

Dieter Grande (Ed.)

Without memory there will be no reconciliation

Approaches to, and reflections on, a Charta Memoriae

Documentation of an international workshop in Buchenwald

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Preface

The painful awareness of a burdened past is part of the experience of the human being. The burdened past often threatens to impede the setting-out to new perspectives. It is easy to suppress the memory of such realities, to forget them 'wilfully'. But it is also obvious that this approach is fruitless and that this kind of behaviour involves subtle dangers. During the recent years, we have witnessed that suppressed conflicts in former Yugoslavia and in the region of the Great Lakes in Africa encouraged an unsuspected dynamism of conflicts which have led to war and genocide. In the face of these situations, the Church is searching for ways to contribute to a just peace. In this context, valuable experience was made particularly in the field of memory and reconciliation work which we intended to communicate and evaluate in this workshop. The primary question was as follows: Is it possible to use the experience made in different contexts to develop general standards for the memory and reconciliation work of the Church? We assumed that – if this is at all possible – this could only be realised by organising an international dialogue.

For this reason, the German Commission for Justice and Peace, Renovabis and Misereor organised an international workshop in 1998, which included 30 participants coming from the relevant contexts in Bosnia, Germany, Guatemala, Croatia, Poland, Rwanda, Russia, South Africa, and Slovakia. We envisaged the following ambitious objectives:

1. The attempt of a dialogue and the development of existing theoretical reflections on memory and reconciliation with the objective of implementing the results in the activities of the Commission for Justice and Peace and of the Church NGOs for overseas development and pastoral co-operation.
2. The organizers of the corresponding projects were asked to present their different approaches of memory work, to discuss them and exchange their ideas.
3. It was our special intention to promote the dialogue between the representatives of the „South“ and those of the „East“ with the objective of overcoming the gap between the different contexts and the different ways of thinking – an unfortunate legacy from the times of the Cold War.
4. Each participant was to be given the opportunity to set his or her special national experience in an international context and to regard his or her own problems from the others' point of view.
5. Apart from the presentation, assessment and documentation of different approaches and activities, this project was designed to elaborate and define the relevance of memory work to democratisation and reconciliation processes,

particularly in view of the strengthening of the human rights in the individual societies.

6. In order to obtain practical results for our fields of activity in peace and development politics, we set out to find long-term answers to the following questions:
- Which generally applicable basic data with regard to the aims of our memory work are available?
 - Are there any approaches to a charta memoriae in the sense of the development of standards for memory politics?
 - What can be done to promote processes designated to the reappraisal of the past?
 - What are the resulting requirements and questions as to the reappraisal of the past in the Federal Republic of Germany and as to our co-operation projects in the fields of peace and development politics?
 - Can a specific Christian approach of remembering be determined?

The memorial in Buchenwald had been chosen as meeting place. We are very grateful to the responsible people at Buchenwald who were prepared to support our project in various ways. This meeting place is of special significance to us because the history as well as the presence of this place clearly give expression to the problems which were discussed during the workshop and the dimensions of our subject. We demonstrated to our international guests that we consider ourselves to be equal among equals in the envisaged process of discussion rather than holders of a secured knowledge which simply needs to be communicated.

The readers of this publication will easily notice that although many questions were addressed, they remained far from being answered. For this reason, this publication on the workshop must be regarded as an interim report on an ongoing process rather than a final documentation. We regard this publication as a contribution to the discussions in society and in the Church on the ways of dealing with a burdened past.

Auxiliary Bishop Leo Schwarz

President of the German Commission for Justice and Peace

Introduction to the Workshop

'Memory, Reappraisal of the Past and Democratisation'

The project group on Reconciliation was established by the German Commission Justice and Peace in 1995. It has been charged with the task to support the Christian Churches' activities in promoting peace and justice and protecting creation, and to search for opportunities to implement and further develop the results of these activities.

The Second Ecumenical Assembly, which was held in Graz in the summer of 1997, was dedicated to reconciliation.

A documentation of the working group's reflections has been published in the form of a working paper under the title 'Reconciliation - a Gift from God and a Source of New Life'.

In co-operation with Misereor and Renovabis, the project group realised an international workshop on the subject 'Memory, Reappraisal of the Past and Democratisation'.

In our letter of invitation, which clearly and precisely described the motivation for the event and its objectives, we repeatedly used the terms 'memory' and 'reappraisal' of the past. Prior to our common reflections, I would like to share some personal thoughts with you.

Memory

The German word for memory is *Erinnerung*. The German dictionary refers to two different meanings of *Erinnerung*.

Erinnerung can have the meaning of 'remembering', 'to hold or bear in mind', 'to recall something'.

Erinnerung can also have the meaning of 'reminding someone', i.e. 'to recall to the mind of another', 'to draw someone's attention to something' so that the person becomes aware of something.

Oblivion

Oblivion is the contrary to *memory*. The English dictionary refers to two meanings of the term which are relevant to this context.

Oblivion is the 'act of forgetting or the fact of having forgotten', 'to lose the remembrance of something, to let go from memory'.

Oblivion also is the 'quality or state of being forgotten'.

One can forget intentionally or unintentionally. People often wish to disregard or forget what happened in order to let the dust settle on it, because they consider it finished and they do no longer want to talk about it.

Suppression of memories

It is astonishing that the term 'suppression of memories' has not been mentioned in this context.

Can 'suppressing' be regarded as an equivalent to 'intentionally forgetting' or does suppression happen unintentionally on the level of the unconscious?

In individual psychology, it is a matter of fact that suppression is a protective mechanism of the human psyche that allows human beings who are burdened with serious guilt or dreadful experience to live on.

It still seems to be unclear whether the human community, e.g. a nation, a society, requires such a protective mechanism; consequently a simple condemnation of acts of suppression would be inappropriate.

In the days to come, we will have to discuss the extremely complex field of problems concerning memory, oblivion, and suppression.

Reappraisal of the past

Apart from 'memory' we used the term 'reappraisal of the past' in our letter of invitation. In this context we also often use the term 'coping with the (burdens of the) past'. Can the past be reappraised like a project? Can one 'cope' with past incidents in retrospect? Both terms seem to be results of a certain wishful thinking and they seem to overestimate true opportunities of social processes.

Examination of the past

Using the term 'examination' of the past might be a more realistic approach. In my opinion, two aspects are indispensable for such endeavours.

First: **We need a memory which is committed to the truth.**

Therefore, every contribution towards finding the historical truth is of great importance. On the other hand, we have to consider the constant change in the process of human remembering.

Timothy Garton Ash wrote in his book about his Stasi records, 'The File': „Our memories are fading in the course of time and with changing circumstances. They become clearer or weaker or even bitter. What we are facing, is nothing less than infinite memories to a moment, to an event or to people.“

“Memories which continue to change with every second either slightly or sometimes, following a shock or a disclosure, dramatically.“¹

Searching for the truth and finding the truth involve highly sensitive subject-matters. Although we try hard to find objective approaches, we have to be aware of the fact that remembering is subject to a constant change in the flow of time. To facilitate an objective search for the truth, a certain emotional distance as well as a distance in terms of time to the occurrence are required. Endeavours to purify society, which are not committed to the truth, can easily degenerate into a 'witch-hunt' and are likely to provoke further wrong in society instead of creating more justice.

When examining guilt and injustice which happened in the past, this aspect seems to be particularly important: **We need a memory which is committed to the truth, a memory which serves reconciliation** between the so-called 'victims' and 'perpetrators'.

Looking back on her experiences of the Nazi period, the denazification, and the 1968 revolution in Germany, Gisela Wiese, who has been Vice President of Pax Christi for many years, said in the book 'Ein Leben wider die falsche Hoffnung' by Wilfried Köpke: „Acts of reconciliation are, if at all, considered as a personal matter. 'My guilt and the good Lord'. This is no true reconciliation ... The individual should not become depressive in the face of his acts. But he must begin to understand what has happened to him and to communicate this to others and warn them.“

Understanding „what happened to me“ is the first step towards a changed attitude. And a changed attitude is the prerequisite for reconciliation.

She had another experience which seems to be important in this context.

¹ Original wording not available

She said: „It is a real deficiency of our profane society that it does not want the sinner to change his attitude because then the image of him would be different. People want him to be a destroyed person, they do not want him to have a future.“

This way of alleged search for the truth is an obstacle to reconciliation and does harm to the individual as well as to society.

Objective:

We need memory which is committed to the truth, a memory which serves reconciliation.

Let us take this as an objective for our workshop.

Prelate Dieter Grande

Head of the Reconciliation Project Group

Octave UGIRASHEBUJA SJ

Memory, Reappraisal of the Past and Democratisation in Rwanda

Someone called the year 1994 (when the genocide of the Tutsi and the massacres in Rwanda took place) the **year which never ends**. This means not only that everything that had happened before reached its climax, but also that we have to think, prepare and plan our entire future starting from this period. For memory is after all a kind of **vigilance for history**.

My considerations are not the result of scientific research. I only started thinking about the issue when I was asked to participate in this workshop; thus there was not much time for research. However, my own experience, reading and contacts to the survivors of the genocide provide a sufficient basis for **my contribution to the draft of a Charta Memoriae**.

This paper is divided into three chapters:

1. Rwanda's history before the genocide is subject of contradictory memories on the part of the two major groups of the population, the Hutu and the Tutsi; their evaluations and views concerning the past differ so much that you cannot help wondering whether we can have a common present at all and whether we will have a common future.
2. Since the genocide (and the massacres) of 1994, the country has been deeply divided; everyone else has disappeared; thus we all - the victims as well as the murderers - are helplessly facing this immense disaster.
3. The problems of remembering the disaster on the part of the Rwandans themselves, the community of nations and the Church.
Finally I would like to explain what I understand by 'just memories'; memories which do not dwell on the horrors of the past, but which make each truly responsible person, each people call out: **»Never again!«**

I. The Rwandans' history and their memory

In October 1990, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) raided the country, a young Hutu of twenty-two years approached me and said desperately: »They return in order to enslave us; I would rather die than be humiliated by these people.« The young man was born in 1968 and he did not associate any personal memory with

that 'oppression of the Tutsi' which he was paralysed with. Since 1959 the Tutsi have been politically non-existent; many are wandering around as refugees and they are not even talked about anymore. Those who stayed in the country (the majority) experienced nothing but harassment and humiliation. They were made the scapegoats for every political weakness, for every economic depression; they were deprived of all their belongings, they were chased away or simply slaughtered. These things happened particularly in 1963, 1972, 1990, 1994.

The young man had known the Tutsi to be an outlawed and distressed people that could be murdered at random and with the absolute certainty that one would never be prosecuted for it. On the contrary: many of these murderers quickly made their ways up in politics. Yet, our young friend lived in fear, had an immense resentment against them and regarded their potential return as a disaster. This is what he had been taught as history. This consciousness of history, which should rather be called manipulated 'memory' in the sense of a thirty-year-old ideology of hatred and exclusion, resulted in the genocide².

A young Tutsi of the same age had a completely different conception of this history, of course. All he associated with it, is distress, exile, insecurity and death. He was dreaming of returning to his home country, to the wonderful country which had been created by his heroic ancestors during the centuries. Some of the fighters of the Front may have had feelings of revenge; they possibly wanted to find and to punish those who had driven their parents and relatives away from their homes and killed others. But most of these young people were longing for a home, where they were no longer ill-treated due to political change or economic difficulties.

Since 1959, however, this will to exclusion has been present in our country. It has indoctrinated an entire people with a frightening ideology of hatred which must have had its origins in history. But in reality it is no longer a matter of history but a matter of collective, i.e. political memory, which has been so deeply engraved in the minds. Our inner life, our thoughts, our most spontaneous reactions, even our moral action are determined by this memory.

A Rwandan historian told me that, on a scientific level, a correct and objective debate among Rwandan historians, both Hutu and Tutsi, had taken place before the genocide. Each group was primarily interested in a certain facet of this history, of

² The textbooks were full of stories about the cruel Tutsi kings and chiefs which were not described as human beings but as true serpents. We should remember that the Jews, too, were accused of the most cruel and blood-curdling crimes and of being erratic; they were called murderers of God, they were attributed a hooked nose and greedy, bony fingers; they were made the depravers of mankind ... just to have an excuse to kill them without punishment.

course, and this variety of interpretations as such is highly interesting. The court's action and its facts, the wars of the kings and the governmental structures under the Nyiginya monarchy were examined by A. KAGAME³. This is a massive and important aspect of the reality of our history. Another inevitable aspect of our national reality was discussed by F. NAHIMANA: the Hutu petty kings, the so-called 'ibihinza'⁴. G. MBONIMANA was fascinated by the phenomenons of colonisation and christianisation in our country⁵. What these historians do is not writing a selective history, but complementing each other to form an overall view.

But the ideologisation of history with its various facets, far from being historically objective, led to intolerance and hatred. This development started already with the beginning of the social revolution of 1959. It happened in the schools, at political addresses, in songs and slogans. This was the reality experienced by the young man mentioned at the beginning. Later, from 1990 to 1994, the whole population was being worked on with the sledgehammer method through national broadcasting and the print media, in particular Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines. Information on this subject can be found in *Les média de la haine* (The Media of Hatred), the bibliographical data of which I have unfortunately forgotten, and in *Média du Génocide* (Media of Genocide), published by Jean-Pierre CHRETIEN.

Those who have read the diabolic propaganda and experienced its consequences have to ask themselves whether a common nation will ever be realised.

II. The genocide

In reality, this reconciliation with our past had always been possible. All this propaganda could have been considered as a kind of more or less exaggerated but understandable criticism. The Tutsi monarchs and their accomplices had not been saints after all. And in spite of these virulent slogans and the brutal intolerance of the words, joint action was still possible. I particularly remember a peace march which was organised by members of religious orders and which was joined by the president and the prime minister. This was in December 1993. The respect for the neighbour could still manifest itself in certain instants of grace. Although the massacre of the

³ Particularly interesting is KAGAME, *Le Code des institutions politiques du Rwanda précolonial*, Brussels 1952, and *Un abrégé de l'ethnohistoire du Rwanda précolonial*, vol. I, Edit. Universitaires du Rwanda, Butare 1972.

⁴ He wrote: *Les Bami ou roitelets Hutu du corridor Nyabarongo-Mukungwa avec ses régions limitrophes* in *Etudes Rwandaises*, no. 12 (1978), pp. 1-25, and *Le Rwanda, émergence d'un Etat*, l'Hamattan, Paris 1993.

⁵ His dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (1981) is entitled: *L'instauration d'un royaume chrétien au Rwanda (1900-1931)*.

Bagogwe had taken place and the people of Bugesera had been killed, there was still a last gleam of hope.

But then the genocide started and everything fell into the abyss. I hope that the audience know about the circumstances:

The agreements of Arrusha had been signed, which were to regulate the new governmental system and the power structure of the individual parties. But the extremist Hutu parties, led by MRND and CDR, considered these agreements as high treason to the cause of the Hutu. President HABYARIMANA, who had signed the agreements in August 1993, finally found himself compelled to fulfil them in spite of the great pressure exerted by the extremists. On his way back from Daressalam, where he had just confirmed to adhere to the agreements, he was killed when his plane was arriving at Kigali airport. This happened on 6 April 1994 at 20.30 h. Immediately afterwards, the massacres of all oppositional Hutu started, followed by the genocide of the Tutsi, first in the capital, then all over the country. This cruel and merciless genocide, which had been prepared thoroughly to the last detail, went on from April to July and claimed the lives of almost one million people. Nobody intervened to put an end to this. The months April to July 1994 marked an indelible rift for all Rwandans. And I mean for all, victims as well as murderers and all people in-between who considered themselves neither victims nor murderers (?). The absolute evil happened in our country. According to the will of the organisers of the genocide, all the Tutsi were to be killed, all without exception! To this end, all the Hutu were goaded or forced to kill - again all without exception! Those who refused were killed first.

It must be noted, however, that no cameras were present to document the Rwandan genocide. What you have just seen, are rotting bodies. When the machetes carried out their deadly work, all the journalists had gone to South Africa. (At this point I read out some pages of the book by Gérard PRUNIER, *The Rwanda Crisis. 1959-1994. History of Genocide*, pp 229.)

The organisers were virtually able to complete their plan. Only one thing had not been considered in their plans: The military victory of the RPF.

The flight to Zaire and Tanzania followed. We are now coming to the time after the genocide.

III. Memory of the genocide and its consequences

a) **The survivors:** They do exist! Because it is never possible to eliminate a people completely. But these survivors (the Tutsi in Rwanda) are not far from being dead. What they have experienced, what they have seen, goes beyond any imagination. They are physically ill for they had to suffer unbearable things. They have been mentally ruined: children who do not talk anymore and do not sleep anymore because they fear nightmares. Exhausted widows who have lost their homes and all their belongings. The physically wounded which have been poorly treated. Women, female adolescents and girls who were dreadfully raped and still suffer from the physical and mental consequences.

All these people had to live next to the mortal remains of their relatives which they were unable to bury. Or they were desperately searching for the places where their dead bodies had been thrown. They have to live with the murderers of yesterday by whom they are threatened with death when they dare to unmask them.

The most miserable are those who escaped from the massacres. In some places they form the biggest group, but they only get casual or poor help because they have neither voice nor power. By the former refugees (returned from Uganda, Burundi, Zaire and elsewhere) they are treated as cowards or accomplices of the murderers only because they escaped from death. Things have even come to the point where they are refused any form of employment, provided that they are still able to work. This is the group of the most deserted, the most fragile and the poorest. And they are supposed to preserve a memory? Can you imagine that?

b) **The former refugees:** They form the second group of those who actually should preserve the memory of the past, because they lost their parents and friends during the genocide. However, they often have great difficulties in reintegrating in their destroyed country or they are preoccupied with their participation in the political power. But they are actually in a suitable position, because the members of the present government and the business people can be found in this group.

c) The other groups - **the new refugees, who have returned or still live in exile, and the prisoners** - are hardly able to admit that the genocide in Rwanda took place. This is understandable because if they admitted the genocide they would admit their own guilt. The international community, too, adheres to this negation in its various forms. Those who go to Rwanda plead for the cause of the prisoners, who are innocent and who live under difficult conditions. Before the refugees returned, many non-governmental organisations had been primarily engaged in the refugee

camps and had not wasted much thought on the misery and distress of the other people in Rwanda.

Present activities:

a) The *remains are being buried* in more or less selected places. During the genocide, the murderers did not have the time to bury the dead. They were simply left at the places where they had been slaughtered - in churches, schools, community centres... When there was a hole somewhere around - toilets or other depressions - a mass grave was created, in which they were thrown even when they were still alive. It is a very important act to celebrate in dignity a funeral for one's relatives. In the Middle Ages a funeral was regarded as the seventh good deed. There is a polemic on this issue in my country. (Some people do not understand why the dead should be located, why they should be buried with a funeral ceremony.)

b) The *Ibuka association*. This association aims at preserving the memory of the events of 1994 so that the necessary consequences are drawn and this will never happen again. At present it is primarily engaged in conferences and discussions. It is also planning to register the dead and to set up a museum. But there is not enough money to realise these projects. Above all, the Ibuka association opposes vigorously all forms of negation.

c) At the Ministry for Culture there is a department called *Mémorial du Génocide* which has committed itself to build genocide memorials at important places. Furthermore a commission was established that is to determine those who can be proclaimed 'national hero'. The latter is only indirectly associated with the memory of the genocide. It has to be noted, however, that there is a first person who has been unanimously proclaimed hero: General Fred RWIGEMA, commander of RPF at the time when it was attacked.

Some conclusive reflections

At the fourth anniversary of the genocide I noticed that among the people - on an individual as well as on a collective level - there was an increasing exigency to comprehend and to recognise the immense misery caused by the genocide. On the individual level, people who appeared to have overcome the worst grief and pain now show signs of worrying traumatism: insomnia, lack of appetite and increasing occurrence of phobias. On the collective level: the way the UN Secretary-General was treated would have been inconceivable only one year ago. The representative of the UN Human Rights Commission was virtually chased out of the country. The numerous letters against the hierarchy of the Catholic Church also stem from this

feeling of intolerance towards everyone who seems to minimise or ignore somehow the horror of the genocide and its consequences.

Thus I feel that we have to be careful. We must not create a negative memory which would throw us into the abyss of eternal agony and grief. This is not what our relatives and friends who died in the massacres would have wished. I regard them as saints, as martyrs for the image of God whom these attacks were aimed at. They pray that their suffering may **raise the firm will in us to take heart and to assume responsibility so that things like these will never happen again. We must create positive memories!** Referring to the whole world Pope John Paul II said: »The truth is that one cannot remain a prisoner of the past, for individuals and peoples need a sort of **'healing of memories'** so that past evils will not come back again. This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin. The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the new-found liberty of forgiveness.

For this to happen, we must learn to read the history of other peoples without facile and partisan bias, making an effort to understand their point of view. This is a real challenge also on the level of education and culture. This is a challenge for civilisation! If we agree to set out on this journey, we shall come to see that mistakes are not all on one side. We shall see how history has sometimes been presented in a distorted and even manipulated way, with tragic results.« (World Day of Peace Message by Pope John Paul II, 1 January 1997)

We also have to adopt a **diverse approach to the events**. The genocide and the massacres of 1994 do not only concern the Tutsi. Others experienced this time in a different way; they have different wounds and different traumata. It can be noted, for example, that at present the Hutu do not dare to organise funerals for those who died during the genocide and the massacres. Nobody has forbidden them to do so, of course, and it is not necessarily because they are ashamed or feel guilty. The reason is that there is only one - official - version of the events. The genocide was something dreadful, and we cannot comprehend yet why it was possible. We all - Tutsi as well as Hutu - are still filled with dismay, perhaps in different ways. We have to create a space that allows us to carry out the autopsy of the monstrous reality of the Rwandan genocide - together and with clear heads. We gave birth to this monster; we saw its hideous convulsions and we heard its horrible cries. The foreigners just disturb us with their remedies for hasty reconciliation. **It is this autopsy from which the Rwandan form of democracy will develop.**

In general, each people reads its history in its own, often monolithic way. And it often considers itself the navel of the world. Rwanda, this tiny territory somewhere in the heart of Africa, cannot claim to be the central concern of the big countries and not even of the other small countries. Consequently, all peoples, and the Rwandans in particular, would benefit from broadening their horizon. The **presence of the others** is inherent in every true identity. It is time for us to exchange our memories, to look at ourselves with the eyes of the others and to absorb the memory of others in order to create something new and common.⁶ This might bring us a step closer to the world-wide CHARTA MEMORIAE.

⁶ cf. Alain THOMASSET, *Réflexions pour conclure*, in *Mémoire des peuples*. Special project no. 248, Winter 1996/1997, p. 58.

Cirilo Santamaría

GUATEMALA: RECOVERY OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD PATH AND PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

Guatemala, the small country in Central America (109,000 sq. km) with approximately 10 million inhabitants, of whom 60% are indigenous peoples and 40% Mestizos, is presently experiencing an important moment of its history. It is a country divided by many „internal“ frontiers - i.e. economic, social, ethnic, cultural, political and religious - a country which has followed an authoritarian tradition and has shown fragile governableness.

On December 29, 1996 a peace agreement was signed after 36 years of a bloody and cruel civil war. From the colonial period until today, the socio-economic structures of the country have been based on exploitation and racial discrimination keeping the population in inhuman living conditions.

The war broke out as a reaction to the oppression of the majority population and the denial of social and political participation. For centuries the population had been denied the possibility not only to participate in, and to organise the country but also to have access to its goods and wealth. The experiences and the course of the war differed widely in the form and intensity of fighting and despite the fact that the theatres of war varied, the armed conflict extended over the whole national territory. In the years 1978 to 1983, the brutalities reached their climax when the most cruel massacres happened and several hundred villages were razed to the ground.

The agreements, which were finally signed by the conflicting parties after laborious negotiations, form the foundation for a future of peaceful co-existence still to be realised. They comprise the basic guidelines for creating a different Guatemala with greater justice and humanity. They are the public, although quite timid expression of the people saying „That’s enough now!“ - enough of so much bloodshedding and killing - and manifesting their commitment to peace.

The thirty-six years of civil war turned the country into an atrocious cemetery, they left more than 150,000 killed people, tens of thousands of widows and orphans, more than 500 completely destroyed villages and about 100,000 refugees. These facts virtually cried out for putting an end to the conflict. Fortunately a peace

agreement was signed after ten years of intensive negotiations which treated several substantial subjects as for example respect for human rights, identity and rights of indigenous peoples, socio-economic situation, strengthening of civilian power, role of the armed forces in a democratic society, historical clarification, resettlement of refugees.

1. Agreement on the establishment of a commission to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer

On June 23, 1994, although under massive pressure, an agreement was signed in Oslo on the establishment of a commission to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer. It was a weak agreement stipulating that the 36 years of political violence are to be investigated in a period of six months which could be extended for a further six months. It also determined not to name any individual person responsible for the crimes, not to use the findings, testimonies and evidences for instituting criminal proceedings. Moreover, the willingness to support this agreement was only half-heartedly manifested by the Guatemalan military and the guerrilla organisation *Unidad Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteca*. The agreement was severely criticised by different sectors of society, particularly by human rights advocates.

In its preamble the agreement recognises that „the people of Guatemala have a right to know the whole truth concerning these events, the clarification of which will help avoid a repetition of these sad and painful events and strengthen the process of democratisation in Guatemala“. These are the words of the agreement which also gives expression to the conviction that the search for the truth and the clarification of the past is a prerequisite for creating peace.

The signing of this agreement opens up a path which all Guatemalans must follow.

Since the signing of this agreement, the Church has adopted its aims and aspirations and has committed herself to the search for the truth, our truth. At that time, the search for the truth was seen as a new path in pastoral work. Convinced that - as Pope John Paul II said - „truth is the power of peace“ (World Day of Peace 1980) the Church as a whole assumed the responsible task of breaking the silence which had been kept so many years by thousands of war victims and of offering them the possibility to speak and to tell their story full of suffering and pain in order to free themselves from the burden that has weighed on them for years. This was in essence the aim of the project called *La Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)* („Recovery of the historical record“) which the Church wanted to achieve

during the last three years: to know the truth about the past and, starting from this, to build up the presence and to be able to plan the future as a pastoral demand.

2. Memory of the past: dictates of peace

I consider the present process in Guatemala neither an individual case nor an exemplary one. Many other countries of the First and Third World as well suffered dark and fatal moments in their history, this history must serve as a lesson for the individual and collective life now and in future. In many places of the world political changes occurred, peace agreements were signed and amnesty was granted to those who were mainly responsible for so much suffering and wrong; however, all this was not always accompanied by the socio-political changes necessary for creating a democratic and peaceful co-existence. Doubts and distrust, sentiments of victors and vanquished, hatred and profound resentment still represent an obstacle for true democracy and peace in justice. Many wounds are not healed, the signed agreement has not reached the heart of the country and of the people.

Guatemala's dream and especially the dream of those who have committed themselves to know the past, to disentangle this history and to „clarify with all objectivity, equity and impartiality the human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer“ - as it is said in the agreement - in our opinion is not only necessary but indispensable in order to avoid a repetition of the past. „As long as we don't know the truth, the wounds of the past will not heal and will not close“ [Pastoral letter of the Bishops' Conference of Guatemala: *Urge la Verdadera Paz*, 11 („We urgently need true peace“)].

On October 20, 1994, the human rights office of the archbishopric (ODHA) pleaded with the Bishops' Conference of Guatemala for the project to gather eyewitness accounts of human rights violations that had occurred during the internal armed conflict. This initiative was based on the conviction that the political violence, in addition to its individual and collective impacts, had denied the people the right to speak. For years the relatives of the victims and the survivors have not been allowed either to speak about their experiences, or to tell what happened or even to denounce those responsible.

The events of the last 36 years followed a centuries-old exclusion of great majorities, who had always been exploited and condemned to silence. Guatemala is still a country where the majority of the people in all sectors of social, cultural, political, religious and economic life must be seen as victims who are condemned to silence.

The Spanish conquest of Ibero-America has left a system with „a few white masters and masses of slaves“, which has remained in existence until today.

The war caused the destruction and devastation of a vast human and social - less material - network which has to be rebuilt by future generations. During the nineties more and more people were firmly convinced that the **wall of impunity**, which caused so much suffering in the country, **had to be torn down**. The point was not to investigate individual cases such as the persecution of Campesino leaders, catechists, indigenous people, free-lancers or unionists. The organised crime, which had developed from the powerful counter-insurgent machinery, terrorised the society and still does today. It was necessary to dismantle the organised crime.

As Eduardo Galeano put it once: „The loss of memory implies impunity, and impunity stimulates the individual as well as the community to commit crimes. When somebody kills his neighbour and this remains without consequences, he will kill the whole neighbourhood step by step, for impunity has a stimulating effect on crime.“

Against this backdrop the project *Recuperación de la Memoria histórica (REMHI)* was launched in April 1995 in 10 dioceses of the country in order to gather and document eyewitness accounts of human rights violations regarding individual persons as well as communities and to realise an objective analysis on violence during the 36 years of civil war. These initial objectives were amplified and completed, an intensive debate on the subject followed and several meetings and seminars were held to work out how to proceed in this project.

Besides the objective facts which necessarily formed the foundation to start from, many further personal aspects - also with regard to the communities - had to be taken into account. The extent of violence and terror had been so cruel that individuals and communities were hard hit and deeply hurt. A socio-political approach was not enough for an intensive study of the issue, but it had to be analysed under personal, psychological, collective, cultural and religious aspects. An open discussion was started at different levels, especially at Church level, in order to jointly search for the most appropriate way to guarantee an investigative work which would have a really healing, liberating and peacemaking effect.

The people felt an urgent need to speak, to tell their story and to free themselves from the burden that oppressed them. It would not be right to reduce their role to simply passing on information without considering the individual person as a whole and the respective communities with their traumatic experiences.

The way that had been taken was not easy to go. Approaching the past, getting to know this history, entailed difficulties but it turned out to be more and more necessary. Many of those who directly participated in the conflict are still alive; victims and perpetrators were sometimes living in the same place; the terror had taken hold of hearts and feelings and sometimes people were virtually paralysed. The memory had been seized by fear and it was very difficult to overcome this oppressive state of mind. However, the people were convinced that, due to silence and oblivion, history would repeat itself again and again. Eduardo Galeano confirmed once again: „The extremely fallacious idea that it is dangerous to remember because, as a consequence, history would repeat itself like in a nightmare has spread through the whole country. Experience teaches us, however, that it is exactly the other way round. It is oblivion which leads to a history repeating itself again and again like in a nightmare. The right memory allows to learn from the past because the sole purpose of reappraising the past is to make a contribution to change the present.“

Having concluded the first phase of the project and having published the report we can say that through our work we got to know, deepened and appropriated our individual and collective history in a dismaying manner. It was as if a window was opened to allow us to breath and speak freely. In many communities new hope budded off which enabled them to come forth from their tombs and to get on their way.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Pope John Paul II put into words what the Church in Guatemala had done:

„As the years go by, the memories of the war must not grow dim; rather, they ought to become a stern lesson from our generation and for generations yet to come. (...)The memory of all that took place must be kept alive: This is our clear duty. (...) What the war meant for Europe and for the world has come to be understood over the past five decades, thanks to new information which had made possible a better knowledge of the sufferings it caused.“ (Origins, Vol. 25, No.3, June 1, 1995)

This is what the REMHI-Project intended to do and part of this work has already been presented to the Guatemalan people: all the sorrow that the people had to suffer, the horrible events and the testimonies of the victims - we all should know it in order to avoid a repetition of this history.

3. The path already gone

Subsequent to the proposal of this project to all bishops, each one of them adopted the initiative and together they put it into concrete forms by successfully and creatively co-operating on interdiocesan level. The human rights office of the archbishopric assumed the function of a secretariat for organisational, logistic and methodical matters. In the monthly workshops, which started at that time, the model of the project, its main objectives, methods and philosophy were defined and determined. The project should proceed in four steps: 1. preparation - 2. recording of testimonies - 3. accusation and analysis - 4. presentation and follow-up.

Then followed the determination of the **pastoral framework** for the multidisciplinary efforts of the grass-root groups, which had an interdenominational nature and should serve the whole society. From the very beginning, this process was accompanied by common reflections on the profoundly human nature of this experience, on the primacy of the victims (including former members of the army and of the civilian self-defence patrols and other aggressors also affected by war) and on an orientation towards the future (support of the reconstruction of the social network) while always taking the past into account. Intense discussions were also held on the significance of truth, forgiveness, justice, mercy and reconciliation as well as on the order of their ranking and their different forms in the life of the society and communities.

It was a process of collective and social learning in which the communities directly participated through their leaders and organisations by reconstructing, re-interpreting and accepting their history and by relating it to national events.

The process was marked by some basic elements: based on the option for peace and reconciliation it was a search open to all sides. The project was much more than a simple study or investigation. On the basis of the agreement on the establishment of a commission for the clarification of past events, it constituted an indispensable way towards peace and democratisation of the country in a personal and collective reconstruction process.

Essential elements of the process:

- * Decisive participation of the people through lay workers (*animadores*) for peace and reconciliation
- * Dignity of the victims whose testimony should be learned and listened to with sympathy and compassion
- * Socialisation of the work, shared experiences, difficulties and problems
- * Therapeutic importance of being able to share one's suffering for those who had kept silence for decades

- * Appreciation of the capability of campesinos, ladinos and indigenous people to be active and not only passive participators in this project
- * Awareness of this process being a process of human and social development and healing
- * Signs and new forms of celebrations for the victims

These elements found expression in the:

- * organisation of a network of 600 lay workers for reconciliation on the basis of the work done in the parishes and co-ordinated on a diocesan as well as national level
- * formation of the lay workers in the following subjects: history of the conflict, mental stability, confrontation with suffering and fear, how to conduct a conversation, security measures, approach to the experiences of the other made during the conflict...
- * 6,500 conversations with individuals and in groups held with victims (92%) and perpetrators (8%). 61% of the testimonies were recorded in 15 different Maya languages, mainly Q'qchi, Ixil and Quiché
- * summary of testimonies, of which 20% were transcribed, translated and classified into 270 categories of analysis
- * final report comprising four volumes (1,400 pages) dealing with the following subjects:
 - 1) The effects of violence on the individual, relatives and communities, forms of survival and accusations by the victims
 - 2) The mechanisms of horror (how were the massacres and tortures carried out, what methods did the intelligence services use; how did the insurgent and counter-insurgent forces behave towards the people?)
 - 3) The historical context (political, economic and military process, role of the Church from the fifties to the signing of the peace agreement)
 - 4) The victims of the conflict (names of the victims of the massacres, of the dead, disappeared and tortured people, general statistics and recommendations)

4. Some statistical data

Maybe some data can help us to understand the vast dimensions of this cruel war with regard to perpetrators and victims. Of course, they are nothing more than figures but each one stands for a human being. We have to be aware of this fact in

order to avoid juggling with figures. „One dead person is a tragedy but a million dead people are a statistical figure,“ one of those eternal sceptics once said ironically.

- * Direct victims of the war (approximately): 150,000 deaths; 50,000 enforced disappearances; one million internally displaced people and 100,000 refugees; 200,000 orphans; 40,000 widows. A total number of 1,540,000 victims.
- * The official machinery of repression included approximately 2,000 agents of G-2 (intelligence service), 3,500 agents of the documentation unit of the presidential general staff (*Archivo del Estado Mayor Presidencial*), 3,000 military police agents (*Policia Militar Ambulante*), 28,000 military commissioners (*Comisionados militares*), 900,000 members of the civilian self-defence patrols (*Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil*). A total number of approximately 936,500 people.
- * The REMHI project registered the eyewitness accounts on 55,021 victims within the period from 1960 to 1996; it has to be underlined, however, that eighty per cent of these cases refer to the period from 1980 to 1983.
- * A total of 25,123 of these victims were killed (45.7%); 3,893 people disappeared (7.1%); 5,516 were tortured (10.0%); 723 had been kidnapped and reappeared alive (1.3%); 5,079 were subjected to arbitrary or illegal detentions (9.2%); 152 were raped (0.35%); 10,157 were victims of different types of attacks (18.5%); and 323 were victims of other violations (0.6%).
- * A total of 422 massacres were documented, 103 of which (24%) had been committed in 1982. A number of 263 massacres (62.3%) occurred in El Quiché, 79 (19.7%) in Verapaz and 42 (10%) in Huehuetenango. Thirteen per cent of the massacres claimed between 11 and 20 victims, 27.5% claimed between 21 and 100 victims, and 9.5% claimed more than 100 victims.
- * The army alone was directly responsible for a total of 32,978 victims (60%); the paramilitary organisations (*PAC, Comisionados*) together with the army were responsible for 3,424 victims; the army and the paramilitary organisations are suspected of having caused further 10,602 victims (19.3%). This means that the army is charged with the responsibility for 43,580 victims (79.2%). The guerrilla organisation was responsible for 5,117 victims (9.3%).
- * 74.5% of the victims were adults and three out of four victims were indigenous people. 46.6% were married or lived together with their partner and two out of three were breadwinners of a family. A total of 86,318 children became indirect victims of the armed conflict, for the crimes were committed against their parents; a number of 42,047 of these children (48.7%) lost their father or mother. At least thirty per cent of the victims were organised, but only eight per cent participated in a military organisation (i.e. 92% of the victims were members of a civilian organisation). Half of the victims who were members of a civilian organisation (51.6%) participated in a religious group and one out of five victims was organised in a community group (18.7%).

These data speak for themselves regarding the dimensions of the war as well as the suffering and pain which the population had to endure for more than three decades, partly because the people opposed age-old structures of injustice and oppression.

5. Meaning of this experience

The work of the past three years has been of great importance for realising a gradual reconstruction of the country. The war caused great damage and traumas deeply affecting a lot of people. The project has been developed accordingly, greater clarity has been achieved in view of the initial objectives and it has become obvious that the project includes a liberating and strengthening factor with regard to people and communities.

Going this way meant to take account of one important factor which was characteristic of any of the steps: the active participation of the victims. In a letter issued at the beginning of witness recording, the bishops clearly expressed their firm conviction and stated as follows:

„The interdiocesan project ‘Recovery of the historical record (REMHI)’ which we have launched is supposed to be a contribution by the Church to the entire society with the aim of discovering and proclaiming the truth in order to realise a new form of social co-existence which will enable all Guatemalans to reconcile.“ (Bishops’ Conference of Guatemala, October 30, 1995)

This process was aimed at giving dignity to the victims and venerating the martyrs. Those who were always stigmatised or ignored have regained their place in history and have now become the new signs of life and reconciliation. The dominating power is still trying to silence the victims and to bury their memories. Nevertheless the project has given back a sense of life to these harassed and shaken people - due to the testimonies of those who were so vilely murdered and humiliated just because they wanted to accompany and defend their communities and who had become an unoppressible force for the reconstruction of a different society with more justice and more equality.

The point was to investigate the reverse side of history, i.e. not as the victors saw it but from the point of view of those who had always been “at the bottom” and had sacrificed their lives for the benefit of their people.

On the other side it was also a healing and liberating process: „Healing the people is a fundamental prerequisite for healing our society and our home country.“

Many of our people suffered serious human rights violations, a large number of them lost their relatives, were persecuted or had to witness violence. These violations are traumatic experiences which deeply hurt the people's hearts and minds, they leave wounds behind which will need a long time to heal.

At the same time the people and entire communities were seized by fear: the fear to speak, to suffer repressive measures, accusations, etc. Fear has always been an objective of political repression, and still is today, in order to divide and paralyse the people and communities. It is an obstacle to the participation of communities in any social, development or Church project. For years they remained silent, they carefully kept their experiences and sufferings like a secret not wanting to tell it to anybody or even less to denounce it. They thought that this would be useless and, what is more, that any accusation or any notice could endanger them or even result in the victims' being accused themselves („They **must** have done something, after all“ or „...if only they hadn't meddled in the problems!“). Even worse was when, for fear, they were unable to bury the deceased and to arrange for the respective ceremonies.

The impact of these experiences depends on the traumatic event itself and on the person concerned, on the point of time when it occurred, on the support the person obtained and on the continuity of the threat.

The project made an effort to face the fear, to loosen the tongues and to open the hearts of the people. That was one of the valuable aims of giving testimony. The statements on what they had suffered or seen, the reports on their personal experiences, the identification of places where their deceased relatives were left - all this has contributed to the fact that they can once again believe in themselves, that they gain confidence in the people around them and that they can give a new sense to their own lives and those of their disappeared or murdered relatives.

At the same time their testimonies are a firm step towards overcoming the problem of impunity. The recording of testimonies was facilitated by the fact that the people themselves, the campesinos, talked with the victims and listened to them.

These lay workers of reconciliation had been trained before, not only in a technical way but above all in a human perspective, because their attitude had to be extremely sensitive, obliging and respectful toward the questioned person in order to overcome any distrust or fear. It has been a profound relationship in so far as they talked about „the lives of their martyrs, and this is of a sacral nature“ one of the groups of lay

workers reported. They shared the pain with the victims, and many lay workers took it upon themselves in order to alleviate the burden of the victims. This pain was no longer a burden overwhelming them but they discovered it to be part of a painful history which can be overcome, after all.

The process was very instructive for the interviewers, the co-ordinators and those who accompanied them. It contributed to a more global and integral view of the Guatemalan history, of the causes which had led to the war, of its actors and those actually responsible for the disaster and tragedy of the country. The situations in the respective communities before and after the period of violence were analysed in several workshops; profound examinations were carried out on history and the socio-economic structures which are responsible for the fact that the vast majority continues to live in absolute poverty and which prevent a process of change towards true democracy. The people have opened their eyes, they know more about their own history and, above all, they feel to be active subjects of this history.

The recording of the testimonies was intended to be a response to the strategy of death initiated by the army. The violence was based on a meticulously planned strategy and took on cruel and at the same time very sophisticated forms in order to silence the population: old people - living memory of the community - were killed in the public, children - future of the community - were beaten and killed, women were raped countless times, churches were burned down, etc. To report this and to hear it from the direct witnesses to the crimes signifies an irrefutable accusation of the perpetrators and at the same time a formal obligation that this will never happen again.

This socio-political violence had enormous effects on the social structure of the country. It resulted not only in a polarisation of society - due to the identification with certain groups - but also in the fact that the army developed a control system which led to the restructuring of social and even family structures and which aimed at the elimination of any form of resistance by military means.

Scorched earth, partly developed areas, model villages, civilian self-defence patrols, all this was part of the mechanisms of terror and, above all, of control.

The project has recorded many testimonies of this reality. For the first time, the people affected were able to speak of the network of this machinery of death and thus to experience life itself, participation and solidarity of the community as a new path leading to the future.

The post-war era is marked by many of these facts: violence is still present, as a result of three decades of killing and oppression much aggression, hidden fears and feelings of revenge have accumulated, life has lost its value, indifference has spread... To know these mechanisms and to dismantle the structures based on these interests are prerequisites for an effective democratisation of the country and the primacy of the civil society.

The past is not simply completed history and nostalgic remembrance. With this project, based on the agreement on the establishment of a commission to clarify the past, the Church clearly affirmed: the past affects the present and the future, it helps to understand the present and to define or devise the future, it leads to a strengthening of the people's identity and history, and at the same time it represents a creative power for a new future. The past must not happen again but it must not be ignored either. Memory is the „guideline“ of the people.

This option has marked the Church's effort and its specific contribution to build up democracy in Guatemala, a differentiated and valuable contribution in the context of the political process the country is presently living.

Clarification of the past plays a key role in Guatemala in order to dismantle the mechanisms which made this state terror possible and to prove their functioning within the economic and political system of exclusion. The history of the suffering of people must not be treated simply as a chapter in a history book. Ignoring or falsifying what had happened and not denouncing those responsible bears the risk of creating new forms to legitimate killing and oppression for the instigators of the war and it jeopardises the future. If we want to prevent such atrocities in future we must not only apply the means of justice but we must also eliminate the systems and ideologies which promote such conflicts and atrocities. This is the task of all of us.

6. Towards the future

On April 24 of this year, the report was handed over to the people in the cathedral of Guatemala City in the presence of all bishops and lay workers - the true actors of the project. It was a solemn moment full of hope. However, this was not yet the end.

We all were aware that we had a further step to go, i.e. to „return“ to the communities their history, to tell it to the entire country. In the process of reconstructing the country and of creating democracy based on participation and equality, this step is as important as the preceding ones. Memory calls for this further step.

At present we are discussing about the instruments and programmes for a follow-up of the project. The people, i.e. the victims have disclosed the wounds of the country and its diseased structures which must be healed now. The aim of this returning of history is to meet the needs the people described in their testimonies, to contribute to the reconstruction of the social network, to grant the victims at least a moral recognition and compensation and, above all, to reinterpret history.

On the one side, the report is **offered - returned** to the victims. It is written in a simple and popular language as a compilation of the history of their relatives and as a vivid textbook of history not only to avoid its repetition but also to re-create it. On the other side, follow-up programmes are recommended as instruments for the reconstruction of the country as for example „peace education“, „mental culture“, „exhumations“, „erection of memorials“ and „religious celebrations“. It will be a long, but possible path.

Conclusion

This experience ended in a martyr's death

„This path involved and still involves many risks, but building up the Kingdom of God always involves risks and only those who are strong enough to face them will belong to its builders.“ This is what Mgr. Juan Gerardi, auxiliary bishop in Guatemala City and initiator and co-ordinator of the project, said on the occasion of the presentation of the final report on April 24, 1998.

Forty-eight hours later he was murdered in the most cruel way: his skull was beaten in with a lump of stone.

Was this the answer to the report *Guatemala: never again?*

There is every indication that the people shall be silenced, that fear and terror shall spread among them.

The unanimous answer of the population, of all social sectors was: NO MORE VIOLENCE; NO MORE IMPUNITY.

The crime provoked an extraordinary interest of broad sectors of the population in knowing: what does the report say, how does it treat history, what are the motives and who are the responsible persons? The assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi

has shown that the path taken in the report is the right one: **Memory as the path to justice and peace.** We all are invited and called upon to follow this path.

For the poor and the victims, the true authors of the report, it represents a promising word and path - like a whiff of fresh air in the climate of death and fear, in which they have lived.

We have opened up a path and we have taken significant steps. However, it is still a long way to go, but the distance we have already covered was very illuminating with regard to the future of our country, i.e. to the creation of a society in which there will be justice, equality and liberty.

Maria Christine Zauzich

The UN Truth Commission and the chronicle of martyrs Two ways of dealing with a burdened past in Guatemala

Review of the history

In the 16th century, Guatemala was conquered by the Spaniards – like the other Latin American countries. The indigenous Mayan population (there were still kingdoms when the Spaniards arrived!) was subdued in bloody wars and, as a consequence, was considerably decimated.

After the declaration of independence (1821) and the collapse of the federation called United Provinces of Central America (1838), the power in Guatemala was held for a long time by the thin upper class of Ladinos (whites and Mestizos) and the military closely linked to them. (In the period from 1871 to 1944, the Catholic Church was severely hindered in its work by governments which considered themselves to be „liberal“, and a process of secularisation followed: Catholic priests were expelled and American Protestants were invited to guarantee the „supply“ with church services; schools were nationalised, seminaries and religious houses were closed, church properties were confiscated.)

The civil war and its consequences

Between 1944 („October uprising“) and 1954, two presidents tried to realise social reforms, i.e. to improve the situation of the indigenous people (the Mayans) and to introduce agrarian reforms – problems which have remained unresolved until the present day.

In 1954, however, these first timid democratic approaches were nipped in the bud during the „banana war“ (an uprising – partly financed with North American means – against the Arbenz regime, which was rumoured to be under „communist“ influence). True is – and this is openly admitted today – that the CIA manipulated this „banana war“, because the American United Fruit Company, which owned large parts of Guatemala, feared for its properties in Guatemala.

In the period 1954-82 one coup followed another. During the sixties, a guerrilla movement developed (an interesting fact is that it came out of the military) which wanted to fight for social and agrarian reforms and to put an end to the oligarchic

conditions. The guerrilla, which consisted of four wings that joined up to form the URNG, grew ever stronger until the eighties when it got control of some parts of the highland for a short period. But it never succeeded in winning the majority of the Mayan population for an active participation in the fight; it could, at the most, count on their solidarity and strategic support (i.e. with food). However, this support was often given under pressure. The Mayan population living in remote regions and hardly speaking Spanish often did not know at all what the fight was about and got between the front lines. One typical example: The guerrillas come at night, hold a meeting in a village (speaking about the unjust distribution of land, the lack of democracy and starvation wages) and then demand – if necessary at gunpoint – food, messenger services and medicine. (People always gave them what they demanded only to make them disappear as soon as possible.) The next morning the military march into the village and punish the authorities, possibly even the whole village, for having supported the guerrilla. Without any investigation, people are tortured and murdered.

Guatemala's most serious problem was, and still is, the distribution of land: Even today, a small minority, about 2.5% of the landowners, is holding 65% of the fertile land; the majority of the population, Indian small farmers, must share the rest of the land which, due to population growth, has not sufficed for subsistence for a long time already. During the harvest season, even today whole families move from the highlands to the coast in order to work under slavish conditions and for a mere pittance as coffee or cotton pickers to make their living until their own corn is ready for harvesting. Big landowners reject any amelioration of labour conditions and trade unions are regarded per se as communist; they fear for their host of cheap labour allowing them to attain highest profit margins. Even today they can hire military squads to protect their grounds, which then are no longer under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence.

As already mentioned, the guerrilla movement finally did not succeed in winning the broad majority of the population; but their warlike actions gave the Guatemalan military – which ranks among the strongest and best trained in Latin America – reason and grounds for the so-called „defence of national security“. In practice this meant: bloody reprisals on critics of the regime and on large parts of the Indian population living in the highlands – the guerrilla's main zone of action.

The military suspected the Mayan population of supporting the guerrilla or of being the „social breeding ground“ for the guerrilla.

From the military's point of view, everyone who advocated human rights and agrarian reforms in whatever way, everyone who took the side of the Mayan population and of the poor rural population came under suspicion of supporting the „subversion“.

The civil war took a heavy toll: an estimated 150,000 people died or „disappeared“; 100,000 people took refuge abroad and there were one million desplazados (displaced in their own country). The Mayans were the worst affected group of the population. This is sometimes called an attempted ethnocide to the Mayans. At present, the first so-called „secret cemeteries“ are being uncovered, where often more than 100 villagers are found – many of them women and children who had been brutally maltreated, raped and tortured before they were killed by the soldiers. Approximately 500 massacres are expected to be discovered – 400 of which have been documented by REMHI.

Between 1979 and 1984, the civil war reached its peak (this period is commonly known in Guatemala as the times of violencia).

Particularly the Church suffered from this situation: more than 19 priests and a sister were murdered, innumerable catechists – primarily Indians – „sacrificed their lives for the Gospel“.

General Lucas García (1980) and General Ríos Montt (1982) spread fear and terror. Not only individual suspects were persecuted, but entire villages were razed to the ground. Even infants and children were murdered because they were potential candidates for the guerrilla.

Democratisation and peace process

Due to the war, this country, which formerly had a relatively stable economy, was on the verge of ruin; the military did not get control of the situation. International protests against „enforced disappearance“, torture, murder and massacres increased, although the eyes of the world public were primarily turned to Chile and El Salvador. (The Mayan population living in the highlands hardly found any international solidarity, maybe because the Mayans, due to their way of life, are rather a conservative people. Rigoberta Menchú and the political arm of the guerrilla were the first who, during the eighties, succeeded in attracting an increased public interest abroad.)

The last military regime had no other choice than to allow – for the first time – democratic elections in 1984, and in 1985 the Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo acceded to the presidential office. Since that time two elections have been held with

one „cold“ coup inbetween, which was not supported by the military though. So there has been a process of democratisation since 1985.

Each of the three democratically elected governments (since 1985) attempted from the very beginning to put an end to civil war by means of a peace agreement. These efforts were also enforced by the termination of the armed conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Both the government and the guerrilla came to the political understanding that none of the conflicting parties involved could really win this war. Background talks were started, involving different mediators; the two mediators appointed by the Bishops' Conference, Bishop Quezada Toruño and Bishop Gerardi, who was killed, played an important role.

The Peace Agreement, which was finally signed on 31 December 1996, is composed of a number of individual agreements. One of these agreements, which was signed on 20 June 1994 in Oslo, stipulates the establishment of an independent Truth Commission under the auspices of the United Nations. This has been the political and historical starting point for the „Truth Commissions“ of the United Nations and for the project of the Catholic Church; independent of this development, the first steps towards a chronicle of martyrs had already been taken before.

To sum it can be said that the first steps towards a documentation of human rights violations committed during the civil war were taken at a time when the signing of a peace agreement was obviously only a matter of time.

Undoubtedly the greatest problem in this context is the fact that – despite a process of democratisation – little has changed regarding the country's structures of power and that not one single perpetrator has been convicted of human rights violations until present. Today's amnesty laws, to which the guerrilla and the military have given their consent, do not apply to cases of human rights violations, but there is presently little prospect of litigating human rights violations. In fact, this is obviously neither in the interest of the guerrilla nor in that of the military.

In this situation – as a kind of generalising statement – the „Truth Commissions“, in shedding light on human rights violations and on the reasons for the armed conflict, could make at least one step towards making a contribution to bring peace to this torn country and to initiate a process of reconciliation „so that the past will not repeat“. Court proceedings and charge against perpetrators are not the aim of the Truth Commissions.

The „Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico“ („Truth Commissions“)

1. Historical and political starting position, initial experiences

The three initiatives mentioned before have the same general historical and socio-political starting position. However, the time of its establishment (1997) and the legal setting created for its purposes (1994) are special features for the UN Truth Commission.

It was the last initiative to start its work and, from the very beginning, its conditions, duration and operation were stipulated by the Oslo agreement dated 23 June 1994. Therefore it is the least flexible initiative. As this agreement, which was signed by the government and the guerrilla, is part of the peace agreement, it came into operation only after the signing of the latter on 31 December 1996.

The **preamble** stipulates the following circumstances underlying the establishment of the Truth Commission:

- Guatemala is marked by „grave acts of violence“, „disregard for the fundamental rights of the individual“ and „suffering of the population connected with the armed conflict“. (Note the cautious wording!)
- The population has the right to know the whole truth concerning these „events“ (acontecimientos), clarification of which will help avoid a repetition of the past and strengthen the process of democratisation ...
- The parties want to help lay the bases for peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights.
- They want to promote a „culture of harmony“ (concordia) in this context, to contribute to mutual respect and to eliminate any form of revenge or vengeance as this is a prerequisite for a firm and lasting peace.

Three purposes are mentioned:

- I. The human rights violations and acts of violence are to be clarified with all objectivity, equity and impartiality.
- II. A report is to be prepared that will state the criteria of judging the events including internal and external factors.
- III. Recommendations are to be formulated to encourage peace and national harmony (concordia!). Measures are to be recommended to preserve the memory of the victims, inter alia, to foster observance of human rights and to strengthen the democratic process.

The **investigations** will cover the period from the start of the armed conflict until the signing of the peace agreement.

The **operation** of the Commission is outlined by the following points:

- I. The Commission will receive information from individuals or institutions affected and from the parties of the armed conflict.
- II. The Commission is to fully clarify the situations described...
- III. The Commission will not „attribute responsibility to any individual“ (i.e. will not mention the names of perpetrators) in its work, recommendations and report nor will it make any juridical proposals, i.e. its findings will not have any judicial effect.
- IV. The Commission will guarantee the secrecy of the sources and the safety of witnesses and informants.

Composition of the Commission

The Commission consists of three members:

- I. Moderator (Christian Tomuschat, German expert on international law, who used to be an appointed observer of the human rights situation in Guatemala)
- II. One Guatemalan citizen of irreproachable conduct (Otilia Inés Lux García de Cotí, educationalist and of Indian/Quiché descent)
- III. One academic (Edgar Alfredo Balsells Tojo, lawyer and notary public, with professional and university experience of many years).

Installation and duration of the Commission

The Commission should start to work as of the day the peace agreement was signed. It was planned that the Commission had to work for a period of six months and that this period could be extended for a further six months.

In the last paragraphs the parties to the agreement committed themselves to collaborating with the Commission and promised that the implementation of the agreement would be subject to international verification by the United Nations.

Initial experiences

This commission disposed of better staff and material than the Truth Commission of the Church. Many nations helped to finance it. The fact that individual perpetrators were not named represented a considerable restriction. From the very beginning, its staff had to face the problem that the period of investigation was short, especially with regard to the inaccessible villages situated in the conflict zones and to the multitude of Mayan languages. The Commission worked on a national level, maintaining 14 offices (a few more than did the Truth Commission of the Church)

with – at times – 105 permanent staff members (plus 21 members of the security personnel!)

Initially the work was very slow to start, certainly because the UN Commission did not enjoy in advance that confidence which was placed in the Catholic Church; its biggest asset its 600 investigators, catechists and church workers who, which is most important, were able to speak the language of the people. Affected persons did not participate in the Commission; although most of the staff members came from abroad, they managed to work in the respective places with the help of local interpreters, e.g. teachers. Often they took advantage of the institutions of MINUGUA, the United Nations Observer Mission which had been working in the country already for a long time: MINUGUA was already known by the people and enjoyed a good reputation. Initially there were only a few witnesses coming forward hesitantly. Obviously the people found it easier to speak in those places where they had already borne witness to REMHI. Some thought that offices which were maintained by „strangers“ represented an advantage because many had been shy and afraid of speaking before other village inhabitants, a fact that also caused problems regarding the translation. In the meantime, the Commission has extended the period of investigation and is still accepting exceptional cases. It became a talking point in situations when, for instance, the National University and associations like the widows' organisation CONAVIGUA handed over publicly the results of their own investigations thereby attracting public interest. (Already in January, also REMHI had passed on its own results to the Commission.) In the present evaluation phase it is being reviewed whether there are cases which have been forwarded twice.

There is one important difference compared to REMHI: Staff members had more authority in asking the military and the guerrilla for documents. It is said that meanwhile the guerrilla has passed on the largest part of its documents, the CIA as well, and that only the documents of the military are incomplete. The government assures to do its very best, but the military declares that all documents older than ten years were destroyed. The objectives did not change – in fact, they were linked to the legal setting of the agreement. One significant feature will be the Commission's recommendations. Therefore it is important that it has established a „round table“ which is to discuss recommendations from the public.

Basic conditions, opposition in society

The starting position for the Truth Commission was more favourable, compared to the other two initiatives: the peace agreement had already been signed, REMHI had started working, secret cemeteries had already been uncovered, massacres were increasingly discussed in public, the military was criticised more openly.

Opposition came especially from among the ranks of perpetrators, above all from the military. The opposition among the population became primarily apparent in a lack of confidence. People asked: „What will be done with my testimony?“ In the villages people also feared that others (the perpetrators) might get to know about their testimonies and might take revenge. The Commission tried to dispel this opposition as far as possible. There were many experienced and sensitive staff members working in the offices who were able to gain the people’s confidence.

Ability to face the past

The interviewers made the same basic experience as those of the other two institutions: „Speaking is an act of liberation.“ That applies both to the victims and to the perpetrators. The society is very contradictory in dealing with the past: In commentaries and radio programmes which allow the audience to participate via telephone calls, people often take the opportunity of expressing their opinion and want to defend and to „explain“ what happened, e.g. the fight against Communism, against the guerrilla; or there are those people who say: „Let us at last forget everything!“ Human rights violations are denied or trivialised as being occasional „slips or blunders“. Up to the present moment, nothing has been done in the schools in order to handle and discuss the armed conflict in an objective manner: Matters are seen from the perspective as perpetrators. However, there are sometimes signs of openness, e.g. that the body of President Arbenz was publicly transported home from the exile and the respective comments on that event.

National memory

Nothing is known about memorials or commemoration days as yet, with the exception of those which have been introduced by the Church. The military still celebrate their Day of the Military on 30 June. In front of the government palace there is one small memorial stone erected for the victims, where the torch was lit on the occasion of the signing of the peace agreement. (Santiago!)

As long as the truth is not known, I do not see any chance of a „national memory“.

Dialogue between victims and perpetrators

It has been difficult – and it is still today – to make victims and perpetrators talk to each other. If this is at all possible, this may rather be realised on a micro-level, e.g. in our scholarship project, and the help of neutral institutions will certainly be necessary. When a general condescends to shake hands with the president of the widows’ organisation Rosalina, this does not mean that they have started to talk to each other. I think that the Nobel Prize, however, which was awarded to Rigoberta Menchú, has been an important step.

I suppose that religious communities and religious celebrations prepare the best ground for doing mourning work, i.e. for learning to cope with one's grief. However, these are steps to be taken in the future. Without any doubt there is the problem – I recognised that when I was preparing this paper – that the military are still trying to stand by one another in complete solidarity and do not admit anything... At least the guerrilla has indicated after the REMHI report that it is willing to review the respective cases of human rights violations and – if confirmed – to apologise publicly. However, this has been nothing but a declaration of intention.

Legal regulations, compensations, amnesty regulations

One of the weak points of the UN Commission is the fact that it is not allowed to suggest legal regulations or criminal prosecution of violations. However, it will certainly make proposals for compensating the victims. Until the present day, there have been hardly any cases of compensation in Guatemala. Right from the beginning of democracy, it was planned that for instance widows should receive contributions for bringing up their children – contributions that have never been granted, in fact.

The staff members of the UN Truth Commission have explained that juridical or legal regulations are quite insignificant for the majority of victims living in rural areas or for the Mayan population. The victims, who are often unable to read and write, have hardly any information on these possibilities. Some of them do have experience with „amnesty“ – a bad one, though. Many of those who had been hiding in the mountains, returned already in the eighties and registered at the next military camp because they were told that they would have nothing to fear and that they were then allowed to return to their villages, they only had to submit to amnesty. Although they were not aware of having done anything wrong – except from the fact, that they had hidden themselves for some time – many of them were tortured and murdered. For other returning refugees, „amnesty“ meant a kind of „re-education“ in special camps where people tried to make them realise that they had done something wrong due to a support of the guerrilla, their flight, and so on.

Only a few communities demand their land back which they were forced to hand over to the military for the setting up of its bases. Most of the people are quite happy, in fact, only to be allowed to return from their „model villages“ to their own villages, to be allowed to cultivate their own corn fields.

I have the impression, which I got in my discussions with representatives of the Truth Commission, that amnesty regulations are in the interest of perpetrators and not in the interest of victims – regarding the guerrilla as well as the military. In Guatemala, amnesty regulations do not include a criminal prosecution, although many people

believe that. In my opinion, truth commissions cannot be an alternative to the two poles of amnesty and criminal prosecution. At best, they may perhaps create an awareness of the fact that an individual person has the right to initiate criminal prosecution.

I think that truth commissions have but a psychological and purifying effect on the individual person. It remains to be seen whether this will change as soon as the results will have been presented publicly. After all, a criminal prosecution of intellectual perpetrators is one of the recommendations formulated by the truth commissions.

Experience made by victims and process of democratisation

It is too early to give an opinion of how a reappraisal of the past may influence the development of the civil society in Guatemala and its democratisation. This will largely depend on the question whether the recommendations formulated by the UN Commission and by REMHI can be put into practice. However, in Guatemala much more is needed than a reappraisal of the past: Social structures have to be changed, i.e. the other parts of the peace agreement will have to be realised as well: agrarian reforms, equal rights for indigenous people, and so on.

In the past the Guatemalan people gained quite positive experiences with receiving „support from outside“: In several cases the United Nations Observer Mission MINUGUA helped to settle matters of land quarrels and it was consulted with regard to conflicts and also human rights violations. Of course, this attitude was criticised by some circles as being an „interference“, but it had positive consequences for those concerned. In this context it is very important to remain absolutely neutral. It is desirable that these organisations should behave more modestly, as they often arouse envy due to their big offices and cars.

Concerning the term „reconciliation“

To a great extent, point 5 concerns the commissions of the Church. Just one remark on that matter: The UN Truth Commission has used the term „to reconcile“ in its propaganda material. In the agreement, however, the term was omitted. The Spanish text includes the word „concordia“, not „reconciliación“. I have the impression that this is not pure chance. Reconciliation presupposes that the parties have actively „joined hands“; concordia, in my opinion, means only to create the conditions for living in harmony with one another. It would be interesting to examine these terms also here in our discussions.

II. Chronicle of martyrs

1) Starting position

As already mentioned, innumerable catechists, 19 priests and one sister were killed in Guatemala, particularly during the years 1979 to 1985. Many of them meet the theological criteria of „martyrdom“: the peaceful, voluntary giving up of one’s life for the sake of a religious truth, a virtue or a doctrine of the Church. That means that a practising Christian (who must not necessarily lead a saintly life as usually is the case with saints) risks his/her life in being faithful to the Gospel. He/she assumes death as Jesus did: patiently, voluntarily, peacefully (without weapons!): Death as a consequence of practised faith. The person gives up his/her life for Jesus Christ, for a religious truth, a (Christian) virtue or a teaching (social doctrine, moral doctrine) of the Church.

Until the present day the Church confers the title of martyr only on those who meet these requirements. Moreover, it must definitely be known that the person died (burial place!) which is a problem in Guatemala since many persons „disappeared“! It must also be clear that they did not fight with weapons and that their commitment to a „good cause“ was not motivated by any ideology but by the Gospel. Proof should also be given that the persecutors were driven by „hate for the faith“ (of the victim). This will hardly be provable in Catholic Latin America. Here, it must rather be said that they were driven by hate for an evangelical truth or hate for a person because he/she advocated evangelical values or truths, practised Christian virtues.

In 1988, I made a documentary film in Guatemala entitled „Seeds sown by the martyrs“ for the German television in order to show that the Church had a stronger position after the time of persecution. At that time I asked myself: „Why are these martyrs unknown?“ and I suggested to Bishop Flores to write a chronicle of martyrs with journalistic „know-how“. Then I compiled the theological criteria of martyrdom and elaborated two questionnaires (one relating to massacres and one to individual murders) and offered the Bishops’ Conference to write a chronicle of martyrs. The bishops agreed. I started my investigations in a rather random manner in the two most affected dioceses. I interviewed catechists and held seminars on „martyrs“. I soon realised that my project would be a mammoth enterprise and so I decided to write a book which would contain about eight typical individual cases. I hope that this book (which is planned to be accomplished by the end of the year) will be published also in a popular version to encourage the communities to write their own history of martyrs.

Some bishops made their own attempts (in which I was not involved) to conduct investigations in the communities with the aim to hand a list of martyrs to the Pope

during his latest visit. The Pope was submitted a document containing about 70 cases which is, in my opinion, insufficient as it lists the names of murdered, committed Christians but does not adhere strictly to the criteria of martyrdom. This list has never been made public.

I now would like to illustrate two typical cases from my chronicle of martyrs, the case of an Indian catechist and of a priest:

a) Domingo Cahuec Sic, a catechist speaking the Mayan language Achi, murdered on 8 January 1982

Domingo was a health worker (Promotor de Salud), a leading authority in the village. On Wednesday preceding the day of his murder, he assembled his family and said: „The guerrilla threaten to kill me on Saturday if I don't follow them into the mountains. But there I would probably be forced to kill. But I am a Christian, a catechist – how could I ever kill? The military told me that I could save my life if I gave them the name of three guerrilleros. But then they would be killed anyway, so I would be the one who killed them. And neither you must ever kill someone, no matter what they will do to you, even if you hold a machete in your hands. Christians are not allowed to kill.“ One of his sons suggested to flee. (During the period of „Violencia“ one million Guatemalans fled to other places within the country: these are called desplazados; 45,000 people took refuge in Mexico, many in the neighbouring countries, in the USA and Canada.)

The father refused to flee: „Why? You know that I did nothing wrong. If it is God's will, let them kill me. Don't be sad, we will see us again in Heaven.“

Two days later the military marched into the village, gathered the inhabitants and selected 60 men from a list who were denounced as guerrilleros. These 60 men knelt down on the village square and began to pray. „A deep silence hung over the square“, the daughter reported. Then all were led to the small village of Clinica and were tortured; those who survived were strangled on a near hill after having been forced to dig out their own graves. Domingo did not flee, he wanted to be faithful to his task – and to obey the Lord's commandment: You must not kill. Peacefully, voluntarily he gave up his life. He is a martyr in the classical sense.

b) Padre Stanley (Francisco) Rother, killed on 27/28 July 1981

Stanley Francisco Rother was an American; the people in Santiago Atitlán called him „Apla's“ (in their language Tzutuhil which he spoke better than Spanish). Like most other priests who were murdered, he had nothing whatsoever to do with the guerrilla.

He only supported those in the parish who were threatened. Soon his name appeared on the lists of those to be killed. For reasons of safety he spent some weeks in the United States. In his letters, however, he repeatedly wrote: „But the shepherd should not leave!“

Today it is known that, three days before he was killed, he had been urged to leave the country – but he stayed: „On the day of our Fiesta I will have hundred marriage ceremonies – maybe afterwards, but now I can't abandon these people.“

Because of the threats he slept dressed in his living room, and indeed the murderers first penetrated into his bedroom. They did not find him, but they found the sixteen year old brother of another priest sleeping in the adjoining room. They forced him at gunpoint to bring them to the Padre. Padre Aplá's, who had thought out a way to escape for an emergency, opened his murderers the door and was shot. Why? Because he had spoken about the murders of his catechists in the United States? Because he had backed his Catholic radio station which had been repeatedly destroyed by the military? Because he had hidden persecuted catechists in the capital? – Every year the community of Santiago celebrates him like a saint.

Victims, perpetrators, specific expressions of a burdened past

The persecution of Catholics – it would not be right in my opinion to speak of a persecution of the Guatemalan Church as a whole – may be considered a special aspect of the armed conflict in Guatemala.

There are some indications of a „persecution of Christians“:

- In some highland regions, many families buried their Bibles in the ground during the period of violence.
- Being scared, some people denied their denomination and joined sects (in general, members of sects were not persecuted!).
- Hosts were hidden between tortillas and were carried to the villages.
- Liturgies of the word were celebrated in the „catacombs of the tropical forest“
- Presbyteries and churches in the region of Quiché were occupied by the military forces and changed into torture centres, sometimes even into mass graves...

Is a persecution of Christians possible in an obviously „Christian“ country? Were the murders and massacres more than just „slips or blunders“ of the military? Members of the military would answer: „We had to defend the liberty of our home country and of our Catholic religion against the communist threat (doctrine of national security!). Of course, we never persecuted or killed Christians – only the subversives and those who supported them.“

This, however, is exactly the problem. „Catholics are subversives“, people often repeated in a generalising way. Due to their social commitment and their leading role, especially the catechists were the ones who aroused suspicion.

Why was there a persecution? People accused the Church of „interfering in politics“. More and more clearly – also in its pastoral letters – the Church stood by the poor, the indigenous people, the landless population, which was one of the consequences of the „option for the poor“ on which the bishops had agreed in Medellín and Puebla in 1979. The spreading of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church played an important role, especially in the region of Quiché. In the fifties, European missionaries founded catechetical movements all over the country: The catechists did not only learn to read and write, but also to commit themselves to a material improvement of their communities. They became health workers, they realised an alphabetisation, they founded co-operatives, and so on. In a way, their objectives were very similar to those of the guerrilla. Due to this circumstance, the Church was accused of „interfering in politics“ – unlike the sects, which encouraged people to keep quiet, according to their principle: „In Heaven you will get your compensation for the injustice you suffered.“ Catechists were often the leading members of farmers' movements. That may explain the fact that the catechists were those who aroused particular suspicion; the same was true for socially committed priests. It was no surprise that some of them joined the guerrilla when they had nothing achieved by peaceful means.

In summary, we can say: Among the persecuted Christians, the victims, there were – above all – socially committed priests (some of them, for instance, missionaries who had been in China before, were professed anti-communists!) and catechists; the physical perpetrators were soldiers and „civilian self-defence patrols“ who were under the military's command; the intellectual perpetrators were military dictators, in close relation to big landowners who feared for the properties they held. (It has to be mentioned as well that, especially during the seventies, some of the Church leaders – among them Cardinal Casariego – were on the side of these circles, a fact which caused conflicts within the Bishops' Conference.)

Initial experiences, participation of survivors, objectives of the work and comparison to the truth commission's way of dealing with the past

I would like to sum up my first experiences with the chronicle of martyrs as follows: The bishops, especially the dioceses concerned (not all dioceses were concerned to the same extent!), have regarded my work benevolently, but I was not actively supported.

I have the impression that there is an unspoken resistance among a part of the clergy for the following reasons:

- a) The concept of martyrs is too „conservative“: Those people who – driven by the Gospel – joined the guerrilla and fought by force of arms should also be included.
- b) The concept of martyrs is too restricted: All innocent people who were murdered are martyrs. (On the occasion of those „celebrations of martyrs“, which are already held in a few communities, all people who were murdered or who „disappeared“ are included without making any difference, even women and children, whom I would compare – as to their definition alone – to the „innocent children“, the „Santos inocentes“, because the criterion of „voluntarily laying down voluntarily one’s life“ cannot be applied to their cases. Most of them would have run away and would have saved their lives if they had been able to do so.)
- c) There are no „martyrs“, because the murdered catechists were Christians, but in fact they were also Mayans, and they have died „for their people“. I think, however, that Indian catechists do not distinguish carefully between these concepts: They have committed themselves to their people for the sake of their religious belief; they have died „for the others, as Jesus did“, a few catechists said repeatedly: as Mayans and as Christians.
- d) We do not need the concept of martyrs used by the Church: „The people confer sainthood on the martyrs. That will do.. We do not need the ‘benediction from Rome“.

During weekends spent with the catechists and in talks with them I realised that many people thought that only the „padre“ or the „madre“ (nun) at most could be „holy martyrs“ because „the padre directs his whole life toward his faith“, as one catechist put it. It was one of my professed aims in these talks with catechists, and it is still today, to make them realise that an „Indian“ or a „poor Campesino“ who lays down his life in the service of the Gospel is not different from Peter or Paul, who did the same at their time. When they have understood, this has a liberating effect on many of them and it gives back dignity to the people who were killed and to those who have survived. This is also important because in their propaganda the military have often succeeded in rousing feelings of guilt in the people, in making them believe that they „had been on the wrong side“ and that torture and murder were the „just punishment“ for their wrong behaviour.

Summary:

With this work, I do not only want to supply the bishops with material which will be necessary to canonise some martyrs – vicariously for others; but the survivors are to

understand that their „contemporaries“ died innocent and, what is more, that they were conscious of risking their lives for the sake of their religious belief. I also want to point out the fact that these Christians can be an example to others, in order to make people aware that there is „martyrdom“ in our present time. Finally I want to encourage people to celebrate these martyrs, to venerate them. These are, of course, pastoral aims which go beyond those of the truth commission. These aims have not changed in the course of time but their realisation is even more important today.

Another new aim is to find ways to start a process of reconciliation by means of celebrations, liturgy and so on. This aim falls in line with future aims to be realised by the Truth Commission of the Church.

Political and legal conditions, resistance exerted by the state and society, possible reactions

The frame conditions of a chronicle of martyrs are not different from those of both truth commissions. I have already mentioned the resistance from within the Church. With regard to society, I would rather call it a lack of understanding than „resistance“. Even today there are large circles who do not realise the fact – or who do not want to realise – that people have been persecuted for the sake of their religious belief, and who consider the social commitment of the Church to be a „political interference“. In the end, these objections and this resistance do not play an important role for my work.

Ability to face the burdened past (perpetrators, victims, witnesses, military intelligentsia)

I would say, the „higher“ one's position in the social hierarchy and the more „guilty“ somebody feels in society, the less willing he/she is to face the past. This is especially true for military circles.

Regarding the „witnesses“, I have the impression that especially in those communities which are less affected by acts of violence, people are willing to ask questions as to what happened and for what reasons.

There is a great willingness of catechists the in affected regions to give testimony – provided that there is a basis of confidence. I always proceeded according to the principle of using the parish priest or the nuns as a kind of „key“ to my interviews; and before I started an interview, I often prayed together with the witnesses in order to show clearly that my intention was not to accuse them or to assign a possible guilt to them, but to listen to their witness. I feel the confidence in the Church to be a good basis to speak about the past.

Memories/experiences represented by events of national remembrance

On the national level, there is but one commemoration day, celebrated on 30 June, which has been declared by the Church to be the „day of martyrs“. I was present, when in 1989 the coffin containing the mortal remains of the first murdered priest Hermógenes was solemnly transported from the burial place to his home community of San José Pinula. The respective local bishop (Prospero Penados) said on that occasion: „The Pope has allowed us to celebrate the martyrs without them being canonised. Therefore let us declare this day to be the Day of Martyrs of Guatemala.“ As a piquant circumstance, this day is also a national holiday: the Day of the Military! During the next years, people did not make a great fuss of this day, but meanwhile it seems that this day is gradually gaining acceptance within the Church.

On the local level, there are more and more „celebrations of martyrs“. However, these are mostly commemoration days for all those innocent people who were murdered. In San Juan Cotzal for instance, a severely affected Indian community in Quiché, the martyrs are commemorated every year on the anniversary of the first great massacre in the village. When this day was celebrated for the first time, the parish priest had invited his community before to list the names and details of murdered and disappeared persons of the community. The names were written on crosses made of wood; these crosses were blessed during Mass and were nailed to the church wall. Since that time, an approximate number of 500 crosses has been hung there. In Nebaj and in Santiago-Atitlán similar initiatives were started.

Several communities solemnly took their murdered priests „home“, as they had been buried elsewhere; they buried them in the church and installed commemorative plaques. As it is especially important for Mayans to know the place where their relatives have been buried, „because it is the only place where they can talk to them“, the uncovering of secret cemeteries plays an important role. Frequently Mayan priests and Catholic priests have been present at the excavations and have celebrated divine services, also at a second burial. These divine services are also an occasion, not only to speak about the innocence of the victims but also to pay special attention to martyrs, especially the murdered catechists.

Dialogue between victims and perpetrators, efforts of victims of different conflict groups to cope with their grief

I do not have any personal experiences regarding the dialogue between victims and perpetrators. Maybe it is too early to start a dialogue. Together with a priest, I am planning a divine service in a community, inviting perpetrators to be present – in this case they are people living in a neighbouring village who, being guerrilleros, murdered sixteen catechists. The victims and perpetrators have been living in

neighbouring villages; acts of revenge or vengeance are unknown. The perpetrators – that is what the survivors say – „bow their heads when they happen to see us on their way“. Some individual cases are known of perpetrators and victims going towards each other and making gestures of reconciliation. I would like to mention two examples:

A perpetrator – tormented by a guilty conscience – tried to get in touch with the widow of the man he killed. Preserving his anonymity, he sent her food. Then he wrote her a letter asking her to give him an opportunity of talking to each other. The widow informed him that she did not want to have anything to do with him. Finally he approached her house and, throwing himself down, he confessed his guilt and said: „Kill me, if you like, but I cannot live on in that way.“ The widow’s father invited him to come into his house, the widow prepared a meal and they had dinner together.

In the other case, the community had decided to start the celebration of the Easter Vigil at night on the Calvary outside the village. Carrying candles, they moved forward into the village. A murderer who was well-known in the village stood in front of his hut. Someone came out of the procession, passed his candle on to him and took the man with him to the procession.

Among the Mayans, in my opinion, there is a special willingness to reconcile, due to their Mayan religiousness. Mayan priests start from the assumption that diseases are generally caused by the fact that people are not balanced, are not „in peace with themselves and with others“. Therefore they celebrate ceremonies of reconciliation before they start the curing ceremonies. This can be a very special opportunity for Guatemala, which has not been discovered and exploited yet, as far as I know.

The widows of victims (they are the great majority) and of perpetrators sometimes work jointly in widows’ co-operatives. When they are asked whether this does not cause problems, most of them just shrug their shoulders and answer that they all have lost their husbands, that life goes on and that finally they have to live together.

I am convinced – and also many others who co-operate with the truth commissions - that reconciliation starts on the micro level and that it has to be realised from the bottom to the top. The church communities are certainly the best ground for a dialogue between victims and perpetrators.

I do not dare say whether national talks held on the highest level, for instance between representatives of the military and the guerrilla, may make a sustaining contribution.

Legal possibilities, legal provisions for rehabilitation and compensation, a new societal beginning with the help of amnesty regulations, truth commissions as an alternative to prosecution on the one hand and amnesty on the other hand?

My discussions within the scope of the chronicle of martyrs did not give any indication as far as these issues are concerned. My experiences correspond with those of the United Nations' „Truth Commission“ which I have already outlined. During the interviews for the chronicle of martyrs, none of my interview partners claimed legal prosecution, although all Church institutions would help to find lawyers and would provide help for legal proceedings.

Experiences of the victims and development of the civil society; reappraisal of the past to overcome the causes of conflicts and as a contribution to democratisation; external support of the democratisation process?

From my experience with the chronicle of martyrs, I do not know much about these aspects. However, I would like to provide some information on my experience with the scholarship programme „Ija'tz“ („seed“). With the help of German friends, we intend to provide the children of widows with higher school and university education. We have realised that the lack of self-esteem of the Mayans in general and of the victim's children in particular plays an important role. We experienced that the victims do not talk about their past among themselves. There are „psychological blockings“. But if we want to initiate democratisation processes, it is necessary to address the questions of the past. Therefore it is important to start on a very low level – i.e. with the self-esteem. In this context, some weekend workshops with psychologists will be organised this year. Only under these circumstances, we can risk addressing very cautiously the questions of the past. We noticed, for example, that there are children of victims and perpetrators from the same village among the scholarship holders. The young people have not managed yet to talk about the resulting tensions. However, it is the conviction of the team of project leaders, that it is necessary to initiate a dialogue between them. This concerns not only the reappraisal of the most recent past, but the reappraisal of the last 500 years. For me, as the initiator from abroad, and for the German board members, this is more evident than for the Guatemalans themselves. This example shows that external help has an essential supporting function. This help appears to be useful and welcome. The concrete steps must be taken by the Guatemalans themselves, of course.

The role of the Church, the concept of reconciliation, the problems, the Christian approach to dealing with the past.

The importance of the Truth Commission of the Church has already been discussed, and based on my experience, I agree to this analysis. In the scope of my work on the

chronicle of martyrs, I have discussed with the catechists the point that it is really a duty towards the Guatemalan Church and towards the Universal Church to keep alive the testimony to the martyrs. This is necessary in order for the children and grandchildren to know why their grandfather, the catechist, or the local priest were killed. It must be clear that such testimony gives cause for pride and happiness. Remembering in order to prevent the events of the past from repeating themselves – this aspect of remembrance has been less important. „We want to forgive but we do not want to forget“, this is the principle, I repeatedly quoted (in contrast to the principle of the „Mothers of the Disappeared“ who said: „neither forgiving nor forgetting“.

In my opinion, this is the specifically Christian approach to dealing with the burdened past. A way must be found to live together in peace, initially on the micro level of a small village community; from there peace must be spread to the macro level of the country. In this sense, I would define reconciliation as follows: „forgiving but not forgetting“.

I am convinced that forgiveness is only possible where wrong is frankly named wrong, where tears are openly shed. I believe that the chronicle of martyrs makes a valuable contribution to this process.

Boris Pustintsev

Bring Out Your Dead

The communist regime in Russia treated the past in full accordance with the famous formula coined by George Orwell. I don't remember the exact words but the meaning was: he who masters the past, will be the master of the future. Millions of people in the Eastern block countries were professionally engaged in falsifying historical events and in controlling access to information. That is, controlling minds and souls of their compatriots. Their efforts were not in vain: the dictatorship succeeded in destroying the memory of several generations. People of the former Soviet Union particularly hard: their memories were being erased for 70 years. People lived in an artificial, illusory world, not knowing what was really going on outside and in most cases not wanting to know. The Soviet empire went down primarily for economic reasons, as we know, not because citizens protested against it - they were too skillfully controlled through the above-mentioned efforts to be able to protest.

As soon as the communists started loosing the grip over the country, first attempts were made to build up mechanisms to restore the history, to stop the destruction of our memory and reverse the process. The initiators were mostly united in groups that soon formed Memorial - still the biggest and most stable NGO in Russia. The idea was first to create by joint efforts memorials to victims of political repression all over the country and thus make the process of memory restoration irreversible, gradually cleaning up our past of accumulated lies.

The first Memorial NGO was formed in St. Petersburg in late 1988. Others followed suit, and by the end of 1990 there were about 80 regional Memorial organizations. By that time, Memorials consisted mostly of former prisoners or the relatives of those who had been repressed but passed away. But soon it turned out that there was no agreement as to the assessment of our past even among Memorial members.

This is a vivid illustration as to what extent historic memory has been perverted, actually destroyed, even in case of people who themselves fell victims to the criminal acts of the totalitarian state. Just an example: One of the first- co chairmen of St. Petersburg Memorial told me in 1991: „We who were arrested under Stalin, were really innocent, real victims, but you were arrested by KGB in post-Stalin years, you got what you deserved because you were 'anti-Soviet elements'“. My colleagues from the post-Soviet countries present here have certainly recognized the vocabulary. In a sense, he was completely right. During Stalin's era you might have

been an avid supporter of the regime and praise it daily, even belong to the highest echelon of the ruling party or government, even to the repressive apparatus, and still find yourself arrested one day (more likely, one night) just for nothing. I am not going into details now to explain the instruments of terror used by Stalin, however it is a matter of fact that many of the victims had been extremely loyal to the Soviet state but were nevertheless destroyed for no visible reason. But as often as not such people's belief in the final wisdom of the Communist party did not undergo any drastic changes despite every proof to the contrary, despite everything that happened to them. Their memory was so effectively manipulated that their comprehension of events was fantastically confused: they loathed Stalin but hailed the regime that had followed Stalin to loom large on the Russian political scene.

By 1992 this group left the Memorial and formed „The Association of Victims of Groundless Repression“, evidently meaning that there had been good ground to repress those who really protested against injustice done and atrocities committed by the Soviets. Now their St. Petersburg organization comprises about 1500 members, St. Petersburg Memorial about 4000.

Even in Soviet times, there were people in Russia who took pains to record any facts related to the events that the authorities tried to falsify or suppress altogether. These people were constantly harassed and persecuted by the KGB but nevertheless they went on with their work until it became possible for them to come into open as members of Memorial and demand the right to access party and KGB archives. The government ignored these demands but then it came to the abortive communist putsch of 1991. The time right after that was the peak of the democratization process in Russia. The government yielded to popular pressure and opened some of the archives for researchers from Memorial and for some of the politicians active in the truth-finding campaign. But only in Moscow and not for long: soon KGB and the military managed to persuade the president that too much vital information was being indiscriminately declassified in the process and that this did great damage to the security of the state, to national interests.

Since early 1992, the constitutional right of access to governmental information was more and more denied to the public, including the data about the crimes of previous rulers against their own people. Memorial researchers are still able to record evidence of the victims and their relatives, but the people outside this circle are today again reluctant to give evidence. All the more in case of perpetrators and witnesses to the crimes. People are again loosing concern for preserving their own history, for restoring their memory. Too many of them were actively or passively involved in the crimes to admit that they were fooled themselves and fooled others.

An enormous personal courage is needed to admit in public: I was completely wrong in my approach to this or that vital problem and I did much harm to others. Yet, much, much more courage is needed if the whole nation is involved in the process of reassessing the past, especially in the absence of a stable moral tradition.

We are constantly faced with new problems that compel us again and again to take a moral choice. It is actually a daily exercise, and the choice is often difficult. Many of us prefer to hide from it in the shadow of the paternalistic state, omnipotent leader, or ideological dogma. Such people feel very uncomfortable at every unexpected turn of events when this shadow disappears leaving them naked and unprotected from the icy wind of changes. Then memory of the past is for these people just a blanket wrapping them against the cold of present. True, this is a banal explanation, but the selectivity of our memory is one of the most common phenomena of this world.

If we were ever able to solve the problems of reassessing our past, next generations would most likely live in peace and dignity, because the things we cherish in our past determine the future we are striving for, even unconsciously. But in many regions, including some European countries, the appeal to reappraise the past goes unheard. It is a shocking experience to realize that the things you have cherished for so long stink, are rotten, dead, because they doom the future.

In the XVII century, when The Great Plague devastated many parts of Europe, every morning in London carts laden with corpses of those who died during the night, stopped at every house and the coachmen began chanting: Bring out your dead!... Bring out your dead!... Well, this is actually the meaning of our appeal: bring out your dead! But as often as not people do not realize the mortal danger of the plague of moral deafness, they still cling to rotten images and ideas.

Recently I have attended a conference in Estonia where about 40% of the population are non-Estonians, mostly Russians. The subject of the conference was very close to what we are discussing today. It was „Integration through reconciliation.“ By and by we got confronted with the main problem: is reconciliation at all possible in the post-empire world? Reconciliation means forgiveness, but there would be no forgiveness without repentance. To be able to repent means to be able to reappraise your past.

When I took the floor, I told the participants of my German experience. I told them about the organization called „Aktion Sühnezeichen“ whose members, mostly young people, volunteer to work in the countries where a German soldier ever set his foot during World War Two. They build and man hospitals, educational centers, memorial complexes. When I saw how many young Germans, half a century after the war, are ready to work for free, without material rewards, to atone for the sins of their grand-

and grand-grandfathers, I experienced a feeling of admiration and at the same time that of deep bitterness. Admiration because I realized that despite the twelve terrible years of nazi rule, German people managed to be morally sound, and that antimilitaristic feelings of most Germans are based on firm moral grounds. And bitterness because I knew that my own people are still too far from being ready to show repentance to the people they wronged, to offer sincere apologies to nations whose lives we crushed down with a soldier's boot.

We know about neo-nazi groups being active in Germany but we also know that they are in evident minority, that people condemn and denounce them. I must tell you that the situation in my country is much worse in this respect. The organizers of this conference have asked us to answer the question: what can we do to promote a Charta Memoriae, to develop political memory standards? Well, I am sure that the German law that makes it a crime to deny publicly the facts of atrocities performed by the former criminal regime, must become a part of international legal and human rights documents.

It is not that in case of Russia reconciliation is impossible altogether. In the early 90-ies, Boris Yeltsin visited Hungary and delivered a formal address to the Hungarian parliament that was, to my mind, his most brilliant political speech. Admitting that the main threat to security and stability in Europe stems from some of the former communist countries, he expressed his conviction that there would be no retreat from the strategic course of political and economic reform. He left no doubt that Russia aims at entering the European community. Finally, for the first time in our history, a Russian leader stated the need to activate such effective tools of progress as the forum of conscience, repentance and forgiveness. It was actually a program for the future as envisaged by the president and the government.

But when back home, president Yeltsin was confronted with a fierce opposition to this program in the parliament where by that time supporters of the „special Russian way“, the idea of renewed isolation of the country from the civilized world, were again getting the upper hand. The deputies refused to ratify the treaty of friendship with Hungary that the president had signed and vehemently attacked all points of the pronounced program. They were joined by some of the people most close to the president. The resistance was so strong that Boris Yeltsin crumpled under it and stepped back. That moment was the beginning of negative changes in Russian internal and external policy that three years later led us to the criminal Chechenian war.

Well, it is never too late to repent and reconciliation is still possible, but in Russia, as well as in many other countries, it means a long and bumpy road to this goal. Bad

habits die hard, and a chauvinistic empire instinct will die the last, I am afraid. Unlike the empire Germany, the Russian empire has not suffered a total defeat as a result of the war that in our times would have been a nuclear nightmare. It just lived out its days and collapsed. Let us thank our Lord that it was the result of an evolution, not a revolution, that no bloodshed on a massive scale accompanied it. But then let us not expect miracles, for example, a sudden moral resurgence of people dropped out of European tradition for seventy-plus years. Unlike post-war Germany, there were no strict new political and moral guidelines introduced for people to follow. It will take tens of years of reeducation and moral leadership which we are still to find. Moses led his people through the wilderness for forty years till the process of, as we would say today, rehabilitation, was over. Well, let us hope it will take less in post-Soviet Russia.

The Russian Orthodox Church is of no help in this respect. As you certainly know, it torpedoes all efforts of other confessions to stimulate ecumenical movement in Russia, stalls all initiatives to this effect that come from Europe. The clergy was purged so thoroughly during the Soviet Dark Ages that no Orthodox hierarchy of today shares what we call common values. On the contrary, they preach isolationism that encourages many priests to join the extreme right movements. It is paradox that the principle of remorse and forgiveness which is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, when it comes to implementing it on a national scale, is rejected by one of the largest branches of the Christian church.

Nevertheless, as I said, the reappraisal of the past and reconciliation of my country with other nations are possible, some of the latest developments confirm this. The present Russian government tries its best to enter the European Union agencies. For more than two years Russia has been a member of the council of Europe. This year the Russian parliament has ratified at last the European Convention of Human Rights. The Russian government has pledged to conform to international legal standards and to observe fundamental freedoms and political liberties of its citizens. As a member state, it is accountable before the European community for the promotion of human rights in the country. It is namely the successful introduction of notions of human rights that will eventually make people comprehend the necessity of re-evaluating their past experience, of coming to terms with new realities.

True, the civil rights movement in Russia is still weak and disorganized, and the government, burdened with centuries-long tradition of controlling anything that ever crawls, tries to tame it, to incorporate it into its own official human rights commissions. These commissions tend to concentrate on social protection and ignore the fundamental rights abuses performed by the government itself. True, the government often violates national legislation in the human rights field and is not too

eager to fulfill its international obligations. For example, five days ago a new minister of justice said that it will not be possible to abolish capital punishment in Russia in the foreseeable future.

Last month the parliament elected hard-core communist Oleg Mironov as a federal parliamentary ombudsman. In his TV interview right after the elections, Mironov announced that, though he is going to terminate his membership in the communist party (as the protocol requires), his long-standing communist past „would help him to do his duty of a federal ombudsman properly.“ In an other interview a week later he said that Stalinist henchmen and Stalin’s victims were equally to blame for „everything that had happened at the time“, that there is no sense in raking up the past - this is the attitude of the parliamentary majority towards the idea of reassessing the past. This nomination may well lead to bringing the very notion of ombudsman into discredit and actual degradation. Next thing we shall witness would be the appearance of a national ombudsman in Iraq, or Iran, or North Korea.

Still, the only way to make it possible for the post-Soviet societies to begin studying their past through the lens of moral values, is to actively promote human rights and education there. For example, implementation of the right of access to information is of the utmost importance, because unwillingness to reappraise the past is largely based on ignorance. Inability to comprehend the sufferings of others also contributes much to this unwillingness, and the only remedy here is systematic, proper education. I repeat that it means years and years of hard work, but we are really working today not for ourselves but for the good of our children and grand children. God forbid that they have to start this process again from the very beginning.

O. Bronislav Czaplickij

The Work of the Commission for New Martyrs in European Russia (Restoration of the Memory)

As part of the preparations for the celebrations to mark the great 2000-year Jubilee, the Vatican established various commissions and secretariats. These include the Commission for New Martyrs. Its work is based on Point 37 of the Apostolic Letter issued by Pope John Paul II "*Tertio Millennio adveniente*". It is worthwhile considering the argumentation of the Holy Father. "The Church of the first millennium was born of the blood of martyrs: '*Sanguis martyrum - semen christianorum*'. The historical events linked to the figure of Constantine the Great could never have ensured the development of the Church as it occurred during the first millennium if it had not been for the seeds sown by the martyrs and the heritage of sanctity which marked the first Christian generations. At the end of the second millennium, the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs. The persecutions of believers - priests, Religious and laity - has caused a great sowing of martyrdom in different parts of the world. The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants, as Pope Paul VI pointed out in his Homily for the Canonisation of the Ugandan Martyrs.

The witness must not be forgotten. The Church of the first centuries, although facing considerable organisational difficulties, took care to write down in special martyrologies the witness of martyrs. These martyrologies have been constantly updated through the centuries, and the register of the saints and the blessed bears the names not only of those who have shed their blood for Christ but also of the teachers of the faith, missionaries, confessors, bishops, priests, virgins, married couples, widows and children.

In our own century the martyrs have returned, many of them nameless, 'unknown soldiers' as it were of God's great cause. As far as possible, their witness should not be lost to the Church. As was recommended in the Consistory, the local Churches should do everything possible to ensure that the memory of those who have suffered martyrdom should be safeguarded, gathering the necessary documentation. This gesture cannot fail to have an ecumenical character and expression. Perhaps the most convincing form of ecumenism is the ecumenism of the saints and of the martyrs. The *communio sanctorum* speaks louder than the things which divide us. The martyrologium of the first centuries was the basis of the veneration of the Saints:" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, No. 37).

The Pope underlines the fact that the great number of saints and martyrs in the first centuries and in our own day shows that the Church is alive, that the Redeemer, who came onto the world 2000 years ago, continues with an all-powerful presence today and gives the fruits of faith, hope and charity to Christians of all races and tongues. The martyrologies must be expanded in order to show to the world the contemporary, 'new' martyrs, among them, in particular, ordinary believers.

The fundamental responsibilities of the Commission for New Martyrs incorporate preparation of the information distributed by the Vatican Commissions to the dioceses. This information includes:

1. The compilation of a martyrology in the wider sense (list of martyrs of the twentieth century) which differs from the Roman martyrology.
The Commission's task consists of collecting evidence and proof for future remembrance of those who, in our century, have shed their blood in the face of hate directed against the faith.
2. Honour of the martyrs.
The Commission proposes that within the scope of the Jubilee in Rome and in the Eastern Churches, various, different memorial celebrations are held, which could combine the acts of honouring the new martyrs from various religions and denominations. This area differs from the processes of beatification and canonisation.
3. A list of twentieth century martyrs
The Vatican Commission intends to publish a martyrology in the wider sense (list) by the year 2000. The list should contain the names of those who, in the twentieth century, gave their life (shed their blood) for Christ, for their faith, but who are not counted among the blessed or the saints. With the participation of the dioceses and orders, the Commission intends to complement this list with the names of those martyrs of other religions and denominations who bear witness to a shared belief in Christ. It is planned to publish the fundamental data on each martyr, together with the documentary material. The Commission's work is independent of that of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The beginning of an arbitrary process is not dependent on the Commission, but is rather an area of competence for the dioceses, which can also choose candidates from the list of names for the material research process, in accordance with the Law of Canonisation.

4. Who should be included in the list?

The Commission will apply Catholic doctrine regarding martyrdom. Martyrdom is the revelation of the virtue of belief, "the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith". A martyr is one who "bears witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united in charity". (n. 2473). The martyr bears witness to Christ because he believes that Christ will resurrect him too. He is reminded that martyrdom is not mere heroism, but rather also the gift of divine bliss.

5. How should the information be collected and compiled? National Committees should collect the following data:

- a) Key biographical data, including the fundamental life data of the respective martyr.
- b) Description of the act of martyrdom. Death must have occurred as a result of agony/torture suffered by the martyr in the witness of faith. Consequently, those will also be recognised as martyrs who died in freedom, but whose death is the direct result of repression suffered. Those will also be considered to be martyrs who suffered as a consequence of defending Christian values, not only in the direct sense of suffering for their witness of faith in God.
- c) Description of the anti-Christian character of the given system of repression and persecution.

What is the mandate of the Commission for New Martyrs?

The main responsibility for the Commission will lie in collecting documentary material on those who suffered repression and persecution for witness of their faith during the years of the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of repressed and persecuted Catholics died in the Stalinist camps and in banishment. In many cases, neither their names nor their burial places are known, often whole families were eradicated. Consequently, there is no-one today who can act to restore historical justice, rehabilitate the dead, or find the burial place. The atheist system of state repression and persecution strove for the complete annihilation of the clergy and the eradication of the religious awareness, regardless of the respective religion or denomination. The mass graves united believers of various religions and denominations. The work of the respective Commission will lead to recognition of the great value of suffering and death for witness of the faith in God, to act as a model with which coming generations of Christians can be strengthened.

Brief Review of the History of the Catholic Church in Russia

When the Kieven Rus' turned to Christianity, there was still no formal division between the Western and the Eastern Churches. Unaffected by the following division, the Rus actually always maintained contacts with Western Christianity. A detailed presentation of the role of the Catholics in the history of the Russian state is not the intention of this paper. It may be taken as certain, however, that only a small proportion of the Catholics in Russia had moved there voluntarily, namely and especially as traders, entrepreneurs and specialists. The largest group which had emigrated to Russia for economic reasons was formed by the Germans, who, at the time of Catherine II, had been invited to establish in so-called free settlements for which they received land along the River Volga, along the coast of the Black Sea, and later in other regions of Russia as well. But they only represented a portion of the Russian Catholics. It is they who came to Russia. But Russia, for its part, "came" to the Catholics of other nations as a result of the expansion of its borders. It is these who involuntarily found themselves within the borders of Russia, including millions of Catholics who endeavoured to change the existing order. Thus, as a result of uprisings and their cruel and violent suppression, hundreds of thousands of Catholics found themselves living in provinces in which their ancestors had not lived. The strongest of these played an active part in the cultural development of their "new home" and organised religious life. Catholic priests, both banished as well as volunteers, sped to them to provide spiritual support. A process of ecumenical migration by Catholics within the Russian Empire also took place. Furthermore, recruits from Catholic areas were enlisted to serve in the Caucasus, in Central Asia and Siberia. The curates and chaplains were Polish priests, among them often those who had been deported. The natural or violent migration into Tsarist Russia did not essentially affect the German community, which lived in colonies. This situation enabled the German population to maintain its religious and national values.

In contrast to the state Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church held the status of a foreign denomination, was a religion of tolerance, although the state repeatedly endeavoured to completely subjugate the Church, to limit its contacts with the Vatican and with other centres. The Greek-Catholic Church had been completely liquidated in Russia as early as in the first half of the nineteenth century. The provisional arrangement gave all religions and denominations full freedom, as confirmed by the Bolsheviks. What this freedom actually meant in Russia will be evidenced by my paper.

The Decree declared by the People's Commissioners on 23 January, 1918, regarding the separation of church and state, as well as school and church, announced the religious freedom and equal treatment of all denominations. But the clergy and the aristocracy were robbed of all their civil rights, including, that is, of

their right to food coupons. The Orthodox Church immediately denounced this Decree, while the Catholic Church, which had not enjoyed full rights during the reign of the Tsars, viewed it with some hope. Even Communists emphasised the suffering experienced by the Catholics under the rule of the Tsars, both in a religious as well as a national sense. But everything was soon to be clarified. The Instruction issued on 30 September, 1918, listed all points. The assets of all churches were nationalised. The local authorities added their own orders to this Instruction. All churches were robbed of their right to be a legal entity, while the church, church items and church objects could be surrendered for use by the registered parish. The Decree of 3 August, 1922, further restricted these rights. In order to attain the right to exist as a parish, twenty persons had to apply to the local authorities for registration. The local authority could always find reasons for rejecting these applications. A previously registered parish did not have the status of a legal entity, yet was obliged to elect an executive board comprised as follows: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditing Committee. After registration, these twenty persons were fully liable for the church and its assets and could employ clergy. The state had every opportunity at its disposal for exerting its influence on the twenty, on manipulating them, intimidating them, and for infiltrating them with its informants.

The Constitution of the RSFSR, amended several times, guaranteed freedom of conscience and anti-religious propaganda. Religious instruction of children under the age of 18 was prohibited, as were all religious mass gatherings at home (meaning more than twenty persons). Atheist and anti-religious propaganda was exercised with great force. To this end, the Union of Combatant Atheists (Sojuz Voinstvujuščich Razhožnikov) was formed.

In 1929, those who had been stripped of their civil rights had these rights reinstated; however, only few priests were still at liberty at the time.

One of the first altercations between the Catholic clergy and the Bolshevik forces was the result of the latter's interference in Church affairs. The clergy led by the Head of the Metropolitan Church, Ropp, refused to sign agreements on the use of the churches, because they believed the churches and their assets, which had been collected over many years through the donations of believers, were part of the most inherent property of the Church. Church representatives sought support abroad, which was consequently made into one of the main accusations. Ordinary believers also developed initiatives and established themselves as Councils. These Councils proved much too strong a memory of what had occurred in the country and therefore caused concern among the clergy.

In 1919, Metropolitan Ropp and many St. Petersburg priests were arrested. The numerous protests by believers resulted in the Archbishop being expelled. Responsibility for the Diocese of Mahilyow (Mogil'v) became a heavy burden for Archbishop Cepljak. The refusal to sign the agreements on the use of the churches, the insistence on the rights of the Church, including the right to instruct children in the laws of God, led to Archbishop Cepljak's arrest. Again, Catholics protested and meetings were held.

After the Peace Treaty with Poland was signed on 18 March, 1921, many Catholics - Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians - returned to their historical homes. The parishes lost their most active members.

1921 saw massive famine break out, especially in Central Russia. The whole Catholic world joined with Pope Benedict XV and began to organise help. The formal administrator of the Russian Dioceses, Archbishop Ropp, who lived in Poland, was actively involved in this, as was the Bishop of the Diocese of Tiraspol, Josef Kessler, who could not return to his starving parish, but who endeavoured to collect material help for the starving. Negotiations dragged out, and only on 12 March, 1922, was an agreement signed under which the Vatican Mission to assist the starving could begin its humanitarian work. In the wake of collaboration with this mission, Communists were accused of espionage.

In late 1921, the action of confiscating church assets began under the pretext of organising help for the starving. But that was not the true reason, because the Vatican and the world public had earlier already been prepared to provide help and assistance. The believers of numerous Orthodox as well as Catholic parishes had collected money with the goal of saving the church assets and were prepared to sacrifice their own valuables. Priests and parishioners defended the churches and their property to the best of their ability. The news that the Pope in Rome was prepared to exchange all valuables was not stopped by the Bolsheviks.

The hard opposition against the Soviet power, the refusal to sign agreements on leasing the churches, and the obstruction of the confiscation of church valuables led to the arrest of Archbishop Cepljak and many priests. In March 1923, the court hearing was held against the St. Petersburg Catholic clergy in Moscow. Archbishop Cepljak and Dean Budkevic were sentenced to death, while other priests were sentenced to variously long terms of imprisonment. Budkevic was shot dead, the Archbishop was released to Poland in exchange for Communists.

In the years that followed, the arrests of priests and the believers who supported them continued. The reason for an arrest could be quite arbitrary, very often some

matter was contrived as a reason on which to base an accusation of espionage or anti-Soviet activity. Many were accused of having given their children Christian instruction.

After World War I, the borders of the dioceses were changed. A part of the clergy of the former enormous church province of Mahilyow (Mogil'v) now found themselves in Poland and Latvia.

Yet even in 1923, a total of 123 priests had remained at their posts (some of them in prison). About just as many were also to be found in the Diocese of Tiraspol. Furthermore, there were the Dioceses of Žitomir and Kamenezk, and the administration for the Armenians and the Greek-Catholic Exarchate. All these priests suffered repression and persecution. Some of those found guilty and imprisoned had the good fortune to be released and exchanged, namely with Poland, Lithuania or Latvia. The most desperate and hopeless cases involved the fate of the German and Russian priests. The repression affected all church parishes in the Soviet Union. Only the French church in Moscow and Leningrad, as well as the church in Tbilisi (T'bilisi) managed to escape closure.

Only few priests who were in prison at the time survived the year 1938. Yet, not only priests were imprisoned, but so too were monks, nuns, and ordinary believers. These were arrested in connection with the cases against priests, namely as witnesses for the "fact" that the priests had established anti-Soviet organisations. A particularly outstanding example of steadfastness in the witness of faith is evidenced by the repeated arrests and banishing of the Terziarki Sisters of the Eastern Order.

Similarly, the heroism of many ordinary believers must be emphasised. These protected priests or sent or brought food to the priests at their place of imprisonment or banishment. Prisons and camps began to fill up again after 1939 with the members of the Catholic clergy and ordinary believers. This development was triggered by the occupation of Eastern Poland and of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union. The same happened again after 1945, when the Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine was liquidated.

The new Soviet Empire unintentionally contributed to the survival of the Catholic Church. Catholics sought spiritual support in the few existing church parishes in Ukraine, Belarus, and also in the Baltic. Moreover, some of the priests released in Central Asia and Siberia succeeded in either establishing Catholic parishes or in maintaining these illegally, as 'underground' parishes.

The Creation of the Commission for New Martyrs at the Apostolic Administration of European Russia

Today, the position of the Catholic Church on the territory of the former Soviet Union is complicated. During *perestroika*, the Catholic Church managed to re-establish its structure, but the territorial disintegration of the country resulted in administrative division. The revival of church life in the former republics, and now independent states, is causing massive difficulties. It is necessary to re-establish the parishes, to re-acquire the churches or to build new ones, to organise parish life, to prepare church servers and ministrants, etc. Under these conditions, the Eastern Churches do not have sufficient resources or opportunity to jointly research their history and the tragic period of their persecution in detail. But these issues need to be clarified, and jointly if possible. Topics such as the discovery and collection of documentary material on the new martyrs, methodological questions regarding the selection of documents, testimonials and items of remembrance, the principle of the systemisation of the material and the compilation of the martyrology must be jointly discussed. A Co-ordination Centre for all the states of the former Soviet Union must be set up. Today, those places which were formerly part of a single state, belong to various states and dioceses. Furthermore, there is a whole catalogue of questions which can only be solved at the level of the Archbishopric. For example, in researching the fate of a martyr, it is difficult to say today to which diocese and which country that martyr belongs. What is to be taken as the determining factor in the resolution of this question: the place of birth, the place of arrest or interrogation, the place of imprisonment or banishment, or the place of death?

However, regardless of the fact that such a Centre has not yet been established, it is nevertheless necessary to collect all the accessible information and material on the new martyrs and to develop collaboration within the analogously organised commissions which were created in Belarus and Siberia.

Allow me please so say a few words at this point on how the work of the Commission for New Martyrs began in European Russia.

Some years ago, during my time as the priest of some revived parishes in the Caucasus, I began to collect information on the life and death of the former priest of Vladikavkaz, Father Antonij Cervinskij, who was shot dead in 1938. On the basis of memories which his former parish members collated, I then proceeded to convince others of the necessity of his beatification. Because the first steps had already been taken, I contacted specialists in this field. I then understood that it would be much easier if the process of beatification was a group process. It became clear to me that all historical documents concerning the Catholic Church in Russia had to be collected. In March 1996, a meeting of the Commission on the Preparations of the

Great Jubilee was held. At this meeting, I was appointed as the chair of the historical sub-commission. I sent the programme of activities of this sub-commission to all parishes, together with a proposal for collaboration. Some of these parishes answered. But, it proved very difficult to continue this work, because I was responsible for tending to the needs of the Caucasus region and its problems.

While I began to collect the material on my predecessor from Vladikavkaz, I learned that Father Roman Dzwonkowski, Professor at the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, SAC, to whom I am most grateful for his help with my work and for his moral support, had already long worked on this topic. The fruits of many years of Roman's search and arduous research work have been published in two volumes on the modern history of the Catholic Church in the USSR, appearing in 1997 and 1998 in Lublin (R. Dzwonkowski, *Kościół katolicki w ZSSR, 1917-1939, Zarys historii*, Lublin 1997; *tenże, Losy duchowienstwa katolickiego w ZSSR, 1917-1939, Martyrologium*, Lublin 1998). The second volume of this publication is of particular interest to us, written as it was on the basis of an analysis of extensive documentary material. Documents from various archives in Poland, France, Italy, from the Vatican, and from the former Soviet Union were consulted during his work on the book. Thanks to the collaboration between Roman Dzwonkowski and Russian historians, in particular, scholars from the Moscow Academic Information Centre of "Memorial", he was given the chance to use documents and court files for his work, documents which had been kept in state and authority archives in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Siberia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere.

The voluntary society for historical information and education "Memorial" is active throughout the whole of the Union. It was founded in 1988 as a social organisation for the victims of repression and persecution. The character of this organisation has since developed and changed greatly. Soon, branches of "Memorial" were opened in many towns of the former Soviet Union, including in Leningrad in 1989. The Leningrad branch set itself the objective of creating a Memorial-Complex in the city, which would, at one and the same time, serve as a memorial, an archive, an academic centre, a lecture centre and an information and education centre, in order to eternalise the memory of the victims of the repression in Leningrad and in the Leningrad region. At the time, an historical and archiving commission was created, which was soon transformed into the Academic Information Centre (NIZ). The result of many years of work by enthusiasts lies in the massive archive which has been collected, in which the memories of the repressed and persecuted, various documents, foreign and Russian publications and photos have been integrated. The NIZ studied the history of the totalitarian Soviet state and the fates and destinies of the repressed and persecuted, including members of the clergy and believers. At first, attention was focused on the history of repression of the leaders and believers of the Orthodox Church. 1994 saw the book "Orthodox Christians on the Solowki

Islands" published by Irina Reznikova on the basis of material collected on the history of Camp Solowki. This led to an opportunity for publishing the little book "Catholics on the Solowki Islands" on the basis of the collected material. This booklet was published by Irina Reznikova in 1997.

Other national, religious and social groups are also working on the restoration of the memory of the victims of the repression and of the atheist system.

The Catholic Church, which met with massive difficulties during the period of its resurrection in Russia and the other CIS states, was not able to dedicate the due attention to the memory of its repressed and persecuted parish members, the clergy and ordinary believers. The lack of a sufficient number of Eastern priests and of an educated intelligentsia, clear confirmation of the result of the repression, led to the Catholic Church only directing its attention to this problem at a late stage. This gap was filled by foreign academics. It is at this moment worthwhile mentioning the extensive literature on this topic, published in Poland between the wars. In the main, this literature dealt with the memories of those repressed persons who were fortunate enough to be exchanged against Soviet spies and were able to leave the USSR.

One documentary account must be mentioned now which found itself into the hands of the Greek-Catholic Archbishop of L'viv (L'vov), Andrej Šeptickij, and another documentary sources which appeared among Russian émigrés in France. Using these sources as a foundation, Deacon Wasily CSV (OSB) wrote the book "Leonid Federow - Life and Work", Rome 1966. This book records the history of Russian Catholicism of Eastern Customs, and, in particular, the tragic fate of the first and last Exarch of the Russian Greek-Catholic Church. The book by French priest Antoin Wenger, "Rome and Moscow, 1900-1950" which was published in Paris in 1987 (Wenger A., Rome et Moscou, 1900-1950, Paris 1987) has proved to be an important source of reference for us. However, a fundamental deficit in this work lies in its lack of documentary material stemming from the archives of the former Soviet Union and which was inaccessible to academics. Professor Dzwonkowski, who himself repeatedly visited various cities in the Soviet Union even while the Union still existed, as well as later in the countries of the CIS, and who met with victims and witnesses of the repression and worked with members of "Memorial" and other academics, managed to overcome this deficit. The most active member of this group was Irina Osipova from Moscow, who wrote and published the book "Conceal me in my wounds". The book was based on her study of previously inaccessible material from the central and regional archives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (successor to the KGB), the central archive of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation, the central state archive of the social organisations of the

Ukraine and the archives of the Federal Security Services of the Republics. This book on the persecution of the Catholic Church in the USSR attracted great interest. It has already been translated into Italian, and a German edition is being prepared. Much as any pioneering work, this book also has its deficits, but is at present unique in its kind. It comprises information on some 400 Catholics who experienced suffering, torture and pain: priests, monks and nuns, ordinary believers. The author essentially uses only one reference source, but it is a very important one: the records and files of investigation kept on the repressed and persecuted.

After having been made responsible for the Commission 'Martyrology 2000' in European Russia in Summer 1997, I began with the search for staff. Again letters were sent to all parishes (by mistake going to parishes in Siberia as well) requesting that the available data on repressed parishioners be submitted in accordance with the information sheet which had been compiled by the Vatican Commission.

On 27 October, 1997, a Memorial Day for the Victims of the "Great Terror" of the years 1937 and 1938 was held in Karelia, near Medvežegorsk. Sixty years ago many of the Camp Solowki prisoners, including 23 Catholic priests, Volga Germans and priests from other regions, had been shot dead in a Sandormoch Wood. Participation in the Memorial Day allowed me to make new contacts and opened additional opportunities in the search for information on those who had been tortured to death. The General Vicar of our Apostolic Administration also approached the Information Centre at the Ministry of the Interior with requests for information on the fate of priests.

At this point some words must be said about how the information from the investigation files and records located in the archives of the security services was received. The most important thing is to know where to look. One has to approach the archive of the security service responsible for that area in which the respective person was imprisoned. In order to be able to consult the files - this is only possible for close relations of the repressed person, however - or in order to get an answer to a question, it is necessary to approach the office of the public prosecutor with the aim of gaining rehabilitation for the respective person. Those who were repressed or persecuted on account of so-called political matters are generally rehabilitated. Those imprisoned on account of criminal acts are in a worse position. However, these criminal acts which they had allegedly committed were often invented or contrived, especially after the Second World War.

It is very difficult to collect data on the ordinary believers who suffered repression and persecution, but occasionally we do make an interesting find. One example is the fate of Kamilija Krušel'nickaja. Kamilija, an educated woman from a Catholic

family, was befriended with the founder of the Moscow Community of Sisters of the Dominican Eastern Customs, Anna Abrikosova (Mother Ekatarina). When she was released in 1932, after camp internment, banishment and an operation, Krušel'nickaja invited her and other acquaintances to a religious dispute in her apartment. One of the participants was a spy. Both Krušel'nickaja and Mother Ekatarina as well as the other sisters were sentenced to ten year's imprisonment. Kamilija Krušel'nickaja came to the Solowki Islands, where Catholic priests were also interned.

Undoubtedly for apostolic reasons, as well as out of ordinary human love, she married another internee in the camp, who also turned out to be an informant. Before his release, Kamilija gave him addresses at which he could find help. All this information, together with detailed reports on the wedding, were soon with the Camp Commandant (see appendix). Kamilija Krušel'nickaja was shot dead on 27.11.1937 in the Sandormoch Wood near Medvežegorsk. Credit for research into this occurrence as well as for a great deal of other data relating to Camp Solowki is largely due to "Memorial" St. Petersburg and, in particular, to Irina Reznikova. She is also the author of the book "Orthodox Christians on the Solowki Islands", which was published in St. Petersburg in 1994.

The Work of the Commission

At present, the work of the Commission entails the collection of pieces of material and the processing of these pieces on the basis of the guidebook produced by the Vatican Commission. These data were previously in the hands of various individuals or organisations. The work of Professor Dzwonkowski, Irina Osipova, Mikhail Škarovskij, Irina Reznikova and others may serve as an example. This co-operation is ongoing. I have repeatedly addressed priests and believers via the paper "Svet Evangelija" (Light of Evangelism), as well as personally contacting various deans and, over and above this, attending conferences of priests, in order to contact all who are interested in the topic at hand. This has already allowed us to collect a substantial amount of information. The memories of witnesses are of particular value. But in order to be able to access these memories, it is not enough simply to turn to the old people. They are not able to write down their memories, and others fear to speak about it, even today. It would be a most welcome assistance for this work if we could enlist young people and specialists from throughout Russia. This would allow us to reduce the expenditure and effort on official travel. It would be useful to organise seminars on *oral history* at various church and state educational facilities; participants of these could then go out and collect memories and material on repressed and persecuted persons. However, no such seminars have been held yet, not even at the St. Petersburg Seminary.

It is very difficult to discover memories which were recorded by the martyrs themselves. Relatives and parishioners endeavoured to destroy all documents which might have served as a reason for arrest and accusation or as evidence in an investigation. For this reason, only few photos or papers produced by the victims themselves have survived. In some cases, such material can be found in the investigation files and records, and a copy can be made. Occasionally, such a document has by chance found its way into the registry of births and - if it has survived - can be obtained from there. The registries of births are kept in archives which are accessible to all.

I place great hope in the proposal made by the management of the Catholic radio station "Radio Maria" in St. Petersburg to prepare a half-hour programme every week dedicated to the contemporary martyrs of the Catholic Church. The information which radio can transmit will help find witnesses who remember the victims, and over and above this will be able to expand the group of specialists and volunteers who are capable of helping the Commission.

Based on the example of my own search for witnesses on the life of the priest from Vladikavkaz, I can say that one can only collect this information when the parish priest is himself interested in the matter. If this is the case, we will also be able to find believers who are prepared to help.

Undoubtedly, much of this material found its way to Germany. Some of it has already been published by the Society of Russian Germans. Special mention must be made of the book by Josef Schnurr "The churches and the religious life of the Russian Germans, Catholic part", which appeared in Stuttgart in 1980.

Through other publications I have become aware that the Commission for New Martyrs in Germany is occupied with analogous work (also covering Germans who suffered in the USSR). I would be more than pleased to enter into co-operation with the Commission here. In Germany, this Commission could collect the documents and memories of those who emigrated to Germany, and our Commission could collect the documents from the files and records of investigation. In future, a productive exchange of information would become possible

However, all work in this field not only calls for enthusiasm and organisational skills, but also for money. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Organisation of the German Episcopate "Renovabis" for the significant material assistance which it has provided for our Commission. Our Secretariat is funded with this assistance, and we have also been able to produce a book on the history of the Catholic Church in the north-western region of Russia / St. Petersburg.

A large part of this book is taken by the martyrology of the clergy and ordinary believers, collected and collated by the outstanding historian and archivist Mikhail Škarovskij. The book will be published shortly. Thanks to this assistance, we can prepare the publication of the findings of the Commission. I am sure that our martyrology will appear in the Italian publishing house "Russija Christiana".

Ecumenical Co-operation

People of various religions and denominations feel mutual understanding while collecting information for the martyrology, and also exchange material and experience. I am helped by Orthodox Christians. This co-operation will be continued into the future.

Under the conditions of a totalitarian state, believers of all religions and denominations suffered. In the face of death, all were one and the same, under internship camp conditions all forgot the often existing dogmatic differences and endeavoured to support each other. The graves which have been discovered over recent years by the search teams are brotherly graves of those who fell victim to the repressive system. In these graves rest the mortal remains of Christians, Muslims, Jews and many others, without religious or denominational differences. For this reason, the work on the restoration of historical justice naturally meets with the deep mutual understanding of people of various religious and denominational affiliations who are working on this serious topic - a topic which is so necessary in our time.

Activity Types

1. Collaboration with existing research institutes and centres, including state and authority archives.
2. Collaboration with analogous Commissions in Siberia and Belarus.
3. Collection of memories in parishes and work to discover material from book publications.
4. Organisation of memorial events, erection of commemorative plaques, organisation of commemorative days, circulation of prayers for the martyrs and their glorification, publication of fragments of the martyrology in the paper "Svet Evangelija" and discussion of these in radio programmes.
5. Creation of an atmosphere which allows the start of the beatification process for the victims of Communism, for which it is absolutely essential that documents are processed and that specialists from abroad are consulted.
6. Organisation of seminars in various regions of Russia on information exchange, on the further integration of people interested in this work, on expanding the Commission's activities and on increasing the number of its members.

7. Measures to awaken an interest in the Commission's work at educational facilities.
8. Actions to source financial assistance (with which to fund the work of the Secretariat and the expenses for telephone, fax, postage, payment of archive staff and translators, official travel, seminars, etc.).

At present, some of the numerous activity fields of the Commission have been implemented, while others are still in the planning stage.

A few words should also be said on the useful initiative started by the Council of the Believers of the Apostolic Administration in European Russia. This council collects facts on the repressed and persecuted stemming from Moscow. A provisional commemorative plaque was initially erected in the Church of the Immaculate Conception listing the names of the tortured priests and believers, and giving some brief information on each of them.

Political and Legal Conditions of Work on Restoring the Historical Memory

The Act on the Rehabilitation of Citizens who fell Victim to Political Repression was passed in the USSR on 18 October, 1991. This Act gives rehabilitated persons the right to financial compensation. This is valued at 3/4 of the minimum wage for each month of imprisonment plus compensation for property lost, but cannot exceed more than forty minimum monthly wages, if those affected lived in a city, and one hundred minimum monthly wages, if they had their home in a rural area. These special rights are awarded to the repressed and persecuted on condition that they are pensioners or are first or second degree invalids. (This year, the State Duma cut back for budget for this compensation programme by 50%).

Unfortunately, the process of rehabilitation has absolutely failed to become an act of penance on the part of the state. The state is unable to admit and regret that the Soviet terrorist system had sentenced people on the basis of criminal laws. The nature of rehabilitation led to a recognition by the state of the fact that court procedure had not been observed or maintained and that, given the lack of a court hearing, people had been illegally accused or illegally sentenced. This means that the rehabilitation process has not resolved the question of principle: WAS THERE A LAW ON REPRESSION. In this way, the Rehabilitation Act can be applied to all who were sentenced - meaning to those who were sentenced as well as to those who sentenced, i.e. to victims as well as to perpetrators. According to the 1991 Act on Rehabilitation it is not so easy to achieve justice: Applications for rehabilitation can be rejected, and there have indeed been such cases. For example, the rehabilitation

of Igor' Oguizov, member of the Social Christian Union of the USSR, was rejected because he had turned against the regime.

Even up until the present-day, Russia has not admitted the crimes of the totalitarian state and the injustice of the system of repression. A person who specifically repents can be forgiven, but a criminal state system which refuses to admit its criminal character cannot. And it is for just this reason that there can be no moral liberation in the country. The commemorative stone for the Polish victims who were shot dead and who lie buried in Levasovo has been engraved with the following words: "WE BEG FORGIVENESS!" (It was these words which Cardinal Wyszynski once addressed to the German people on behalf of the Polish people). The repressed who died as Christians have forgiven their persecutors. Those who survived and their relatives are prepared to forgive, but the henchmen, the perpetrators, and their like-minded equals fail to repent in the face of their victims. Over and above this, facts on the henchmen are kept secret in Russia. The state even ensures that their names and their past cannot become known to the public. In the face of such exclusive care from the state, one cannot seriously speak of reconciliation.

It must be noted once again that the process of the work on the restoration of historical justice has met with various obstacles. 1991 saw a decision passed on the surrender of documents from the archives of the former KGB for storage in the state archives. Although this decision is in force, there is hardly anywhere in Russia where it has been complied with. Furthermore, a development has been observed over recent years in which the archives of the former KGB are being made inaccessible. Although access to the archives of this agency was made difficult for academics in the past as well. Only direct relatives have the right to inform themselves about the contents of the files on their relations. The offices of the FSB (Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB) endeavour to "protect (these relatives) from their own confusion". An internal instruction has been issued within the agency on the protection of personal data; this even impedes access for people wishing to work on the documents. Furthermore, material on operations and agents is inaccessible for academic purposes, and the archives of the Ministry of Interior Affairs which pertain to the internship camps are not accessible. For the sake of fairness, it must be noted that the archives of the Council for Religious Affairs have been completely opened.

The Orthodox Church began as early as at the beginning of the 1990s to collect material on repressed archpriests, clergy and believers, when the public and political situation in the country changed and great hope was placed in the process of *perestroika* and the constitutional state order. For this reason, the Orthodox Church, although encountering its own difficulties in the process, managed to find and acquire the archive material of interest to it, without experiencing the difficulties which

the Catholic Church must overcome today. The Catholic Church had no academics, and missed out on the somewhat more favourable opportunity given at the time. And today, during the process of restoring the system, it is more difficult for members of the Catholic Church to retrieve the necessary information from the archives. It is possible that the situation will continue to deteriorate; the recently-adopted Act on Religion will play a role in this process.

Signs of remembrance (statues, crucifixes, plaques, stones) have been erected at various places, often at the place of execution. In most cases, these were erected as a result of the initiative taken by and funds given by social organisations, and, in some cases, the local authority also participated. In St. Petersburg, a commemorative stone for the victims of political repression was erected on Troika Square. In Levasovo, the commemorative plaques of the various peoples whose representatives died there have been erected. Crucifixes, Orthodox and Catholic, were erected in a wood near Medvežegorsk. Such places of remembrance are also to be found in other regions, also on the Solowki Islands.

In Russia, 30 October has been made the official day of commemoration for the victims of political repression. Other dates are 5 September - Day of the Red Terror - and 10 December - Day of Human Rights. In St. Petersburg, there is a custom of commemorating the victims, whose burial place is unknown, on the first Saturday in June. Flowers are thrown into the River Neva in remembrance of these victims. Moreover, meetings are held which are in the main organised by "Memorial". The organisation publishes books, and in former times arranged Commemorative Weeks.

"Memorial" has a broad spectrum of interests and great success. Young enthusiasts began these activities; it is not a veterans' organisation. It was created for the future. Its mission is to do everything in its power to ensure that the past is not repeated, that the memory is restored and that the truth is recorded, because only the truth will liberate people. It is not a political organisation and it has not set itself the goal of providing political education. It is all the more true then that this organisation cannot assume the role of the Church Commission, which is occupied with the New Martyrs. This is purely a Church affair, with its interest directed solely towards those people who suffered for their belief and who were Catholics. Therefore, the Commission cannot collect information on all who experienced suffering. Its role is to safeguard the witnesses of the faith who remained true to Christian values and who were prepared to die for their faith and protects them from being forgotten. This witness of the faith consolidates the belief of future generations.

Although it has started such an initiative, the Church does not intend to build up any illusions. There will always be martyrs, because it is not easy to accept the truth and

because a disciple of Christ and well as his teacher will always meet with the resistance of the forces of evil. The model for those who showed courage in the face of their persecutors and of death will consolidate and strengthen the belief of future generations.

It is possible that the restoration of the memory of the dead will move some henchmen to repent and will help build up a new society, but primarily, it will remind Christians at all times of the words of the Redeemer: "You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world." (Jn 16, 33).

Thomas Hoppe

APPROACHES TO A „CHARTA MEMORIAE“

The following reflections are not meant to be a kind of summary or even evaluation of what we have heard and shared with one another during the past days. I simply want to try to term some elements of an ethical and theological nature which, in my opinion, must not be renounced when formulating a *Charta memoriae*. I will structure them according to three main aspects: Obstacles to reconciliation as a reason for the necessity to create a *Charta memoriae*, the special character of a situation needing reconciliation, methods and objectives of reconciliation work. The last part will be a reflection on the profound theological structure of the effort to create a *Charta memoriae*.

Obstacles to reconciliation

It seems to be very difficult, *to read with new feelings once again* what has happened (John Paul II). Frequently one can observe that the gulf between the lives of the victims and those of the perpetrators and onlookers becomes even wider over time. This is particularly the case where the victims are forced to live together with the people who tortured them and even murdered their relatives, without the truth being brought into the open or being able to testify against them. However, the gulf is also widened and maybe made permanent where the victims are marginalised because their stories of suffering irritate the newly found optimism of a majority society or because their survival is interpreted as secret collaboration with the persecutors.

Keeping a memory alive specially serves the purpose of overcoming at least to some extent this, as it seems, nearly fateful life in separate worlds and thus of opening up to the victims a means of continuing their lives in spite of their traumatising, which cannot be undone, as a part of contemporary society.

Another problem is the fact that it is very difficult to convey to the perpetrators and, above all, outsiders the suffering of the victims. The drawings of artists who were imprisoned here in Buchenwald and wanted to picture the reality of camp life therefore used particular „ciphers of camp life“ - watchtowers, disinfecting, roll call, columns of prisoners marching out. One can only approximately recall what was experienced and it is therefore at most only possible to empathise in a fragmentary fashion with other people's suffering, a fact which has repeatedly been mentioned here.

Reconciliation is only possible where the moral context in which the issue of possible reconciliation is raised is not overlaid and thus devaluated by strategic calculations. When such calculations are effective, a willingness for forgiveness and reconciliation can be seen as an expression of the weakness of those who have something to forgive. This brings a strange ambivalence into the desire for reconciliation, it throws up the justified question of the extent to which one should get involved in such a process at all. The risk of getting involved is still there even outside the risk from strategic calculations: We have repeatedly discussed the conditions under which perpetrators can dare to face up to and admit to their guilt by means of asking for forgiveness. Is the prior willingness for reconciliation from a victim needed? But how will it be possible when it is the absence of a request for forgiveness from the perpetrators that condemns many victims to remain caught up in the memory of unconquerable suffering? Of course some individuals have the blessing that they have the ability to forgive. But this is not the case for many others. To how many people does it appear that they are victims once again - this time of a vicious circle that cannot be broken from inside or from outside - and not by punishment of the perpetrator - no matter how harsh - either!

Furthermore, many major collectives tend somehow to reinterpret the burdened past and to interpret categories such as guilt and reconciliation as depending from the personal viewpoint and its particularities. As a consequence, the weight of responsibility is not only modified but also the concept of moral behaviour itself may be fundamentally changed. This mechanism plays an important role regarding the ideological reassessment of basic moral concepts that characterised for example the training of SS units. Therefore a *Charta memoriae* should not only consider the contents to be remembered but it should also uncover the subtle structures which allow to pervert an orientation to universal moral standards and lead to an ideologically justified special moral of a class, group or nation.

The basic moral character of a situation needing reconciliation

This last thought refers to a basic feature of many events which need reconciliation. There are moral dilemmas which do not offer any satisfactory answer to those who got in it. Daniel Gaede quoted as an example that those holding an exposed position in the Buchenwald camp had to decide every morning whom of their fellow sufferers to send to the quarry and whom to the factory. When making their choice they knew that those who worked in the factory had better chances to survive. But did these people really have an alternative to escape from, or to refuse to participate in this sophisticated system of moral blackmail? Daniel Gaede gave a parallel example and described the situation of the Jewish councils, which were ordered by the SS to name those Jews to be deported the next morning. A refusal would have sealed the

fate of all Jews and not only of those who were directly threatened by deportation. In fact, with their actual collaboration the Jewish councils could only delay but not prevent the murder of the others. However, does one really have the right to reproach them morally for their decisions? Or is it only admissible to indicate that, particularly under moral aspects, a different decision could also have been considered justifiable? Does such a decision, made under such circumstances, also depend on the probability of saving other people's lives?

These questions will perhaps help to understand why even those who have done their best for their fellow prisoners in camps cannot content themselves with this, and, what is more, why they have even a feeling of guilt that becomes more unbearable for them the longer they have to live with it. Above all, these questions clearly illustrate why a system of rule that uses moral blackmail cannot only be interpreted as a fatal error, but has to be termed morally evil in the real sense of the word. Its main concern, after all, is to make as many of its victims as possible into accomplices of the crime and thus drag them into the abyss of guilt and entanglement. The moral damage, perpetrated on individuals and on an entire society, may even go deeper than external injuries, even the destruction of perspectives for the rest of one's life.

Memory work must therefore aim to uncover the political and social mechanisms that lead to entanglement in guilt. Dostoyewsky's *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* demonstrates that mechanisms of authoritarian rule are particularly effective if they make people feel that they can relieve them of their original moral responsibility.

Methods and objectives of reconciliation work

An empathy that also takes account of the suffering on the other side is needed, particularly when right cannot be assigned strictly to the one side and wrong to the other side. Applying a standard of comparative justice must not be aimed at levelling down the sufferings according to the poor maxim 'we are all guilty'. Asking for justice as a quest for the historical truth is a cultural and political challenge that can lead societies to the limit of their integration capacities; on the other side it can hold the key as to how models for a better shared future can be drawn up. Particularly conflicts which are interpreted by either side in the categories of ethnic identity and therefore often seem to be insoluble, require the search for concrete causes that have nourished today's readiness to violence. These causes will probably allow for constructive handling, if they involve issues such as keeping people from appropriate opportunities to political participation, to economic development or to social justice.

A long time is needed before grief for the victims of one's own side can be transformed into a willingness for forgiveness and reconciliation. Furthermore, it is

also essential that perpetrators and victims remember together that there is a situation between them that needs reconciling - and that they look into the reasons for this together. We cannot escape from the issue of the truth; a victim of persecution by the State Security Service of the former GDR put it in the simple, vivid words: „I can only forget what I know.“ For such joint memories, space must be opened up in which experience can be put into words and where it is possible even to take the risk of the burden of memory overwhelming one once again. Traumas that take away people’s speech are irrevocable. It is quite possible that third parties who attempt to influence such processes from outside rather cause damage than bring benefit, particularly when they press for too hasty steps towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Only such efforts for reconciliation are authentic which do not exclude the issue of justice. This remains true, even when it is certain that in the rarest of cases the efforts for justice can compensate for perpetrated wrong and that these efforts can only approximately result in justice, anyway. By way of contrast, the hasty call for amnesties gives way to the demand for impunity and too easily creates the psycho-social prerequisites for the repetition of the crimes. Truth commissions are generally no appropriate alternative to criminal prosecution, at least of the first offenders - but they offer at least the possibility to speak about what happened to the victims and to give them back something of their seriously violated dignity. Maybe the most important socio-political task of such truth commissions is to prevent that those will be successful who try to reinterpret history in a sense which is more favourable for them. Father Santamaria described the experience made in the REMHI-project in an unsurpassable way:

„What we could discover was that the war was based on precise strategies - the brutalities which characterised this war were meticulously planned: killing of the old - extinction of the past, killing of the children - extinction of the future. Women were raped countless times, churches were burned down, etc. To report this and to hear it from the direct witnesses to the crimes signifies an irrefutable accusation of the perpetrators and at the same time a formal obligation that this will never happen again.“

For this reason, gestures of reconciliation are needed, particularly in direct meetings of perpetrators and victims, but not exclusively on this level. What is also needed are public acts manifesting efforts for truth and reconciliation on the level of society and politics.

The theological dignity of a Charta memoriae

In view of these facts the question is raised whether one can hold on to the hope that there might be - at least generally spoken - an earthly forgiveness for all suffering

that individuals or groups of people inflicted on each other; i.e. a kind of reconciliation which certainly requires some external framework conditions (perpetrators and victims still have to be alive and they have to meet as persons, as moral subjects), but which is nevertheless possible under these conditions. Or is there - for certain forms of wrong - actually no earthly forgiveness, but only the chance of establishing a remembering community in order to prevent the repetition of what happened? A remembering community which lives on the hope that those for the sake of which the memory is kept alive can at least approximately comprehend the quality of the remembered experience? A remembering community which is aware of the fact that such memory represents a 'weak' category because the individual and collective consequences of forgetting are realised only later? A remembering community living on the hope that the abyss, which has separated people from each other since they have been on earth, will once be overcome even in the face of serious guilt? This abyss spares neither victims nor perpetrators. As Albert Camus once wrote, the most lonesome death is the death of a person which must die trapped in his/her lies.

But how can one go on living with the remains of the history of guilt and entanglement which cannot be wiped out within the world? Prior to any philosophical or theological speculation, does this awareness of the dimensions of evil raise the question of theodicy in its existential meaning? Can a religious foundation, on which these dimensions could be discussed, paradoxically only be saved, if the religious and theological reflection stopped at the point where the complete seriousness of the theodicy issue becomes comprehensible?

A speculative answer to such an existential question cannot be satisfying. An answer which is based on the same level as the question must rather attempt to reflect the experience of those who irrevocably became victims of guilty behaviour but did not reject their faith in God. If there is at all something adequate to the seriousness of the question, it is only the reference to the possible gift of firmness even in the situation of extreme desolateness.

For this reason these reflections should not be closed with a new attempt at argumentation but with a brief reference to a text written by the devout Jew Jossel Rackower on 28 April 1943 during the last phase of the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto. In the face of certain death, he speaks to God reproaching Him with having punished him more dreadfully than he would have wished on his worst enemy. His wife and his six children are already dead, arbitrarily killed in one way or the other: his ten-year-old daughter when she was desperately attempting to get some left-overs of bread from beyond the ghetto wall - „and the Nazis run bayonets through her head“. In the face of the sufferings inflicted on people like him, Rackower asks God for

forgiveness for those who, in their misery and their despair, turned away from God; and for himself and for those who are in the same situation, he claims the right to know the limits of patience of his God. But he firmly rejects the alternative of giving up the faith in this God; and he even confirms his hope for the last time:

„In an hour at the latest, I will be united with my wife and my children and with millions of my people in a better world, which is free from doubt and where God is the only ruler.“

It is only this hope which saves his dignity beyond death and saves this death from banality, from cynicism, from derision by those who believe themselves to be the victors.

Isn't it true that remembering the authenticity of such hope is also needed so that 'life in spite of history' remains possible at all?

Appendix

Programme

List of participants

Reference points

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

GERMAN COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE in Cooperation with MISEREOR and RENOVABIS

„Memory, reappraisal of the past and democratization“

**Without memory there will be no reconciliation.
Approaches to, and reflections on, a Charta Memoriae**

6. - 9. Juni 1998 Memorial Buchenwald

Programme of the International Workshop

Saturday, 6 June 1998

	Arrival Hotel <i>Dorotheenhof</i> , Weimar
12.00 am	Welcome of the participants, presentation of the programme and introduction to the workshop
01.00 pm	Lunch
02.30 pm	Departure for the memorial
03.00 - 5.00 pm	Guided tour of the memorial „On the difficulty to remember rightly. The ideological traps of memory“ Speaker: Daniel Gaede, Director of the educational department of the Buchenwald memorial

Subsequent to the guided tour, time for discussion and exchange

06.00 pm	Departure from the memorial
06.30 pm	Dinner
07.30 pm	Informal gathering The participants introduce themselves by showing 4 or 5 slides in order to present their individual context.

Sunday, 7 June 1998

07.00 am	Breakfast
07.50 am	Celebration of the Eucharist
09.00 am	Departure for the memorial
09.30 - 11.00 am	Unit: Ruanda. „The problem of <i>communication between</i> <i>perpetrators and victims</i> “ Speaker: Octave Ugirashebuja, Secretary of Justice and Peace Ruanda

11.00 - 11.30 am	Break
11.30 am - 01.00 pm	Continuation of this unit (including interventions by participants coming from Ex-Yugoslavia)
01.00 pm	Lunch
02.30 pm	<i>Unit: Guatemala.</i> „Different ways and problems in dealing with the past“ Truth Commission, REMHI and the <i>chronicle of martyrs</i>
	Speakers: Cirilo Santamaria; Marie Christine Zauzich
04.00 pm	Break
04.30 pm	Continuation
06.00 pm	Return to the hotel
06.30 pm	Dinner

Opportunity for informal talks and gatherings

Monday, 8 June 1998

	Celebration of the Eucharist
07.45 am	Breakfast
08.30 am	Departure for the memorial
09.00 am	<i>Unit: Russia part I.</i> <i>MEMORIAL. „The destruction of memory as an instrument of control“</i>
	Speaker: Boris Pustintsev
10.30 - 11.00 am	Break
11.00 am	<i>Unit: Russia part II.</i> „The restoration of memory“ Report on the <i>work of the Martyr Commission of the Catholic Church in Russia</i>
	Speaker: Bronislaw Czaplicki, President of the Martyr Commission
01.00 pm	Lunch
04.30 pm of	<i>Unit: Approach to a Charta Memoriae. Summary the meeting in the form of theses. Part I</i>
	Speaker: Thomas Hoppe, Hamburg
06.00 pm	Return to the hotel
06.30 pm	Dinner
	<i>Continuation of talks in an informal gathering</i>

Tuesday, 9 June 1998

	Celebration of the Eucharist
07.45 am	Breakfast
08.30 am	Departure for the memorial
09.00 am	<i>Unit: Approach to a Charta Memoriae. Summary of the meeting in the form of theses. Part II</i>
	Key-note: Bsp. Leo Schwarz
10.30 - 11.00 am	Break
11.00 am	<i>Unit: Continuation of the discussion</i>
12.00 am	Commemoration ceremony in Buchenwald, possibly wreath-laying
01.00 pm	Lunch
	Departure

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

GERMAN COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE in Cooperation with MISEREOR and RENOVABIS

„Memory, reappraisal of the past and democratization“

**Without memory there will be no reconciliation.
Approaches to, and reflections on, a Charta Memoriae**

6. - 9. Juni 1998 Memorial Buchenwald

Speakers

Cirilo Santamaria	REMHI Guatemala
Bronislaw Czaplicki	President of the Martyr Commission
Boris Pustintsev	Memorial St. Petersburg
Octave Ugirashebuja SJ	Commission Episcopale „Justice et Paix“, Ruanda
Maria Christine Zauzich	Guatemala

Participants

Gerhard Bauer	Adveniat
Guido Brune	Referat Weltkirche Erzdiözese Hamburg
Pia Frohwein	Memorial Buchenwald
Dietrich Gaede	Memorial Buchenwald
Dr. Franz von Hammerstein	Aktion Sühnezeichen / Friedensdienste
Prof. Dr. Thomas Hoppe	German Commission for Justice and Peace
Jozo Ivic SAC	Croatian Commission for Justice and Peace
Markus Leimbach	Renovabis
Gudrun Molkentin	Joint Conference Church and Development
Dr. Eva Maria Nowy	German Commission for Justice and Peace
Cas Paulsen	Justice and Peace Department, South-Africa
Prälat Hellmut Puschmann	Deutscher Caritasverband
August Rößner	Missio Aachen
Jonathan Rwamuningi	Bekenntnis von Detmold
Weihbischof Leo Schwarz	Vorsitzender German Commission for Justice and Peace
Silvia Servaes	Misereor
Kabelo Selema	Justice and Peace Department, South-Africa
Dr. Oleg Turii	Institut für Kirchengeschichte Lviv, Ukraine
Ivan Vojtassák	Slovak Committee of Justice and Peace
Prof. Ante Vuckovic ofm	Institut für eine Kultur des Friedens Split, Kroatien
Dr. Ilja Zivkovic	Sekretär der Kroatischen Bischofskonferenz

Chair

Prälat Dieter Grande
Jörg Lür

German Commission for Justice and Peace
German Commission for Justice and Peace

Secretariat

Bettina Huhn

Interpreters

Elzbieta Dziekonska
Wolfram Wiesner

International Workshop

Remembrance, reappraisal of the past and democratization

Reference points for the speakers

1.
 - 1.1 Under which historical and political conditions did you start your work? What are the events to be remembered? Who were the victims? Who were the perpetrators? Which are the specific features of the past whose burden weigh on your country?
 - 1.2 What was the historical and political starting point of your work? Is there any initial experience to be identified?
 - 1.3 What group of persons started the work? Were there any victims or survivors involved? What were the initial aims, have they been extended or changed in the course of the work and what were the reasons for it? What are the specific approaches of your work? Is there a difference to the State's official ways of dealing with the past?
 - 1.4 Under which political and legal framework conditions did the work start? What are the present framework conditions? What kinds of resistance to your work is exerted by the State and society? How do you react to it? What do you think of this resistance?

2.
 - 2.1 How would you describe the ability or willingness of your country to face the burdened past? How does this ability or willingness vary with regard to the different social groups - victims, perpetrators, witnesses, military, intelligentsia etc.?
 - 2.2. What memories and experiences are represented by signs and events of national remembrance (remembrance days, monuments, memorials)? (Perhaps you can illustrate this with some photos or slides).
 - 2.3 What possibilities do you perceive to initiate a dialogues on the conflicting memories an experiences of the different social groups? What do you think particulary of the possibilities for a dialogue between victims an perpetrators? Do you habe experience in such conversations and if so, what kind of experience? What perspectives do you see for a joint effort of victims of different conflict groups to cope with their grief?

3.

- 3.1 Do the victims and survivors have any opportunity to assert their interests by legal means? Are there any regulations ensuring that get back their property or regulations ensuring rehabilitation and compensations? If so, what kind of regulations and for whom? Are there any limitations? Are these regulations actually applied?
- 3.2 How do you feel about opportunities of building a new society with the help of amnesty regulations?
- 3.3 Can truth commissions be a satisfying alternative to the two poles of criminal prosecution and amnesty? If so, what preconditions have to be fulfilled?

4.

- 4.1 How could the victims' and the survivors' experience be used to benefit the development of the civil society in your country? (E.g. within the educational system)
- 4.2 How can the reappraisal of the past help to overcome the conflict causes? What kind of supporting measures are required?
- 4.3 To what extent do the approaches for the reappraisal of the past you presented influence the democratization process in your society?
- 4.4 Can help from outside benefit the democratization process and the reappraisal of the burdened past? If so, what form of help would be desirable?

5.

- 5.1 What role does the Church play in the process of reappraisal of the past?
- 5.2 Does reconciliation play a major role in your work? If yes, to what extent? What traditional conceptions of reconciliation specific to your culture do exist in your country? How do you define reconciliation? What do you think is the problem with this concept?
- 5.3 Is there any specifically Christian approach to coping with the burdens of the past? What are the principle features?