

The final insult to reality comes in the scene of the black-hating, self-hating white man picking cotton for the black family whose husband/father has been murdered. Perhaps that is the ultimate fantasy in the mythological land of white goodness and black helplessness — and the need to say that things are really not so bad, after all.

That *Words by Heart* has been highly praised by many white critics is a disheartening sign of the continued need for mythology. As white people, we cling to the myths because we want so much to convince ourselves that we are good people. What clearer indication could there be of the destructiveness of racism to white people than the unrelenting need to be reassured of our basic worth as human beings.

Racism nurtures a spirit of violence through its suppression of people, ideas, behavior, speech. White people are just as surely victimized by the violence of racism as black people, for we have paid a high price for maintaining a racist society. We have been censored and repressed so that we would not disturb the system, our thought and behavior molded by numerous influences, our

education distorted. In all of this, mythology has played a pivotal role, for it keeps us from understanding that unconsciously and unwittingly we are acting against the very principles we value most highly — freedom, independence, equal opportunity, justice.

Only when we as white people recognize that we too are damaged by racism will we be prepared to see the muzzling effect of books like *Words by Heart*. However well-intentioned the author, she does us no favor to perpetuate mythology, for it is like an addiction. The more we behave in ways that support racism, the more we hang onto mythology in order to ease the pain and guilt and to avoid taking action. And the mythology in turn perpetuates the racism. Writers who help us are those who break our needles instead of supplying us with more narcotics.

Kathy Baxter is co-chair of the Racism Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. This article is reprinted by permission from Volume 11, Number 7, 1980 Interracial Books for Children Bulletin, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

Forerunners of Servicio

by LUIS E. ODELL

In the first interview that Adolfo Perez Esquivel granted to Swedish television after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize last December, he declared that the Latin American movement known as "Service for Peace and Justice," of which he is the coordinator, was comprised of pastors, priests, Christian laypersons and others. I was struck by the fact that he mentioned pastors first and thought that perhaps, without expressly intending to do so, Perez Esquivel had rendered homage to those whom we might call the forerunners of *Servicio*. Knowing something about the antecedents of the movement, I was aware that the real exponent of that grassroots effort in Latin America was, in fact, a pastor.

Shortly thereafter, I received from the American FOR a reprint of an interview with Perez Esquivel published in the December 1978 *IFOR REPORT* (of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation) which confirmed that conviction.

In response to a question about the origins of *Servicio*, he said: "Our organization grew out of our experience that in all of Latin America there are church groups, community groups, labor union members, students, and intellectuals all working for change and development in Latin America, basically through a process of nonviolent liberation. To



bring together people with this concern, a gathering was called in Montevideo in 1968, where the basic structure of *Servicio* was established. Directing the work was Pastor Earl Smith, who is from the US, but has worked and lived for many years in Montevideo, Uruguay. Now in his 80s, he began with a newsletter and an exchange of information among groups working in Latin America. Later, in 1974, we had another international gathering—in Medellin, Columbia—at which we studied the needs of the continent and decided to focus on the need for coordination, for support, and for better understanding among groups working for nonviolent change."

It was at Medellin that *Servicio* was consolidated and Perez Esquivel designated coordinator.

Earl Smith had begun his struggle many years before—back in the 1930s—when he began to create groups which formed part of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and which later adopted the name "Movement for Peace and Reconciliation." As an example of the kind of work that was done, we cannot help but remember the visit made to our region by that extraordinary English pacifist, Muriel Lester.

In this work of making nonviolence known, two of our beloved Argentine brothers participated with enthusiasm and a great sense of vocation. I refer to Carlos T. Gattinoni, bishop emeritus of the Argentine Methodist Church, and an outstanding layman, the late Dr. Daniel Lura Villanueva.

Later, as the Movement for Peace and Reconciliation grew, J. Antonio Loureiro of Uruguay was named executive secretary for South America, a responsibility which he dispatched with great dedication for more than twenty years.

Perez Esquivel, in an attitude greatly to his credit, has insisted that the prize he was awarded belonged essentially to all those who work for *Servicio Paz y Justicia*. That being the case, I believe I do not exaggerate in affirming that the Nobel Peace Prize also does honor to

There is no more military defense, only military offense and counter offense. We can try nonviolence. But although it has positive values, nonviolence alone is not adequate to meet the present challenge.

Love is adequate, if it is widely stimulated through a worldwide spiritual awakening or revival. The world will be saved by love, or it will perish. The spiritual awakening can begin anywhere and need not be doctrinally uniform.

Let us pray and work for it.

Earl Smith
Montevideo, Uruguay