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SPIRITAN NEWS

September-October 1980

No. 31

CONGREGAZIONE DELLO SPIRITO SANTO - CLIVO DI CINNA, 195 - 00136 ROMA

IN THIS ISSUE

EVENT: The West African Foundation.

DOCUMENTATION: International Team for the Mandyaks in Guinea-Bissau.

NEWS: Decisions of the General Council- Generalate Team- Brazil - Sierra Leone - East African Foundation - France - Ireland - Official Directory - Our Dead.

Event: OPENING OF FIRST SPIRITAN NOVITIATE FOR WEST AFRICAN FOUNDATION

After the English-speaking East African Foundation (1973) and the French-speaking Central African Foundation (1977), a third Spiritan Foundation in Africa has now begun. August 1980 was fixed for its official opening by a group of 13 Spiritan superiors who met in Dakar in April 1979 to discuss it.

The West African Foundation is international like the two others but it goes a step further in being also bilingual: both English- and French-speaking. And both the novice master, Fr. Hugh DAVOREN, 36, from the English Province, and his Assistant, Fr. Joseph de ROBILLARD, 59, a Mauritian from the Franch Province, are bilingual.

Spiritan News No. 23 (July-August 1979) gave the reasons for setting up the Foundation as follows:

"It was not a question of wanting to start something new for the novelty of it. Candidates to the Spiritan life exist in West Africa and it did not seem feasible to affiliate them to either of the two existing Foundations or to the Province of Eastern Nigeria. It is important to respect the cultural origins of these candidates, and any great geographical displacement would in truth be an uprooting for them.

Nonetheless, the problem is not a simple one. West Africa, certainly, has a large measure of unity, arising from a massive Islamic presence. It has also since colonial times the problem of two different languages, which makes exchange difficult. More importantly, it has been influenced by other factors, also a heritage of colonialism, which find expression in different viewpoints according to mentality, type of formation and theological approaches, often diverse.

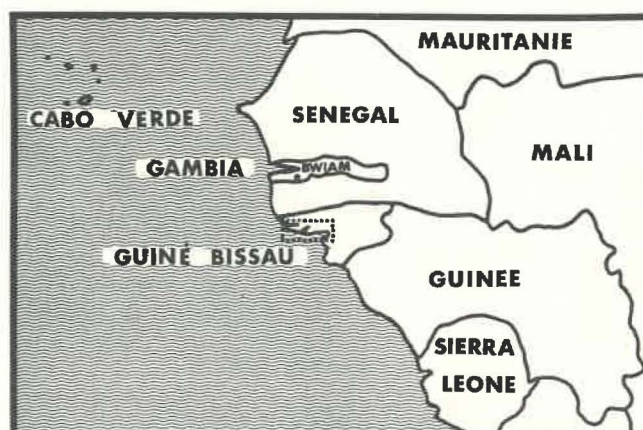
The relatively small Christian presence in these areas makes it impossible to foresee, at least in the immediate future, the establishment of separate Provinces in each country. The juxtaposition of languages in West Africa is such that there, more perhaps than elsewhere, a bilingual Province is necessary. Such a Province would help to harmonize and integrate certain aspects of the African reality. Indeed, in the ultimate, it would appear that this problem can be resolved only at the level of internationality and bilingualism."

The novitiate opened at Bwiam, near Banjul (Gambia) on 15 August, feast of the Assumption, and the first six novices took the habit on 9 September, feast of Blessed Jacques Laval, at a ceremony at

which Fr. Jean DAVIET, Principal Superior of Senegal, presided. Four of the novices are from Ghana, one from Nigeria (Makurdi) and one from Senegal.

With the three African Foundations, the Provinces of Nigeria-East and Angola, Brazil (which, without the name of Foundation, already counts several Spiritan vocations) and Puerto Rico (which will be opening a Spiritan novitiate next year), a new future for the Congregation is taking shape, and we intend to come back to the subject in a later issue of *Spiritan News*. The setting up of a bilingual novitiate highlights one of the difficulties of internationalism, but this initiative seems to be a step towards the future, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The address of the novitiate is:
Spiritan Novitiate, Catholic Mission, BWIAM, P.O. Box 165, BANJUL, The Gambia.



The West African Foundation corresponds to the Districts of Senegal-Mauritania-Guinea, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kwara-Benue and Makurdi. Apart from indicating Bwiam, the site of the Foundation's novitiate, the above map indicates, with a dotted rectangle, the area of the Mandyak mission (cf. following article and more detailed map on p. 2).

Documentation : INTERNATIONAL TEAM FOR THE MANDYAKS IN GUINEA-BISSAU

It may seem hardly worthwhile to highlight the opening of a 'mini-mission' in Africa, when 1,260 Spiritans are already working in that continent, but it may be well all the same to inform confreres of this venture, for, in accordance with the Chapter orientations, it expresses the missionary spirit of a District, the importance of First Evangelization, and the setting up of a new international team at the service of a local Church.

The Mandyaks are one of the tribes of Guinea-Bissau, living near the sea in the northwest of the country, just south of Senegal. Their total number is estimated at about 150,000, but half of them are at present outside the country. They are great migrators, many of them being found in Senegal (25,000 in the region of Dakar) and in France, as foreign workers. They also frequently return to their country.

Open to the Gospel message, they have hardly been touched by Islam. At Dakar, for example, the majority of catechumens are Mandyaks: about 1,000, with 250-300 adult baptisms a year. Half the children baptized in Dakar each year are Mandyaks. The same rhythm of conversions among them can be found in France.

For this group of new Catholics with their own language and culture, a Mandyak chaplaincy was set up in Dakar in 1969 and entrusted to a Spiritan who had been expelled that year from Guinea (Conakry). A team of lay Catholic Mandyaks helps him in the coordination of his ministry to their people in various places.

The migratory movements, however, have been a problem. When Catholic Mandyaks returned to their own country, they did not find any structures to help them. In Guinea-Bissau there was only one Mandyak mission station - at Canchungo, run by a Portuguese priest. In the whole area, however, there are now Catholics, most of them young, who were baptized at Dakar or elsewhere and who are keen on setting up Catholic communities.

The Mandyak Catholic community in Dakar had been a first stage. For many years, because of the local political situation in Guinea-Bissau, it had not been possible to consider a mission to the Mandyaks in their own country. As soon as circumstances allowed it, however, the Spiritan District of Senegal proposed such a mission. The Enlarged General Council at Knechtsteden in May 1978 accepted as a priority that an international team be sent to Guinea-Bissau in consultation with the local Church. A year later, in May 1979, Bishop Settimio FERRAZZETTA, O.F.M., of Bissau met the Generalate Team in Rome to discuss the mission.

This was officially opened at Bajob on 8 April 1980, with two French Fathers (aged 54 and 51), a 27-year-old Portuguese Father, and a Portuguese scholastic (aged 23) who is attached to the Province of France. The two French Fathers had spent the previous year preparing the mission: building the house and learning three languages: Portuguese, Creole (the national language) and Mandyak (one of ten local languages). The two young Portuguese arrived at the beginning of 1980.

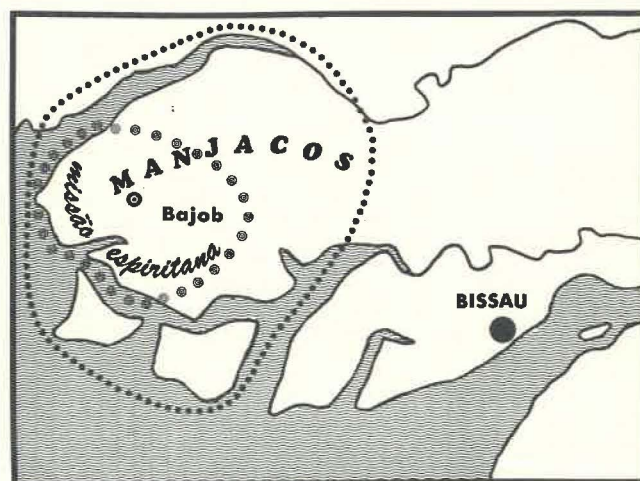
THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU

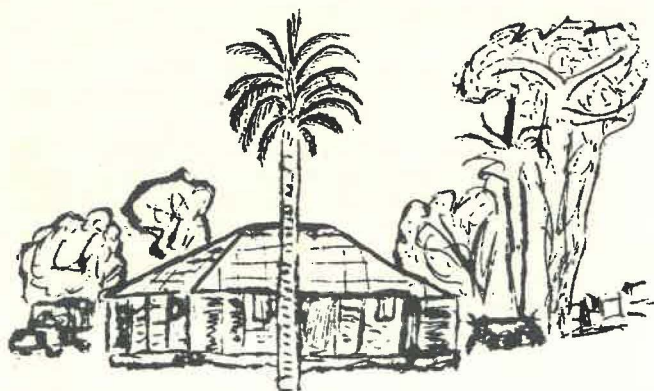
- 14,000 sq. miles - 700,000 inhabitants, of whom 8% Catholics, 30% Muslims.
- 40 priests, of whom one-third Italian Franciscans, one-third Portuguese, and one-third local clergy or others. Diocese (Bissau) since 1977.
- Republic under collegial government by a single party: PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde).
- Independence proclaimed in 1973 and recognized in 1974.
- Relations with both East and West blocs, including Portugal.

The area of the mission is about 30 by 40 kilometres (19 by 25 miles) and includes 30,000 of the 60,000 Mandyaks in Guinea-Bissau. The village of Bajob has the advantage of being central, but it counts only 219 inhabitants - with 40 men to 62 women (an indication of the emigration of men, looking for work), but, on the other hand, 70 boys to 47 girls (under 20). 235 persons from the village now live outside the country. The Catholics in the village number 25, all adults. With their children, they will form the nucleus of the mission. But already, in other more populous villages in the area, there are about a dozen groups with some 50 catechumens in each.

There is no church or chapel, and the missionaries' house is of the simplest, as can be seen in the drawing, which we received in one of the first letters from Bajob. In spite of its mud walls, however, it is the most impressive in the village, as it has a galvanized iron roof, which none of the others can boast (though some in nearby villages have this luxury). It has no running water or electricity.

There are certainly other missions in the world that are as poor as this one, and other missionary ventures that are as interesting. Among other Spiritan initiatives, for instance, there is the work





of the District of Kilimanjaro for East African nomads, or the sending of Spiritan confreres from Yaoundé to help the Oblates in northern Cameroon in first evangelization. However, the mission to the Mandyaks seemed worth calling attention to as an effort by an 'old' Spiritan District in an area of first evangelization, with an international team, at the service of the poor in a poor local Church - all elements that

WOMEN IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Politics in Guinea-Bissau today closely follow the lines laid down by Amílcar CABRAL, leader of the PAIGC, who was assassinated in 1973. In hardly any other country do women play as important a part in political life as they do in Guinea-Bissau. Already during the war of independence, two of the three liberation movements had women at their head as political leaders, and today five women hold key positions in the Government and 10% of deputies in the National Assembly are women. Women also play an important role in the civil service. There is a strong drive for education, as at the moment of independence 95% of the population were illiterate. Schools have been opened everywhere (even in churches) and evening classes organized.

"The women in our country should be told that they must win their independence by hard work, fidelity to the Party, self-respect and a firm rejection of anything that would be against their dignity" (Amílcar CABRAL).

Cf. Afrique Nouvelle, 18 Oct. 1978.

are clearly in accord with Spiritan ideals as once more emphasized in the recent Chapter.

NEWS

Decisions of the General Council

- On 29 Sept., in accordance with CDD 303 and GA 118, the General Council appointed, to succeed Fr. Alphonse SOUCY, from 1 Oct. 1980,



Fr. Joseph DE BOER
General Bursar and General Assistant

Born 12 Aug. 1927 at Haarlemmermeer (Holland).
Professed 5 Sept. 1949 at Genep.
Ordained 18 July 1954 at Gemert.
1955-60: Curate at Libolo (Angola).
1961-63: Curate at Lukange (Tanzania).
1963-70: Curate at Msongozi (Tanzania).
1970-79: Principal Superior of Bagamoyo (Tanzania).
1979-80: Financial officer for new Foundations at Generalate (Rome).

- On 29 Sept., in accordance with the Rules and Constitutions, no. 39, the General Council appointed Fr. Brendan McMAHON, of Ireland, as **General Secretary of the Congregation**, from 1 Oct. 1980.
- On 15 Sept., the General Council appointed Fr. Joseph WOLLENSCHNEIDER as **Superior of the Central African Foundation** for three years, starting on 25 Oct. 1980. He had previously been elected Principal Superior of the Congo, from 20 Oct.
- On 7 Oct., the General Council appointed Fr. Adrianus VAN SONSBECK, former General Assistant, as **Superior of the Generalate community** from 15 June 1981, when Fr. Alphonse GILBERT's second three-year term comes to an end. Fr. Manuel SANTOS NEVES, General Procurator to the Holy See, has been appointed **Bursar to the Generalate community**, from 1 Sept. 1980.
- On 29 Sept., the General Council confirmed the election of Fr. Nikolaus VELSINGER as **Principal Superior of Brazil South** for three years, from 17 Sept., replacing Fr. Bruno TRÄCHTLER, who was elected General Assistant by the Chapter at Chevilly.
- On 29 Sept., the General Council named as **Commission for the General Chapter Texts** Frs. GROSS and DALY (General Assistants), with Frs. GODARD and QUESNEL (Information Service). The texts, in French and English, will be sent out during the month of December.
- Fr. GENERAL left for USA/East on 30 Sept. He stayed there until 10 Oct., representing the Congregation at the inauguration of Fr. Donald NESTI as President of Duquesne University on 3 Oct., and meeting confreres, especially those concerned with education and Spiritan formation.

Generalate Team

From 10 to 13 Oct. he was in Canada, for the celebration on 11 Oct. of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Province.

From 13 to 20 Oct. he was in St Pierre et Miquelon, the oldest District of the Congregation.

After a month back in Rome, he will visit Spain, with Fr. TORRES NEIVA, from 27 Nov. to 7 Dec., on official visitation.

Later he will go to Ireland, with Fr. DALY, from 10 to 20 Dec., on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of ordination of Fr. Francis GRIFFIN, former Superior General. He will return to Rome on 30 Dec., after ten days in Holland.

- Fr. DALY, after accompanying Fr. GENERAL to Ireland, will remain there until 31 Dec.

- Fr. EZEONYIA will visit Nigeria and the West African Foundation during the whole month of December.

- Fr. BEVAN, after accompanying Fr. GENERAL on his visit to USA/East, visited the Haitian community in New York and the formation community in Chicago before going to assist at the election of a new Provincial for USA/West, after the death of Fr. REARDON. He is due to return to Rome on 26 Oct.

- Fr. TRÄCHTLER will be away from Rome for the month of October, partly in Germany and partly in France.

- The Generalate Team has decided that, barring unforeseen circumstances, they will be all in Rome for three weeks in November, for the month of February or March, and for the month of May.

Brazil

His Holiness the Pope has appointed Fr. Mário CLEMENTE NETO, C.S.Sp., as Coadjutor Bishop with right of succession to Bishop Joaquim DE LANGE, C.S.Sp., of Tefé, Amazonia (Oss. Rom., 7 Aug.). Bishop NETO, 40, was born in Brazil and has worked there for the past 12 years in pastoral ministry and formation. He was one of the prime movers for the setting up of a Brazilian Spiritan Foundation (cf. *Spiritan News*, Nos. 11 and 17). He received episcopal ordination on 19 Oct. in his native town, Itauna, in the Diocese of Divinópolis, which is twinned as a 'Sister-Church' to the Prelature of Tefé. The Prelature will become a Diocese on 8 Dec.

Sierra Leone

His Holiness the Pope has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Thomas BROSNAHAN, C.S.Sp., of Freetown and Bo, and promoted Bishop Joseph GANDA of Kenema to the Archdiocese of Freetown and Bo. A decree of the S.C. for Evangelization, dated 25 Sept., appoints Fr. John O'RIORDAN, C.S.Sp., as Apostolic Administrator of Kenema 'ad nutum Sanctae Sedis' (Oss. Rom., 5 Oct.).

East African Foundation

Five Tanzanian Spiritans were ordained to the priesthood on 12 June, bringing to nine the number of priests of the Foundation.

We would like in a coming issue of *Spiritan News* to present **figures for Spiritans in formation throughout the Congregation**. We would be grateful if those in charge of formation would send statistics for their area (as on 1 Oct. 1980) as soon as possible to the Information Service, with detailed figures for each stage of formation. Thanks in advance.

France

The meeting of Spiritans on leave, traditionally called 'Spiritan Congress', was held at Chevilly from 3 to 6 Sept. — later than usual because of the General Chapter. More than 100 confreres took part, with Fr. GROSS representing the Generalate Team. Apart from a fraternal get-together, there was a sharing of information on such topics as the texts of the General Chapter, formation and missionary animation in France, the Districts of Bangui and Haiti, and the international team for Guinea-Bissau. The meeting was closed with a concelebrated Mass at which six novices (three from France, two from Switzerland and one from England) made their first profession and five French confreres made their perpetual vows.

Ireland

To prepare the post-capitular animation of the Province and the presentation of the Chapter texts, the Irish confreres who took part in the General Chapter, whether as representatives or functionaries, had an all-day meeting at Gort Muire on 13 Sept. and a further meeting at the Provincialate on 24 Sept. It was decided that in the first half of October there would be an evening presentation of the Chapter in each community, with appropriate liturgy. In the longer term there would be an Irish Provincial Assembly and monthly conferences on Chapter topics. The annual retreat next June would be preached by Fr. Cassian YUHAUS, C.P., who had preached the General Chapter retreat and was Facilitator at the Chapter.

Official Directory

The General Secretariat published the new Official Directory ('Etat du Personnel') of the Congregation on 1 June 1980. Most of the Provinces and Districts sent in their orders, and these were met by 10 Sept. 400 copies are still available and orders may be sent to the General Secretariat. Price (postage included): \$ 8.90 (US); £ 3.80 (sterling); 7,000 lire; 35 French francs.

N.B. Some circumscriptions ordered as many copies as there were confreres (even 100), while some ordered a single copy for the whole circumscription!

Our Dead

9 Sept.: Fr. Josephus VANWESENBEEK (Angola), 46.
29 Sept.: Fr. Ludovic HUITRIC (France), 71.
1 Oct.: Br. Gabriel CORNICET (France), 73.