

## **ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL on business referred to it by the Fourteenth General Synod**

The Executive Council, meeting in Pittsburgh, PA, on June 29-30, 1983, reviewed the items referred to the Council by the Fourteenth General Synod in Vote 83-GS-108.

Only the action of the Executive Council adopting an item is printed as part of the Minutes. The Executive Council acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod took the following actions.

### **1. RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR MICRONESIA**

VOTED 83 6 EC 9a: The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod, receives and adopts the resolution "Concerning the Right of Self-Determination for Micronesia" with the changes proposed by Section 1:

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, through the United Church Board for World Ministries maintains partner church relationships with Micronesia which date from the arrival of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions missionaries from Hawaii in 1853; and

WHEREAS, as the people of faith who are committed to love of neighbor and the dignity of human life, who affirm universal justice that prompts us to uphold the civil rights of all people, and who follow the Prince of Peace and, therefore believe that a peaceful world free from war and the preparation for war is as God intends it to be, we seek to respond to the concerns now afflicting the Micronesians.

WHEREAS, we have come to recognize that the United States has placed military interests above its Trusteeship obligation to "promote the development of the inhabitants of the territory toward self-development or independence as may be appropriate . . . and to . . . promote the economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants . . . and to . . . encourage the development of fisheries, agriculture, and industries . . . and to protect the inhabitants against loss of their lands and resources . . . and to . . . protect the health of the inhabitants"; and

WHEREAS, the Compact of Free Association with its military subsidiary agreements negotiated by the United States with Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia outlines a political status which appears to cut short any Micronesian aspirations for sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, the Compact with its subsidiary agreements promotes U.S. Military strategy interests through provisions for 1) the storage and transportation of nuclear weapons in Micronesia, 2) the storage and disposal of nuclear wastes in the waters of Micronesia, and 3) the usage of land for military bases in Micronesia.

WHEREAS, the Compact fails to address adequately Micronesia's political, economic, social, educational, and health needs; and

WHEREAS, the Pacific and Asian American Ministries of the United Church of Christ, established in 1974, has sought to give voice and advocacy to the problems, concerns, and insights of Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans;

THEREFORE, the Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Declares its opposition to U.S. policies and procedures which are designed for further military expropriation of land;
2. Declares its support of Micronesian landowners seeking to recover lands which have been expropriated in the past;
3. Supports the resolution of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA (November 3, 1982) which, in part:
  - a. Urges the U.S. to acknowledge responsibility for the tragic effects of its self-interest policies under the Trusteeship Agreement and to negotiate means by which the U.S. can actively cooperate with Micronesian entities in solving the educational, social, health, and economic problems they face; and
  - b. Urges the United Nations, prior to the remaining plebiscites in the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, to guarantee and monitor an extensive educational program considering all political options, including independence, and
  - c. Urges the United Nations General Assembly to play an active role in the termination process of the Trusteeship; and
4. Recognizes that it will be particularly important, if the U.S. Trusteeship is terminated, for the United Church Board for World Ministries to continue its work in Micronesia; and
5. That these resolutions be communicated to: a) the appropriate members of the churches in Micronesia; b) the United Church Board for World Ministries; c) the Focus on Micronesia Coalition of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, U.S.A.; d) Ambassador Fred Zeder, Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations; e) appropriate members of the U.S. Congress; f) the U.S. Department of the Interior; and g) the U.S. Department of Defense.

### **2. RESOLUTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH**

VOTED 83 6 EC 10a: The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod, receives and adopts the resolution "Human Rights and the Response of the Church" with the changes proposed by Section 1:

#### **Introduction**

Respect for human rights is central to our Christian faith. As affirmed in the Pronouncement on Human Rights of the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, human rights have their source in God's act of creation, reconciliation, and redemption. The Pronouncement also recognizes that human rights are grounded in human responsibility to God. All human beings have equal rights by virtue of their being created in the image of God. Thus, all persons and all civil orders are under moral obligation to develop policies, programs, and politics which respect basic human rights.

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Human rights abuses have accelerated in several countries in the period since General Synod 12. The Reagan Administration's obvious reluctance to undertake a forceful public advocacy of human rights, compounded by its unwillingness to use diplomatic, political, and economic leverage in response to significant human rights violations by "friendly authoritarian" governments, has removed sanctions which in the past have tempered both the incidence and severity of abuses in these countries.

The church in many parts of the world is responding to God's call to be faithful participants in the care of creation and the realization of justice. These churches have heard the cries of those suffering from political oppression, economic deprivation and exploitation, and cultural alienation and despair and have responded. In faithfulness to the Gospel, and, often at great cost and hardship, churches have accepted solidarity with those who suffer and are victimized by violations of human rights, and have struggled to advance human rights.

The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod, recognizes the fact of world-wide abuses of human rights, including those of our own country. We choose to highlight at this time the role of the church as witness for human rights in Poland, Guatemala, South Africa, and South Korea.

### POLAND

The people of Poland have experienced bitter suffering through the suppression of their efforts to secure fundamental civil and political rights and self-determination, and forcible abolition of the Solidarity union movement, one year of government by martial law, physical deprivation and shortages of consumer goods including foodstuffs as the result of the severe economic problems which still continue, and the arbitrary detention of thousands of Polish citizens.

The Christian faith of the vast majority of the Polish people has always led them to find in their churches—the majority Roman Catholic Church but also the member-churches of the Polish Ecumenical Council—a genuine expression of their loyalties and aspirations and a source of community and hope. Thus the churches have a crucial role in finding constructive solutions to the complex issues facing the nation.

The solution of Poland's internal problems, complicated by that country's geographical position between eastern and western Europe, can be best achieved by the Polish people with minimal interference from either super-power.

### GUATEMALA

Guatemala is a country of diverse peoples. The majority of them are Indians, with their own culture and language, and the remainder are Latinos, descendents of Spanish explorers. It has struggled through a series of military governments, a CIA-backed coup, major earthquakes and serious economic problems.

Successive regimes in Guatemala have been criticized for flagrant human rights abuses by the United Nations, the International Commission of Jurists and other reputable human rights agencies. Amnesty International calculates that between 1978 and 1981 5,000 persons, mainly opposition figures, were tortured and assassinated in a deliberate

and long-standing program of the Guatemalan government. The United States government terminated military assistance to Guatemala in 1977 due to serious human rights violations.

Even after the accession of General Efraim Rios Montt as President, a born-again Christian evangelical, human rights violations have continued, especially against the Indians. Amnesty International and Americas Watch document that 2,600 unarmed civilians were killed by military forces between May and November 1982 and some 30,000 Guatemalans have fled to Mexico and Honduras and are in refugee camps. In addition, Roman Catholic priests and Protestant pastors have been killed or "disappeared," and lay people have been tortured and murdered in a "counter-insurgency" campaign by the Rios Montt government. Finally, this repressive campaign has forced whole congregations and villages with their priests and ministers into exile.

### SOUTH AFRICA

The minority apartheid regime has consistently violated the human, civil, and political rights of the 23 million blacks in that country. Through its basic structures of injustice and exploitation, the government has been able to restrict the movement of people, crush opposition to its policies by imprisonment and detention, silence vocal or written expressions of dissent by banning persons and prohibiting newspapers and publications from informing the public on crucial issues of national importance.

Through the creation of so-called "homelands" or Bantustans, over eight million blacks have been deprived of their South African citizenship and over two million persons have been uprooted and dumped in resettlement camps. Pending legislation, the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill, would put the cities off limits to all but a small number of blacks and keep the majority in rural poverty and unemployment. It has been described by some South African churches as the governments' "final solution" of apartheid.

In recent years there has been a series of clashes between the government and the South African Council of Churches and its member churches on a number of important religious and political issues, such as civil disobedience, conscientious objection to military service, racially mixed marriages, and financial support for deportees to the homelands. The South African Council of Churches is composed of the main English language multi-racial churches, including the United Congregational Church of South Africa, the partner church of the United Church of Christ. The current investigation of the South African Council of Churches and its General Secretary, Bishop Desmond Tutu, by the Eloff Commission is the first step by the government to isolate, discredit, and possibly repeal the Council's right to exist and continue its opposition to the racially oppressive apartheid state in the name of Christ.

### SOUTH KOREA

The human rights situation in South Korea has been significantly worse under the CHUN Doo Hwan regime than in the Park and Rhee periods which preceded it. In 1982 critics of the government received harsh sentences based on false evidence and on confessions obtained by torture. The

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secretary of a Christian Youth organization who dared to criticize the government's stand in the Control Data labor dispute was imprisoned for 18 months. A father of four died in Kwangju prison in May from injuries sustained during two periods of police interrogation. And in October a former university student body president died in Kwangju prison from his hunger strike against prison conditions and treatment.

In addition to its treatment of individuals, the government has acted violently against groups, as in the military brutality against public demonstrators at Kwangju in May 1980 and in the government-condoned beatings of women union members at the Control Data and Wuonpoong Textile plants. Regrettably, false interpretations of those events by government-controlled media have discredited and dismantled the independent labor movement and thrown suspicion on the church-related Urban Industrial Mission Committee.

The frustration of Korean students at American support for their repressive government issued finally in the burning of the Pusan American Cultural Centre. That regrettable but symbolic incident was a dramatic statement of the rapidly deteriorating image of the United States among Korean people who see us as the guarantor of the Chun regime and a major exploiter of the Korean people.

Despite the December release of KIM Dae Jung and 47 other political prisoners, there is the sobering fact that 370 other political prisoners continue to suffer in Korean prisons.

It is a critically important time for the United Church of Christ to be entering upon a new partnership in mission with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, a church which has been in the forefront of the effort in South Korea to establish justice and democracy as pillars of national life.

The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Affirms solidarity with the churches of Poland, Guatemala, South Africa, and South Korea and with the Christians in other parts of the world who also have responded to God's call to advance human rights;
2. Advocates the promotion of human rights in a visible, consistent and evenhanded manner as a central determinant of U.S. foreign policy. Such a policy requires the U.S. government to react with the same degree of moral outrage and with the same forceful policies to the abuses of human rights and the state terrorism in Guatemala, South Africa, and South Korea as it did with regard to the imposition of martial law in Poland;
3. Calls upon all members of the United Church of Christ as Christians and as United States citizens to accept responsibility for federal government policies and practices which support foreign governments that grossly violate the rights of their own citizens;
4. Calls upon the members, churches, and agencies of the United Church of Christ to insist that our Federal government end military and economic assistance wherever the regimes in power practice torture, arbitrary detention, and the systematic denial of freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition for the redress of grievances.

With regard to Poland, the Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Supports the efforts of the Polish Ecumenical Council in conjunction with Church World Service to continue service and development activities which contribute to the reactivation of the nation's economy;
2. Supports the termination of martial law and the churches' efforts to achieve the full restoration in Poland of all normal civil, legal, economic, social and political rights, including the rights of workers to organize trade unions of their own choosing;
3. Calls on the government of the United States to terminate sanctions against Poland which limit normal trade, commercial and cultural relations between the two countries;
4. Calls upon all governments to respect Poland's right to determine its own policies and programs in the interest of the welfare of the Polish people.

With regard to Guatemala, the Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Requests that military and economic aid be discontinued until human rights violations cease;
2. Requests the appropriate instrumentalities to provide emergency aid through Church World Service to assist refugees in Mexico and "displaced persons" in Guatemala;
3. Condemns the Orderly Movement and Resettlement Bill and other present efforts of the South African government to enact legislation that not only legalizes and entrenches apartheid, but also has the potential for bringing about racial violence.

With regard to South Africa, the Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Expresses its support for the South African Council of Churches in its current legal struggle with the South African government;
2. Requests the President of the United Church of Christ to communicate to the Secretary of State the dismay and concern of the United Church of Christ regarding the apparent efforts of the Republic of South Africa to restrict the Christian witness of the South African Council of Churches and its Secretary Bishop Desmond Tutu;
3. Condemns as anti-Christian the Orderly Movement and Resettlement Bill and other present efforts of the South African government to enact legislation that not only legalizes and entrenches apartheid, but also has the potential for bringing about racial violence; and

The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Affirms a deep sense of oneness with our brothers and sisters in South Korea and our solidarity with the church there in its courageous and faithful stand in behalf of the dignity and the rights of the Korean people; and
2. Calls upon the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, and the Office of Communication to provide educational

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resources and timely news during this biennium to the churches and Conferences regarding human rights through existing publications and to take other such appropriate actions to advance the cause of basic human rights in South Korea through social and political initiatives; and

3. Calls upon the government of the United States to make the termination of human violation a clear condition for any continuation of our military and economic aid.

### 3. RESOLUTION ON FREEDOM TO TRAVEL TO AND FROM CUBA

VOTED 83 6 EC 11a: The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod, receives and adopts the resolution "Freedom to Travel To and From Cuba" with the changes proposed by Section 1:

#### Background

In 1979 the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a resolution which called for increased relations between the United Church of Christ and the Cuban churches through two-way visits, exchange programs, and the sharing of resources, and for full diplomatic and trade relations between the governments of Cuba and the United States.

Since then, United Church of Christ study seminars have been held annually in Cuba, U.C.C. youth have participated in a Cuban Workcamp, a Cuban missionary has served in one of our Conferences, Cuban youth have spent time visiting U.C.C. churches, and several Conferences have developed close ties with the churches and Christians of Cuba.

Today, however, because of tightening restrictions placed by the U.S. upon travel to Cuba, it is increasingly difficult for Christians to travel to that country. On April 20, 1982, the Treasury Department issued a new regulation, under the authority of the Trading with the Enemy Act, which was intended to prevent travel to Cuba by prohibiting travel-related "transactions."

The Helsinki Accords of 1975 affirmed the universal right to travel freely. As Christians, we also affirm a basic right: for Christians to travel anywhere in God's world, and to maintain contact and fellowship in the faith with fellow Christians despite any human and temporal political or economic barriers.

*Biblical Perspective:* Christ prayed that we might be one in him (John 17:20). Paul traveled through his world strengthening all believers (Acts 18:23). Christians need to bear witness to this unity by encouraging one another in the faith.

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ over the past four years in response to the resolution of the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, has developed deepening ties with churches and Christians in Cuba; and

WHEREAS, the present Administration has sought to restrict travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba, thereby disrupting the opportunity for U.S. Christians to travel and maintain fellowship with Christians in Cuba;

THEREFORE, the Executive Council, acting ad interim for

the Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

1. Expresses its opposition to the restriction on travel to and from Cuba imposed by the present Administration;
2. Calls upon the members, congregations, Conferences, Instrumentalities, and agencies of the United Church of Christ to protest these restrictions to the President, the Department of State, the Treasury Department, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee;
3. Urges the Cuban government to permit reciprocal travel for all Cuban citizens who wish to visit the United States for the same purposes;
4. Calls for an increase in two-way visits and exchange between the churches of the U.S., the United Church of Christ, and the Cuban churches;
5. Calls upon the United Church of Christ to use its ecumenical influence to encourage involvement of other communions in this effort.
6. Encourages the United Church Board for World Ministries to enter into intentional dialogue with the Cuban churches through the Ecumenical Council of Cuba and the Ecumenical Seminary of Matanzas concerning the theology of mission and the mission of the church.

### 4. RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST ARMS RACE

VOTED 83 6 EC 12a: The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod, receives and adopts the resolution "The Middle East Arms Race" with the changes proposed by Section 1 and amended:

WHEREAS the Middle East Arms race constitutes a major threat to regional and world peace; and

WHEREAS this arms race has made the Middle East, arguably the most volatile region of the world, now the most heavily militarized region of the world, with the highest per capita expenditure for arms; and

WHEREAS the United States and the Soviet Union are the major suppliers of destructive and sophisticated arms to Middle Eastern nations; and

WHEREAS we are called to be in solidarity with Christians of the Middle East who seek to carry out the ministry of reconciliation;

The Executive Council, acting ad interim for the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Calls upon the President of the United Church of Christ to communicate to the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church our concern about the threat the Middle East arms race poses to world peace and to propose that our churches join in a joint witness to our governments on this issue; and
2. Urges the U.S. Government to work toward a multi-lateral agreement among all arms supplying nations to limit or freeze arms transfers and/or military aid to Middle Eastern countries; and
3. Encourages those nations in conflict to seek diplomatic solutions to Mid-East problems and that other inter-