

Ecumenical and Interreligious Initiatives for Peace

by

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Some years ago in an article entitled "Ecumenism and World Order" written for a G.E.A. publication I briefly traced several aspects of both the ecumenical movement and the world order movement, showing some of the common characteristics of the movements and illustrating that an important aspect of the ecumenical movement has been concern for promoting a renewed world order.

Nation states have taken steps in the twentieth century to create global structures such as the League of Nations (1920) and then the United Nations (1945), in order to face better the challenge to peace and human well-being in our global village. At the same time Christian churches separated from one another for centuries, have made a variety of efforts to overcome their divisions, by promoting contacts between themselves, by fostering various activities including prayer for unity, theological dialogue, and common social witness. Structures have emerged which link many churches together such as the World Council of Churches (1948) and various national and regional councils of churches.

By the ecumenical movement I mean that movement among separated Christian churches (Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans), for primarily theological reasons, to overcome the doctrinal and other difficulties preventing their reconciliation, and gradually to achieve a true visible unity, not a uniformity, but a unity characterized by a healthy diversity. This ecumenical movement must be distinguished from another very important contemporary movement, the interreligious movement, involving the great world religions: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and many others, in efforts to seek ways of cooperation and understanding among themselves as well as initiatives for the betterment of humankind. We see an important expression of this in the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

The present paper is very limited and modest in scope. It is primarily related to questions three and four of the "Guideline Questions" for this consultation. The purpose of the paper is to look at the theme of religion and world order from an ecumenical perspective. Specifically it presents some case studies of "multi-religious" and ecumenical initiatives which illustrate cooperation which has already taken place toward promoting world order values. These are presented in the hope that they might suggest other multi-religious projects that could be undertaken towards a just, peaceful and sustainable world order.

The first example outlines the ecumenical and interreligious event in Assisi in 1986 which can be seen as an effort to collaborate with the United Nations. Another event in Assisi in 1993 addressed the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These can also be seen as "Multi religious initiatives" which would support "effective systems of governance which are more just, human and ecologically sustainable" (Cf. Guideline Questions).

The other two examples illustrate ecumenical efforts to support transformation in two countries toward more just, and peaceful conditions. One effort in 1986 was organized in support of the transition of Namibia from a colonized area to an independent nation. The other shows ecumenical support for the peace process in Guatemala, a process which came to a successful determination on December 29, 1996 in the signing by the government and the military opposition of an accord for a lasting and durable peace. These examples relate to transformation in just two societies. But of course the advance toward systems of global governance that are more just, human and ecologically sustainable, is aided if such advance takes place in specific nations.

The Assisi events were organized by the Catholic Church but were broadly ecumenical and interreligious. The initiatives for Namibia and Guatemala were organized by the Lutheran World Federation, but were also very ecumenical.

## I. The Assisi Events

The first event in Assisi was the "World Day of Prayer for Peace" October 27, 1986, at the invitation of Pope John Paul II. The second, a Day of Prayer for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, January 9-10, 1993, was at the initiative of Pope John Paul II together with the Presidents of the European (Catholic) Episcopal Conferences. Each involved, though in different ways, ecumenical and interreligious partners. These two illustrate especially the effort to contribute to peace on the basis of the spiritual resources of religions, such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage.

World Day Of Prayer For Peace, 1986

During

The United Nations International Year Of Peace, 1986

Pope John Paul II indicated that it was precisely in the context of the United Nations declaration of 1986 as the International Year of Peace that he desired to invite other Churches and Christian Communities as well as other great religions of the world to a "special meeting of prayer for peace" in Assisi.<sup>3</sup> It would be "a day of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage"<sup>4</sup> and intended as a spiritual contribution, a "movement of prayer and peace" in support of the International Year of Peace.<sup>5</sup> The Pope envisioned representatives of the religions of the world "standing side by side to implore from God the gift of peace  $\frac{3}{4}$  the gift of which all humanity has so much need today for survival".<sup>6</sup> Careful to avoid to avoid syncretism, the Pope signaled that the participants would "be together to pray" rather than "pray together."<sup>7</sup> The world religions, he said, notwithstanding the fundamental differences that separate them,

"are all called to make their contribution to the birth of a world which is more human, more just, and more fraternal. After having been frequently the cause of divisions, all would like now to play a decisive role in the building of world peace".<sup>8</sup>

Although the focus was spiritual, on prayer, the Pope also announced on October 4th that to those currently caught up in conflict throughout the world, an appeal would be made for a total cease-fire for the entire day of October 27th. He expressed the hope that political and military leaders of nations and groups involved in armed conflict "would, . . . support the prayers of almost all of the religions of the world", and in that way bear witness "that, for them also, violence does not have the last word in the relationships among people and nations".<sup>9</sup>

The Day of Prayer consisted of three parts. The first was a greeting of welcome by Pope John Paul II to all the participants at the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, a few kilometers from the old town of Assisi. The second part included prayer for peace by representatives of the different religions, each religion having a particular place or church in Assisi to use for its prayer, i.e., the Jews in one location, Muslims in another, Christians another, Buddhists etc, each group in its own location. All of the Christians — Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants — came together at the Church of San Rufino. In the third part, participants of all religions went to the area of the Basilica of St. Francis to be together as each group prayed.

The response of other churches and other world religions to the Pope's invitation was very positive. Prominent Christian leaders from a variety of Christian families took part, some represented by their most prominent leaders such as Metropolitan bishops from various Orthodox churches, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the General Secretaries of world communions such as the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Baptist World Alliance, the Mennonites and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, two presidents and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

The Christian prayer service had been prepared in an ecumenical way with the participation of representatives of various Christian World Communions. At Assisi, persons representing some nineteen Christian denominations and others from the World Council of Churches, the YMCA and YWCA led parts of the prayer service.<sup>10</sup>

Prominent leaders of world religions such as the Dalai Lama took part. The people of world religions present included Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Jainist, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, traditionalist African religion, traditionalist Amerindian and Zoroastrian. Prayers for peace of all of these religions were offered that day.<sup>11</sup>

The Pope summarized the significance of the gathering by saying that this meeting is "an invitation to the world to become aware that there exists another dimension of peace and another way of promoting it which is not a result of negotiations, political compromises or economic bargaining. It is the result of prayer, which, in the diversity of religions, expresses a relationship with a supreme power that surpasses our human capacities alone".<sup>12</sup> In his final allocution on that day the Pope, speaking on behalf of all gathered there, appealed to world leaders, and promised support for peace making efforts:

"We earnestly invite the leaders of the nations and of the international organizations to be untiring in bringing in structures of dialogue wherever peace is under threat or already compromised. We offer our support to their often exhausting efforts to maintain or restore peace. We renew our encouragement to the United Nations Organization, that it may respond fully to the breadth and height of its universal mission of peace"<sup>13</sup>

## Prayer for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Assisi 1993

While the World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986 was global in its perspectives, the "Assisi Day of Prayer for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina" in 1993 focused on one part of Europe.<sup>14</sup> It resulted from an appeal jointly made at the height of the tragic war in the former Yugoslavia by Pope John Paul II and the Presidents of European (Catholic) Episcopal Conferences on December 1, 1992, first of all to the Catholic churches of Europe from which the predominant number of participants came. The appeal was issued at the same time to other churches and Christian communities of Europe and also to Jews and Muslims.<sup>15</sup> The Pope invited specifically leaders of the Churches and Religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, most directly affected by the war including the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church, and also Muslim leaders of that area. Christians, Muslims and Jews came from various parts of Europe and beyond.

The purpose of this event according to the Pope was "to meet together . . . to reflect on peace in Europe especially in the Balkans, and to pray".<sup>16</sup> Invitations were addressed he said to "three great religious traditions present for centuries on this continent, and to the slow formation of which . . . all three have made their contribution and are making it still: Jews, Christians, Muslims".<sup>17</sup> He then reflected on the ecumenical contribution of religions to a better world order: "We are now being asked to contribute in a specific way, with our prayers and the offering of our fast, to the rebuilding of the continent of Europe, and perhaps to its survival . . ." <sup>18</sup>

The meeting was called at short notice because of the devastation and tragedy unfolding in the war in the former Yugoslavia. The predominant number of participants came from the Catholic Churches of Europe and therefore the main service on Sunday, January 10th was a Mass. The ecumenical aspect took place on Saturday evening January 9th. Ecumenical participants included representatives of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania, a Bishop from the Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands, the Anglican Archbishop of York, a Methodist district leader from England a Representative of the Lutheran World Federation, as well as representatives of the Lutheran churches of Sweden and Finland, a Reformed pastor from the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, and a Lutheran Bishop representing the Conference of European Churches. No one from the Serbian Orthodox Church was able to come, but Patriarch Pavle of that Church sent a letter to the Pope, part of which was read at the ecumenical service. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople also sent a letter which was read. Those of other religions included some Jews and a large representation of Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and elsewhere.

The ecumenical aspect had two parts: first, testimonies. then secondly, prayer. To provide testimonies of those touched by the war, an ecumenical and interreligious delegation from the Balkans had been invited to give first hand witness to the suffering of people and the irrationality of war.<sup>19</sup> Testimonies were given among others by a Catholic sister from Banja Luka, a woman from Mostar, the Archbishop of Sarajevo, a leader of the Islamic Center in Sarajevo, and the Cardinal Archbishop from Zagreb, Croatia. No Serbian

was present to give a testimony, but in the extract of the message sent by the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Pavle which was read in the ecumenical service that followed, the Patriarch expressed his joy that this common prayer service was being organized in Assisi, assured the Pope that "we shall also on that day, as on every day of God, be in communion with you in prayer for peace and the salvation of all"<sup>20</sup> and indicated that he would afterwards send a delegation of his Church to Rome, which he did.<sup>21</sup>

Immediately after the testimonies were given, a Christian ecumenical vigil service took place in the Basilica of St. Francis.<sup>22</sup> Following the pattern of Assisi 1986, aimed at avoiding syncretism, the Jews and Muslims present were each also offered an opportunity to pray together in another particular place. Many of the Muslims after their own prayer, chose to be present in this Christian ecumenical vigil service, in which the Christians of different denominations took specific parts.

The prayer service ended with a procession of light. Lamps were lit symbolizing the light of Christ, the Prince of Peace. Young people were asked to go forth from the basilica, carrying the light of the Prince of Peace into the night, through the winding streets of Assisi among the people and their homes. They were sent with the prayer:

"May the brightness of this night, filled with hope, spread to our brothers and sisters in countries torn apart by war in any of its forms. May it become, for them, a dew of peace".<sup>23</sup>

Assisi 1993 as Assisi 1986 before it, with their focus on prayer taught the lesson that the primary and best contribution of religions to world order, to peace, to justice, is their reflection on, and living according to their deepest spiritual resources. This is illustrated in one of the four readings at the ecumenical vigil service in 1993 which was taken from the Christmas Message for 1990 of the (Orthodox) Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople, who had died two years previously. He rooted all war in the original war of humanity against God. Humanity he said is beset by a deep yearning for peace which was lost when it declared war on God. "War against God has brought war and unrest to all creation . . . Everything is motivated by personal gain in the negative sense on the part of individuals, groups and peoples . . . peace is sacrificed on the altar of particular interests. This . . . leads to suspicion and fear, to an arms race . . ." But then giving a Christian response to this, he said that Christ, by his incarnation, "has met the problem at its root, for man has in the first place been reconciled to God (Rom 5:1) and united to him. From this reconciliation is born peace between individuals and between peoples". "This peace . . . is a reality which arises from ultimate abasement: the 'Kenosis' and the sacrifice of the Son of God", in whose person "selfish interest has been sacrificed on the altar of love and thus reconciliation and peace can become a reality".<sup>24</sup>

His was a deeply theological message. Appropriate, since the Assisi "Day of Prayer for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina" was an effort to bring spiritual resources to bear on resolving the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia.

## II. Ecumenical Cooperation and Namibian Independence

A second example or case study was initiated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). It consisted in an Interconfessional Consultation on Namibia held in Europe and North America in November/December, 1986.<sup>25</sup> While prayer was also involved, this event focused more on common action and direct contacts with leaders of church and government in different countries to help create conditions for change.

During the 1980's the people of Namibia struggled to become independent of the Republic of South Africa. The Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches in Namibia, with a combined membership of over 75 percent of the Namibian population<sup>26</sup> worked closely together to support the pastoral needs of their people during this struggle. To reinforce these efforts, the LWF with the assistance of the appropriate offices of the Anglican Communion and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) of the Catholic Church, and several Catholic Episcopal Conferences, initiated this interconfessional consultation. It involved some thirty leaders from Namibia, equally numbered from among the three churches. The LWF, the Anglican Communion and the SPCU, were able to call upon various persons from their networks in different countries. According to Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, then General Secretary of the LWF, support for this idea was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. Robert Runcie, and by Pope John Paul II "at the very outset".<sup>27</sup>

The theme of the consultation was very Christian: "One in the body of Christ: together a free people". Its aims were three: to explore the Namibian model of confessional cooperation and its role in the present mission of the church in that country; to express the spiritual roots of the Namibian people in the biblical witness and in the tradition of the church; and to ask how the three communions, at the global and local levels, could provide pastoral support for the Namibian churches during the crisis of that time.<sup>28</sup> The crisis the Namibians were struggling with was well expressed during the consultation by the Namibian Lutheran theologian Dr. Zephania Kameeta in these words:

"We are not only together here, working shoulder to shoulder as Anglicans, Catholics and Lutherans during this consultation, but we are also together in jails and in torture chambers, together persecuted, and together in exile. Together we are working for the creation of a new society and a new human being. We believe that to be truly spiritual is to believe in God, to care for human beings in their concrete, particular needs".

"We are not fighting for concessions or reforms but for the total eradication of apartheid and colonialism and for true independence for Namibia".<sup>29</sup>

There were two stages to the consultation. The first took place in Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany, November 23-25, 1986 where the program consisted of worship services, bible studies, presentations on the situation in Namibia, leading to reflection and discussion on the biblical and pastoral mandate for the churches' involvement in the liberation struggle in and for Namibia.<sup>30</sup> In the second stage, the group organized itself into five delegations consisting of representatives of the three church bodies, which then visited altogether ten countries, meeting with leaders of church and government, with ecumenical organizations, the media. The purpose of these journeys was to speak about the suffering of the people in Namibia and "to call for strong and concerted action on the part of the world community to bring liberation from illegal occupation by political, economic, and military forces of the South African government".<sup>31</sup> Each delegation visited two capitals with clear ideas of particular goals for each meeting. The capitals were paired off in this way: Bonn/Rome (including the Vatican), Copenhagen/Oslo, Helsinki/Stockholm, London/Paris, Ottawa/Washington. Each visit had different results.<sup>32</sup> At the Vatican, the delegation was received by the Section on Relationships with States of the Secretariat of State, the Commission on Justice and Peace, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. It also had meetings with Superiors of certain Religious orders, with faculty and students of the Jesuit Gregorian University. They were received in a private audience by Pope John Paul II who expressed solidarity with them in these words:

"You may recall the special concern for the independence of Namibia which I have expressed on previous occasions, an independence which I consider above all a demand of justice corresponding to the legitimate aspirations of its inhabitants. You will also recall the many condemnations of the church concerning the discrimination of apartheid. I mention these today not just to draw attention to the church's concern for you and your people in the past, but to make even more emphatic its love and interest today and in the future. We wish to stand with you and for you, praying for the unity and well-being of your people".<sup>33</sup>

What did all of this accomplish? The results were mixed. The Namibians did not find a strong, united response everywhere to their request for support.<sup>34</sup> But Dr. Paul Wee, the LWF official who especially organized the consultation noted in 1987 some "signs of hope for change in Namibia". The Finnish government on July 1, 1987 cut all trade links with South Africa and Namibia to protest Apartheid and colonialism. The Swedish government voted an extra grant of 64 million crowns (ten million dollars) to SWAPO on May 22, 1987. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quoting the delegates who visited Denmark from the Interconfessional Consultation, decided on significant grants to Danchurchaid projects

in support of the Namibian people. Countries of the European Community were considering the inclusion of Namibia in a 1987 sanctions action, extension of economic sanctions to include a wider range of goods and a ban on the import of coal from South Africa.<sup>35</sup>

Did this ecumenical effort contribute to the eventual independence in 1990 of Namibia from South Africa? It is of course hard to say. But the General Secretary of the LWF, writing in 1987, was sure that when independence comes, this ecumenical consultation would be seen as "one of many tributaries that joined to form a mighty river leading to the day of freedom for the Namibian people."<sup>36</sup>

It is with this sort of conviction that ecumenical contributions toward a human world order must be made.

### III. Toward Peace in Guatemala

A third example of religious cooperation for peace relates to the struggle for peace in Guatemala.

In December, 1996, representatives of both the Government of Guatemala, and the long time military opposition, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), signed a peace accord, hopefully bringing to an end more than thirty five years of war in that country, and perhaps opening a new day in that troubled society.

At the initiative of the Lutheran World Federation, ecumenical delegations twice visited Central America, the first in 1989 in support of the Esquipulas II Peace Process there, and another in 1993. On the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987, President Oscar Arias Sánchez of Costa Rica expressed to Dr. Gunnar Staalsett of Norway, General Secretary (1985-1994) of the Lutheran World Federation, and also a member of the Norwegian Nobel prize Committee, his backing of the latter's proposal that an international delegation of leaders of the LWF go to Central America to give support to the peace process. The LWF in turn asked Catholic cooperation especially through the help of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, with which it had previously agreed to broaden cooperation on social issues<sup>37</sup> and also in direct contacts with Catholic leaders in El Salvador. At the LWF request the PCPCU helped arrange for a Catholic Spanish speaking bishop from the USA to join the Lutheran leaders, therefore making it a LWF delegation but with Roman Catholic participation, and thus ecumenical. The Catholic participant was especially helpful in key contacts with Catholic leaders in those countries.

From October 7-21, 1989 the delegation visited five central American countries. In Guatemala the delegation made an important contact with the high command of the Guatemalan military, as well as contacts with the URNG. A critical, even if unforeseen result of this ecumenical visit in Guatemala was

that the government and also guerrilla leaders agreed to attend together "a top-secret" summit in Oslo, Norway at a government owned chalet in March, 1990.<sup>38</sup> After hesitation, this meeting resulted in an initial agreement signed in the presence of the Norwegian Foreign Minister. The LWF then, at the request of the Guatemalans, began in 1990 facilitating meetings of strategic leaders: Guatemalan politicians from 32 political parties met in Spain, landowners and industrialists in Canada, religious groups in Ecuador, small businesses, journalists and academics in Mexico, each group building support for peace as it dialogued with major participants.<sup>39</sup>

The second ecumenical delegation, during April 13-23, 1993, was more broadly based, being sponsored by the Latin American Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the Lutheran World Federation, and in cooperation with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a broad ecumenical coalition<sup>40</sup> and again organized primarily by the LWF. The delegation visited El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the USA. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the delegation met with representatives of as many sections of society as possible, religious, governmental, the civil sections, to hear and understand developments in the peace processes there and to make its assessment about them and to encourage the pursuit of peace in both countries.

The visit to Mexico was related to that of Guatemala, because having met Government leaders in Guatemala City, the delegation was able to meet URNG leaders who were based in Mexico City. The visit to the USA at the end was aimed at meeting leaders of government, church and voluntary groups in order to share experiences of the delegation's visit and to encourage their support to the Guatemala peace process.

To illustrate specifically, I will concentrate on the Guatemala part. The delegation was there April 17-20. The intention of the delegation in Guatemala was to become acquainted with the realities of life for the people especially as these realities bear on the goals of justice, peace, and democracy. It therefore made contact with various groups of the civil sector including human rights groups and development agencies, persons representing refugees and displaced persons, others representing those who had been widowed because of the war, and others living in the war zones.<sup>41</sup> There were contacts with the churches. The delegation sought to learn about the work of the Catholic Episcopal Conference and the Conference of Evangelical churches and to support their efforts for Christian unity, and to discover ways in which the international community could be supportive of their ministry for peace in the present circumstances. Among the church leaders visited were several bishops of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Guatemala including the President of the Episcopal Conference and the Archbishop of Guatemala City, also the Papal Nuncio, and leaders of the Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala (CIEDEG). A highlight of the contact with the churches was the celebration of an historic ecumenical prayer service for peace in Guatemala, held at the Catholic Cathedral in Guatemala City on Sunday evening, April 18th, organized together by the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Guatemala and CIEDEG, on the occasion of the visit of this delegation. Local bishops, the papal nuncio, evangelical protestants and the delegation participated. In its report on this, the delegation reflected that it was during this service that "we

recognized that peace in all of its width and breadth is a gift of God, and that spiritual renewal is needed in all hearts and minds in order to achieve it".<sup>42</sup>

The delegation met with the President of Guatemala, Jorge Serrano Elias, and other government officials including the head of the Government Peace Commission, and the Minister of Defence.<sup>43</sup> Discussion took place also with the Ombudsman for Human rights. Contacts were made also at the US Embassy and the Swedish Embassy in Guatemala, as well as the "Group of Friends for Peace in Guatemala", including ambassadors from Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela, and Spain.

There was a meeting too with 1992 Nobel laureate Rigoberto Menchù Tum. One of the most important contacts was with Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, Conciliator of the Peace Process in Guatemala, respected by both sides in the process, and whose efforts the delegation especially wanted to support.

The delegation traveled to Mexico City on April 20th to meet with the General Command of URNG in order to gain an understanding of their position, to hear their views of how the international community could contribute to the efforts for a just peace, and to give encouragement in their efforts in the peace process.

The delegation issued its report shortly after the visit. Some of the findings in regard to Guatemala were the following. The delegation expressed the view that an authentic and lasting peace requires justice. Peace cannot be achieved through a cease-fire alone, but requires "accords and agreed-upon political instruments geared towards social, cultural and economic justice, providing as well for equity and assured participation in the life of the Guatemala society".<sup>44</sup> It therefore recommended that a formal means be found for bringing the requests and recommendations of the civil sectors to the negotiating table. It recommended that the church communities represented by the sponsoring bodies search for adequate ways to draw effective support and accompaniment for these civil sectors in their overall quest for peace with justice.<sup>45</sup> It made a variety of other recommendations such as calling upon the authorities to confront the threats and acts of intimidation taking place and to expressly guarantee refugees, displaced persons and the exiled the freedom to exercise their rights, and suggesting that a compensation fund be established to provide adequate means for victims of war to restart their lives.<sup>46</sup>

The report addressed churches worldwide to express their support and intercession for the work on behalf of human rights and peace in Guatemala and to promote prayer for peace and reconciliation in Guatemalan society.<sup>47</sup>

Trying to act always with a sense of balance, the delegation sent a letter from Washington D.C. on April 23rd, 1993, addressed to three recipients together: the President of Guatemala, the URNG, and the Bishop

Conciliator of the Peace Process, to thank them for receiving it and offering all of them its prayers and assurances of support.<sup>48</sup>

One hundred and fifty thousand persons had died in 36 years of war in Guatemala, and forty thousand had disappeared. It was therefore a moment of great joy when on December 29, 1996, an accord for a stable and lasting peace was signed by the government of Guatemala and the URNG. In assessing the factors involved in this historic development in the life of Guatemala, one of course must give primary credit to the people there, the churches, the various civil sectors, the political leaders on different sides who took great risks to move in the direction of peace. They brought about this transition. But one can also say that the ecumenical support for the peace process that came from outside was a useful, even if very limited, aspect as well.

A report published in Lutheran World Information in 1997 looked back over the events leading to the peace accord. It cited one of the URNG leaders who expressed to the former LWF official who had organized the two delegations that "without you this could not have been done".<sup>49</sup> This report also gave credit to other important factors as well saying that in the process of reconciliation, "the demise of the Soviet Union helped, as did Pope John Paul II's visit to Guatemala".<sup>50</sup> There were many factors leading to this important transitional step in Guatemala.

## Conclusion

Each religion has its respective traditions, sacred texts, and networks to contribute to the goal of creating just, humane and ecologically sustainable systems of global governance. But when Christian communities cooperate ecumenically towards that goal, or when there is planned interreligious cooperation among the world's religions, the collective contribution they can make in the transition toward a more human world order is all the more powerful.

The initiatives just described show that, some significant common ecumenical efforts and interreligious efforts aimed at the betterment of society have been made, and perhaps have had some impact. Ecumenical and interreligious efforts will have true impact insofar as they emphasize the spiritual resources that are fundamental to religions. They can already bring some shared ethical concern towards concrete struggles for peace and security, economic and social justice, human rights, ecological sustainability, and cultural identity and integrity.

While it may not be the role of religions to determine the shape of a future global governance, it must be their role, together, to insist that as it takes shape spiritual values need always to be considered. Without spiritual values as support, the possibilities of peace and justice in our global society are very limited.

## NOTES

John Radano, "Ecumenism and World Order", in *Christian Voices on World Order*, Edited by Patricia M. Mische. East Orange: Global Education Associates. 1978. *The Whole Earth Papers*, Vol. 1, N° 10 pp. 30-32.

For steps leading to Assisi 1986, the speeches, the Christian Prayer during that Day and other addresses afterwards see "Assisi: World Day of Prayer For Peace, October 27, 1986", Secretariat For Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City Information Service (=IS) 62 (1986) 155-181. All references below to materials related to this event are from this source (notes 3 - 13).

"A. Steps leading to Assisi". "Before the Angelus, September 14". *Ibid.*, 155.

"Discourse on the Meaning of the Day of Prayer for peace", at the General Audience, October 22, 1986, 158.

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*, 159.

Cf. *Ibid.* 158-159.

*Ibid.*, 159.

"An appeal for a total cease-fire", 157.

"The Christian Prayer for Peace", 161-172.

"A Prayer by Each Religious Tradition", 172-173.

"The Welcoming Encounter at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, in the morning. Allocution of Pope John Paul II", 160.

"Pope John Paul's Final Allocution", 176.

For various materials related to this event see "Assisi Day of Prayer for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, January 9-10, 1993". IS 83 (1993) 61-77. Various items cited below in regard to this event will refer to this source, unless otherwise noted (notes 15-20, 22-24).

"The Appeal For a Day of Prayer for Peace in Europe, December 1, 1992".61-62.

"Vigil of Prayer for Peace in Europe Especially in the Balkans . . . January 9, 1993. The Pope's Address at the First Part of the Vigil", 62.

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"Extracts of a Message of Patriarch Pavle, January 5, 1993", 73.

" Visit to Rome of a Delegation of the Serbian Patriarchate, April 12, 1993, IS 84 (1993) 153.

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Ibid., "Procession of Light", 70.

"Message of the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I for Christmas 1990".67.

Information, documentation, discourses for this international project are found "the Church and the Namibian quest for Independence: 'One in the Body of Christ  $\frac{3}{4}$  together a Free People'". LWF Documentation N° 22/23. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, July 1987. Hereafter, Doc.

Forward by Gunnar Staalsett, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Doc.,3.

Ibid, 4.

Ibid., 3.

Zephania Kameeta, "The Spiritual Dimension of the Namibian Struggle", Doc., 54.

Staalsett, op. cit. Doc., 3.

Ibid., 4.

"Summary of Reports From the Namibian Delegations", Doc., 17-29.

Ibid., 18 Stallsett said of the Pope's address: "the statement of the Holy Father at the time he received the delegation will long be remembered by the Namibian people as a pastoral word of encouragement in their struggle to express the unity of the church for the sake of the unity and freedom for the Namibian people". Doc. 4.

Paul A. Wee, "the Costly Unity of the Church: A Reflection on the Interconfessional Consultation on Namibia", Doc., 5.

Ibid., 7-8.

Staalsett, op.cit., 3.

"Visit of a Delegation of the Lutheran World Federation to Rome March 3-5, 1988" IS 67 (1988) 91.(In 1988 the name of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was changed to Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity). The PCPCU in turn contacted the appropriate channels of the Holy See asking assistance.

"Lutherans helped broker peace in Guatemala", Lutheran World Information, N° 2, 23 January 1997, 7. Also, "Introduction", Report of the Ecumenical Delegation for Peace to El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the USA, 13-23 April 1993. Lutheran World Federation. 1993. (Hereafter: Report). The Introduction to the report of the 1993 delegation shows the latter's link with the delegation of 1989.

"Lutherans helped broker peace in Guatemala", 7.

The ten participants included representatives of these five sponsoring groups, and came from Presbyterian, Anglican, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic traditions.

"Itinerary and Meetings", Report Appendix 16-18.

"Guatemala. IV. Prayer and Solidarity" Report 10, cf. 1.

Not long afterward President Serrano was ousted , and a new government came in.

"Guatemala" Report, 8.

Ibid.

Ibid., 9.

Ibid., 10.

Report, 30.

Jorge Rosal to Dr. Paul Wee, former LWF assistant general secretary for international affairs and human rights. "Lutherans helped broker peace in Guatemala", op. cit., 6.

Ibid., 7.