

# Latin America: The Church Militant

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*If the Christian believes in the fertility of peace for achieving justice, he believes also that justice is an unavoidable condition for peace. He does not overlook the fact that Latin America finds itself in a situation of injustice that could be called institutionalized violence, because the present structures violate fundamental rights. This is a situation that demands wholesale, audacious, urgent, and profoundly renewing transformations. We should not be surprised if in Latin America what Pope Paul VI called the "temptation to violence" is born. One must not abuse the patience of a people who endures for years a condition that those with a greater awareness of human rights would hardly accept.*

—Document on Peace,  
Second General Conference of CELAM  
Medellin, Colombia, 1968

ONE OF THE great religious dramas of our time is currently being enacted throughout the length and breadth of Latin America, which contains more than one-third of the world's Catholic population. In the dozen or so years since John XXIII proclaimed his *aggiornamento*, the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America has been increasingly assuming a role not unlike that of the ancient Hebrew prophets in pointing to the injustices and disorders of society; at the same time, it has been experiencing an internal ferment that has affected all levels of its hierarchical structure. To be sure, dissent and disarray—what John's successor, the more cautious Paul VI, has called "inner rebellion" and "self-demolition"—are apparent everywhere in the Church, but in Latin America they have assumed a particular relevance. There, the papal social encyclicals are being put to ideological use as guides for a fundamental reorganization of society; and the dogmatic definition by Vatican II of the Church as "the People of God"—the effect of which was to limit the traditional predominance of the clerical hierarchy—has paved the way for a democratization of Church life in nearly all its forms. Moreover, in Latin America the Church has been generating a "theology of revolution"—disseminated in pastoral letters and bishops' orations, in the writings of theologians, and in official pronouncements—which condemns

in no uncertain terms the "institutionalized violence" of a society that confines from one-third to one-half of its population to backwardness and marginality.

Indeed, the formal Church hierarchy, in many instances, is the main voice of this new concern with social problems, and this, too, is a "revolutionary" development. The Latin American bishops, who heretofore were known for their conservatism, have become increasingly radical in rhetoric. This development is reflected in the documents issued by CELAM (Latin American Bishops' Council), which began life in 1955 as a rather conservative body but which, under the influence of Pope John's encyclicals, *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra*, and of Vatican II, has been transformed into a progressive body, pronouncing itself on such questions as economic integration, agrarian reform, university problems, and violence. Of course, ideological divisions still remain within some of the Latin American hierarchies, but pressures from both priests and laymen have had a modifying effect on all but the most rigid attitudes. Thus, while Chile and the Brazilian Northeast have been the main centers of clerical innovation in recent years, the progressive currents within Catholicism have become a major factor in the politics of virtually every Latin American republic. In smaller countries like Bolivia, Guatemala, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, the *aggiornamento* has been largely in the hands of foreign missionaries, mostly Spaniards and North Americans, many of whom have been acting much more boldly, politically speaking, than they would have been permitted to act at home.

The changes within Catholicism over the past decade have been so swift and varied that some observers feel that something akin to the Protestant Reformation, with its elements of both social and religious revolution, is presently taking place. The Chilean Jesuit magazine *Mensaje*, the most widely read and respected Church publication in Latin America, has editorially compared the changes in the Church today with the historic role of Martin Luther:

In Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church recognizes as its patrimony many of the points made by Luther in his time: the primacy of the Word of God in the Scripture; the reality of a living tradition and not merely mechanical and verbal; the role of servant of the Word and of men that corresponds to the Teacher; the

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prophetic and priestly function of the laity and the "equality of all [hierarchy and laity] with reference to dignity and common mission"; the assertion of the liberty with reality of the Spirit that animates all in the People of God, giving them charisma; the subordination of ceremony and institution to the faith of Christians. . . .

Like the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century, the present *aggiornamento* of the Roman Catholic Church has been rooted liturgically in a shift from Latin into the vernacular language and in the assumption by "the People of God" of a central role in the simpler and more direct celebration of the ritual. To obtain a sense of how powerful the traditional fusion between social and religious elements of rebellion can be, one might look beyond the contemporary examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King to Luther's own time; in the decades before the great Peasants' War of 1525, the German peasantry was chafing against the new taxes imposed to support the swelling bureaucracies of the German principalities, and against the hardships caused, in that time of growth of towns and trade, by the need to pay in cash instead of kind. This peasant unrest found vindication in the Reformation, according to Professor Roland Bainton, since "Luther's freedom of the Christian man was purely religious but could very readily be given a social turn. . . . Luther certainly had blasted usury and in 1524 came out with another tract on the subject, in which he scored also the subterfuge of annuities. . . . His attitude on monasticism likewise suited peasant covetousness for the spoliation of cloisters. The peasants with good reason felt themselves strongly drawn to Luther."\* Luther was a miner's son, and miners in the world's revolutionary traditions have served in many instances as leaders in the transformation of the peasantry into a social force. This association between social and religious protest has continued since Luther's time, and is abundantly evident in Latin America today.

## I

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH has been at the heart of political controversy throughout most of Latin America's history, and this conflict has left it weak. Until the 19th century, the Church was an arm not only of the Spanish conquest but of the colonial government as well. Under the *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage) granted by Popes Alexander VI and Julius II, the Spanish monarchy was given total control of the Church in the New World, except in matters of doctrine and religious discipline, in exchange for a promise by Ferdinand and Isabella to spread the faith in the unknown lands coming under their temporal power. A series of papal

bulls issued between 1493 and 1508 in effect gave the Spanish crown the power to collect tithes and to nominate bishops, priests, and abbots; further, no cleric could go to the Indies and no monastery, church, or hospital could be built without specific royal authorization. No papal bull or decree could be circulated or enforced in the New World without prior approval of the Council of the Indies. Thus the life of the Church became thoroughly intertwined with the political interests of the crown. (By the early 17th century one-tenth of the population of Lima, for example, consisted of priests, friars, canons, and nuns, with nineteen churches and monasteries serving a population of 26,500. In the Vice-royalty of New Spain—Mexico—the Church became the principal lending institution, controlling roughly half the colony's landed wealth through either outright ownership or heavy mortgages.)

At the same time that thousands of missionary-priests, especially Jesuits and Franciscans, were penetrating deep into the back country, advancing the frontier and the king's control into mountains and jungles, religious life in many big-city monasteries was becoming engulfed in concubinage, fraud, speculation, and commerce. The New World was so vast, and the means of colonization so slim, that Western ways, especially Christianity, could form at best a thin and patchy veneer on local customs. Since few European women accompanied the early colonizers, concubinage and miscegenation became everywhere the norm, to the degree that even today roughly half of all births in most countries of Latin America are illegitimate. The ritual and symbols of Catholicism were grafted onto the surfaces of a thousand different bodies of traditional belief; the resulting hybrid practices are still in evidence today. On the *altiplano* of Peru and Bolivia, for example, the image of the Virgin Mary is fused in the minds of the Quechua and Aymara Indians with that of their traditional earth goddess, the *Pacha Mama*, to whom animal victims are burned in ritual sacrifice. In Haiti, the traditional African *vodun* dances are tinged with recognizable elements of the Catholic Mass, while the *loa* or spirits worshiped in the ritual derive from the local deities of Dahomey and the Congo. Among the highland *municipios* of Guatemala, where in some Indian villages the Mayan calendar is still in use, the Catholic Church is merely one of several holy places in the neighborhood to which *brujos* (sorcerers) come with small groups of worshipers to perform rites to a local deity. And in Brazil, formal Catholicism is colored by survivals of West African folk religions, especially the Gêge-Nagô cult of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, preserved for centuries by the descendants of Negro slaves.

The prelates of the New World presided serenely over this mosaic of practice and belief until the breakup of the Spanish empire toward the end of the 18th century. Until then the privileges

\* *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, p. 209.

of the Church in Mexico, for example, were not less than those of the French clergy before 1789, although when the Society of Jesus was expelled from the Spanish empire in 1767 its 128 plantations in New Spain were expropriated by the Crown. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, Freemasonry spread from England, France, and Spain to the American possessions. In the Spanish colonies not only did Freemasonry help lay the groundwork for independence, but—although priests were members of many lodges—it also set the pattern of Church-State conflict for the next hundred years. In the period immediately following independence, twenty-eight of thirty-eight episcopal sees in Latin America were vacated because of the exile or voluntary departure of their bishops. The successors of these bishops now plunged into republican politics, encouraged by a papacy desperately engaged in Church-State controversy all over Europe.

Following the pattern of the times, a series of Liberal-Conservative conflicts began in Latin America over such questions as clerical control of education, confiscation of Church property, the legality of divorce, immunity of the clergy from criminal prosecution, and the prohibition of tithes. These conflicts, which were often ultimately decided by bitter civil war, usually resulted in a severe drubbing of clerical interests. In Mexico, for example, the Church's fortunes declined to such a degree that today it is left without property (it does not even own its churches and cathedrals) and without the right to conduct public processions; Mexican priests are legally prohibited from wearing clerical garb in the streets. In Paraguay, Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez Francia, who ruled as dictator for the first thirty years following independence, "took all the Church's property into his own hands, deprived it of all ceremonies which were wont to impress the populace . . . and in the end made himself head of the Church after the example of Henry VIII of England. . . ."\* In Guatemala, under a Liberal dictatorship lasting from 1871 to 1885, the Jesuits and the Archbishop of Guatemala City were expelled, Church lands were seized, convents and monasteries closed, cemeteries secularized, and priests forbidden to wear collars and cassocks outside of church. (Most of these provisions remained in effect until 1954.) The same thing occurred in Venezuela under Antonio Guzmán Blanco's long dictatorship (1870-88). And in Colombia, the conflict generated by more than a century of recurrent Liberal-Conservative religious strife was climaxed by the *violencia* of 1948-58, when Conservative gangs dressed as police brought Liberal peasants before the local priest, who made them kiss a crucifix and swear allegiance to the Conservative party; later these "professions of faith" were an-

nounced in the provincial press. Today, only four of the twenty-one Latin American republics—Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic—preserve the "protected" status of the Church that prevailed during the Spanish empire.

THE DECADES of fanaticism and holy war were followed by the modernization of politics (in most cases this has taken place only within the past fifty years), a period marked by the abandonment of Church-State controversy in favor of debate by a new generation of political parties over "the social question." This development corresponded to a change in the life of the Church itself. Until Pius XI and Mussolini concluded the Lateran Pacts in 1929, successive Popes had remained in seclusion as self-styled "prisoners in the Vatican," in piqued response to the loss of the papal lands, in 1870, to Garibaldi's armies—the Papacy's final prostration in European politics. (Italian troops marched into Rome just as the First Vatican Ecumenical Council, still in session, had finished proclaiming the doctrine of Papal Infallibility.) For almost sixty years following, Catholics were forbidden under papal injunction from participating in Italian politics; the interdiction was abrogated when Mussolini and Pius XI agreed to the creation of an independent Vatican State with the Pope's absolute sovereignty over a 100-acre enclave within Rome. During that time little attention was paid to Pope Leo XIII's great social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, which in 1891 called the world's attention to workers' rights and sketched one of the clearest outlines ever formulated of social democracy as practiced today in Western Europe and the United States. For most of the seventy years between *Rerum Novarum* and the proclamation in 1961 of John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, the Catholic hierarchy in Latin America remained largely silent on social questions. In 1937 the Archbishop of Lima, Msgr. Pedro Pascual Farfán, was still able to say: "Poverty is the most certain road to eternal felicity. Only the state which succeeds in making the poor appreciate the spiritual treasures of poverty can solve its social problems."

The social awakening of Catholicism in Latin America began to pick up speed in the mid-1950's with the start of a new era in hemispheric affairs, one in which electoral democracy showed signs of replacing dictatorship as the political norm. The Church has played an active role in this process. The angry opposition of Argentina's conservative hierarchy led to the fall of Juan Domingo Perón (1945-55), despite his announcement in 1945 that "my social policy will be inspired by the papal encyclicals," and despite the alliance between Perón and the Church that lasted through most of the dictatorship. Following Perón's fall, clerical opposition helped pave the way for the overthrow of other dictators, including Gustavo Rojas Pinilla of Colombia (1957),

\* From J. Lloyd Meacham, *Church and State in Latin America*, p. 191.

Marcos Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela (1958), Fulgencio Batista of Cuba (1959), and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic (1961). The Church's hand in these developments was indicated in October 1959, when a new Papal Nuncio, Msgr. Lino Zanini, arrived in Ciudad Trujillo, to the shock and surprise of Perón, then living in exile there as Trujillo's guest. Perón remembered that Zanini had come to Buenos Aires as Papal Nuncio shortly before his own fall from power; Perón made immediate preparations to leave the country, and in his farewell visit to his host cautioned: "It was that man who caused my downfall. Wherever that man puts his foot, he causes disturbances. Watch yourself carefully." Four months later, following a wave of arrests after a plot against Trujillo was discovered, Zanini prodded the Dominican bishops into issuing two pastoral letters attacking the dictatorship, as a result of which the Nuncio was expelled. Before his departure, in discussing Trujillo's violent reaction to the pastoral letters, Zanini told a high Dominican official: "That man doesn't know whom he's getting mixed up with. Everyone who has opposed me has died." Fifteen months later Trujillo was assassinated.\* By that time, Pope John had issued *Mater et Magistra* and had summoned the world's Catholic bishops to the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

## II

THE NEW TREND in the Church toward disengagement from—if not active opposition to—the conservative power structure is most evident in Brazil, which, with its ninety-five million people, is the world's largest and most populous Catholic nation. There the Roman Catholic hierarchy is engaged with the six-year-old military dictatorship in the gravest Church-State conflict of the hemisphere. The factionalism of the Brazilian hierarchy notwithstanding—there are some two hundred bishops with widely varying points of view—the Church, over the past six years, has become the main focus of opposition to the country's military-dominated government. Leading prelates and the former Papal Nuncio, Msgr. Sebastiao Baggio, have been accused frequently of Communist sympathies by army generals and other government supporters. Many priests and bishops have come under severe attack as a result of a campaign by a right-wing organization called the "Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property," which enjoys government and military support. In December 1968 President Costa e Silva disbanded the Brazilian Congress because it refused to waive the parliamentary immunity of a young deputy (a former Catholic Action student leader) who had offended the army; he called particular attention to "the anti-government campaign in the schools, with participation of the so-called progressive

clergy and of certain organs of communication in deforming the facts, which demonstrate the existence of a revolutionary movement."

Typical of the Church-State conflict of recent years in Brazil was the incident involving Dom Valdir Calheiros, bishop of the steel-making city of Volta Redonda, near Rio de Janeiro. Although he developed a personal following among younger priests in his previous position as auxiliary bishop of Copacabana in Rio, Dom Valdir is known as a quiet, even-minded cleric with more of a pastoral than a social-revolutionary bent. In December 1967 four students (two of whom were living in the bishop's house) borrowed his station-wagon and used it to hand out leaflets denouncing the government. A few hours later, four soldiers brandishing machine-guns broke into the bishop's home, ransacked it for more "subversive material," and threatened Dom Valdir with arrest.† The bishop responded by printing a list of Brazil's "seven capital sins," which included low wages, unemployment, discrimination, hunger, and disease. After the army seized all copies of the handbills and jailed two priests who were distributing them, the Brazilian Bishops' Conference issued a public protest which, characteristically, emphasized social issues. Citing the "painful picture" of social inequality and injustice inherited by Brazil, the bishops stressed that "we must do our duty toward forming the conscience of our congregation, so they shall rise to an apostolic activity producing the necessary changes. . . . The preparing of laymen to accomplish this mission with courage, according to the insistent appeals of the Pope, is not a subversive activity. On the contrary, it is a contribution to true peace, which is unobtainable without a just social order. . . . We are conscious that a large part of our population regards the Church as one of their last hopes. We are anguished by the limited means at our disposal. It is not within our province to make certain decisions, which are urgent and unavoidable. . . . We do not have the resources to reduce poverty. But we are willing to cooperate, chiefly through laymen, in projects of human development, so that in a short time all paternalistic aid may be replaced."\*\*\*

Partly as a result of statements like this one, the bishops have served to fill the political vacuum created by the rise of a right-wing military dictatorship and by the failure and near-disappearance of the country's traditional politicians. (The political role of an intelligent and publicly-active Brazilian bishop may be compared with that of a key U.S. Senator, except that the latter is elected

\* This story is told in Robert D. Crassweller's excellent biography, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator*, pp. 382-83.

† On December 4, 1969, Dom Valdir was indicted for subversion by a military court after he had charged that a labor leader at the government steel mill in Volta Redonda had been tortured during interrogation.

\*\* From "Bispos Apóiam Padres contra Acao Militar," in *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, December 1, 1967.

for six years while a bishop is appointed for life and is removable only by the Pope.) Although fewer than forty of Brazil's two-hundred bishops are spokesmen for the most "advanced" Church views, the progressive bishops include in their ranks many of the more educated clerics and have therefore, despite their small numbers, been able to exert a powerful influence over the broad, uncommitted majority; they have exercised a similar influence in the councils of CELAM, whose current President is a Brazilian, Dom Avelar Brandao of Teresina.

The rhetorical radicalism of the Brazilian hierarchy reached a peak of sorts in the pastoral letters of 1962-63, issued just prior to the 1964 military coup that ousted President Joao Goulart. At that time both the lay and clerical Catholic leadership reflected, in addition to the instruction of Pope John's social encyclicals, the teaching of French Catholic philosophers like Jacques Maritain, whose *humanisme intégral* profoundly influenced the writings of Alceu Amoroso Lima, Brazil's foremost Catholic thinker and for many years the leader of Catholic Action. The younger generation of Brazilian Catholics also developed a strong interest in the personalist philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier, founder and editor of the French journal *Esprit*, who, like Maritain, elaborated upon and to some extent influenced the social teaching of the Church. At the same time, the Brazilian hierarchy was being swept along by the powerful and radical lay movements that became a major force in the somewhat chaotic social effervescence of the Goulart years (1961-64). This radical thrust was concentrated in the elite youth sections of Catholic Action—known by their initials: JUC (university students), JEC (secondary students), and JOC (young workers)—which were strongly influenced by the young, progressive priests (many of them French, Dutch, and German missionaries) who served as their advisers. Many of these young people came under the intellectual persuasion of a Brazilian Jesuit theologian, Padre Henrique C. de Lima Vaz, who has produced widely-read commentaries on Hegel and Marx as well as on Pope John's encyclicals. In 1968 the Catholic university movement, JUC, decided to enter student politics; prior to 1964 the last four presidents of the National Student Union (UNE) were Catholic Action leaders, working with the Communists in a coalition in which the Catholics were the stronger and more radical partner.

Emanuel de Kadt, a British sociologist studying Brazilian Catholicism, reported that during the early 60's "most bishops were simply overwhelmed by the political and social happenings, leaving the hierarchy divided and unable to come down forcefully on one side or the other. It had something to do with the fear, quite widespread among Catholics, of being left behind in the overall trend toward reform. As a result, even some of

the less wholeheartedly progressive Catholic leaders were willing to let a section of the Church get implicated in the wider radical movement. They regretted, certainly more than the young people themselves, the ideological weakness of those jumping on the bandwagon. These middle-of-the-road churchmen gave warning of the dangers of naiveté, but had few, if any, positive and concretely helpful suggestions."\* In 1962, after the militant Catholic Action leaders were finally warned by the bishops that their more aggressive political activities were compromising the Church as a whole, a new political organization, *Ação Popular*, was formed with many of its militants retaining membership in their respective Catholic Action groups. After the 1964 coup, many Catholics involved in UNE and *Ação Popular*, including priests, were imprisoned or forced to leave the country. The military regime's inquiry into subversion in UNE produced an indictment of 712 students and two priests, Padre Vaz and Frei Mateus Rocha, former head of the Dominican Order. Padre Francisco Lage, a priest accused of organizing labor unions and advising *Ação Popular*, was sentenced to twenty-eight years in jail and then allowed to escape to Mexico.

SINCE 1964 the principal theater of the Church-State conflict has been the Brazilian Northeast, which, with a population of about thirty million, is the most extensive and populous area of extreme poverty in Latin America. The Northeast consists of the so-called drought polygon of the semi-desert *sertao*, as well as the coastal strip, *zona de mata*, inhabited by descendants of both indigenous peoples and African slaves imported to work the region's sugar plantations. The social structure is still that of the 400-year-old sugar economy, though the industry has declined steadily since the abolition of slavery a century ago. Although the scarcity of arable land forced most of the freed slaves to remain on the plantations as subsistence-wage peons, some were drawn away by the 19th-century rubber boom in the Amazon, and others in recent years have migrated to the more prosperous and industrialized areas of southern Brazil around Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. In the Northeast, roughly three-fourths of the population cannot read or write. In this primitive region the average church parish is 300 square miles, with more than 16,000 inhabitants for each priest: it is no wonder that the area abounds in magical folk religions with African roots and in messianic cults built around legendary revivalist preachers who have roamed the *sertao*.

The luxuriant growth of revivalist cults in the Northeast, together with the violent, chronic al-

\* From "Religion, the Church, and Social Change in Brazil," reprinted as CIDOC Document 68/73 (Guernavaca, 1968), p. 73/21.

ternations of rain and drought, have contributed to a kind of lyric extremism in both politics and religion.\* In the Pernambuco revolution of 1817, local priests were the revolutionary leaders and champions of social reform. In 1874 a civil war swept the *sertao* in protest against the new metric system of weights and measures. In November 1935 the Brazilian Communist party engineered barracks revolts in the Northeastern garrisons of Natal and Recife; the revolt failed for lack of coordination with other plotters in the south.

Under the primitive conditions that prevail in the Northeast, perhaps any proposal for meaningful change might smack of "extremism," which may be why the imaginative Church-sponsored radio literacy campaign, the Basic Education Movement (MEB), has come under severe attack for combining literacy education with a novel program of *conscientizacao*: instilling in the peasant a consciousness of his condition and rights. Just prior to the 1964 military takeover, the MEB—financed by the Ministry of Education—had 470 full-time employees providing daily broadcast lessons to some 180,000 peasants over 25 radio stations. Although it was organized and supervised by a Council of Bishops, MEB was run entirely by laymen, many of whom had been involved in the Catholic Action youth movements. Even before the 1964 coup, however, MEB's literacy manuals—stored in Rio de Janeiro for distribution in the Northeast—were confiscated because of their objectionable content, under orders of Carlos Lacerda, the right-wing Governor of Guanabara state. Since the coup, MEB has been limping along without federal support; the inventor of its *conscientizacao* techniques, Paulo Freire, has been forced into exile in Chile, where he has developed an international reputation in adult education. The Church-sponsored peasant *sindicato* movement in the Northeast has likewise been paralyzed since 1964 due to opposition by the army and harassment by landlords' private gangs, though the priests who advise the peasant movement have remained as the only leadership available for the past six years. The Church clearly has been involved in a holding operation in the Northeast since 1964, a position which has become increasingly difficult to

maintain as Church-State conflicts have sharpened.

The principal figure in this holding operation is Dom Helder Camara, the Archbishop of Recife and Olinda, who is Latin America's best-known cleric and probably the most popular public figure in Brazil. A small, wispy Northeasterner, he held the key post of Secretary-General of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops during the 1962-63 period when, it will be recalled, the bishops produced their most dramatic statements on social questions. Dom Helder assumed his present position—which amounts, in effect, to acting as Primate of the Northeast—a few days after the April 1964 coup. Shortly thereafter he was denounced by General Itebere Gouvea do Amaral as being "on the side of leftism" and for "taking pleasure in appearing on TV with excesses of histrionics and clownish attitudes." The general also charged that "the analysis of Communist organizations on the balance of forces opposing the [military] power seizure considers the disorganized Catholic Church in Pernambuco [the state forming Dom Helder's archdiocese] ripe for infiltration." During my visit to Recife not long ago, Dom Helder was being sued for libel by a labor lawyer who was offended at a speech the Archbishop had made before a *sindicato* of sugar peons in the nearby town of Cabo, in which he urged the peasants to "repel as traitors the union leaders who receive money from bosses to make the worker accept unjust and immoral contracts. If the workers opened their eyes, they would discover that, besides honest lawyers, there are parasites enriching themselves from the tears, blood, and sweat of the workers, receiving money from worker and employer, endorsing contracts so unjust that they draw the curse of God."

Despite his flair for publicity, Dom Helder appears in some ways to be a very traditional churchman: thus, he paternalistically dispenses charity to the poor through personal contacts, whereas other progressive bishops favor social-mobilization programs. A leader of the avant-garde at the Vatican Council, Dom Helder has been a personal friend of Pope Paul since 1950 when, still an ordinary priest, he approached the then Msgr. Giovanni Montini with a bold reorganization plan for the Brazilian Church; he has since been careful to remain publicly on the correct side of the Pope on the critical issues of celibacy and birth control. At the Pope's request, Dom Helder has recently been urging the adoption by Brazilian Catholics of the techniques of non-violent rebellion developed by Dr. Martin Luther King.

**D**URING MY visit to Recife I had an opportunity to put some questions to Dom Helder and to obtain an elaboration of his widely-discussed views on the Church and revolution. "Within the effort for creation of a theology

\* Euclides da Cunha's literary classic, *O Sertao*, quotes this description from 1877 of the most famous of the backland preachers: "There has appeared in the northern backlands an individual who goes by the name of Antonio Conselheiro, and who exerts a great influence over the minds of the lower classes, making use of his mysterious trappings and ascetic habits to impose upon their ignorance and simplicity. He lets his beard and hair grow long, wears a cotton tunic, and eats sparingly, being almost a mummy in aspect. Accompanied by a couple of women followers, he lives by reciting beads and litanies, by preaching, and by giving counsel to the multitudes that come to hear him when the local Church authorities permit it. Appealing to their religious sentiments, he draws them after him in throngs and moves them at his will."

of development, one must mold a long chapter for the theology of revolution," he told me. "What I have read until today is not easy to apply to the enormous diversity of worlds in which an apparently unitary Latin America is unfolding. The presence of the Church in social movements is very old. What is really new is the angle in which the Church places itself. Christianity in Latin America recognizes its great part of responsibility for situations of injustice in which a great part of the human masses find themselves, in a state of internal colonialism, in infra-human conditions. What looks like a mixture of political mysticism and religious mysticism, what reminds us of our social leadership, is a thirst to recuperate lost time and pay for the sin of omission."

When I asked what he considered the most important work of the Church in his archdiocese, Dom Helder copied out for me in his small handwriting an excerpt from an article by a Spanish theologian, Padre José Maria Gonzalez Ruiz of Málaga:

We Christians have important tasks in the construction of a world being born and which is heading for a socialist solution. In this construction of socialism we Christians have no concrete technical solution: the experience of 2,000 years teaches us that the *civitas humana* should not be absorbed by the Church. The Church does not have the mission of creating its own *civitas* in which the Gospel is converted into an economic, social, and political code. The *civitas* should be built with its own autonomous means. . . . The Christian should commit himself to the socialist revolution without technical misconceptions and without stressing his role as a believer, but giving at the same time his notable contribution of mystique for universal brotherhood and total hope. Because—and this must be known—socialism never will be built with a sectarian call to the blind fatalism of a mechanically-conceived history. Socialism is an option of the free creative will of man and, for the realization of this option, the Gospel has served and continues to serve as an impulse of immense efficacy.

Dom Helder apologized for the length of the citation—"but it faithfully relates the thought that illuminates the work of the Church in our archdiocese," he concluded.

THESE VIEWS, which enjoy considerable support among younger laymen, bishops, and priests, in Brazil and the rest of Latin America, give such primacy to the achievements of social justice as to undermine seriously the Church's more traditional associations and alliances in temporal society. For this reason, moreover, the Brazilian Church has been undergoing an internal crisis in its confrontation with the current military dictatorship, one that is curiously analogous to the inner stresses within the dictatorship itself. The situation, too, has been aggravated by the in-

crease of political terrorism over the past year. On May 27, 1969 the body of Padre Antonio Henrique Pereira Netto was found hanging from a tree on the campus of the University of Recife, with three bullet wounds in his head and deep slashes in his throat from a *faca peixeira*, a long knife used by fishermen in the Northeast. The young priest was a professor of sociology at the university and director of Catholic youth movements in the state of Pernambuco, and his murder was preceded by the slaying a month before of a Catholic student leader, Candido Pinto. Both killings were attributed to a right-wing terrorist group called the Communist-Hunting Commandos, which began operating around Recife in early 1969 and whose list of thirty-two Catholic leaders marked for death included the names of Padre Pereira, Dom Helder, and the auxiliary bishop of Recife, Dom José de Lamartine. Also in 1969 the residences of Dom Helder and Angelo Cardinal Rossi, Archbishop of Sao Paulo, were twice shot up.

In November 1969 several priests and friars were implicated in the leftist violence during the investigations that followed the kidnapping of the U.S. Ambassador two months earlier. (Ambassador Elbrick was freed after a few days, when Brazilian authorities gave in to the kidnappers' demand that fifteen specified political prisoners be flown into exile in Mexico.) The man sought as the kidnappers' ringleader, a former Communist Deputy named Carlos Marighela, was killed in a gun battle with police November 4, after authorities used two Dominican priests, arrested a week before, as the bait to draw Marighela into a police trap. Since then, the government has charged that religious seminaries and monasteries are being used to prepare subversive literature and to provide hiding places for terrorists seeking to escape to neighboring countries. In response, Church authorities have criticized the involvement of priests in political violence and terrorism as "anti-evangelical," while at the same time denouncing arrests and tortures by the government.

These developments show how deeply the Church is being drawn into the conflict that has been polarizing Brazilian society. Despite its hesitations and internal divisions, the Church provides the only institutional opposition to the increasingly unpopular military regime. Growing political instability—the armed forces on several occasions have set aside their own constitution in order to accommodate internal pressures—has strengthened the hand of a leftist-nationalist military faction that is influenced, in part, by the progressive wing of the Church. The Brazilian case, although not unique, is the outstanding example in Latin America of the way in which the Church, by putting the social doctrines issuing from the *aggiornamento* to an immediate and dangerous test, has assumed a central role in a conflict whose end cannot be seen.

## III

QUITE PROBABLY there would be no Catholic renewal in many countries of Latin America today without the Jesuits, whose famous energies are now being directed almost exclusively toward achieving social justice. Their chief instrument for this purpose are the centers for research and social action—Centro de Investigación y Acción (CIAS)—which the Society of Jesus has established in all of its Latin American provinces. The social-action effort has gained further impetus from the leadership in Rome of Padre Pedro Arrupe, a Spaniard who in 1964 became the Society's Father-General. (The Jesuits' new activity, it should be noted, has been promoted at the expense of the order's more traditional educational activities oriented toward the training of elites: some Jesuit schools and colleges in Europe have been closed to free staffs for missionary work in Latin America.) At a meeting in Rio de Janeiro in May 1968, after reviewing the entire Jesuit operation in Latin America, Padre Arrupe and the Society's seventeen Latin American province-heads sent a letter to the nearly 5,000 Jesuits working in the region, which proclaimed in part: "We wish to conceive the totality of our apostolic mission as focusing on the social problem. We wish to avoid any attitude of exclusiveness or domination. We wish to adopt an attitude of service in the Church and Society, rejecting the image of power that frequently is attributed to us. . . ."

For the greater part of this century, the Chilean Jesuits were identified with an aristocratic secondary school in Santiago, the Colegio San Ignacio. About ten years ago, however, several Jesuits concerned with social problems broke away to form, within the CIAS framework, the Centro Bellarmino, which has since become the most influential Jesuit institution in Chile and is a striking example of what a small group of highly-trained Jesuits can accomplish. This community of eighteen priests has generated sufficient influence in the Chilean Catholic hierarchy to make it the most progressive in Latin America. Moreover, they have critically influenced the growth of the Christian Democratic party, helping to transform it from a tiny splinter faction into the ruling party it has been under President Eduardo Frei (his term expires later this year). The members of the Centro Bellarmino form a battery of specialists in sociology, trade unionism, theology, communications, housing, and land reform, and over the years they have served as advisors to the Chilean bishops on social questions. Besides publishing the influential magazine *Mensaje*, the Centro Bellarmino operates an impressive variety of social and research programs.

The impact of the CIAS social-action program is also strong in the smaller, more backward republics. In Paraguay, for example, where the dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner has re-

mained virtually unchallenged for fifteen years, a major Church-State conflict has developed over the regime's efforts to extend its control over the Jesuit-run Catholic University, which had become a center of anti-government opposition, and to expel from the country five Spanish Jesuits holding key professional and administrative positions. One of these was Padre José Miguel Munárriz, managing editor of the Church's official weekly newspaper, *Comunidad*, which occasionally printed editorials critical of the regime and which had been closed by government order while most of the Paraguayan hierarchy was away attending the 1968 CELAM Latin American bishops' conference in Medellín, Colombia.

The Spanish Jesuits in Paraguay have been a major force in the *aggiornamento* of the traditionally weak and submissive Paraguayan hierarchy; they have also organized Catholic peasant leagues and advised in the formation of a small but vigorous Christian Democratic opposition party. While the Stroessner regime was pressuring diplomatically in Rome for the transfer of the five Jesuits mentioned above, the Paraguayan bishops opened a public campaign for the release or trial of political prisoners who had been held for several years without formal charges. The Paraguayan hierarchy then issued a pastoral letter bluntly attacking a newly promulgated security law for its "consecration of a form of absolute totalitarianism that has been condemned many times by the Supreme Pontiffs in the name of social morality." These maneuvers continued until a climax was reached on October 22, 1969, when Padre Francisco de Paula Oliva, one of the more influential Jesuit professors, was called to police headquarters and summarily deported from the country; police then beat up and dispersed a number of students, priests, and professors who had gathered on university grounds to protest the expulsion. Three priests were injured. The Archbishop of Asunción responded with an announcement that, according to canon law, "the authorities that ordered the beatings given the priests have been excommunicated."

## IV

AS I HAVE noted, dissent and disarray are threatening the future of the Latin American priesthood. One of the more dramatic examples of clerical rebellion is the case of Padre Camilo Torres, who was killed in February 1966 in a clash with an army patrol in the mountains of eastern Colombia, where he was leading a Castroite guerrilla band. The story of young Torres, a son of one of Bogotá's socially prominent families, also serves to point up the continuing crisis in Colombian society, the most clerically-oriented in Latin America today. Torres's death occurred just a few months after he had been released (at his own request) from all



priestly vows, save that of celibacy, following an ugly public dispute over social doctrine with the aged Archbishop of Bogotá, Luis Cardinal Concha Cordova. This was also shortly after the conclusion of Vatican II, whose liberating effects led, in Bogotá, to a rebellion of the younger members of lower clergy against the reactionary Cardinal, which in turn prompted an inspection visit from a representative of the Roman Curia and Cardinal Concha's retirement a few months later.

Meanwhile, Colombia was passing through difficult times. A sharp decline in coffee export earnings had cut in half the dollar value of the Colombian peso; political insiders were speculating in cheap official dollars, while factories were closing for lack of foreign exchange to finance imports of raw materials; a number of sensational kidnap murders of wealthy citizens had occurred during the year, and a Castroite guerrilla insurrection had begun in the mountains of eastern Colombia; electoral abstentions had reached as high as 70 per cent of the eligible voters in the previous election; the Liberal-Conservative "National Front" pact to end the *violencia* (the tribal warfare between the two parties that from 1948 and 1958 had cost an estimated 200,000 lives) threatened to come apart as powerful splinter groups developed in both parties. The government showed little capacity to stop the downward slide, and in the middle of 1965 Torres's political appeals began to catch on. "The revolutionary struggle is a Christian and priestly struggle," he declared. "I am a revolutionary because I am a priest and because I am a Catholic. The Colombian Church is one of the most backward in the world."

While traveling through Colombia on a reporting trip in August 1965, I accompanied Camilo Torres on one of his speaking tours to Cali, a tropical city near the Pacific coast, which has become an industrial mecca and refuge from the *violencia* for hundreds of thousands of peasants from Colombia's western departments. "For me there was no possibility of compromise with the Church, because the Church has always been with the oligarchy, and continues that way," he told me. "Believe me, many young priests feel as I do, but cannot express themselves. We are forming a United Front with the Communists, the Christian Democrats, and the left-wing of the Movimiento Liberal Revolucionario (MRL). They have accepted my platform of agrarian reform, of urban reform that will convert all tenants into homeowners, and nationalization of hospitals, radio and television stations, and the country's natural resources. We would agree to a plebiscite to end the National Front;\* but we

\* Under the 1958 agreement the Liberals and Conservatives have undertaken to share equally for sixteen years the Presidency, governmental appointments, and parliamentary representation, to the exclusion of all other parties.

would abstain from any other election because in Colombia there is no free vote."

The thirty-six-year-old suspended priest, who had been immensely popular as a chaplain and professor of sociology at the National University in Bogotá, was to speak in a small plaza near the newly-created slum of El Rodeo. Torres's meetings had been drawing consistently larger attendance than either of the major parties had been able to attract in many years, and although he arrived two hours late, a big crowd was waiting patiently for him. The crowd began to drift away, however, as his speech dragged on. Torres's oratory was full of Marxist cant—"masses," "revolution," "oligarchy," "agrarian reform"—which often tends more to bore and irritate an audience of poor people than to win their involvement and support. By the time he finished speaking half the crowd had dispersed.

Within a month after this appearance, Torres's United Front showed clear signs of falling apart. Under pressure from the Church hierarchy, the tiny Christian Democratic party and the radical Catholic trade-unionists who had supported him began publicly to condemn his alliance with the Communists, the only organized party not to deny him its support. Torres's public appearances became less and less frequent until they stopped altogether toward the end of 1965. After he disappeared entirely from public view, it was rumored that he had gone to Cuba; another report had him resting "for reasons of health" in some remote *hacienda*. In early 1966 a communiqué signed by Torres circulated in Bogotá: "I have joined the armed struggle. From these Colombian mountains I intend to continue the struggle with weapons in hand, until power is conquered for my people. I have joined the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) because I have found in the ELN the same ideals as the United Front." He died a month later in the *municipio* of San Vicente de Chucurí, a primitive region deeply scarred by years of the *violencia*, where ELN guerrillas are still operating.

SINCE HIS DEATH Torres has come to be venerated by many Latin American Catholics as a martyred saint who fell in the struggle for social justice; a cult has grown up around his memory very much like the one around the memory of Che Guevara. To others, however, the death of Camilo Torres has become symbolic of the general process of dissolution in the Latin American priesthood after the Vatican Council. The future of the priesthood in virtually every republic is threatened by numerous resignations from the clergy and the near-total lack of priestly vocations among the young. Beyond this the various hierarchies are hard-pressed to handle the many rebellions issuing from the ranks of the younger priests. In Cali not long ago a group of priests organized marches to protest the "extortion

against the people" represented by an increase in bus fares. During 1969 four Spanish priests and an American nun were expelled from Colombia for allegedly inciting student disturbances; some of them were associated with a group of thirty-nine priests and the young bishop of Buenaventura, known as the Golconda Group, which had issued a document calling for a "socialist society" in Colombia and "an increase in revolutionary action against imperialism and the neo-colonial bourgeoisie."\* About this time Church authorities also closed the Colegio Marymount, a fashionable girls' school run by American nuns, because of Marxist tendencies among its student and faculty.

In Argentina, where another conservative Church hierarchy presides, 283 clergymen belonging to a group called "Priests of the Third World" signed a document last April, proclaiming their support of the twenty-eight priests in Rosario, Argentina's second city, who had resigned their posts in protest against the "insensitivity" of Archbishop Guillermo Bolatti, who had dismissed a priest in a workers' district for implementing one of the liturgical innovations of Vatican II. In another protest in Rosario, 4,500 parishioners signed a letter to Pope Paul backing the dissident priests, whom the Archbishop had called "Marxists" and "subversives." In July five persons suffered bullet wounds when police broke up a demonstration protesting the arrival of a replacement for the dismissed priest. Earlier, the Archbishop of Cordoba was forced to resign his post following a similar conflict. Faced with intransigent young priests citing the papal encyclicals and the documents of CELAM and the Vatican Council, conservative national hierarchies, such as those of Colombia and Argentina, have often been forced to yield.

THE RADICALIZATION of large numbers of priests has led in turn to some radical innovations in the symbolic language of the Church. For example, the Chilean Jesuit magazine *Mensaje*, in an editorial published on the eve of Pope Paul's 1968 Latin American journey, compared the death of Che Guevara with that of Christ. This much-discussed editorial attempted to deal with the moral problem of revolutionary violence by turning "martyred" guerrilla leaders such as Che Guevara or Camilo Torres into Christ-figures, who "died for men" while struggling against the injustices and cruelties of Latin American society. Another example of this sanctification of violence is afforded by the "manifesto" issued by a group of priests in Higüey, one of the poorest rural dioceses of the Dominican Republic: "The violence (so much feared) is already among us. When a peasant with many children who are hungry and naked, without house or school, looks at his children, he must turn to violence; when he looks at the great extensions of pangola grass, he must turn to vio-

lence; when he sees the well-tended pastures, where the animals are better-fed than his own children, this peasant must turn to violence. . . ."

Both the *Mensaje* editorial and the Higüey manifesto appeared around the time of the 1968 Medellín conference of CELAM, sometimes called Latin America's own Vatican Council, which went on record as saying that "Latin America finds itself in a situation of injustice that could be called institutional violence, because the present structures violate fundamental rights." The same position was articulated somewhat more graphically by a former Maryknoll priest, Thomas Melville, after he and three other American missionaries (including a Maryknoll nun whom he later married) were expelled from Guatemala, after fifteen years' work among the highland Indians, for having provided assistance to a Castroite guerrilla movement. Melville wrote: "Having come to the conclusion that the actual state of violence, composed of the malnutrition, ignorance, sickness and hunger of the vast majority of the Guatemalan population, is the direct result of a capitalist system that makes the defenseless Indian compete against the powerful and well-armed landowner, my brother\*\* and I decided not to be silent accomplices of the mass murder that this system generates. We began teaching the Indians that no one will defend their rights, if they do not defend themselves. If the government and the oligarchy are using arms to maintain them in their position of misery, then they have the obligation to take up arms and defend their God-given rights to be men."‡

Most of the recent Catholic discussion regarding the necessity and legitimacy of revolutionary violence hinges on the following paragraph from Pope Paul's 1967 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples):

There are certainly situations whose injustice cries out to heaven. When whole populations destitute of necessities live in a state of dependence barring them from all initiative and responsibility, and from all opportunity to advance culturally and share in social and political life, recourse to violence, as a means to right these wrongs to human dignity, is a grave temptation. We know, however, that a revolutionary uprising—*save where there is manifest, longstanding tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country*—produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and brings on new disasters. A real

\* From "Segundo Encuentro del Grupo Sacerdotal de Golconda," in *SIC*, No. 312, Caracas, February 1969.

† From "Manifiesto de los Curas de Higüey," in *SIC*, No. 315, May 1969.

\*\* Arthur Melville, also a former Maryknoll missionary, who was expelled from Guatemala with Sister Marion Peter Bradford (whom Thomas Melville married) and Father Blase Bonpane.

‡ From "Revolution Is Guatemala's Only Solution," in the *National Catholic Reporter*, January 31, 1968, p. 5.

evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery. We want to be clearly understood: the present situation must be faced with courage and the injustices linked with it must be fought against and overcome. Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep. Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay. (*Italics added.*)

The key words, of course, are contained in the italicized clause, which repeats a concept that can trace its theological lineage back to St. Thomas Aquinas, who formulated the Church's classic position on revolution.\* The Pope's pronouncement has been welcomed by progressive priests and bishops who, while not advocating violence, believe it may be inescapable in achieving the sweeping social changes advocated in the encyclical. Consequently, however, there has been sufficient speculation on the advisability of violence to cause Pope Paul to express some reservations on the subject, and three of the four speeches he delivered in Bogotá in 1968 contained pointed warnings against revolutionary violence.

## V

THE CHURCH's social involvement of recent years, for all the hope it holds out to Latin America, is nevertheless proving to be a mixed blessing for the hierarchical authority. A good case in point is the situation in Chile, where the national hierarchy published in 1962 a momentous pastoral letter, "On Social and Political Responsibility in the Present Hour," which was credited with helping pave the way for the triumph of the Christian Democratic party over a Communist-Socialist coalition in the 1964 Presidential election. But after this triumph, and after having changed its popular image by donating all its lands for distribution among the peasants, the hierarchy yet finds itself losing traditional ground—to an extent where the Chilean bishops were recently constrained to speak out against the effects and consequences of liberalization: "weakened feeling for God, deterioration of the spiritual life and abandonment of the sacraments, arbitrary acts introduced into the liturgy, . . . ideological confusion, and in particular a 'secularization' that is ill-understood and built on a doctrine that substitutes the evangelizing mission for a mere strategy of social promotion with vocabulary and method taken from an openly atheistic ideology." This lament of the Chilean bishops brings into question the role of ecclesi-

\* "The tyrannical regime is not just, for not orienting itself toward the common good, but toward the private good of the ruler, as one reads in the Philosopher [Aristotle]. For this reason, the disturbance of such a regime cannot be called sedition, if it is not disturbed in such a disorderly way that the tyrannized multitude suffers more injury with the uprising than with the tyrannical regime." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2-42.

astical authority in a situation of inevitable change; indeed, it is the opinion of many that the shrinking celibate priesthood cannot for long resist the transfer of responsibility to leaders emerging from the lay community of the faithful, since in many areas of Latin America there is simply no other alternative if the Church is to survive. Moreover, some signs indicate that the new popular sovereignty will increasingly be associated with a spontaneous "prophetism" that will challenge the intercession of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy in matters of interpreting divine revelation. These certain eventualities are inherent in the insistent demands being voiced today—that the Pope share power with the bishops, that "the People of God" as a whole participate in the choice of bishops (who are now appointed by Rome), and that the priesthood be opened to exemplary married believers whose authority derives from the community they serve.

Whatever new forms may evolve, it is abundantly clear that the present ecclesiastical structures have been considerably weakened. Indeed, the Church is quite visibly shaken, and one would be hard-pressed to say what arouses Rome's greater inquietude, the crisis in religious discipline or the social-revolutionary spirit that has been unleashed by the *aggiornamento*. Be that as it may, sometimes the two tendencies—they are undoubtedly complementary—unite in the person of a powerful advocate. Such a person is Ivan Illich, a forty-three-year-old, Vienna-born American Monsignor of Jewish-Croatian parentage. In 1961, Illich founded the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, an institute for the training of missionaries bound for Latin America, for the publication of books and pamphlets on Latin American society, and for conferences of intellectuals concerned with hemispheric affairs. Prior to this, Illich had obtained a PhD in history at Salzburg, studied theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, and was apparently headed for a career in the Vatican diplomatic service when, rather abruptly, he turned up as a priest in a Puerto Rican parish of the Washington Heights section of Manhattan. Here he became a protégé of the late Francis Cardinal Spellman, who supported him in his subsequent troubles with the Vatican Curia. At the age of thirty-one, Illich became a Monsignor and, leaving New York, was appointed Vice-Rector of the Catholic University in Puerto Rico, where he remained for five years until he quarreled with Bishop James MacManus of Ponce over the Church's intervention in the 1960 Puerto Rican election.

Illich's reputation as an iconoclast—it is this that aroused the wrath of the Curia—derives primarily, however, from two magazine articles he published in 1967. In "The Seamy Side of Charity" (*America*, January 21, 1967), he wrote with unconcealed scorn: "If North America and Eu-

rope send enough priests [to Latin America] to fill the vacant parishes, there is no need to consider laymen—unpaid for part-time work—to fulfill most evangelical tasks; no need to re-examine the structure of the parish, the function of the priest, the Sunday obligation and clerical sermon; no need for exploring the use of the married deaconate, new forms of celebration of the Word and Eucharist and intimate familiar celebrations of conversion to the Gospel in the milieu of the home." In "The Vanishing Clergyman" (the *Critic*, June-July 1967), Illich's contribution to the celibacy debate, he drew this unpromising picture:

. . . A large segment of the thinking Church questions the tie between the celibacy and the priesthood. The Pope insists on their connection. Neither doctrine nor tradition give definitive support to his position. I believe that the emergence of a new pastoral Church depends largely on compliance with his directive during our generation. His position helps assure the speedy death of the clergy. . . . Thousands of priests now reject celibacy, and present the painful spectacle of men trained for sexual abstinence groping belatedly into big-risk marriage. The Church dispenses of them secretly, arbitrarily, and awkwardly. They are forbidden further exercise of their orders. Having chosen marriage, they *could* still exercise priestly functions, but they would cease to be models—except perhaps to others like themselves.

What happened thereafter has been widely reported. First, CIDOC became the object of various ecclesiastical investigations as a suspected center of dangerous leftist and heterodox activities. Then, in June 1968 Illich was summoned to Rome for a secret appearance before the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (the former Holy Office), where he was interrogated by Franjo Cardinal Seper, the Congregation's head and a fellow Croatian. This was followed by Illich's refusal to take a secrecy vow or to answer any questions unless given a written copy of all the charges against him. Illich was then handed a bizarre list of 85 inquisitorial charges put as questions.\* He responded by writing a letter to Cardinal Seper, stating that he refused to answer because "a questionnaire of this type seems designed to wreck any hope of a human and Christian dialogue between the one judging and the one being judged." The curtain on the drama rang down with Seper's dismissal of Illich, in Croatian, with a line that echoed the words of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor: "Get thee hence, get thee hence, and do not come back." Despite a series of subsequent maneuvers by Illich to exempt himself and CIDOC from ecclesiastical control and the sanctions of canon law, the Vatican, in January 1969, forbade all bishops to send priests or nuns to CIDOC for missionary training; Illich then appealed his case directly to Pope Paul.†

THE PROSECUTION of Ivan Illich by the former Holy Office of the Vatican Curia cannot be separated from the general crisis in papal authority—which in practice also means the authority of the Roman Curia—that has agitated the Church since Vatican II, and that reached a climax at the Synod of Bishops which met in Rome last autumn. The growing impression is that the Vatican has now become afraid of the more radical effects of *aggiornamento*. Paul's image is no longer that of the winged Pope, making jet-age visits to India and Africa, Bogotá and New York, but of a quietly determined old man trying, in a last-ditch effort, to save the Church from the tumult it has generated within itself. During Easter Week of 1969, for instance, he warned of "a practically schismatic ferment that divides and subdivides the Church." On June 24, while commemorating the sixth anniversary of his reign, he spoke of the "grave dangers to the Church of God" posed by two key problems: "A diminished sense of doctrinal orthodoxy toward the repository of faith that the Church has inherited from its apostolic origin . . . [and] a certain diffuse lack of confidence toward the exercise of Our ministry which, under the mandate of Christ, united and guided the People of God on several levels." And on his visit to Bogotá in 1968, as we have seen, Pope Paul was pointedly reserved in his social utterances, avoiding repetition of the attacks on neo-colonialism, "liberal capitalism," and the "international imperialism of money" that he had made a year before in *Populorum Progressio*, and warning his Latin American audience against using the encyclical as a justification for violent revolution.

Nevertheless, for all his public agonizing over

\* See Edward B. Fiske's interview with Illich in the *New York Times*, February 4, 1969, and texts of the Congregation's 85 questions and Illich's letter to Cardinal Seper in the *National Catholic Reporter*, February 12, 1969. Here are two samples from the 85 questions: "3: What do you say about those who say you are 'petulant, adventurous, imprudent, fanatical, and hypnotizing, a rebel to any authority, disposed to accept and recognize only that of the Bishop of Cuernavaca'? . . . 5: Is it true that by articles, interviews, and ambiguous theoretical and practical positions, by personal sympathies toward the political and social Left and a morbid understanding of ex-religious and ex-priests, you have fomented grave confusion in the souls and consciences of others, especially by assimilating Marxism to Christianity and by equating the celibate parochial clergy with the married deaconate?"

† A Vatican document reported in *Le Monde*, June 14, 1969 and in the *National Catholic Reporter*, June 25, 1969 said that "the Holy See . . . does not oppose attendance on an experimental basis, by priests and religious, at courses organized by CIDOC," but urged that Illich leave CIDOC and place the center under the control of CELAM and the Mexican Bishops' Conference. In a statement Illich referred to a March 15, 1969 letter to Cardinal Terrence J. Cooke of New York, saying: "In this letter I expressed what must continue to be my firm intention to govern all the decisions and actions of my life completely independently of any canonical authority, legislative or otherwise, special to the clergy."

some of the directions in which the *aggiornamento* is taking the Church, Paul VI has been careful in most instances not to associate himself with the reactionary party in Vatican politics. Moreover, he cannot be unaware that, with the consolidation of social democracy in most of Western Europe and North America since World War II, Latin America is now the only Catholic region of the world where the Church's newly enunciated social teachings are being put to a serious test. Certainly the Vatican cannot turn its back on the public pressure for social justice generated in nation after nation by Latin American laymen, priests, and bishops. Despite instances of extremism, this development has issued in a fertile enrichment of Christian tradition in an area where it has been conspicuously weak. Although only about 10 per cent of the population attends Mass with any regularity, the Church in Latin America has returned to the center of public life

with a social doctrine that has given it a prophetic role, and sometimes a polarizing role, in what remains an unjust and highly volatile society. The hierarchical Church remains too weak and poor to bring about by itself the changes it preaches. Nevertheless, it has learned over the years that its institutional charisma and solidarity can be greatest where its temporal pretensions are least. In the words of Ivan Illich, "I believe the specific task of the Church in the modern world is the Christian celebration of the experience of change." But, with or without this celebration, no one can be sure in what form the Church will survive. The agony of Catholicism seems likely to continue, with the Church caught between surrendering itself to a religious revolution of its own making, or fortifying itself in the traditional forms and usages that these days show diminishing power to sustain a living faith.

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