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Windhoek - Urban Mission

In August, David Poynton, the CPSA education officer, visited St George's Cathedral to lead a seminar group on the role of the cathedral congregation in the city of Windhoek.

About twenty members of the cathedral parish met together every night for a week, and discussed the mechanics of the church, relationships within the congregation and between the congregation and the rest of the town. The areas which seemed to need most urgent attention were discussed and listed, and planning groups consisting of people interested in these aspects have been meeting to try and work out a policy for the future.

This description makes it sound dry and dull and bureaucratic - the whole concept of 'planning' after all, reeks of bureaucracy. Yet this was not like that at all.

Windhoek is not big, as cities go, having a population of only about 60 000, yet it is the capital and largest city of a country 318 000 sq miles in extent. The population of South West Africa is smaller than that of Durban. Yet in Windhoek itself, there is a great need for the gospel.

The town has a large floating population. Ovambo contract workers come, spend a year or 18 months, and then leave. They leave their wives and families in Ovamboland, and in Windhoek, they are cut off from their friends and farms, lonely in a strange world. Among the whites, there is a similar movement. Whites come from South Africa, sent here by their employers, stay a few years, and then leave again. They have few real friends, relationships tend to be shallow and superficial. Family quarrels seem more frequent here, divorce is common. The whites, especially the English speaking ones, seem almost as money conscious as those in Johannesburg and in a small town, the pressures are greater.

The city is expanding. Already most of the population lives in new housing areas - Suiderhof, Katutura, Pionierspark, Khomasdal - dusty streets with drab grey suburban boxes. There is very little to provide a sense of community, or a centre of community. People are shut in with their fears and neuroses, oppressed by the city and the impersonal forces that rule it. A whole township is forced to move, because 'they' have decreed it. Hardly a weekend goes by without someone being stabbed or shot. Old people starve, men beat their wives - in affluent suburbia no less than in the townships of the dispossessed. And if tensions within the family do not cause it to break up, the laws and the social system will try even harder. And in this town, the churches go their separate ways, meeting for worship services in separate buildings, and after they have met, the people go home . . . what of the Gospel? "He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind"

In Windhoek, the church as a whole has not taken this job sufficiently seriously - perhaps in the future it will see what needs to be done, how it is possible at least to make a start in building the Kingdom.

Communal Living

Phil Peters, Box 622, Manzini, Swaziland, writes :

Communal living and marriage between two members of a commune : a commune is a voluntary association where all group-related activities are carried out on the basis of voluntary co-operation. I think that within such a framework you can still have private relationships between members, even private 'ownership' of certain facilities - like my 35mm camera, for example. I happen to dig photography, I bought a camera that would enable me to take the pictures I want, I cannot readily afford to buy another such and so am not anxious to lend this camera indiscriminately. My possessions fixation would not operate with equivalent force if the items in question were things like clothing, sleeping place, eating utensils . . .

About marriage - this particular interpersonal relationship is basically an agreement between two people that there are to be fewer barriers between them than between either partner and anybody else (is that clear?) The big question - Will you share with me ? This question is never answered for once and ever, but must be re-asked and re-affirmed every morning before breakfast. Two people who decide to try a common future may be drawn to communal living by the aspect of voluntary co-operation. In a commune, as in any other place-to-be the big question must be posed at all instants . Once the answer is yes, then any church or state ceremony is merely recognition of the couple's decision (gives priests and bureaucrats something to do - keeps them off the streets and out of trouble). Once the answer is no, the arrangement is dissolved, though not for good.

Child-raising is the really interesting aspect of marriage that takes on new dimensions in a communal set-up. Part of child-raising is a drag (3am feeding and washing a mountain of shit-stained diapers). The giving and receiving of affection and the impression on the child of the things you have come to believe, respect, love, fear . . . these are personal joys that may be hard - though not impossible - to share with a larger community than the reproducing pair. The other, the shit work - what a relief to load such onto the community at large - but of course, that won't go over. In a communal set-up, 'parents' (ie reproducing pair) would have to sort the ego-trip factor out of raising their child - for example, all members of the commune may have an equivalent right to impress beliefs, fears, etc on the child, and the child may be bigger, healthier, as a result. But now what happens when the 'parents' and another commune member disagree over something basic. Obviously 'parents' and other member must sort it out first - the reproducing pair surely has no toe-hold on the truth.

Tony Kelly, of Selene Community, Can-y-Lloer, Ffarmers, Llanwrda, Sir Gaerfyrddin, Cymru, U.K., writes :

In reply to the June Pink Press : "But if the aim of a commune is to provide an alternative, one must ask 'An alternative to what ?'" . . .

Let's define the alternative society straight away as 'A society in which the option to choose an alternative is always open', and this must include both the material means of implementation, and the social validation of a deviant choice. The alternative, then, from which we wish to deviate, is a society in which a pattern - any pattern - is arbitrarily imposed, whether by sanctions or by attitude.

Your statement that the commune 'as an alternative to the family' means 'common ownership of the means of reproduction' seems an appeal to common prejudice which could be damaging to this socially valuable institution.

The group family is not based on ownership, so much as on sharing, and this means sharing many things over which monogamists take a more

exclusive view. The loss of one's spouse in the closing years of one's life is devastating (as statistics regarding the demise of the remaining spouse verify) and neither belief in a deity nor reliance on the extended family appears to offer anything like adequate compensation. The group family of a dozen or so members offers the best possible emotional shock absorber for there are a number of people in the group not only sympathetic, but already with the status of wives and husbands with all the love and warmth that this implies; and moreover, they are living permanently in the group, and there is no added upheaval.

But this negative justification of the group family, while the most important reason in my view, is only one of many. The child in the nuclear family is completely vulnerable to its parents' prejudices; a group of children is less vulnerable to a group of adults since adults constantly evaluate each others' attitudes, not only in superficial ways by discussion but in very deep and meaningful ways because a number of them are always there and intimately involved in the immediate emotional fabric of the situation. In a monogamous family, both members are practically indispensable; in a group family, nobody need feel that they cannot, if necessary, relinquish responsibility for a time; indeed, by empathetic co-operation, responsibilities can be shared to everyone's advantage.

I think it is a mistake to overemphasise the sexual, or even reproductional, aspect of the group family. There is no more sex in the group family than there is in the isolationist monogamistic family. There is no less either. But there is certainly more love.

The World Council of Churches and the "Terrorists"

The World Council of Churches' decision to give + R 140 000 to 'anti-racist organisations' has evoked a disproportionately hysterical response from South African church leaders. Mr Vorster's response was uncalled for, but at least it was a fairly obvious way of wooing verkrampte votes in the Provincial Elections next month. The reaction of the churches serves only to show their moral, political and theological confusion.

The worst reaction was that of some church leaders who accused the World Council of supporting those who were using violence, because the use of violence is unChristian. One can accept such a statement from Bishop Zulu, who is a Vice-President of the World Council, and has made no secret of the fact that he is a pacifist. But what about those churches who have always supported violence? How can they condemn the World Council, and yet have church schools with cadet detachments, whose sole purpose is to train people to kill, innocent women and children - amongst others. If violence is unChristian, then Frelimo guerillas and school cadets must be condemned equally. Again, this is not the first time that the World Council of Churches has supported those who are using violence. The relief supplies flown to Biafra helped the Biafran war effort, yet the South African church leaders were silent. If South African church leaders really mean what they say when they condemn violence, then they should actively encourage the members of their churches to be conscientious objectors, like Jehovah's Witnesses. They must abolish cadets at church schools, and withdraw their chaplains from army camps. Members of the churches should not even join non-combatant units of the army - remember, the WCC money is going for non-combatant purposes, such as medical aid and education.

On the other hand, many church leaders would say that they are only selectively opposed to violence. Violence may be justified under certain circumstances. . . . the doctrine of the 'just war.' But the doctrine of the just war requires that right be overwhelmingly on one side. Is this the case at present? The organisations to which the WCC gave money are fighting racism. The South African churches, with a few notable exceptions, have condemned racism and apartheid as

unchristian. So the cause of those who are fighting against apartheid is more likely to be just than that of those who are fighting to maintain it. Yet the church leaders condemn the violent methods of the first, but not those of the second. To the first they say 'We approve of your aims, but not your methods' To the second 'We deplore your aims but not your methods.' Violence is bad, but if used in defence of an unjust system, it can be condoned. Either the churches must show by their actions that they are totally against all forms of violence, or they should not throw stones at the WCC from the false security of glass houses.

Part of the problem, of course, is the failure of the church leaders to think theologically at all. Their immediate reaction was of political expediency - to avoid antagonising the Nationalist Government. And in this they failed. Vorster, having been offered an inch, demands a mile. Which was completely predictable. A politician who fails to grasp such opportunities soon becomes an ex-politician.

Two years ago, the theological commission of the South African Council of Churches produced 'A message to the people of South Africa' It was a good start, a first attempt to see what the Gospel is saying to us in Southern Africa. But obviously it is not enough. More is needed. Perhaps SPROCAS will come up with something. But it had better be good. And simple enough for even Moderators and Bishops to understand. The most urgent need of all is a study of the theology of violence and non-violence. We live in a violent society. Every young white South African male is called on to spend nine months or more learning how to kill his fellow human beings, his brother Christians. And a not inconsiderable number of young black South Africans have left the country to learn the same thing. Violence is one of the most basic factors of our traditional way of life. Yet everywhere, people are afraid to talk about it. If it is mentioned, it causes embarrassment, fear, shame. It is like sex to the Victorians - ubiquitous yet unmentionable.

A couple of years ago, a radio journalist from the Dutch Christian Radio Society (NCRV) went round Vietnam at Christmas time, interviewing U.S. army chaplains. He asked them if they would be preaching on 'Peace on Earth' on Christmas day. "No" replied one, "it would be bad for the morale of the boys".

Which is more important - the Gospel, or 'the morale of the boys' ?

Start running, Reverend . . .

Berkeley, California : Christianity and city administration continued their collision course as the city council for the third time discussed - but refused to resolve - the beating up of the Rev. Richard York, an Episcopalian (Anglican) priest who runs the Berkeley Free Church.

York and his wife Melinda were walking on a Berkeley sidewalk on the night of July 4 when two uniformed Berkeley police officers drove up in an unmarked car.

"I heard someone shout 'All right Reverend, start running' and one of the officers got out of the car and began chasing me" York said. The squad car headed him off, he said, and after he went down under the first blows from behind, both officers continued to club him.

"The streets, as they say, are unsafe" York told the Berkeley city council on July 20. "The two thugs who beat me are still at large".

The Berkely Free Church is an interdenominational street ministry in Berkeley, California. They produce an excellent 'Free Church Collective Handbook', and several other useful publications - see contacts list for address.

Community of St Simon the Zealot.

John & Jenny Aitchison came and spent almost a month. They did not stay in Windhoek, but travelled extensively throughout the territory. The time they spent with us was probably the happiest and the most fruitful we have ever had in our community, and we were able to start many new projects.

Randy Falkenberg, secretary of ASATI (Association of Southern African Theological Institutions) came to see the staff of two theological seminaries in South West. While in Windhoek he stayed with us, and from him we learned of many other people who are interested in communities.

David Poynton, from Natal, has already been mentioned. Colin Collins, secretary of the University Christian Movement, has also spent some time here, investigating the student scene in South West Africa.

Bill Maier has been in Ovamboland, travelling around with Bishop Winter on a month-long confirmation tour. Dave de Beer has shaved off his locks, donned the kilt of the Transvaal Scottish, and gone to the borders to terrorise the freedom fighters for 90c a day. He had a kilt in his kit-bag -- if you saw the film 'Carry on up the Khyber' you'll know the secret methods of anti-guerilla warfare. Send requests to 'Forces Favourites' to play 'We shall overcome' for Dave.

Chris and Jill have moved out of the house into a flat. Being newly married, they wanted to get to know each other properly, which they felt they could not do with people always coming in and out of the house. We asked people not to crash, but to warn us in advance if they were visiting, in the hope that this would improve things, but it made little difference. Some visitors were very inconsiderate. Once, when nine people were staying in the house, and the laundress was struggling to do the washing for so many people, another person came along, asked her to do his washing as well, and then had a bath, using all the hot water she needed to do the washing. It would be possible to run our house as a crash-pad, and there is perhaps a need for such a thing in Windhoek. But it is a full-time job, and we feel that our other work is more important. Visitors are welcome - provided they are prepared to help and not to hinder our work.

Laying the Foundation.

Some members of the community have assisted in the formation of a 'Christian Foundation of South West Africa'. The aim of this body is to do the same kind of work as the Christian Institute is doing in South Africa. It works in close co-operation with the Christian Institute, and it is hoped that, if the Christian Institute should ever extend its activities to South West Africa, an amalgamation will take place. Because of the size of South West Africa, and the thinly scattered population, some form of ecumenical co-operation is essential if the church is to be effective. Up till now there has been very little ecumenical activity apart from on a clergy level. The Christian Foundation aims to bring Christians of any denomination together, and to keep them in touch with Christian and ecumenical developments in other parts of the world.

Omahungi Uehi

One of the projects undertaken by the Christian Foundation is the publication of a Herero-language news sheet called 'Omahungi Uehi' (Stories of the Land) This carries news, not only about the Christian Foundation, but also about the churches generally, and secular news as well. Because there is so little reading matter in Herero, its coverage is as wide as possible. The first issue was received enthusiastically, and the second one is now being produced. Many people have written articles, and so it seems people not only are keen to read it, but to write for it as well.

Publications.

IKON - No 5 now on sale, with an extra bonus - a poster on population removals. Articles include "God and Land" by John Davies, former chaplain of Wits University, on the Biblical attitude to land use and ownership. 'Zululand Pentecost' - a feature on the centenary of the Diocese of Zululand, with extracts from Bishop Zulu's address.

Subs - R 1.00 per year, 20c per copy. Send to Ikon, Box 1343, Pietermaritzburg.

LOGOS - Christian Anarchist bulletin. Distributed free. Write to Laurens Otter, 35 Natal Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR4 8QH, U.K.

CATONSVILLE ROADRUNNER - Revolutionary Christian monthly produced by the British subversive Church. Subs - R 1.70 for 10. Send to Roadrunner, 3 Caledonian Road, London N.1. Samples from Ikon Pubs, Box 9219, Eros, SWA at 15c each.

SIGNAL INTERNATIONAL - A Finnish small-ads magazine, member of Cosmic Circuit. Lists interesting publications (like Ikon !) names and addresses of people in all countries wanting pen friends, etc. Send \$US 1.00 to Raimo Kaarna, Box 8150, Lahti 8, Finland.

NORDDEUTSCHE MONATSPRESSE - Another Cosmic publication we have received. Underground press, in German. Subs \$US 5.00 (R 3.60) to 3000 Hannover-Kleefeld, Scheidestrasse 23, DEUTSCHLAND.

FREE CHURCH COLLECTIVE HANDBOOK - Published by Berkeley Free Church. \$ 1.00 each from Free Church Publications, Box 9177, Berkeley, Calif., 94709, USA.

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Brandberg Expedition

The thought was too much for Musrum, who revealed two broken springs on the afternoon of our departure. We still had two cars - Aitchisons, Steve and food in one; Nicholsons, Dave and liquor in the other. An unwise arrangement.

We visited a Lutheran seminary in Otjimbingwe, met and chatted to some of the students and staff. Then on to Hentiesbaai, a desert holiday resort where land is sold for R6000 per quarter acre! Here too, our communications broke down. The liquor-laden car headed for Cape Cross and waited (as supposedly arranged) for the other car. It didn't come. Return to Henties. It wasn't there. Drove to the Brandberg. No Supper. Three a.m. - other car arrives, having waited on the other side of the Mountain!

The Brandberg has a brutal quality about it - waterless and burning. Its peaks grow as you climb, as John and Dave discovered. The route to the White Lady was ostentatiously littered with white arrows and encouraging signs like, 'nie ver nie'. More interesting were the paintings we found off the path.

We tottered back late that afternoon and three of us ate ravenously - our first meal in 4¹ hours.

Our return was via a Lutheran High School which has just had to move from Karibib to an African Reserve. Again we met pupils and staff.

ON MOVING

41 Kleinwindhoek now has an extension - a married quarters. We talked a lot before we moved. Were we breaking down the fellowship and unity of St. Simon by leaving? Were we leaving to become just another couple in another box in another row of boxes? Would we drift away from St. Simon until we became one of its visitors? And so on.

At other times my thoughts were 'Only difference between Christopher and the other four men is that I sleep with him. Why the hell can't everyone leave us alone just for one night?' (the night they did a visitor arrived while we were in the bath!) 'I wonder what its like to cook for just my husband.' And so on.

If St Simon existed purely as an experiment in community living, then staying in the house would be imperative. The two articles on the previous pages make this clear. But when the prime motive is service outside the community, it is not so. The house at 41 is too small for any privacy beyond a whisper. It was not designed for a Community. Our flat is a mile away. That is far from ideal. So we have compromised.

41 is still the community center. We all have lunch together every day and supper some nights. We work and gather at the house. Steve has his room in the garden. Christopher and I have ours a mile away.

It is over a week since we moved. The first few evenings in the flat with Christopher were rather strange, which shows just how much we were in need of that sort of evening. Now 41 and ext. seem to be working well. It has been a valuable experiment and has given us all a better understanding of what the accommodation lay out of a communal home should be. It has indicated how much we all need privacy.

A strange madness schnitzels & schnails.

A strange madness overtook some members of the community one night. For the first time in months (years, even) Steve and Dave, impelled by some atavistic urge and donned ties and blazers, to go with Chris and Jill to eat in a hotel restaurant. After scanning the menu (the right hand column, with the prices, naturally) Chris, Steve and Dave decided that Wiener Schnitzels could be afforded. The waiter did not hear correctly, and returned with plates of snails. Then, after eating the snails, and waiting in great fear for the bill, the waiter returned, with the manager, and schnitzels. The snails were on the house.

IKON - stop press.

Ikon 5 is now ready on sale, with the free poster about population removals. Ikon Vol 2 No 1, Spring 1970, will be ready late October or early November. It will have articles by Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, on Church and State, Duncan Buchanan on small Christian magazines, more on the question of land and God. Send your subscription now to Ikon, Box 1343, Pietermaritzburg.

Christmas Card.

There is a possibility that we will be producing an Ikon Christmas Card. We are hoping to use a lino-cut by John Muafangejo, and artist from Ovamboland, South West Africa. More information om this in the next Pink Press.

This Pink Press produced by

Jillian Nicholson and
Stephen Hayes.

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It is he who keeps faith for ever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the LORD, who sets prisoners free,
the LORD who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
the LORD, who protects the stranger
and upholds the widow and orphan.

It is the LORD who loves the just
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The LORD will reign for ever,
Sions God, from age to age.

Psalm 146.

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The Community of St Simon the Zealot

LIVES AT - 41 Klein Windhoek Road, Windhoek.

COLLECTS POST FROM - Box 9219, Eros, Windhoek.

IS TELEPHONICALLY ACCESSIBLE * Phone 3607.

ALL LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO BOX NO. Letters addressed to 41 Klein Windhoek Road take much longer to reach the Fuzz who send them on several weeks later.