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IDEOLOGICAL OPTIONS AND POLITICAL DYNAMISM

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Introduction: aspects of the ideological struggle in Latin America

1. It is not necessary to remind this audience how wide and complex the discussion is concerning the different meanings assigned today to the word "ideology". To me it seems quite clear that during the last few years the concept has been what may be called "re-vindicated". The sociology of knowledge tried to prove that "thought", human thought, is reflection against the background of a certain situation and certain socio-cultural facts, and in this sense it is always "ideological thinking", a form of conditioned thinking. The concept of ideology handled in this paper, therefore, tallies (in general) with the definition given by Armand Cuvillier: "Social existence (says the author), like any form of existence, obeys a sort of law of 'awareness'"; in the first place, it is simply lived; then it is represented, and lastly it is scientifically known. The ideologies correspond (in my view) to the second stage of this "process of becoming aware", to quote the fine formula of Leon Brunschvieg. An ideology, moreover, is certainly not a scientific knowledge of reality, and that is why it can be denounced as illusory, partial (in both senses of the word), slightly "mythical" in the Sorelian sense...; but it is the emergence on the plane of consciousness, under the form of representation, of a situation which until that moment had simply been lived. That representation is, therefore, necessarily affected by a co-efficient which is historical and also "situational"; this may distort the reality, but it well expresses a reality from a certain angle, in a particular light. I add (he concludes a few lines further on) that such 'awareness' always involves a certain décalage and that the ideology thus nearly always shows a certain delay with regard to the historic reality which it is supposed to translate." ("Las ideologías a la luz del conocimiento", Universidad Nacional, México, D.F., 1957, pp.12-23).

I want to emphasise two elements in this definition of Cuvillier's: first, that the ideology corresponds to that moment of awareness of the lived situation, of the historical and social reality. Secondly, that although this 'awareness' presupposes a certain distortion, and therefore cannot be equated with scientific knowledge, it is useful to express reality "from a certain angle, in a particular light" (to quote Cuvillier).

2. Two other points must be mentioned by way of introduction, in order to understand the nature and importance of the role played by the ideologies in Latin America. Firstly, it must be remembered that the word "ideology" refers also to what we may call the social dimension of ideas. "The idea (says Jean Meynaud and Alain Lancelot in his book "Las actitudes políticas", Eudeba, Buenos Aires, p.97) would be the intellectual product in its pure state, while the ideology would express the state of this idea after it has passed to the level of collective assimilation". This collective

character of ideology does not imply a pejorative distinction in comparison with the importance of the idea. When we draw attention to the "social dimension" of ideology we are recalling that (to quote Meynaud and Lancelot again) "it appears to us like a system of variable coherence which expresses, explains or justifies the attitudes of man in relation to the world in which he lives; and also as "an incitement to act in this or that direction, in accordance with a value-judgment of society" (ibid., p.98). Therefore this exposition of the "ideological options and political dynamic" of Latin America must not be understood as the abstract conflict between certain ideas about society, but as a frequently violent collision between social groups identified with a certain concept of change, and involved - through the dynamic of that ideological concept - in praxis (political action) i.e. in the struggle for power.

3. This last affirmation may somewhat surprise the representative of European and North American countries present here, because since the end of the second world war there has been talk in those countries of the phenomenon known as "the end of the ideologies"; this means the ideological appeasement which lies at the root of the theory of "peaceful co-existence" affirmed by the two main world-powers. I must insist that this theory of the "twilight of ideologies" (Raymond Aron, Arthur Koestler, Seymour Lipset, John K. Galbraith) seems to be unacquainted with the most significant world phenomenon of the last 20 years: the rise of the Tiers-Monde, the break-up of the colonial structure which had survived the second world war, and the appearance of a group of nations, independent but interrelated owing to their common historical origin, and the similarity of their problems. It is precisely in those under-developed areas (which include Latin America, as has been shown by the latest integrations in face of the problems of the international situation) that the ideological struggle has acquired a new and strong significance. This revival of the ideological struggle manifests itself, primarily, outwardly, because the "Tiers-Monde" represents an ideological position of its own in face of the two great power-blocs. Secondly, it manifests itself internally, as a result of the confrontation above all between the groups which advocate social change and those which defend the "status quo" (through political and military force), because the "status" of traditional society constitutes the basis of their economic privileges and class privileges. But this confrontation occurs also between the groups which seek social change, owing to the plurality of positions and nuances, ranging from "reformist" or "progressive" solutions to solutions based on violence and revolution. The result of this second confrontation, and its effect on the Latin-American situation, is that the groups which resist change have hitherto shown greater cohesion and more political unity (and consequently a more effective use of methods of pressure) than the sectors which advocate social renovation.

4. It is to this last expression of ideological dynamism in Latin America, its internal expression, that I want to refer in this paper, because it is predominantly there that we can perceive the political options which determine the present situation of the Continent. However, we must bear in mind that the differing ideological positions in this internal struggle necessarily presuppose certain concepts of foreign policy, differing and well-defined attitudes towards relations with the great powers, to the role

played by those powers within the national situation, and similarities or differences in relation to the two great systems which dominate the world economy (capitalism and socialism) and their different nuances.

## II. Characteristic features of the Latin American ideologies

1. "The social reality (say Meynaud and Lancelot in the book cited above, page 99) always expresses itself in a two-way movement of ideas. On the one hand, a dominating ideology is formed which justifies the hierarchy of the hitherto-existing groups; on the other hand there is a demand for change which questions that hierarchy and that social organisation." This theoretical characterisation of the problem applies in general terms to the situation in Latin America, except for one difference, which is due to the nature of the political process and to the social stratification of the continent.

As has been pointed out on many occasions, the political independence of Latin America that was achieved during the 19th century did not signify a real change either in the power-structure, or in the social system imposed by the "conquering empires" during the colonial period. The revolutionary trends of today, therefore, are the first real attempt to transform that power-structure and that class-system, and to continue the movement for emancipation that was started in the last century. Consequently, the distinction drawn by Meynaud and Lancelot in theoretical terms between a "dominant ideology" and "a number of ideas demanding change" (if we want to be consistent with the concept of ideology laid down in the first part of this paper) is not entirely consistent. The ideology (it will be recalled) corresponds to a process of becoming aware of the lived reality (Cuvillier) and manifests itself as "an incitement to act in this or that direction, in accordance with a value-judgment of society. (Meynaud-Lancelot). Consequently, an ideology is a dynamic expression, which has its origin in a process of reflection (awareness) and characterised by the pre-dominance of what is rational ("a system of variable coherence"). It is this which prevents assigning an ideological attitude (rational, dynamic) to the groups which identify themselves with the "status quo", i.e. with the structure inherited from colonial times. On the contrary, the fact which characterises those groups which are generally called conservative or reactionary is the absence of ideology, the lack of a coherent scheme of thought and the negation of reflection. It is the predominance of the irrational over the rational. It is not as irrelevant as it may appear at first sight to use ethical categories to describe the deep causes of the social maladjustment in Latin America, although this is often overdone, admittedly. The roots and motives for the conservative attitude are irrational: they spring from the desire for power, ambition, the tendency to maintain economic and social differences between men. And the instruments with which these aspirations have traditionally been defended (and are still being defended today) in Latin America society are violence (legitimised by the use of power), mendacity, the negation of any step which leads to reflection, to awareness of the real situation by the political majorities of Latin America, persecution and the concealment of the rational. It is not unjustified to speak of Latin America's "mediaevalism", of a new obscurantism, or of the re-introduction of the inquisition.

2. The political aspect of the situation in Latin America is characterised, undoubtedly, by ideological effervescence. But the outstanding features of this effervescence are not clarity nor maturity. During a lecture given in the summer of 1965 at the University of Mexico, the Argentinian historian Rodolfo Puiggrós referred to this fact, pointing out that the backwardness of Latin America is not merely technical, due to the means and capacity for production, economic and even political parasitism. It is also ideologically backward, "because we have not worked out a doctrine which would liberate and channel the tremendous forces of progress of our Continent." What then are the characteristic features common to the main ideological trends in Latin America? One could begin by enumerating three of them:

(i) First, the high degree of improvisation and the lack of systematic coherence of these ideologies. This flexibility, or tendency to improvisation, is not necessarily a defect; it is rather, I would say, an inevitable fact in face of a process which is incredibly dynamic and fluid. The faithfulness of interpretation of reality, the unforeseeable factors in social change in Latin America, make it impossible to apply coherent ideological programmes to the actual situation. The improvised nature of the ideologies of social change is therefore due to the very nature of the process.

(ii) The second feature is the complex or fibrous nature of the Latin American ideologies. I am referring to a marked tendency to philosophical eclecticism which has always been characteristic of Latin American thinking. In the case of the political ideologies the same phenomenon is observable. There are some trends which had their origin in, and corresponded up to a certain point, with the scheme of the basic trends of contemporary thinking like Marxism, positivism or the various forms of European political thought (Liberalism, nationalism, etc.); but this basic scheme is mingled with elements which are merely opportune or utilitarian and more compatible with other trends, and also mingled with elements which spring from the nature of Latin American society (race, indigenous traditions, the heritage of Spain, the movement for emancipation) and also from the special features of the institutions and political process in our countries. The internal constitution of the ideologies is therefore complex; the content and even the general scheme on which they are based present serious resistance to analysis, and the fact which this complexity reveals most clearly is the absence hitherto of any work which tries:

- (a) to systematise scientifically and exhaustively this ideological process;
- (b) to establish a basic typology and the corresponding characterisation of the main trends which have participated, and are participating, in the political process in Latin America.

(iii) A third characteristic may be pointed out: the empirical character of these ideologies. This empiricism is not necessarily a defect: on the contrary, it may be the feature which best reveals the originality and the "raison d'être" of the ideological process in Latin America. Because the reason for this empiricism is the need felt by the movements and groups which are ideologically creative to turn their ideas into practice, to define themselves ideologically not by reason of a purely intellectual process, but in the light of their action and their political commitment.

It should be borne in mind that (according to the concept of ideology defined above) dynamism is an inherent feature of all ideologies; it is therefore inconceivable to imagine a real ideology which does not lead to action. I therefore stated before, that the behaviour of the groups which advocate social quietism and oppose change is not ideological; it is anti-ideological. But this elementary view must now be defined more precisely. In the more flexible and evolved sectors of the higher social classes one does find a certain amount of understanding for the need for social change. This understanding or acceptance of change, however, is also conditioned by irrational motives which spring from the desire to defend positions of privilege. This attitude may be called the neo-liberalism of Latin America, and its outstanding feature is precisely the limited or controlled acceptance of change. It is limited basically by its aim to preserve the basic structure of the traditional society. This means that their concept of change enables them to accept certain modifications on the fringe or, if you prefer, in the super-structure, but not in the basic organisation nor in the fundamental institutions of that society. From this point of view this quasi-ideological attitude - because it is more intelligent and presupposes a certain degree of reflection, although it is a reflection conditioned by irrational factors - is extremely dangerous and constitutes a more serious menace to the sectors which advocate social change than those attitude which we have called reactionary and conservative. This danger has been well analysed by the theorists of the CEPAL (\*), who have pointed out that the real cause of the backwardness of Latin American society is not its resistance to change, nor its impermeability, but its relative permeability, the limited elasticity of its institutions. That elasticity has permitted a relative transformation within certain traditional patterns, but it has delayed the phases of the process and concealed the need for profound change. On the other hand, the effect of that relative elasticity on the masses in Latin America is even more pernicious, because it has the effect of a sedative or an opiate, drugging their capacity to react and delaying the dynamic drive which could produce change at a deeper level, and radically transform the socio-economic structures of the countries of Latin America.

3. I should like to stress the fact that this analysis does not correspond to the argument attributed, often with excessive simplicity, to the Marxist-Leninist groups which are active in Latin America. That argument - as its critics seem to understand it - consists in opposing any partial or relative solution of the social problem, in order to obtain the degree of tension and desperation which will produce violent revolution. Needless to say, I do not agree with this new kind of social Machiavellism. The question here is not to prove the ineffectiveness of gradual change, but to point out how the concept of gradual, superficial change (i.e. changing certain conditions which do not involve a deep, radical transformation of society) is the most effective instrument in the hands of the conservative and neo-liberal groups, because it postpones that change indefinitely and neutralises the impulses which seek a complete renewal of the socio-economic structure of Latin America.

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(\*) Comision Economica para América Latina

III. Function of the political ideologies in Latin America  
(Ideology and "Praxis")

In order to complete this analysis of the ideological dynamic in Latin America, I think it will be useful to examine the last of the characteristics mentioned in the previous section: the inherent relation between ideology and political practice in Latin American politics.

As I already pointed out, the ideologies in Latin America do not originate in a merely intellectual process (they therefore do not represent the specific contribution of the intellectuals to the political struggle); they are closely bound up with political praxis, with the need to direct political action within certain theoretical policies and in relation to well-defined aims. The relation between concrete political action and reflection which tries to base that action on the analysis of reality and then to formulate a strategy in order to promote certain aims, therefore constitutes the dynamic process which gives rise to the ideological policies. This process may be divided into three successive phases which must be examined separately.

1. The ideologies which originate in that process of reflection are presented, primarily, as an analysis of the social and political situation in Latin America. This capacity for analysis is mainly the outcome of a certain historic remoteness from the new ideologies, in relation to the moment when traditional society acquired its basic form. The process which takes for granted that remoteness is the historic evolution of the traditional institutions, up to the time when, as the result of their own effectiveness, their rigidity and their manifest inability to adapt themselves to the new situations and to enable social progress to take place, they constitute factors of obstruction and stagnation. Therefore the word remoteness stresses the youth of the new ideologies; but at the same time it enables one to understand why the movements which want to change the traditional ideology are frequently accused of obeying foreign ideological influences, particularly Marxism.

This attitude of remoteness, however, is the indispensable first step for all reflection or analysis which claims to be based on scientific methods and which aspires to an objective understanding of reality. And although it is certain that the scientific instrument for that reflection has been influenced by modern sociology and to a large extent by the Marxist analysis of the capitalist economy, the content of the new ideologies is the result of the analysis and interpretation of the local reality. They are therefore nationalist ideologies corresponding to what should be understood as Latin American ideological nationalism.

Indeed, mention is often made of the nationalisms of our Continent. There exist, it is true, a Mexican nationalism, an Argentinian nationalism, a Brazilian nationalism, a Chilean or Bolivian nationalism. But in order to understand the basic difference between this type of nationalism and that which characterised certain recent trends in the European political process, one has

only to recall that the social changes which occurred in countries like Mexico, Bolivia or Brazil (during the process which was interrupted by the military "coup" of April, 1964), which were directed more or less towards the Left, were always based on ideologies whose demands were nationalist. This means that nationalism in Latin America represents primarily an emphasis on what is national instead of on what is foreign (the elements which determine the economic and political colonialism of our countries). But at a deeper level, ideological nationalism in Latin America is a scientific attitude which consists in determining in advance the limits and aims of the social analysis. In other words, nationalism is the desire to work out an ideology on the basis of the national reality. When the analysis of this reality is based on scientific categories methods, nationalism acquires the status of scientific knowledge (according to an important group of sociologists and economists in Brazil - Michel Debrun, Guerreiro Ramos, Machado Neto). (See A.L. Machado Neto, "Sociologia do Desenvolvimento", ediciones "tempo Brasileiro", Rio de Janeiro, 1963, especially the chapter on "As ideologias politicas e o desenvolvimento nacional").

2. Secondly, the new ideologies which spring from this analysis of the situation present themselves as a diagnosis of it, and consequently propose a therapy. It is this combination of diagnosis and therapy which constitutes the real content of the ideologies, and therefore the specific element of each. It is an encouraging fact that there are no basic discrepancies between the different trends in Latin America today. Within the framework of the ideological variants on which this paper bases its reflections, it is possible to fix the limits between which these ideological contents can oscillate. On the extreme right we find plans for development which are approximately parallel to those in the industrialised countries, in the ideology called technocratic (Meynaud). On the extreme left we find a whole series of ideologies which fall into the general category of revolutionary, all deriving their source from Marxism and all sharing the same objective - the Socialist State. The evil known as "progressivism" (a term which has no ideological significance) is represented mainly by the technical organisms which are working to survey the socio-economic level of the regions. The most important of these, and to some extent their factotum, is the CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America) which is under the jurisdiction of UNO. The important work done by this body over a number of years has consisted in analyzing the characteristics and causes of Latin American under-development, and taking the necessary steps to face the situation and to promote regional development. Its efforts are not limited to the plane of theory, but culminate in the creation of different national bodies which serve the different governments. Moreover it has done important work in giving technical advice, and has been the main promoter of practical steps towards the economic integration of Latin America.

The distinction between the ideology of progress propagated by the CEPAL and the other ideologies of the extreme left in Latin America does not lie primarily in its content. Generally speaking, it would be difficult to refute the diagnosis of the CEPAL, including the Marxist groups. The discrepancies arise when the ideological basis of that diagnosis is examined. In actual fact the CEPAL oscillates between two limits: on the one hand it is clear that the development of Latin America

is a problem of capital (theory of "economic take-off" of Rostow), and consequently the remedies advocated invariably incline towards solutions of the neo-capitalist type. This means, greater stimulation and participation of foreign capital (public and private) and of course under more liberal conditions, within a régime of moderate planning and state control. The other limit is fixed by the need of CEPAL to attribute a certain "innocuousness" of "a-sepsis" into its political prescriptions. Consequently, leaving political analysis on the second plane, the CEPAL insists, by way of compensation, on the importance of the technical bodies and technical posts within the state-system. This, without recognising that the formation of these bodies, without a basic transformation of the power-system and of the political institutions in Latin America, gives no choice for overcoming the irrational factors which have hitherto conditioned progress in Latin America.

It is possible that this last point may enable a distinction to be drawn between the function fulfilled by a body like the CEPAL and the ideology of progress on the political level (e.g. in the Christian Democratic parties, especially in Chile). In essentials the programme of the Christian Democratic party in Chile, the widespread "revolution in freedom", is inspired by the type of reforms and the way of development proposed by the CEPAL and its different subsidiary bodies. But one fact must be stressed: that the DC in Chile (unlike the CEPAL) is a political party which exercises power, and which is therefore in a position to carry out a plan of development of its own. The difficulties which hitherto seem to have been encountered by the Government of President Frei are also of a political nature (his party does not have a majority in parliament), but basically the case of Chile may be a test-case to confirm the viability and efficacy of the ideology of development advocated by the CEPAL, and the suitability of democratic and parliamentary forms of government for achieving a radical transformation in the socio-economic structure of Latin America.

3. These political ideologies begin by analyzing the social situation; they then proceed to a diagnosis and propose a remedy; lastly they work out a strategy to carry it into effect. It is probably in this last phase that the ideologies acquire their differentiating nuances, which explains the proliferation of different trends, currents and ideological groups throughout the Continent. Broadly speaking, however, the ideologies of social change in Latin America can be divided into two large groups: on one hand the ideologies of development, whose general characteristics I have just described; and on the other hand the revolutionary ideologies which are more or less related to Marxist philosophy. Then it would be impossible here to try to examine all the different aspects of Marxism in Latin America, and even more difficult to enumerate all the different revolutionary concepts ranging from the most extreme forms of opposition (such as the guerrillas) to the practice of co-existence (e.g. the Soviet Communist Parties). I will confine myself to pointing out what I consider to be the particular contribution of Marxism to the ideological dynamic of Latin America.

In my view, Marxism affects two sectors of our problem. Firstly, the Marxist analysis has enabled us to understand the ultimate nature of the capitalist economic system and its relation to the under-development of Latin America. In accordance with a widespread theory, the economic and social backwardness of the

Continent is often explained by the expression "structural dualism". This theory supports the co-existence of two régimes or two simultaneous societies in our countries: an agrarian society of the feudal type, and a semi-industrial urban society organised on the pattern of modern capitalist society. The most penetrating recent studies of our economic development have shown that in Latin America there has never existed a régime which could be called "feudal", even metaphorically. Ever since the time of the conquest, the typical pattern on which the Continent has been economically exploited has been capitalistic; similarly the progressive deterioration of our sources of materials and our economic dependence on goods imported from overseas is the outcome of the kind of interchange created by the relation of colonies to their metropolis. This misinterpretation (the theory of structural dualism) can be corrected thanks to the application of the Marxist method. But the utility of the analysis is not merely historical; Marxism has also enabled us to understand the present manifestations of the capitalist economic phenomenon, and its inevitable derivation towards new forms of imperialist relationship (colony - metropolis) like the present relationship between the USA and Latin America.

The second contribution of Marxist analysis is directly related to the concept of social justice. In this case, Marxism has enabled us to understand the injustice inherent in the class-system of traditional, Latin-American society. On this point I think Marxism must be considered very seriously by Christians, or by any other group which is seeking social justice as one of its most important objectives. It is difficult to conceive this justice without a levelling-out of the social classes based on the fair re-distribution of wealth, equal opportunities, equal rights and equal privileges for all. In this sense the classless society postulated by Marxist ideology cannot be regarded as a mere Utopia. It constitutes an aspiration and a possible objective, and every form of political action in Latin America which takes seriously the biblical concept of social justice must recognise that Marxism has provided the scientific instrument for implementing the analysis of the economic and social stratification in contemporary society.

#### IV. Appendix on the attitude of Christians to the ideological struggle

Amid this ideological panorama the Christians in Latin America have generally assumed two basic attitudes. Of course, this is an over-simplification of the problem, and there exist many nuances between the two attitudes which I shall endeavour to describe.

1. The first attitude is a sort of retreat or defence by Christians of what is claimed to be a rigid and orthodox concept of the faith, and its implications for the social problem, political participation, the economic systems, etc. Although this attitude may give rise to different answers, they nearly all spring from the same attitude. It consists in assuming that the Christian faith already possesses an answer to the social, political and economic problems, and therefore everyone who calls himself Christian should express himself in the same way on social, political and economic questions. It is claimed that Christianity establishes a certain economic or political system, or at least (and this is only a more intelligent way of affirming the same thing) a scale of values inherent in a certain

system. In this way Christianity appears on an equal footing in face of the political ideologies, being identified with a system which is supposed to correspond to Christian values and principles, and being strongly opposed to those who defy those principles. This may be called the "ideological behaviour" of Christianity, i.e. the Christian faith reduced to the level of one more ideology.

2. The second attitude may be described (for want of a better expression) as a "demarcation" between the personal and communal meaning of the Christian faith and the historical elements and institutions which Christianity implies. This demarcation requires two procedures: firstly, the theological reflection which permits us to distinguish between essentials and accidentals in our contemporary interpretation of the Gospel, the Christian tradition and the mission and nature of the Church. Secondly, a sociological procedure in order to discern in the empirical and institutional existence of the Christian community, the factors inherent in a certain social structure with which the Church identified itself at a certain period of history, but which are not essential from the biblical point of view nor as expressions of our obedience to Jesus Christ. My own conviction is, that in carrying out this demarcation the Christian finds himself able to face his political and social responsibility within the compass of the truth and the complete freedom of which Jesus Christ himself spoke. So that merely by arriving at this point one avoids the risk of identifying the Christian faith with a definite ideological content, and the Christian is free to choose freely the system of ideas which is in accordance with his own historical and social situation, and with his grade of political responsibility, thus enabling him to act with greater loyalty to the biblical concept of social justice.

It is unnecessary to stress the fact that this action within the ideological and political systems is always a "relative", "approximate" and "imperfect" action. The realisation of this fact is probably the great contribution which the Christian can make to the political struggle, because by accepting in advance this limitation and inadequacy of all ideologies, he avoids the risks of dogmatism, infallibility and "Messianism" in the political struggle. This is only another way of saying that his ultimate loyalty and obedience is always to Jesus Christ, who has told us that his Kingdom is not of this world.