



**Our cover stories portray the amazing degree of collaboration between agencies which makes much mission success possible.**

Ralph D. Winter



Dear Reader,

In our last issue (on the “Uncertain Future of Missions”) I wrote about my recent return visit to Guatemala, where my growing family and I worked between 1956 and 1966. I wrote of how Christian families have been shattered by the massive, forced migration of fathers and older brothers seeking work.

I ended the article with the following question:

*So what is the future of the Mam Indians? How can the existence of a strong church tradition contribute to that future? Is that now (or should that have been) a concern of the mission agencies?*

In this issue our cover stories portray the astounding growth and success of mission efforts all over the world, and in particular the amazing degree of collaboration between agencies which makes much of that success possible. No one has made a greater contribution in this area than Phill Butler. See his story of the background. Get his marvelous and unparalleled new book on the ins-and-outs of forming field partnerships. (See pages 12-16 and 29.)

Note his reference to the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS), which is the first organization on a world level designed to track the peoples of the world wherever they may migrate.

However, without in any way detracting from that and other stories in this issue, I would like to move further in the attempt to answer my own question about how all this meets the ground. Last time I referred to the “success story”



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of mission work in Guatemala. Only a few small countries of the world have a higher percentage of Evangelicals (40%). Yet hundreds of thousands of Evangelical families are trapped in extremely desperate (and getting more desperate) living conditions.

In this country our thousands of gang members are mainly kids with absent or non-functioning fathers. Instead of our laws merely forcing fathers to treat their wives right, fathers ought to be forced to treat their kids right. Instead of going after the fathers, we lock the kids up and put them under severe “injunctions” which hamper their attempts to get a job. Meanwhile, our welfare system creates more absent fathers by paying mothers more if their husbands have left the home.

In many mountain towns in Guatemala desperation forces over half the fathers and older brothers to pay huge sums to get smuggled into the USA. In some towns 80% of the people left behind are women and children. Ninety percent of available funds are “remisas” of money from family members illegally living in the U.S.

This situation is already shattering families. Worse still, we know what happens when communities of “Native Americans” live on a dole from a distance. Human beings are degraded if they cannot fulfill themselves through productive work in which they can take pride. Drugs, gangs, and violence are the result.

The historical record of this country shows that subsistence farming gave way to small farms, which then gave way to big farms, and then to colossal farming enterprises. In the USA whole families

could move to cities (without illegally passing through tunnels or barbed-wire fences to get there). To some extent, rural people have already moved to the city in Guatemala; the most modern city (the capital) is now awash with unemployed rural people.

I thought long and hard about this situation over 40 years ago, when it was not as bad as it is now. In the intervening time a host of different enterprises – unilateral governmental, United Nations, non-governmental, religious agencies, and others – have done their level best to figure out how to be helpful to people who are poor.

But consider seriously the sub-title of a new book, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, by William Easterly. Two reasons “the West’s efforts” have mainly failed is that people who are poor don’t just lack money, and that no plan will work without a few truly honest people. As mentioned, putting people on the dole is degrading and doesn’t get at the whole answer. They lack medicines, schools, job opportunities. They lose the potential of many of their most helpful citizens by the “brain drain.” Further, without the mission movement to produce honest people, little will truly succeed.

The work they used to do is now suddenly taken away from them by some more efficient process a thousand miles away. Consider, for example, the lantern makers of Cairo, who used to work months in advance to pile up stock for the moment in the Islamic year when carrying around lanterns was the thing

to do. Today those millions of lanterns are made in China and are shipped to Egypt at less cost.

The thousands of Egyptians left without work are not less willing or less able to work. They simply cannot compete with Chinese efficiency. They have been made poor through no fault of their own but because of sweeping improvements

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in global communication and manufacturing. Neither is such poverty due to people in China trying to harm them. The Chinese workers are simply trying to make things the world will buy so they can buy what is made in other parts of the world.

In past centuries land has allowed most families of the world to be self-sufficient. But arable land has not increased with population. World population has increased *more than tenfold* since 1600. Low-cost high yields are now derived employing farm machinery worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Even if land had increased tenfold along with population, those who work the land by hand cannot compete with modern methods.

It is not as though there is not enough food to feed the world; rather, people who lack food are not yet linked pro-

ductively into a larger economy. More than money, poor people need to be geared securely and productively into the international economy, which more and more is the only one that counts. That substantial reality offers more security and involvement of their talent than any other. Can missions help them?

If you were offered a job with Wal-Mart or with a six-by-eight cookie stand next door, which would you take? Even if a family gets a "micro-credit" loan to establish a cookie stand, the security is relatively small and likely to be temporary. That's not the way cookies are made any more! The Girl Scouts, who sell more than two billion cookies a year in the USA, don't get them from one-family factories.

Another 50 Subway sandwich stores are being opened in North Ireland. It is quite possible that those getting a job

with Subway (which has more stores worldwide than McDonalds) will be more secure than if they were to sign on with a family sandwich shop.

But even if work opportunities exist, people can't work at all if they are constantly prey to epidemic diseases. Who will seek to eradicate malaria and dengue fever? Some are – such as Bill and Melinda Gates. Evangelicals have shown they can organize against abortion. Should we do the same to extend work opportunities and fight eradicable diseases? Is our God's reputation at stake over the day-by-day conditions of His new millions of followers who are now poorer than ever?

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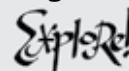
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