

Series 11, No. 4
July-August 1984

MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Many of you are spending days near the sea or lakes admiring God's work in Nature. The little story I picked up in an African newsletter may give us something to reflect upon: God is on all our paths. The story speaks for itself.

Last night I had a dream...

I dreamt that I was walking along the beach with God. Against the sky I saw scenes shown of my life and it struck me that at each scene there were, on the sand of the beach two pairs of footprints... one pair was my own and the other pair was of God.

When the last scene was depicted before my eyes I looked back and realized that on my life-path there was often only one pair of footprints visible, and this precisely at the most difficult moments of my life.

I turned to my God and asked Him: "God, when I gave up everything to follow you, you said that you would always be at my side. Yet, now I realize that at the most difficult moments of my life there is only one set of footprints on the sand. I do not understand why at the times I needed you most you left me alone..."

God answered, "My child, I never left you alone and certainly not in moments of suffering and trial. Where you see only one set of footprints I was then carrying you!"

(The Link, Newsletter of the Diocese of Mzuzu, Africa. Easter 1984, No. 95, p. 2)

Cover Photo: Sr. Marta Romero, M.I.C. of Cuba greeting Pope John Paul II in Mexico.

MIC MISSION NEWS a bimonthly published by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.
P.O. Box 157,
Laval-des-Rapides
Laval, P.Q., Canada
H7N 4Z4
Tel.: (514) 663-3698

Editor
Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

Layout Editor:
Angelina Yap, M.I.C.

Advisory Committee:
Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.
Paulette Gagné, M.I.C.
Angèle Lemaire, M.I.C.
Edita Telan, M.I.C.

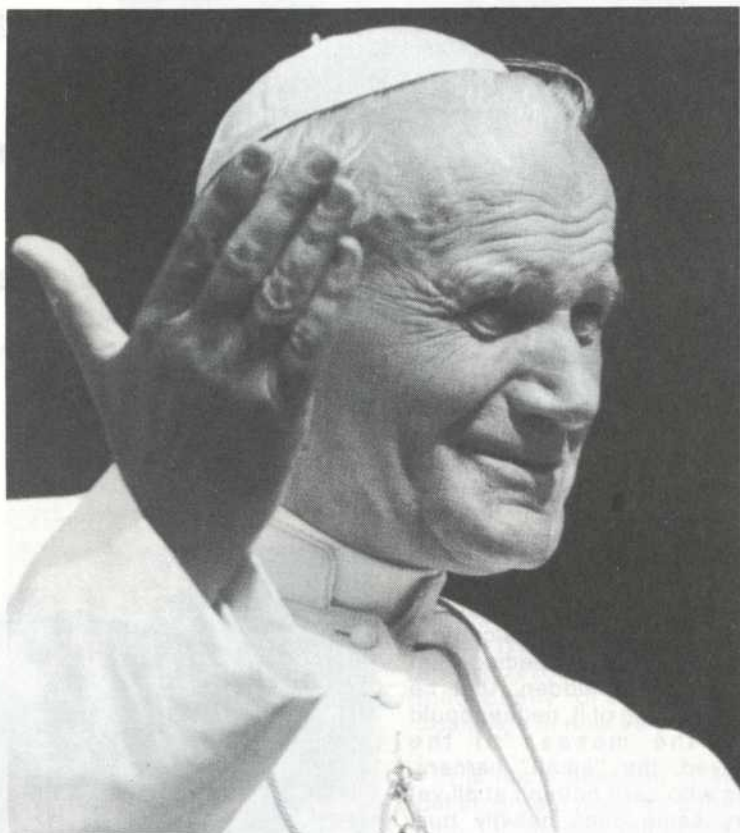
Secretariat and
Circulation
Team of MIC Sisters

Printed by "Interlitho
Inc."
Second class mail
Registration No. 0358
Return postage guaranteed
ISSN 0315-9655

Subscription rates:
\$3.00 (1 yr) \$5.00 (2
yrs)
\$10.00 (4 yrs) \$50.00
(life)
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countries
\$4.00 (1 yr)

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Haiti... After the Papal Visit



Some people in Canada are wondering just what the Papal visit might bring to this country? Will Pope John Paul II have a special message for Canadians? Will he challenge us on the priorities in our lives?

If we read about what occurred after his visits in other countries we can be assured that he will have relevant messages for all of us, individually and collectively. This is how the Conference of Religious in Haiti relates the effects of the Papal visit in that country in 1982.

"One year ago, John Paul II was visiting our shores in Haiti.

We greeted him according to tradition, so to speak...

This pastoral visit... we surely would have preferred it otherwise... much longer... less protocol... so that the Vicar of Christ, "the Servant of servants of God" among the people could have seen us, the people of Haiti, as we really are. We would have liked him to see us in our blue shirts, our working clothes, not all dressed in our Sunday fineries but in our peasant garbs.



Sr. Laurence Cantave, M.I.C. giving hope to youth through education.

***"Things
change
here!"***

We would have wished him to notice how our students in their correct uniforms were literally starving for catechesis and religious culture. At a first glance, it seemed that these facts were hidden, that he could see nothing of it, neither could he see the masses of the unemployed, the "small" earners, the ones who earn nothing at all yet the very same ones heavily burdened with miseries!

Still, without a doubt, he saw it all! His visit was like that of a doctor. The well-trained eye of John Paul II quickly grasped and perceived the situation... unlike the superficial and self-sufficient tourists... he saw through it all!

He then threw the gauntlet, risking to hurt the feelings of some people around him. "Things must change around here so that all classes of the poor may begin having hope once more!" He had met the same kind of poor people at Puebla!



When history is not criticized, it repeats itself. Progress is blocked!

But what was there that really did change or is now in the process of change? What has the Church of Haiti done since his visit? How have the religious people responded?

must

around

John Paul II.



One of their last documents, the Charter on Human Rights demands from all of us a precise involvement as one of our priorities: a campaign for alphabetization.

This makes us question ourselves on the type of work and aid we had always given to the people, either individually or collectively. The challenge is now very clear to us.

It is not a question of motivation but an urgent need for us to conversion. Let us give the credit to Pope John Paul II for making us more aware of this urgent need of our brothers.

Yes, things must change. First of all, our own way of thinking as religious well-wishers, very comfortably settled in our ideas about generous and apostolic options. Now, we must see to it that all the classes of the oppressed and culturally repressed illiterates live in hope once more! This is our challenge!

(Bulletin of the Haitian Conference of Religious, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. March 1984. Bulletin No. 11).



Our Bishops who had observed a collegial silence from May 1972 to December 1980, that is, for eight years, since then have been continuously animating us by their **messages**. These are not mere pious readings but real pastoral instructions and orders. We could even call them challenges!

SERVING THE LOCAL CHURCH IN VANCOUVER

by Sr. Teresa Fung, M.I.C.

When I was first invited to come to Vancouver from Canton (China), it was in answer to a need in the Church.

The M.I.C. Sisters had opened St. Joseph's Oriental Home for elderly Chinese patients, in Vancouver, as early as 1921. Many of the men being unable to communicate in English, were desperately in need of someone speaking their own native tongue. Moreover, they were old, lonely and sad. Many years before, they had come to Canada in search of work on the new railways being constructed across the country. They had been separated from their families for years, as women and children of China were not allowed in Canada, due to strict immigration laws that were later repealed.

When they heard me speaking their own native language, they found new courage in life! At last someone could understand them!

My first tasks in the Home were those of cooking, cleaning, serving and ministering to these forty to fifty men worn out by age and work. Whenever I had the chance I would teach them something about Jesus in the Gospel. Some of them asked for Baptism but whenever the Pastor, a foreigner, would come from the Chinese Mission, they were at a loss. So I had to serve as interpreter... the priest could not speak Chinese... the patients could not speak English! The greatest problem was when the men wanted to confess their sins. This problem obliged me to prepare a booklet with both Chinese and English translations to help both priest and patients. This situation lasted for quite a few years.

In 1945, after World War II, many Chinese families emigrated from Hong Kong and China, so the Chinese population rose rapidly. The Chinese parish of St. Francis



Sr. Teresa Fung, M.I.C. displaying the award received for her dedicated work among the Chinese in Vancouver.

Xavier now had many newcomers of both sexes. This parish had been founded in 1933, by Fr. Hugh F.X. Sharkey, S.F.M., at a time when there were only a few Chinese Catholic families in Vancouver. The Grey Nuns of Pembroke undertook the difficult task of organizing a Catholic Kindergarten for the Chinese children although not one of them spoke the language.

During all those years I served as interpreter whenever I could. I was often called upon to teach Catechism lessons, to visit Chinese patients in the hospitals and families. With so much apostolic activity, it became clear that we needed a Chinese priest. Then I decided to approach the Archbishop of Vancouver, Msgr. W.M. Duke to explain the problem to him and to suggest inviting a priest from Hong Kong. He readily agreed to my proposition. But to our disappointment, none were available at the time.

However, in 1953, the Lord answered my prayers. Msgr. Peter Chow, having recently completed a Doctorate degree in Canon Law in Rome, was asked to come and serve as assistant parish priest in Vancouver. The young Fr. Chow was destined to spend some 22 years of his life creating a true Chinese community.

A few years later, seeing the growing needs, I summoned up enough courage once more to approach the Archbishop to ask him if Fr. Chow could not be appointed parish priest. I explained all the important points to the Bishop, reminding him that there were now more than 300 Chinese families attending the services in the Church. Fr. Chow was then the only Chinese priest and I was the only Chinese Sister in Vancouver!

Once more my prayers were answered. Fr. Peter Chow was appointed parish priest! He served

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An audiovisual

experience in catechetics in Africa



by *Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C.*

During a recent stay in Malawi, I witnessed the impact made by an audiovisual presentation during a Mass in a sub-station far from Mzimba, the residence of priests serving in the region.

Sr. Gabrielle Saucier, M.I.C., who was in charge of catechetics for Mzimba and its sub-stations, invited me to accompany her to this presentation. We left early in the morning with Agnes, an experienced catechist. Covering the 42 km. was a considerable challenge, the rainy season making the roads difficult. Our arrival in the mission at Watereka in a mud spattered vehicle was greeted with enthusiasm by the large number of people already there: they had been afraid that the condition of the roads would delay our arrival.

I was struck by the warm welcome we received, the cleanliness of the new chapel and the bungalow at the disposal of the priest. The walls had been newly roughcast by the women and attentively decorated with huge flowers of contrasting colours.

While I looked over the premises and made my first personal con-

tacts, I was limited to the few words of Citumbuka that I knew. Sr. Gabrielle and Agnes busied themselves blacking out the chapel and setting up the generator and projector for a "cinema" which would take the place of the homily during the Mass. The episode taken was adapted to the liturgical season: the sermon of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. It was a movie taken from Zeffirelli's, "JESUS OF NAZARETH."

After the reception ceremony of two catechumens in the Church... young women bearing their babies on their backs... the Mass began. The songs were sung to the rhythm of the drums and the rattling of a bamboo instrument resounding like the Mexican maracas.

Although the chapel seemed full, throughout the service the curtains over the two doors were constantly being lifted to allow new arrivals to enter. The men were all on the left

and the women and children were on the right; all were seated on the ground, in great expectation to what they would soon see on the screen.

While Sr. Gabrielle operated the projector, Agnes explained the pictures, one at a time, in the people's own native language. She mimed the scenes, she asked questions, and received spontaneous answers from the assembly. It was a real dialogue, a give-and-take communication.

The older people near me looked at the screen with unflagging interest, now and then exclaiming in surprise their approval or disapproval of John the Baptist. His clothing and language surprised them. The children were simply fascinated. The women's attention was interrupted now and then by babies that needed comfort.

The film lasted forty minutes and the interest was sustained all that time. When the last picture was shown, I had the vivid impression that the 230 persons in the chapel were once more coming down to earth. The curtains were drawn to let in some welcome fresh air. The

lights came on again and the Mass continued.

One hour later the service was over and it was time to go out. People reluctantly made their exit, regretting to leave. Small groups soon assembled in the compound of the Mission.

They were discussing: John the Baptist!

Sister Gabrielle explained to me that these people had an amazing oral and visual memory. What they had seen this morning, they would never forget! They had understood the meaning of the message... that all must prepare for the coming of Jesus just like John the Baptist. Their reactions to the film showed this clearly. Sister now is convinced that when films are used in catechism there is a quicker understanding and a deeper assimilation of the lesson. She added that it is worthwhile spending all that time setting up curtains and transporting the generator to get the Gospel message across.

Sr. Gabrielle Saucier, M.I.C. believes in audiovisuals for religious education.





A vision

*Sr. Jacqueline Blondin, M.I.C.
Foundress and President of SAIDI.*

In her message to the graduates on SAIDI Foundation Day, last January, Sr. Jacqueline Blondin, M.I.C., cited an excerpt from **Markings** by Daag Hammarskjöld: 'To be free, to be able to stand up and leave everything behind, without looking back... to say YES!'

Sister was addressing the graduates from her wheelchair to which she is confined due to her terminal cancer. She was speaking from deep down in her heart to her listeners of various nationalities of Asia.

Sister Jackie, as she is fondly called by all those who know her, spoke from experience. She too had to say "YES" when she founded Southeast Asian Interdisciplinary Institute, known as SAIDI, in Manila.

It was as far back as 1965 that she organized the successful and flourishing Institute. It originally

presented a specialized program in educational media and technology for educators in the Philippines.

But Sr. Jackie wanted to offer more, she had a wider vision... it extended beyond the boundaries of one country to englobe the vast region of Southeast Asia.

She felt there was an urgent need to train key people whose leadership was required in the Church of the Third World countries.

Therefore, in 1975, upon her return from specialized studies in the U.S.A., Sr. Jackie opened the doors of SAIDI to welcome students from all of Southeast Asia. She felt that SAIDI would serve as a study centre for the communication and diffusion of planned change in Asia. It would serve as a catalyzer, broadening and developing educators in all sectors of society, including the Church.

a mission

a goal

Sr. Jacqueline Blondin was already well known as an expert educator, having years of experience behind her as a teacher and principal. She had taught all levels of education, from Kindergarten to the Graduate School. She had touched the lives of thousands of students from Montreal to Manila, even up to far away Mindanao. All her past students regarded her with respect, as a woman of action, an innovator, a person with a vision which led her to where she is today, the Foundress of SAIDI.

Sr. Jacqueline had never hesitated when there were barriers to cross as she saw her goal clearly. She lay the seeds of her Institute in spite of obstacles of all kinds, in spite of warning signs of declining health. She was convinced that there was a need for this type of institute to form leaders. That was her vision, mission and goal!

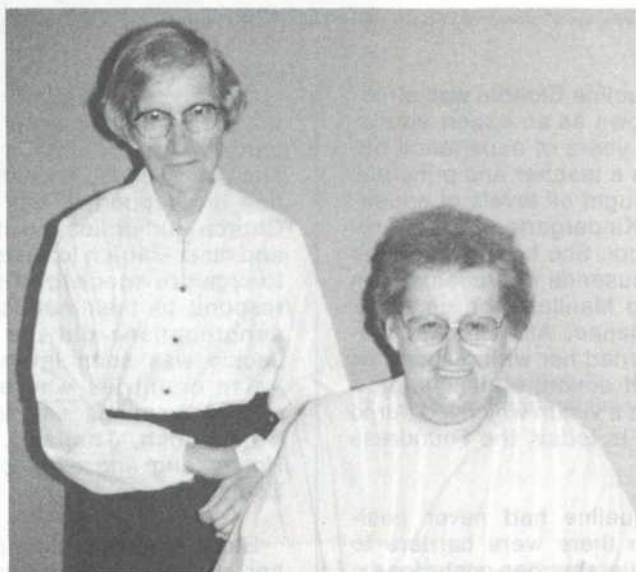
It took a deep Faith in God to get the project off the ground. Besides the support of her M.I.C. community, she soon noticed that she was getting the support of the Philippines Church authorities, as the Bishops and other Church leaders asked her to organize specialized sessions to respond to their needs. Religious congregations did the same. Sr. Jackie was soon invited to other Asian countries where she conducted meetings and sessions in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and even countries in South America.

Because of the slow progress of her cancer tying her down to her sick bed, she has now passed on the administration to a team of three younger priests. These carry on the endeavor of SAIDI from diocese to diocese in the Philippines, in the footsteps of their mentor and Foundress.

Sr. Monique Prefontaine, M.I.C. Superior General praying with Sr. Jacqueline.



Sr. Jacqueline in her wheelchair and Sr. Lorette Moran, M.I.C. (standing).



Sr. Jackie remains the inspiration and the guiding spirit helping this team in their continuous growth toward an every more effective goal for SAIDI for the benefit of the people of Asia.

She still finds ways to revise existing programs or courses. One of her latest initiatives is a ten-week course for religious superiors. Her main interest lies in ARFI, (Asian Religious Formation Institute) a ramification of SAIDI for Formators confronted with the mission of preparing men and women for the Church of Asia. This eight-month course has seen this year, twenty-one more Formators and spiritual directors graduating. These will go forward now, radiating God's love and bringing the message to their Asian brothers and sisters.

There would be so much more to say about Sr. Jackie and SAIDI... only God knows the reach-out of this Institute, the Vision of Sr. Jacqueline Blondin at a time when her days were counted. Only God knows the generosity and courage it took for her to be able to say "YES"... "YES" to the call to serve the needs of her brothers and sisters in Asia.

Now, she is free, she can leave everything behind. The roots are so solid in the foundation. She herself admits that death is beckoning her... yet she feels she will always remain a part of SAIDI... the spirit she has given the Institute will live on!

Sources: letter of Lorette Moran, M.I.C. and SAIDI documents.

MISSION

BRIEFS



Haiti: Roche-a-Bateau

The couples about to be married next February begin attending a course in literacy and general formation. Most of these people work on the road under the supervision of Sr. Lucille St. Onge. These nine couples have been living "faithfully together for years." Their poor financial condition prevented them from getting married in the Church.

Now a "Marriage Feast" has been organized with a view of helping them in the situation. This will take place after they have completed their three-month Marriage Preparation Course. This is one of the many ways we have to help the poor in our milieu.

Japan: Tokyo

"I can imagine how excited you must all be at the thought of the Pope visiting Canada next September. Judging from what we all experienced here about three years ago and by the incredible enthusiasm generated by his forthcoming visit to Korea... literally thousands of Japanese, some of them non-Christians, have packed all available flights to Korea in the next two weeks.

Such was the impact he (the Pope) made on the entire nation during his short visit in 1981. It is not difficult for me to attune to your feelings. I shall pray very much that this may be a visitation also of the Lord's grace to your dear country in terms of a revival of Faith and Hope at all levels. After all, this is undoubtedly what the Pope himself has in mind in all his trips to the nations..."
(Letter from Alfonso Nebreda, S.J. to Denyse Belanger, M.I.C. dated April 18, 1984).

Chile: Chaiten

A few weeks ago, Sr. Veronique Caouette and myself left to give a catechetical session at Malito, a mission station in the Cordillera, a six-hour bus ride from Chaiten. It turned out to be an eventful trip.

On the way, our bus overturned on its side and we had to climb to safety through the windows to the tune of "Blue Danube Waltz"! Glancing at the zigzag roads over huge precipices overlooking the sea, we could only thank God that it was not more serious than that!

A farm owner nearby came to our rescue and invited us to his home while waiting for the bus to be upturned. The cold drizzle made us appreciate his offer as he comforted us with hot coffee and cakes. We soon recovered from the shock and continued our trip a few hours later. But that was not the end! At a place called El Frio where we had to change bus, the one bound for Palena had not yet arrived. The first bus driver offered to bring us further on... what did we see? The vehicle we were to take had broken down! The motor had caught on fire! Needless to say we were a few hours late for the session.

The following day we began our first formation session in the sector. We met the participants three to six hours each day. Their interest and goodwill really amazed us for some had to walk or ride horseback for several kilometers. But these young people hunger for the Word of God and want to dedicate themselves teaching others in their village. By means of these mini-sessions we hope to pursue their formation during the whole coming year.

(Marie Dolores Tremblay, M.I.C.)

Canada: Rimouski

In response to the invitation of the Committee on Pastoral Help of St. Pius X parish in Rimouski, three M.I.C.'s from the Philippines and a lay woman accepted to represent their country at the "hunger Meal" of April 1st.

This "Carême de Partage" took place at Curé Raoul Roy Parish Hall from five o'clock to seven in the evening. More than 300 persons purchased tickets of \$2 per person or \$5 per family. The proceeds of this Lenten sharing will go to the Development and Peace office who will in turn, channel the funds to the Third World countries.

As part of the evening's main feature Sister Edita Telan, M.I.C. presented a slides show on the Philippines depicting the country's economic, political and religious situation. This is in answer to the parishioners' desire to know better the Filipino people, their struggles for justice and true democracy and the hope which sustains their courage to overcome the present situation.

To those who partook of the meal, it was a mere nothing, so to speak, but it spoke strongly of their desire to be in *solidarity* with all the Third World countries whose incessant fight for justice arouses the sleeping conscience.

This awareness wanting to convert itself into action is graphically illustrated by the group of young men who choreographed two situations: Development and peace and the Third World.

Slides turned into songs, songs turned into prayer truly made the two hours of togetherness an intense moment of reflection.

(Angie Yap, M.I.C.)

Serving... from page 7

until 1975, when he decided to leave for Taiwan to teach Canon Law in a seminary. He was replaced by Fr. A. Lou, who is still there today.

I had the privilege to work with both of these dedicated priests. I have continued helping prepare catechumens for Baptism, and Catholics for other sacraments. I have served wherever my services were required, day and night, answering the needs of people of the Chinese community. It was indeed a fulfilling work for a missionary.

On December 4, 1983, when St. Francis Xavier Chinese parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee, I had the unexpected honor to be handed an award thanking me for the many years of service rendered to the Chinese community. Msgr. Peter Chow, visiting for the occasion, praised me for what he called my "untiring zeal" in the faithful services to the Church.

Now, as I look back on all these years, there is much joy in my heart! I have been privileged to carry out the function of catechist ever since I first landed in Canada, on April 6, 1936. Like Mary, my heart is overflowing with joy and gratitude. I have seen with my own eyes the growth of the Catholic Chinese community. All I can do is repeat with our Blessed Mother: "The Lord has done marvels for me, Holy is His name!"

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San Juan de Miraflores (Peru)

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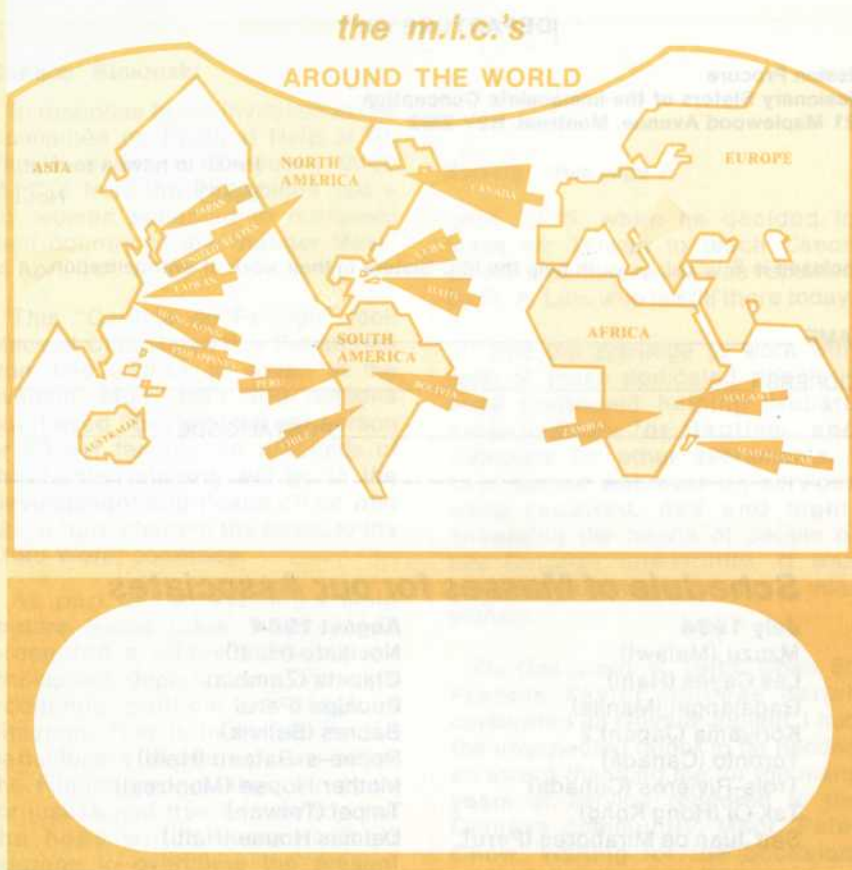
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The Generalate
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H2V 2M2

Chinese Center
30 Goulburn
Ottawa, Ont., Canada
K1N 8C8

MIC Sisters
56 Indian Road Crescent
Toronto, Ont., Canada
M6P 2G1

2950 Prince Edward St.
Vancouver, B.C., Canada
V5T 3N3

1417-38th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
U.S.A. 94122

Provincial House
P.O. Box 47
Mzimba, Malaŵi
Central Africa

Provincial House
13-16 Fukazawa 8 Chome
Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 158
Japan

Provincial House
Mount Good Hope School
Clear Water Bay Road
Kowloon, Hong Kong

MIC Sisters
30, Lane 148, Section 2
Fu Hsing South Road
Taipei 106, Taiwan

Provincial House
P.O. Box 468
Greenhills, Metro Manila
Philippines, 3113