(a) it concentrates on the handicapped among the poor and leaves the vast majority of the poor untouched; (b) it does something "for" the poor, rather than making it possible for the poor to fight for their own liberation from the oppressive yoke. Most YMCA activities of this kind help only to reinforce the oppressive system by dressing the wounds of some of its victims. Can the YMCA undertake some radically new projects involving the structural evils of society, and in which the poor are the active participants in the struggle not merely passive recipients of help.

Learning from the poor is dangerous business. When their forces are mobilized with YMCA help; the forces of oppression will turn their guns on the YMCA. That is when you will need the C in your name.

Let us here in this World Council meeting look at the inter-play of force-fields, and see where the YMCA is lined up now, and where it should be. The force-field of the Incarnate Christ is also interacting with us. Let us be sensitive and be guided by it.