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LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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Dear Friends,

SUDAN

Under extremely strong pressure from the USA and Europe, who would like to have a free hand to develop and commercialise the oil fields in the South and West of the country, Hassan El Beshir and John Garang met together in Uganda on the 20th of July to sign the **protocol of Machakos**. This is the first step in a search for a lasting peace for this country torn apart by twenty years of civil war in which more than two million people have been killed, while most of the international community remained unconcerned by these events. The signatories must meet again towards the end of August to take up the negotiations and try to establish a permanent peace.

Since this protocol was signed there has been at least one extremely serious incident in which several hundred civilians from the South were killed. In fact this protocol has aroused a good deal of opposition not only within the NIF (the Islamist party) but also within the rival groups of the MLPS and their "allies" in the opposition. In addition, Egypt, which fears a secession of the South, which the protocol renders possible after a transitional period of six years, has made clear its dissatisfaction. Thus the peace is still very fragile. One can hope, but it is not only the cynics who have doubts.

What about our activities in the country? Kamal has forwarded to me a large amount of mail from His Eminence Wako, Archbishop of Khartoum, informing me of the decisions he has been obliged to take regarding the schools (rakubas) in view of the precarious financial situation and after having received the recommendations of the committee set up to study this programme in depth. In summary, the schools will open normally, but the "Save the Saveable" programme will not continue to exist as such. These schools will henceforth be managed by committees of parishioners and teachers under the overall guidance of an Archdiocese's Secretary General for Education which will cover thirteen parishes. Each parish will be responsible for obtaining the necessary funds for the proper functioning of the schools under its jurisdiction and for running them. The Secretary General will be responsible for the distribution of any funds which he succeeds in obtaining from foreign donors. As the Archbishop explains in his letter to Sister Emmanuelle, the Sudanese church's sustained effort to provide for this project's needs in the face of declining income from the major donors during the past few years has proved a heavy financial burden which has left the church practically penniless.

It is nevertheless true that the Sudanese children scattered around by the civil war need our help more than ever. We decided therefore, together with Kamal, to continue providing financial support to

some of the poorest parishes, as an NGO, within the limits of our resources. Next year we shall endeavour to provide school material such as books and stationery, small meals if necessary, or teachers' salaries. This will depend on contacts Kamal will establish with some of the parish priests. In any case these funds will be released only after Kamal has checked upon their proper utilisation.

Kamal feels relieved about being no longer responsible for the management of the schools. This task was becoming too heavy for him as he was getting older. However, following the pressing requests of Archbishop Wako, Kamal has agreed to be a **Consultant to the Office of the Secretary of Education** for at least one more year.

Kamal reckons that he will now be able to devote more time to our programmes which have developed considerably over the years. For example, thanks to the financing of Caritas Kēnten in Austria and of the Orange Operation created by Jean Sage in France, we shall be able to open a new home for young street girls. Also, responding to the S.O.S. of a parish priest who was witnessing the extreme distress of some of his little parishioners who were becoming literally crazy for lack of food, we launched a new programme as detailed below. This programme has already started and we are presently trying to raise funds from the Communes or private donors.

FUNDING REQUEST FOR FEEDING 2000 CHILDREN

Purpose of the project:

These children are victims of the civil war and of the displacement of southern populations escaping from battlefields. Their parents live in a state of extreme poverty and are unemployed. We were informed that the health of some 2000 children was very shaky and they sometimes became crazy due to lack of adequate nutrition. Our aim is to help them whether they are Christians, Muslims or Animists and this immediately, by providing a meal five times a week in several of our centres.

Our past experience:

Seven or eight years ago we started a supplementary feeding programme for 600 babies in Kalakla, south of Khartoum. Presently we provide them with a meal three times a week but we intend to increase this to five times a week. You should see these little children between three and six years old sitting quietly, solemnly waiting for their meal, the older children taking care of the younger ones in a perfectly fair manner. Another feeding programme concerns 200 babies who are in prison with their mothers!

Funds required:

Only 25 Swiss cents are needed for one child's meal!

This means that the cost of feeding a child (20 meals a month) is: Fr. 5.- a month or Fr. 60.- a year

WE APPEAL TO YOUR GENEROSITY TO HELP THESE UNFORTUNATE CHILDREN.

How many children can you sponsor this year?

Note:

In view of the extreme danger threatening the mental health and even the lives of these children, we have decided to start this supplementary feeding programme without delay for 600 of them in two of

our centres, Gabarone and Omdurman. Come to our aid...We have the facilities and the staff. We just need money...

ANNUAL REPORT OF HAITI-COSMOS

For the fifth and last time, Jean-Claude François and Amalia-Elena Pasteur returned to Hinche in July 2001, together with their three children, and stayed until January 2002. On leaving Haiti they left behind four fully functioning institutions manned and managed by local staff they had trained.

A. Cosmos Dispensary

The lack of personnel and equipment at the Saint-Theresa public hospital in Hinche is such that virtually all the sick people in this town come for consultations and treatment to the Cosmos Dispensary. At only Fr. 1,50.- a consultation it is the cheapest dispensary in the country. This dispensary also has a conference and training room at the disposal of the community and it is here that the sixty medical assistants were trained. These medical assistants are now in a position to diagnose and treat, with plants, about 80% of the diseases occurring in the Central Plateau.

B. Health Centres

The year 2001 has been a great blessing for Haiti-Cosmos as well as for the people of the Central Plain. In fact we have been able to build health centres in thirteen villages in the region. Our appeal brought fruit beyond our hopes and several Geneva communes together with the city and canton of Geneva provided the funds to build these centres.¹ Constructed on a common model these buildings measuring 48 sq. metres are divided into four rooms. There is an open gallery, which serves as a waiting room, a large room for consultations and vaccinations, a rest room and a medication store (leaves, flowers, roots, bark and storks). The centres are separated from one another by about three hours' walk and each serves between 7,000 and 10,000 people.

Two medical assistants, who have completed a course of tropical medicine, pharmacology or the use of medicinal plants for healing, manage each centre and a three-person management committee looks after the maintenance and discipline. The cost of constructing a centre has averaged Fr. 6,840.- as against the Fr. 5,500.- budgeted. In addition to inflation this additional cost reflects the fact that we have had to buy the land for the centres whereas we had hoped that the communes would have provided this free of charge.

What has delighted us is that the people from the villages have supported us wholeheartedly. Young and old, women and children have carried stones, water and even sand to the building sites. Unfortunately the same level of support was not forthcoming from the local authorities who made our task more difficult in various ways and causing us to exceed our budget allocation.

C. Botanical Gardens

Our plan was to create a garden of medicinal plants alongside each health centre from 2001 onwards. We have not yet managed to achieve this since it has taken us about three months to persuade the owners of the land to sell it. They could not believe that there were generous people in Switzerland who wanted to help them. They rather imagined that we were acting on behalf of the government and wanted to take their land and give it to the State. Since the opening of the new health centres,

¹ ASASE is pleased to announce that an additional substantial sum of money subsequently received from UK donors to build health centres will be used to improve the 13 existing centres and to build six new ones.

however, there is a shortage of medicine. Some of the sick have had to go down to Hinche - a 3 or 4-hour walk – to obtain a plant from the Cosmos Dispensary. The botanical garden in Hinche now has 121 different medicinal plants of which have been scientifically tested and approved by the authors of the “Tramil Report”. These are easily cultivated and present absolutely no danger. Our agricultural technician has already prepared the nurseries in order to plant the various gardens.

D. The Mutual Credit Bank of Haiti (MCH)

Since the beginning of 2001 the CMH has been facing a serious crisis. After having received a two-year training programme, five members of the staff, including the director, decided to leave the organisation. They left to work for competitors since, within a two-year period, two commercial banks and a dozen co-operatives have set up business in Hinche. As for the co-operatives, which recycle funds generated by drug trafficking, they pay interest rates of up to 15% per month on savings and charge 20% per month on loans. This means that small savers are no longer interested in using the MCH although this credit bank receives more and more requests for loans.

To conform with the principle we established of helping the most needy, we have progressively increased the number of agricultural loans to the detriment of commercial loans. By the end of December 2001 this had resulted in a significant loss of Fr. 23,000.- since the interest charged on agricultural loans (2.5%) is less than for commercial loans (3%). We have also invested in cattle and fertiliser. We would like to continue to give priority to the financing and support of agricultural production.

The employees who resigned have now been replaced and the new ones are undergoing training. By the end of 2001 the credit bank had 2,500 members divided among six agencies.. The volume of savings had fallen to Fr. 43,000.- compared to Fr. 100,622.- at the end of 2000. The assets amounted to Fr. 342,000.-. and the outstanding loans totalled Fr. 240,000.-.

E. Technical College IGEC/Polytec)

Following the final examinations of 2001, one student received the diploma in accountancy bringing to 14 the number of diplomas issued in this subject. Fifteen others completed the course in management and also received diplomas. These successful students have all found jobs and some have even been recruited as teachers in the college.

In October 2001 the college changed its orientation. It became a technical college (Polytec) and offers a two-year training programme in agricultural techniques, veterinary techniques, management, accountancy and construction techniques. The number of students has risen from 60 to 150. A school-leaving certificate has replaced the baccalaureate as entrance requirements. This new orientation is better suited to the needs and requests of the young people of the region. A four-person management committee runs the college and there are eight teachers on a part-time basis. Two French members of staff, Jacques Faisant and Jonathan Beuchat, will shortly be leaving us. We wish to pay tribute to their competence and dedication to our cause and to thank them for their contribution. We thank also The Association AFU that kindly placed these two individuals at our disposal.

F. Construction “BATI-BRIQUES”

The Bati-Brique project has been the most difficult to bring to fruition. Forty young apprentices from Hinche received training in this construction technique of which 32 became specialists in building with local materials (clay, wood, bamboo, etc.). They organised themselves in an association and have carried out eight construction projects.

The second phase of this project was to persuade these young people to put their expertise at the service of the poor people of the region. This stage cannot yet be put into operation since, in the hope of finding work, the young people have finished up being pawns in a political game being played by certain members of the present regime. In view of the delicate socio-political situation in the country Haiti-Cosmos prefers to distance itself from these young people for the time being.

G. Thanks

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to all those members of Haiti–Cosmos who participated in this work in the Central Plain of Haiti during the past seven years. In particular we thank the Doctors Amelia-Elena Pasteur, Gabriel Bittar, Jacques Falquet et Bertrand Gras as well as the couple Danielle and Léon Meynet who recently took some marvellous panoramic slides portraying our different field activities.

We also wish to thank our donors for their kind generosity. Finally our thanks go to Mr. Michel Bittar, President of the Swiss Association of the Friends of Sister Emmanuelle and to the other members of this committee whose goodwill touches us every day.

Jacques Nerfin
President, Haiti-Cosmos Association

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I would like to inform you that Dr. Amalia-Elena Pasteur, a general practitioner now back from a mission of five years for the medical project of Haiti-Cosmos, has just opened a medical practice in Geneva. Also Jean-Claude Francois has resumed his full-time activity of fiduciary.

Michel Bittar
President