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I/D 28

THE GENERALATE TEAM

June 1981

THE AFRICAN FOUNDATIONS

Libermann's vision being fulfilled

Change. Shift of the centres of vitality. Ageing personnel. Decrease in numbers. These are all facts of the missionary situation today.

The accelerated pace of change, the unbalancing shift of the centres of vitality and the painful and inescapable decrease in numbers have led many Congregations to begin Foundations in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The emphasis at the moment is on formation. Especially in Africa the stress is on (a) internationality, with regional groupings, and (b) readiness to make use of local facilities (diocesan senior seminaries, colleges and universities), while living in one's own residence.

Spiritans Foundations

Spiritans are part of this movement, and for eleven years now we have had Foundations in the 'Southern Hemisphere'. Some are at a reasonable stage of maturity, some are still in their infancy, and others in embryo. Chronologically they stand as follows:

- 1970 BRAZILIAN FOUNDATION (the six Districts) – 19 students, 5 priests.
- 1970 EAST AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, with the integration of Kongolo-Zaire being considered) – 37 students, 9 priests.
- 1977 CENTRAL AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Cameroon, Gabon, RCA and Congo) – 8 students, of whom 3 will be ordained this year.
- 1978 PUERTO RICAN FOUNDATION – II pre-novitiate students, 3 novices.
- 1980 WEST AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi, Kwara-Benue) – 15 students.
- 1981 INDIAN OCEAN FOUNDATION (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion). The novitiate will open in September 1982, and there are six prospective novices.

In Brazil, the recent annual meeting (Jan. 1981) declared: "What is said on new Foundations in the 1980 Chapter documents makes us recognize in our own situation here the presence of a Brazilian Spiritan Foundation. We do not know in advance all the ways of the Spirit and we realize that we shall need time and patience and have to accept uncertainty, but we wish to continue along this road." They hope that the Foundation will be a catalyst for bringing together all the Brazilian Districts.

The map is impressive. The achievements are already substantial. Indeed, "a new era has begun". One cannot resist saying with Mary: "I exult in the Lord... He does great things." This Information/Documentation focuses on the Foundations as they exist in Africa. They have a common qualifier: African – with problems and concerns that are specifically African. The other Foundations, no less important, will be treated in a future I/D.

Authentically African

Western missionary presence is still strong in Africa (some 30,000 missionaries), but there has been more and more questioning as to the continued appropriateness of this. "The Churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity, and the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church" (G. H. Anderson). While there are areas where the local Church is hardly developed and where missionaries are still needed, there are others where a withdrawal of missionaries helps the local Church to find its own feet and to flourish as it could never do if it remained under too strong a foreign influence.

African politicians and intellectuals are generally in favour of reducing the missionary presence, and political crises of one sort or another have in fact brought about an exodus of missionaries from several areas, such as Guinea, Eastern Nigeria, Southern Sudan, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

The number of African priests and religious is growing steadily (3,700 African priests in 1975) and in many countries the episcopate is entirely, or almost entirely, Africanized. As Pope Paul VI said in Uganda in 1967: "We wish our presence among you to be a sign of our recognition of your maturity. You Africans are by this time your own missionaries. The Church of Christ is truly planted in this blessed land." And as long ago as 1919, Pope Benedict XV wrote: "In places where the local clergy is sufficiently numerous and properly trained, one may say that the work of the missionary is over and the Church successfully planted" (quoted by Fr. Pierre SCHOVER in *L'Eglise et la Mission*, 1975).

This very success of the missionaries of the past in planting the Church of Africa calls for a spirit of sacrifice in the missionaries of today: "He must increase, while I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). Bishop James SANGU of Mbeya, Tanzania, while appreciating the presence of foreign missionaries, did not hesitate to say to the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome that the establishing of the local Church requires that the local clergy assume more responsibilities and that expatriates be ever more willing to play a supporting role.

In sending his missionaries to preach in Africa, Libermann's intention was that they should train African priests

and religious as soon as possible, and he would certainly be pleased to see not only the strength of the African diocesan clergy today, but the increasing numbers of Africans joining the ranks of his Congregation.

Here mention must be made of the two Provinces of Nigeria East and Angola. Nigeria East provides a striking example of what has been said above. In his report to the 1980 General Chapter, Fr. General referred to "the Igbo Church, with its more than 2,000,000 Catholics and an unparalleled flowering of sacerdotal and religious vocations", and said that "it is the glory of our Congregation, and most particularly of Bishop Shanahan and our Irish confreres, to have sown the seed which has produced so abundant a harvest". But it is also true that it was the closing of Eastern Nigeria to some 300 Irish Spiritans at the end of the Biafran War of 1967-70 that allowed the Church that they had planted so well to come to full maturity and to produce in addition a thriving Spiritan Province. The Province of Nigeria today counts one Bishop, 52 priests, 3 Brothers, 64 scholastics and 16 novices.

The Province of Angola is smaller and is struggling to establish itself in much more trying circumstances. It numbers at present 12 Fathers (of whom 4 Angolans),

2 Brothers, 6 theologians, 4 philosophers and 7 postulants. Like the Province of Nigeria it runs a juniorate.

Towards a Definition

"The word 'Foundation' is new in Spiritan terminology... (and is) used to describe the beginning of a structure for the training of Spiritan candidates in their own areas, with a view ultimately to the establishment of a Province" (General Bulletin 776, p. 225).

In his report to the General Chapter, Fr. General said: "The term 'Foundation' stands for a new kind of thing: works of formation for African Spiritans, set up under the responsibility of several Districts which collaborate in the formation program. These works are destined to become a new structural organization as they develop, distinct from the founding Districts, entitled to receive new members for profession and probably later on to replace the present Districts" (p. 32).

For its part, the General Chapter preferred not to attempt a strict definition, but listed rather some common characteristics of Foundations (SL, 110-114), leaving them a certain freedom to develop according to local conditions.

The Foundations

"See how I lay in Zion a stone of witness, a precious cornerstone, a foundation stone" (Is. 28 : 16)

The history of the Spiritan Foundations in Africa has been dealt with in *Spiritan News* (July-August 1979) and also, here and there, in past I/Ds. The Foundations were the principal theme of the three recent meetings of Major Superiors in Africa, a report on which appeared in the April-May 1981 issue of *Spiritan News*. This year, therefore, may be called 'the year of the Foundations', and an attempt will be made here to give a fuller picture of them in the light of recent developments.

The East African Foundation

Although the Foundations are new, the idea of an East African Province was raised as long ago as 1963 by the five Tanzanian Spiritans of the time (all European-trained) and was discussed between the Generalate and the Districts of Kilimanjaro, Bagamoyo and Kenya. In a letter of June 1969 the Tanzanian Spiritans again raised the question. The 1970 District Chapter of Kilimanjaro adopted their proposal of a Foundation and invited postulants, several of whom presented themselves. The Generalate welcomed the idea and, at a meeting at Usa River (Arusha Diocese, Tanzania) in 1972 between Fr. LECUYER and the three Principal Superiors of East Africa (Frs. Thomas TUNNEY, Kilimanjaro, Joseph DE BOER, Bagamoyo, and Paul CUNNINGHAM, Kenya), it was decided that the Foundation would be the common responsibility of the three Superiors. The Superior of the Zambia Group, Fr. Anthony HEEREY, also later became associated with it.

The novitiate opened at Usa River in 1973, with Fr. Pat RYAN as novice master, and six novices, in a house donated by Bishop Denis DURNING, C.S.Sp., of Arusha. The novitiate moved to a new site, at Magamba (in the Usambara Mountains, Tanga Diocese, Tanzania), in 1978, and in the same year a residence for theologians was built near the Kenyan interdiocesan seminary at Langata (Nairobi).

Fr. TUNNEY was appointed 'Executive Officer' of the Foundation in 1977 - the unusual title of the post being chosen to imply that, as Superior of the Foundation, he was representing the other Principal Superiors as well. He was succeeded in 1980 by Fr. Chris PROMIS, the new Principal Superior of Kilimanjaro.

Seven of the nine young Spiritan Fathers from the Foundation have been appointed to Zambia, to mark its missionary orientation from the beginning. At the same time those responsible for the Foundation are very much aware of the need to allow its East African dimension to take root, develop and flourish (SL, 132).

The Central African Foundation

At the second meeting of the Pan-African Conference of Spiritans, held in Yaoundé in December 1976, the main topic discussed was indigenization within the Congregation and the need for local houses of formation. The proposals of the meeting were taken up two months later at the meeting in Bangui, in February 1977, of the French-speaking Principal Superiors, and it was decided that a 'Fondation d'Afrique Francophone' would be set up, under the joint responsibility of the Superiors of the Congo, Gabon, Yaoundé, Doumé, Bangui and Senegal. The novitiate opened at Essos, a suburb of Yaoundé, in September 1977 with four novices (two from Cameroon, one from Gabon and one from Senegal), who had all already completed a two-year course in philosophy. The novice master was Fr. René DES DESERTS, with Fr. Nicolas GOBINA, a Cameroonian, as assistant novice master. The professed students follow their courses at the Biayenda Regional Seminary in Brazzaville, Congo.

In 1979 two candidates from Equatorial Guinea presented themselves, and these did their novitiate (1979-80) at Linzolo (Congo), under Fr. Auguste DURAND. For 1980-81 the novitiate has again moved back to Cameroon, but this time to Akono (Yaoundé), with Fr. René CHARRIER as novice master. (Fr. CHARRIER, as Principal Superior of the Congo, was Superior of the Foundation from 1 July 1978 until he was succeeded in both capacities by Fr. Joseph WOLLENSCHNEIDER in October 1980.)

With the setting up of the West African Foundation in 1979, Senegal decided to join the new Foundation, and the 'Fondation d'Afrique Francophone' changed its name to Central African Foundation. The particular problem of this Foundation is the relationship of its members to the diocesan seminarians. This has helped them to discover their Spiritan identity and compels them to bring something original to the local Church: their missionary vocation and the witness of unity in their inter-racial community.

The West African Foundation

The decision to set up a third Foundation was taken at a meeting of Major Superiors of West Africa, held in Dakar in April 1979. It was decided that all the Major Superiors of West Africa would be responsible for it, but that the Superiors of Gambia (Fr. John HOGAN) and Senegal (Fr. Jean DAVIET) would have special responsibility.

The West African Foundation has added a further international dimension in being both English- and French-speaking, and the two novice masters, Fr. Hugh DAVOREN (of the English Province) and Fr. Joseph DE ROBILLARD (a Mauritian of the French Province), are both bilingual.

The novitiate opened at Bwiam, near Banjul (Gambia) on 15 August 1980 with six novices (four from Ghana, one from Makurdi, Nigeria, and one from Senegal). The siting of the novitiate near Banjul is historically fitting, as it was in Banjul (Bathurst) that the first African Spiritan, Fr. Jean LACOMBE, was born, on 28 Oct. 1829, of a

French father and a Senegalese mother. He entered the Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris on 1 Oct. 1848, when Fr. Libermann was Superior, and was ordained by Bishop Kobès in 1852. He made his profession in the Congregation in 1857 and worked in Banjul.

The bilingualism of the Foundation poses a problem, and one may ask if it is really workable. "Being bilingual is not easy and good preparation is absolutely essential, because without a basic grasp of the other language there is always a frustrating struggle for words" (Fr. Hugh DAVOREN).

Formation

As mentioned above, the **East African Foundation** has already produced nine priests, and one of these (Fr. Paul CHUWA), after some missionary work in Zambia, has been sent to Duquesne University for three years to prepare him for a post of responsibility in the Foundation.

The numbers now in formation are as follows:

1st Pre-Philosophy:	2
2nd Pre-Philosophy:	7
1st Philosophy:	7
2nd Philosophy:	5
Novitiate:	5
1st Theology:	6
2nd Theology:	4
3rd Theology:	0
4th Theology:	1

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The Pre-Philosophy course is given at Usa River (Arusha Diocese), with Fr. Tom TUNNEY in charge. For Philosophy the students go on to Kibosho Seminary (Moshi Diocese), where they study under the direction of Fr. Brendan CRONIN. The novitiate is done at Magamba (Tanga Diocese), under Fr. Pat RYAN, who has been novice master since the first novitiate in 1973. Finally, for Theology the scholastics go to Kenya, where they attend the national seminary at Langata, near Nairobi, and live in a Spiritan residence with Fr. Tom McDONALD as director.

In the **Central African Foundation** there are three novices at Akono (Yaoundé), and five professed scholastics (two philosophers and three theologians) at the Emile Biayenda Seminary, Brazzaville. These live in a community house near the Seminary, with Fr. René TABARD as director.

Apart from the five novices now at Bwiam, the **West African Foundation** has one theologian from Makurdi at Langata, Nairobi. Post-novitiate studies will be done at the Spiritan House of Philosophy at Isieniu, Nigeria, in a spirit of collegial responsibility. The major seminary at Sebikhotane, Senegal, is being considered for theology. The authorities are to be approached for a possible Spiritan house there, and, if this fails, other areas will be explored. The pre-novitiate is done with the 'Pères des Saints Apôtres' at Otele, Cameroon. Ghana is being considered as a permanent site for pre-novitiate formation.

As can be seen, the members of the Foundations study at various seminaries. The tendency in Africa now is towards regionalization of the major seminaries – usually as affiliates of the Urban University, Rome, for the purpose of granting degrees. Regionalization provides considerable savings in money and personnel. Religious Congregations likewise save money and personnel by sending their scholastics to study at these regional seminaries.

Another advantage is that the scholastics, by going through their formation in different seminaries, get used to the mobility and internationality of missionary life. By studying side by side with diocesan seminarians from their own cultural backgrounds they also establish close links with the local Churches and this is important for their future work

On the other hand, one may ask whether this system allows the students of our Foundations sufficient opportunity to nurture the seed sown in the novitiate. The curricula of the seminaries are outside our control and are geared to meet the degree requirements of the Urban University. There may be excessive stress on speculative theology, to the detriment of pastoral theology and missiology. If the Congregation wants to be implanted in the African soil in the way it envisages for itself, should it not have its own houses of formation where it has full control of the training program? In spite of its benefits, does the present system of appendage to regional seminaries not run the risk of producing diocesan priests under the guise of Spiritans? As the numbers in formation in each Foundation are still small, it would not be possible for each to have its own scholasticate, but would it be worthwhile considering the possibility of a single senior scholasticate common to all the Foundations? Our presence in these regional senior seminaries is becoming problematic as our numbers grow.

Another point to be noted is that in our own formation programs expatriate missionaries still hold the key positions. This is to be expected, seeing that the Foundations are still young, but the sooner local personnel moves up to the key positions the better it will be.

Cultural Formation

"An important element is to ensure their formation in the local or regional cultural context" (SL, 111).

Culture is the operative word in the Foundations.

"Culture is the totality of the way of life of a given people. Its ingredients include languages, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artefacts, technical progress, moral values and religion" (AFER, Aug. 1979, p. 216).

At first sight the Foundations may seem to be regions with the same cultural heritage. But this is far from true, even where a common language provides a link. In the labyrinth of culture in Africa, language is only one element. Swahili, French and English may be the principal media of communication, but to be trained in them does not mean to be trained in one's culture. In East Africa, Swahili is an administrative language; in Central Africa, French is foreign; and in West Africa, English and French are equally foreign. The tribal system in turn engenders a multitude of cultural trends and characteristics that make it difficult to have a common cultural formation. To have Masai, Chaggas, Kikuyus, Creoles, Mendes, Tivs, Igallas, Ashantis, Chewas, Tongas etc. studying together does not make for the proper training of each group in their own cultural heritage. Thus the Foundations' formation program tends to create a melting pot situation instead of a formation which is truly incarnated in the local culture. Yet it is probably true that the emphasis should be placed on internationality rather than on 'settledness' in a local culture.

Vocations

"You should not be fishing in the basket but in the river" (Mgr. BALA)

Methods of promoting vocations differ considerably in the Foundations.

In the **East African Foundation**, candidates are accepted from the junior seminaries and secondary schools on the completion of their Fourth Year. The Fifth and Sixth Years (equivalent to A-Level work), with emphasis on language and literature, are done at Usa River as the Pre-Philosophy course.

In the **Central African Foundation** the normal procedure is to accept candidates who have already completed their philosophy (though the two candidates from Equatorial Guinea had not done so). There are several aspirants from Cameroon and the Congo at present studying philosophy in the local seminaries. Mgr. BALA's remark, however, that we should be fishing in the river and not in the basket is not without justification, and Mgr. ZOA recently encouraged us to greater "apostolic aggressivity".

In the **West African Foundation** vocations are sought at the level of the secondary schools, and each country has its own program. The most successful program so far has been in Ghana, where, apart from the three novices at Bwiam, there are four postulants (three of them at the pre-novitiate stage in Cameroon) and 23 aspirants doing their secondary studies. The Vocations Director, Fr. Declan DORR, described the program as follows:

"The favourite method is personal contact: through retreats preached in schools and at the junior seminary and through the aspirants themselves. During term-time contact is maintained by correspondence. The whole

group came together at Christmas for a two-day meeting, the first day being a retreat and the second a celebration. During the last long vacation (June-September) the aspirants were assigned in groups of six or so to the Spiritan parishes for pastoral work. There they were sent in twos to the outstations. For this period they were given a structure of common life together: morning and evening prayer, readings. The whole lasted for two to three weeks, after which all reported together to a convenient school. A two-day retreat followed, during which all were seen individually by the Vocations Director. The meeting ended with a celebration in which the Fathers joined."

An important question in the matter of vocations is whether the Foundations should open their own juniorates. In 1963, when the possibility of starting an East African Province was suggested, Fr. Dan CARRON, the District Superior of Eastern Nigeria, was asked his advice and he replied: "I cannot see how a Province can be started without a juniorate." It is true that juniorates are out of fashion nowadays and that they require money and personnel, but the success of the Province of Nigeria East sprang largely from its juniorate, and the Province of Angola is taking the same direction. In Africa, junior seminaries are a 'conditio sine qua non' for steady growth. "If we do not have our own structures, especially in the early formative stages, it is just that we do not want to admit to ourselves that there is a difference between a child nurtured by the mother – a loving mother – and that brought up in a day-care centre."

Finance

In 1979, Fr. Joseph DE BOER, who had been one of the founders of the East African Foundation, was brought to the Generalate to promote the financing of the Foundations. He made contacts with various funding agencies, which have been generous in their support, and the annual 'Cor Unum' allocations from the Generalate have also helped.

However, the Foundations will be truly African only when they can dispense with outside help, and there must be an effort towards self-reliance. In Tanzania, a

country where self-reliance is a political principle, the East African Foundation started a farm project of 140 acres of arable land at Tengeru.

However, our record with farm projects has not been encouraging, and some have questioned the suitability of farming as a means of raising money for the Foundations. Other productive projects could be considered, but, whatever the means adopted, there should be serious attempts to reduce the need for funding from abroad.

Further Questions

Apart from questions already raised, there are other questions that come to mind.

The juridical status of the Foundations is a concern. They are destined to grow into Provinces. When will this take place? Where will the Provincialate be located? Will local rivalries spring up between the countries involved? Will the large areas covered be a handicap? Should the members always be sent as missionaries outside their own countries, or should they work in their own countries, where they have closer contact with the local culture? Are the older African confreres being sufficiently consulted and are they being given sufficient responsibility in the Foundations?

As a long-term exercise, can we maintain the present system of recruiting in secondary schools? Is it not an

anomaly that we do not want to appear to be in competition with local Bishops by establishing juniorates and yet we recruit from their seminaries?

The 'migratory' system of running the Foundations is undesirable. "Rolling stones gather no moss." Yet what do we do about giving the Foundations stability?

These and many other questions have to be faced and resolved as time goes on. However, it remains that the African Foundations, along with the two African Provinces and similar Foundations in Brazil and Puerto Rico, are providing a welcome rejuvenation of the Congregation. The recent *Spiritan News* documentation on Formation (March 1981) pointed out that, of the 400 young Spiritans now in formation, 200 are from the 'Southern Hemisphere'. The mustard seed is beginning to grow into a tree.

"Increase and multiply."

The Foundations are not only signs of a shift of the 'centres of vitality' within the Congregation but also an indication of the fecundity of the Congregation in its former mission lands and its readiness to propagate and perpetuate itself in them. This is in the nature of things. The great appreciation given by the 1980 General Chapter to Spiritan presence in both hemispheres reveals the

general desire of all confreres to see the Congregation "increase and multiply". "Widen the space of your tent" (Is. 54:2). The Foundations should be close to every Spiritan's heart and should be nurtured with genuine interest and care.

THE GENERALATE TFAM