

FOREWORD

The pro-democracy movements sweeping through Africa today may not be taken in isolation from the birth of a new world which emerged in less than a decade. Since Gorbachev initiated *glasnost* and *perestrioka* in 1985, the world has not been the same:¹ the Berlin wall fell and German unity became a reality (1989-1990), the Soviet block along with the Soviet empire collapsed (1989-1991). With only one super-power left in the ring (the U.S.A.) a radical shift necessarily occurred in the ideological struggle. America and its allies (the First World) no longer have an alibi in a doctrinaire Marxist opponent to keep on propping African dictators; and with the pathological messianism of the Soviets burnt out, Marxist regimes in Africa crumbled like their mentor. Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Zaire, Mozambique, Angola, Benin, Togo, etc — all being borne by the sweeping wind of change! But how much humanity will this wind bring to Africans? Will absolute poverty and hunger disappear at the end of the tunnel or will it be, alas!, misery without end? These are the kinds of questions raised in this combined issue of our **Bulletin: Human Rights — The African Perspective**.

We publish four articles presented as conference papers at the Symposium on Human Rights held in November 1990 at the Spiritan International School of Theology Attakwu, Enugu (articles of Eze, Kalu, Ahmadu, and Uzuoku); two of these (by Ahmadu and Uzuoku) have been completely reworked for publication. Four other articles address our topic from different perspectives: slavery (Hurbon), women (Muoneke), indigenous religion (Ejizu), and Church law (Nkinda). And a review article (Ozigboh) scrutinizes critically the posthumous restoration of human rights to the intrepid Bishop Shanahan.

All our authors are in agreement that the dehumanizing condition in which the majority of Africans live must be rejected — an inhuman condition which is produced by structural evil;

there is also a consensus among our contributors that human rights for Africa must imply that the masses take hold of their destiny, control what they produce to be totally empowered in order to transform the world in which they live. Thus the struggle for human rights in Africa merges with the Third World's struggle for survival. And, predictably, the irruption of Third World realities into the arena of world Church concerns had effectively thrown "into reverse with an almighty jerk ... the powerful institutional mechanisms which for so long had been placed at the disposal of the status quo".² In other words, the World Council of Churches as from its Third Assembly in Delhi (1961) and the Roman Catholic Church as from Vatican II (1962—1965) underwent a radical shift in their perception of man's stewardship in this world. Thus, as an ecumenical association of Nigerian theologians, we feel that we are making a contribution to the present struggle for freedom in Africa by presenting to our readers reflections which analyse critically the African condition and which propose integral (and christian) patterns for the transformation of the context which would ensure deeper humanity to Africans.

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(Editor-in-chief)

- (1) See R. Fossaert, *Le Monde au 21e Siècle. Une Théorie des Systemes mondiaux*. Paris: Fayard, 1991.
- (2) P. Valley, *Bad Samaritans. First World Ethics and Third World Debt*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990, p.247.