

# Churches Warn of Imminent Food Crisis

BY RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

Mahatma Gandhi declared that "to a hungry man God will appear in the form of a loaf of bread."

World hunger, and the specter of a global famine have gripped the attention of Churches and religious agencies and prompted them to offer suggestions for averting such a catastrophe.

Church people have joined on several occasions recently to warn that the food shortage is not getting better and will continue to get worse unless Americans become truly concerned about the problem and deeply committed to do something about it.

Formation of a World Hunger Action Coalition by religious and secular agencies in April was one concrete evidence of the importance being given to the situation. The new organization plans to provide packets of material on hunger and hold workshops to stimulate a greater consciousness of world hunger on the part of Americans.

Member groups represent a wide range of Christian constituencies, including Church World Service, the relief agency of the National Council of Churches; Catholic Relief Services; Church Women United; Lutheran World Relief; and Bread for the World, another ecumenical lobby.

An announcement issued by the coalition said the group was "alarmed at the apparent isolationist trend in the U.S. and believes that developed nations cannot afford to enlarge the gap between themselves and less developed countries."

In its statement of principles, the coalition declared that the right to eat is a fundamental human right, that hungry people in the U.S. are an integral part of the world food problem, and that any program designed to relieve world hunger must protect consumers and the farmer's right to a fair return on his investment and labor.

As the coalition was formed, the United Nations General Assembly conducted a special session on raw materials and development in preparation for the World Food Conference to be held in Rome in November. Among the grim reports presented to the special session was one by the Food and Agriculture Organization declaring that the food outlook for 1974 and beyond is "precarious" and that a crop failure in just one major food-producing country would be very serious.

A declaration on the food crisis, signed by religious leaders and other public figures from nearly 100 countries, was presented to U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim during the special session. It said that "tens of millions of human lives are suspended in the delicate balance between world population and food supplies," and called on governments, organizations, and men and women everywhere to recognize that world resources are finite and that birth rates must eventually be brought into reasonable balance with lowered death rates.

Signers of that statement included denominational representatives and leaders of the World Council of Churches Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the National Council of Catholic Laity, and the American Jewish Committee.



Refugees pound maize in a camp in Akobo, Ethiopia. Like the nations of the sub-Sahara region of West Africa, Ethiopia is in the midst of a calamitous drought that is causing wide-spread famine. While not as drastic, other areas of the world are experiencing food shortages. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization has reported that the food outlook for 1974 and beyond is "precarious," and that a crop failure in just one major food-producing country would be very serious. [RNS]

Proposals to alleviate the world food crisis have focused both on initiatives that can be taken by individuals and restructuring of entire economic and foreign-aid systems. In the first category, Bishop Edward E. Swannstrom of New York, head of Catholic Relief Services, recently told a Midwest Conference on Food Policy in St. Paul that the "erosion" of national will to help others "is an ominous trend, completely unrealistic, in a world in which the welfare of one human being increasingly depends upon the welfare of another."

He warned that "some day, perhaps sooner than many expect, we may be called upon not only to tighten our belts but to actually reshape our eating habits in order to keep others from starving to death." And the prelate had some harsh words for Americans who "continue not only to waste an incredible amount of food each year but to spend millions upon millions annually on fad diets, on defatting parlors, on foods with virtually no nutritive value."

Dr. W. Stanley Mooneyham, president of World Vision International, an evangelical relief agency, has suggested that American housewives hold the key to providing more food to starving peoples.

He said that the average housewife in a family of four "probably spends a minimum of \$30 to \$40 weekly on food." By reducing food purchases, Dr. Mooneyham commented, housewives could help create a larger food surplus for overseas relief use and could put their savings to use by donating money to church mission programs.

Sen. Mark O Hatfield (R-Ore.), a Conservative Baptist layman, offered similar proposals at the annual meeting of the Conservative Baptist Association of America, in St. Paul.

"Some Christians may decide that part of their witness means being a vegetarian," he said, with the object of creating meat surpluses and saving money that can be given to hunger relief programs.

Restructuring of systems of aid was discussed at a four-day seminar on world hunger, poverty, and injustice held recently in Aspen, Colo., and attended by some 125 persons, most of them religious leaders.

In a "statement of conscience," issued as a basis for discussions in local churches and synagogues, the participants declared:

"As Americans we have come to

realize how many of our national policies, of our institutional structures of production, marketing and defense, and of our current personal patterns of conduct and consumption, are inextricably linked to the ongoing and explosive global catastrophe of famine, hunger and malnutrition, which continues to claim millions of lives every year in various parts of the world."

They added that this situation makes it necessary for religious people to commit themselves, "not merely to bring immediate relief to the suffering, but also to work toward the creation of global structures which will ensure basic dignity and humane existence for all people."

Some church people believe that the problem of world hunger cannot be looked at in isolation, but should be considered a part of the overall problems of "justice and liberation" facing many of the world's people.

One such observer is the Rev. Jovelino Ramos, a Presbyterian clergyman and native of Brazil who is assistant general secretary of the National Council of Churches' Commission on Justice, Liberation, and Human Fulfillment.

Ramos asserts that "there is no such thing as a scarcity of world resources. What you have is factors that go against production." In his own country, for instance, he reports that about one per cent of the land-owners control half of the farmland and use it to produce such crops as coffee, sugar and cotton, which pay well on the international markets, but are not the "survival crops" needed by the world's hungry.

"If Brazil could give the man who wants the land an opportunity to work the land," says Ramos, "there could be produced enough rice to supply all the world's needs."

A special study of the world food shortage, involving scientists, geographers and economists, is being conducted by the World Council of Churches' Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. The study group planned to present an initial report to the WCC Central Committee at its meeting in West Berlin in August.

As U.S. Churches and religious agencies organize to tackle the food crisis, they are hoping that through their efforts the magnitude of the problem will be brought home to each American. In separate statements, New York State's Roman Catholic bishops and World Vision's Dr. Mooneyham have emphasized the importance of these efforts.

At the Spring meeting of Region II of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), New York State's Catholic prelates issued a statement that declared:

"As a nation so highly blessed by God, we must not allow our preoccupation with our fiscal and political problems at home to cause us to turn our backs on a growing tragedy of world-wide magnitude which we can help avert with such a small sacrifice in food and fertilizer supplies."

The bishops expressed confidence that the American people would not fail "in their traditional response to the poor and the hungry."

## 'Reconciliation Way to Peace,' Is Day's Theme

Vatican City [RNS] — The theme chosen by Pope Paul for his eighth World Day of Peace, to be observed Jan. 1, is "Reconciliation as the Way to Peace."

### INDIAN CRAFTS

Members of the American Indian Club of Rochester will give craft demonstrations Saturday afternoons at the Rochester Museum and Science Center. Finished work in techniques demonstrated will be offered for sale. The demonstrations are scheduled for 1-5 p.m. each Saturday through Aug. 31, with the exception of Aug. 17. There is no admission charge.

The announcement was made at a press conference here July 11 by Bishop Torella Cascante Ramon, vice-president of the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace.

Commenting on the theme, the bishop pointed out that reconciliation was linked to peace in a two-fold way.

"Peace in the vertical sense, the return of men to God; and peace in the horizontal sense, reconciliation among men themselves."

"Peace," the prelate said, "cannot be reduced to simple co-

existence. It goes beyond this and presupposes reconciliation, which, among men, demands mutual forgiveness."

Bishop Cascante Ramon noted that, while no one denied the value and possibility of reconciliation between individuals, many persons questioned the possibility of reconciliation on the level of international conflict of interests and concerns.

Admitting the difficulties facing attempts at reconciliation on this level, the bishop suggested that efforts be directed toward the "causes" rather than the "effects" of conflicts.

Meanwhile, he said, there should be concerted, persistent efforts among men with conflicting international interests to seek dialogue and understanding.

In theological terms, Bishop Cascante Ramon said, reconciliation among men, as a

divinely-imposed duty, derives directly from the reconciliation of men with God, accomplished through His Son.

He added: "The Church has received from God and entrusted to each of her members the ministry of reconciliation — the way to peace."

### Curbstone Art

The 10th annual Curbstone Art Festival will be held in downtown Rochester July 25-27. Everything shown will be for sale. Prizes totaling more than \$1,000 will be awarded at a 4 p.m. ceremony July 26 at Security Trust Mall.

Entrants registered so far come from seven states, Canada and New York City, as well as from the upstate area, according to Al Hasenauer, chairman. July 20 is the deadline for registering, through the Chamber of Commerce, 55 St. Paul St.