

middle class—eager young technocrats from the business world, young “progressives” of the military, or intellectuals with a sense of destiny—who would like to climb over the masses to power in the name of “nationalism.” Then there will be other Cubas, and all accompanying dependence on Moscow, the expropriations, the cries “*paredón*” (“to the wall”) will be only symptoms of the real danger that follows from the “elitism” of intellectuals and professionals. Structures will not be changed, but only the personnel in the privileged groups and the social level of the privileged class—as happened to a certain extent under Vargas and Perón and—repeat—Castro.

And so those who are convinced of the need for social change in Latin America, whatever their ideology or religious faith or social group, must start by going to the people, by waking them up and—in the process—immunizing them against exploitation by negative nationalists, by enabling them to do what will be for the good of the whole country, i.e., letting all share in power and wealth, thus creating a nation.

To sum up, Latin America has too few genuine “nationalists,” but a superfluity of “country-ists”—protagonists, that is, of a social system that keeps countries as only countries and will not let them become nations. Latin America needs genuine “nationalists”—builders of real nations.

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# Social Justice and Revolution

by Juan Luis Segundo

How are we in Latin America to interpret the social documents of the Catholic hierarchy? Do we find a normative image of society in them that is valid and appropriate for Latin America?

Before answering these questions, I must stress that it takes a very imaginative effort to apply the Church's social thought *here and now*—in 1968 and in the conditions of Latin America. To see it in contemporary perspective, let us take a brief look at its development.

The history of Catholic social thought falls into three major periods.

1. The Gospels offer no theory of society or techniques for modifying it. “Woe to the rich,” Christ said on many occasions and in different ways—and He explained why. But from His words it is quite impossible to construct an economic or political system. He gave, rather, a few broad guidelines, rejecting profit as the driving force behind man's activity and his interpersonal dealings.

But by terming Christ's social teachings “broad guidelines,” I do not mean He gave us only a vague, empty, fluid attitude. Invoking those guidelines, the Advent Pastoral of Msgr. Carlos Parteli, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Montevideo, concludes that it is a Christian duty to repudiate a capitalism that makes profit its essential or ultimate motivation.

The gospel commandment to love all men, even the humblest, to seek first justice, before all else, and universal brotherhood—all these elements of Jesus' message, if we build around them an interior, cohesive spiritual life, will lead us to very concrete attitudes and decisions as we deal each day with persons, ideas and particular situations.



This becomes patently clear if we remember how Church and society confronted each other under the Greco-Roman Empire. The Church Fathers—that is, the official Church of those days—thundered that the prevailing structure of property was at loggerheads with the spirit of Christianity. St. Ambrose wrote: “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor. You are handing over to them what is theirs. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.” St. Basil said the same thing: “That's how the rich are: they make themselves masters of the common goods that they claim now because they were the first to seize them.” St. Clement of Rome had said, earlier: “All things in the world should be for the common use of men; but one man calls this thing his, another calls another thing his—and thus began the divisions among mortals.”

We, with our modern mentality, are liable to evaluate the Fathers' counsels in terms of their *political* efficiency. But it would be a gross anachronism to judge them on that basis, because such statements about ownership and use of property, uttered under the economic conditions of the Empire, could only be *moral*. They had no political applicability, even though to us today they may seem usable—and indeed sometimes are used—in electioneering and in the education (*concientización*) of the awakening masses. To read them politically would be an oversimplification, too—for a reason whose bearing on the

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Church's social teaching we shall see more and more clearly as we advance: Christianity had become the state religion of the Roman Empire.

This change led to a mutual utilization: the Church used the civil institutions of the State to make Christianity available to the masses of the Empire; and the State used the Church in order (among other purposes) to instill into the masses a morality to help them fulfill their civic duties.

So it was that when bishops ventured to criticize the economic structures of the Empire in the name of Christianity and its natural dynamism, their criticism was looked on, in the context of the existing Church-State relations, as no more than a sort of nonconformism, which was tolerated precisely because of its harmlessness (at least at short range) on the political level. We might compare their criticism to the anti-Vietnam protests on U.S. university campuses.

So true was it that the Church expressed a *moral*, not a *political*, doctrine that when political agencies collapsed in the high Middle Ages, and the Church found itself in charge of civil order, it did not seize the occasion to establish a better economic and political order, in which everything would really be at everyone's disposal.

In the centuries when the Church enjoyed its greatest influence, the social order of the West continued to be shaped by factors distinct from the Church, and was only superficially modified by the moral imperative contained in the gospel warning: "Remember that you are not owners, but only stewards, of goods that really belong to everyone."

Why did the Church not establish a more equitable order? As even Marxists would admit, the most elementary analysis will show that whatever the Church's intentions may have been, the minimum objective conditions for establishing such a new order simply did not exist. The Christian aversion to treating poor men and rich differently never came to be more than an "inspiration"—there were no politico-economic means to put it into practice.

By coincidence, at the very moment when news of the death of Che Guevara had caused a severe loss of morale among guerrilla fighters throughout Latin America last October, the Latin American hierarchy was issuing another round of condemnations of capitalism. In various parts of the continent, bishops have published frank statements condemning not only this or that abuse, this or that form of institutionalized violence against men's basic rights, but the whole capitalistic system.

As I read the mood of the moment, the millions who suffer injustice in Latin America are becoming more and more desperate as they see the guerrillas—who, after all, were championing those same millions—being crushed by the defenders of the status quo. It was only logical, then, that the Latin American Church, whose duty it is to watch the signs of the times, should finally have been roused to action.

Seven years had passed since Pope John pointed out, in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, that the social problem of today is to be found not in the relations between employers and employees, but in those between rich and poor nations. It was disconcerting that so many otherwise perceptive Latin American bishops reacted to the encyclical by excoriating those immediately responsible for the misery of

millions of poor people—but were strangely silent about the real cause of that misery: the industrialized countries and the international capitalistic market. Thus it was that, for many of us Latin Americans, the "Message to the People of the Third World" (*Catholic Mind*, January, 1968), issued by 15 bishops of that world, and the Advent Pastoral of the Coadjutor Archbishop of Montevideo, Msgr. Carlos Parteli, came as a breath of fresh air. Both documents insisted on the need for something better than capitalism.

The new tone in the statements of Church spokesmen has evoked fresh interest in the Church and curiosity about its internal evolution among people who before had always been cool, if not mistrustful, toward it. For example, despite its long-standing critical attitude toward the Church, one of Latin America's weeklies with the most sophisticated editorial page, *Marcha*, of Montevideo, recently decided to outline the Church's social posture in three special issues in successive months. The first issue contained a selection of important social documents since *Mater et Magistra*, along with the Advent Pastoral of Msgr. Parteli. As an epilogue to those documents, it added the accompanying article of mine. I have restructured it somewhat for the readers of AMERICA. J.I.S.

Let me repeat that this was a moral pressure. It was not an economic, political or social system.

But if this moral inspiration did not—could not, in fact—lead toward a new economic order different from that of private property, did it contribute anything positive to human society? Perhaps it brought advantages, after all. Even if that gospel orientation, handed down through one generation after another, never came to be more than a

nonconformism, a sort of dissent, perhaps its impact produced a sensitivity, at least, that enabled the West to become the cradle of other possibilities—of a system of social living not based on profit. This may have been the course of events, even though those other creative ideas had to be born outside all apparent relationship to Christianity, precisely because they too were nonconformist.

2. A second period of history coincides with the appearance of theoretical

socialism—that is, of a socialism not yet incarnated in a stable political regime. Broadly speaking, we can say this period extended from the beginning of capitalism to the Russian revolution. It also saw, in Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the first formulation of the Church's official doctrine on the social question.

If we compare the content of this papal document and that of the *Communist Manifesto*, we find in both the same strong condemnation of the inhuman aspects of capitalism. But if we compare the results of the two statements, we discover a striking difference. From Marx's *Manifesto* there followed a profound change in Western society; from Leo's encyclical, no radical change at all.

But the comparison can mislead us if we make it on the supposition that we must commit ourselves to one or the other document. For that supposition is not true. Whether we agree with Marx or not, he was a creative genius in the area of politics. He created the image of a society not based on profit. When I speak of an image here, I do not mean merely some ideal, but rather an ideal plus the necessary socio-economic conditions. And Marx's image of the new society was viable, with or without the subsequent modifications it underwent.

In the encyclical, on the other hand, there was nothing more than what the gospel, applied to conditions of the late 19th century, had to say in condemnation of the alienation and exploitation of man. The Pope offered no workable alternative. As always, he merely asked people to make use of the practical alternatives they might find about them or devise new alternatives of their own: transformation, revolution, etc.

*Rerum Novarum*, then, despite its nonconformism, went no farther than motivating its readers to seek solutions within the capitalistic system. And this was only logical. Why so?

As I see it, there are two reasons why, in those early years, the Church's

official doctrine never looked in an objective, detached way at the concrete possibilities of socialism and capitalism. The first is the one most frequently given, and also the more superficial: theoretical socialism was from the beginning (just as incarnated socialism would be later) not only a-religious but explicitly anti-religious. But there was a more fundamental reason: capitalism was in existence, and socialism was not. In 1892 socialism was only a theory.

The real world in which Christian inspiration moved and lived was solidly one: it was a world of industrial capitalism. The Church's social teaching was not an ideology; it was a moral force—a nonconformist one perhaps, but only a moral one—over against the existing fact of capitalism. What *Rerum Novarum* set out to teach was how to live more morally in the given economic world, that is to say, in a world of capital. So it is that even today, more than 75 years later, we still see Catholics heatedly debating on our TV screens the question: Does the Church condemn capitalism?

At the same time, socialism, as Leo XIII summed it up, had the naked simplicity of anything theoretical—and could be rebutted with a similar simplicity: "The remedy they offer openly clashes with justice, because to possess things as one's own, to the exclusion of all others, is a right that nature grants to every man."

Formulating and refuting socialism in that fashion, with none of the corrections or shadings that a truly creative imagination and intelligence might have conferred on a still unrealized idea, the Church's social doctrine broke with the capitalistic way of life only to the extent of trying to avoid its defects. It never dreamed of replacing it with something else.

To conclude, then, there existed, at the moment we are talking of, an interdependence of Church and capitalistic Western world—for the simple reason that no other world actually existed.

Indeed, thanks to a growing secularization, the Church was able to stand up to the world in an attitude of dissent or nonconformism. But that moral (not political) nonconformism was quite

unable to judge the relative merits of the theory and the reality.

3. The third period, spanning the past 50 years, saw the beginning of a qualitative change, as the world was increasingly polarized into two opposing camps, capitalist and socialist.

I say the "beginning" of such a change because in the 117 years between the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), on the one hand, and, let us say, Che Guevara's *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (1965), on the other, there was a final 50-year period during which millions of individuals had the experience of a different way of life. They lived it with trial and error, with hatred and great idealism, with propaganda and sincerity, advancing sometimes and then retreating.

The first admission that the end of the age when the Christian inspiration faced no more than a single option (capitalism) was already here came from Pope John. He wrote in *Pacem in Terris* (§159): "Neither can false philosophical teaching regarding the nature, origin and destiny of the universe and of man be identified with the historical movements that have economic, social, cultural or political ends, not even when these movements have originated from those teachings and have drawn and still draw inspiration therefrom."

But the Holy Father's conclusion has by no means been accepted by all members of the Church. Almost at the moment when Pope John was writing those words, Catholics in Uruguay were being reminded of what Leo XIII had said of *theoretical* socialism. And if what I was told is true, an important Latin American cleric made the following significant comment on Msgr. Partelli's Advent Pastoral: "It ought to have quoted Pope Leo on these problems." Many are trying, in other words, to ignore what might be a most appropriate matter for Christians to study: the living reality of socialism and its possible ability to transform our semi-feudal societies. Instead, they go on comparing an existing capitalism and a merely abstract blueprint of socialism.

All this adds up to a single conclusion: despite the anti-religious venom socialism has displayed and its constant denial of religious freedom, the Church must objectively and neutrally examine what possibilities this existing socialism, as lived by men today, holds for the Christian way of life.

Because of our peculiar social conditions, it may be that we Latin Americans are obligated more than anyone else to see if certain facets of socialism are not, after all, compatible with Catholic social teachings. I would mention first of all, paradoxical as it may be, man's right to ownership of the means of production.

For long years a discussion raged about whether the natural right to private property applied only to consumer goods, or whether it took in the means of production, too. If it applied only to consumer goods, then no one could protest that a socialistic regime infringed the citizens' natural right to ownership of property; all would simply be employees of the state.

But along came Pope John, asserting that private ownership of the means of production too is a natural right. Do Catholics, then, have to be opposed to socialism? Only apparently. If they reflect further, Catholics will come to three conclusions:

1. One's natural right to a thing is not satisfied when somebody, anybody, possesses it. The basis of the right is the fact the thing is indispensable for the realization of one's human condition. In the sense in which we mean it, therefore, the right to ownership of a thing is not the right that a few individuals have to it, but the right of all to own it, in order to be fully human.

When ownership of property is widespread, these principles are not often invoked. But they become extremely relevant and important when practically nobody owns anything. In Argentina, which is probably the country with the widest distribution of ownership in all Latin America, 1 per cent of the landowners hold 50 per cent of the arable land. What, in those circumstances, can be the meaning—the hard, practical meaning—of one's "natural right to ownership of the means of production"?

Is that 1 per cent justified in continuing to hold half the land? Or do all who work in agriculture have the right to own a piece of land from which they can live humanly?

Once we establish that ownership of some means of production (i.e., means of livelihood) is normally an essential condition for living a really human life, does it make sense, in Chile, which also is one of the most developed countries of our continent, to talk about a "natural right to the means of production" when, according to a census taken shortly before President Frei's election there in 1964, some 90 per cent of the people received only 10 per cent of the national income?

2. Everyone knows, of course, that the means of production in a modern society cannot be divided indefinitely. The *minifundio* is just as disastrous as the *latifundio*. And business enterprises are forced to merge in order to survive, not only in capitalistic nations but in socialist ones, too.

Now, since it is unthinkable—and especially in developing countries—that each citizen should have his own railroad, or factory, or even his own farm, what did Pope John mean when he talked of the natural right to ownership of certain means of production?

Either he made no sense at all or the word "private" doesn't mean "with an exclusive title to dispose, in an arbitrary way, of things that were made for the needs of all." Men must join in associations if they are to own viable means of production.

All we need do is look at the papal encyclicals, particularly the recent ones, and at Vatican II's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, to see that the root meaning of "private" here is not "with a title to withdraw something from society's needs," but rather "with a title to apply to the thing possessed one's creative responsibility."

Now let us turn back to our Latin American reality, looking at it from this new perspective, and ask ourselves just what a man means when he says something is *his own*. Who feels closer to

what he possesses: the owner of a share of stock in an industry that has thousands of shareholders, who can sell it and five minutes later buy a share of stock in a rival company, or the person in charge of one of that company's shops, or offices, or branches?

Let us direct such a question to 90 per cent of the population of any Latin American country and let them tell us what, in terms of the papal documents, they need in order to feel they are fully human.

The reply would be a clamor for socialism—but a more sophisticated socialism than what most Westerners, with their conditioned prejudices, think of when they use the term. It would be a socialism in which ownership is exercised, as much as possible, in true communities—something very different from a useless statism. Any Latin American will admit that everything is not really at the service of everyone unless all can somehow have responsibility for it, thus making it *their own*.

3. In connection with what I have just written, it is interesting to note that for a long time there has been in Catholic social doctrine an emphasis whose real thrust has largely passed unnoticed in the developed countries. It is expressed in the following excerpt from Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*: "Certain forms of property must be reserved to the state, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large" (§114).

But this, precisely, is true of the Latin American countries. Proof of the assertion is the fact that 50 per cent of the land belongs to 1 per cent of the people. The development of these countries is tragically slowed down because most of the wealth is not available for all, but is expatriated—or re-exported—to foreign banks.

Social teaching urges the state to exercise a control over these funds and make them serve the common good. By buying them up at market value? Obviously not, for if the state were rich enough to do that, it would have enormous funds to invest directly.

In other words, if we read these repeated directives attentively and boldly, in the context of Latin America's underdevelopment, we are compelled once again to recommend forms of socialism that international policy—primarily that of the United States—will inevitably interpret, and take reprisals against, as Communist and as hostile to U. S. interests, equating them with Soviet communism. None the less, they are in keeping with good Catholic doctrine, actually or potentially.

I would like to conclude by proposing five frank questions that we Latin Americans often discuss among ourselves and that some day, in an honest dialogue, we must discuss with our North American brothers. Perhaps some will see no connection between them and what has just been written. Yet there is a connection.

1. Why does U. S. public opinion fall into the mistake of looking on every tendency toward socialism in Latin America as a *rapprochement* to Marxist communism and to the Soviet bloc?

2. Why are the friends and allies that U. S. policy seeks in Latin America consistently those persons and groups most hostile to the very ideals that are the proudest accomplishment of the United States?

3. Why do U. S. public opinion and U. S. policy drive every revolutionary attempt in Latin America toward enmity with the United States?

4. Do the American people really believe that the injustice against which antitrust laws have been enacted in the United States is any less a threat to world peace—and ultimately to the United States itself—when it occurs in Latin America?

5. Finally, why does the U. S. electorate let the policy of Washington toward Latin American countries be dictated by the only group that is interested in big profits and a big military machine in Latin America?

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# The Church and Conscientização

by Henrique C. de Lima Vaz

Few words have become so popular among Brazilian reformers and revolutionaries as that very Latin, quite untranslatable one, *conscientização*. (Roughly, it means "making people aware politically and socially.") The term has now passed beyond the frontiers of Brazil and is used all over the world, though in the process it has lost a bit of its original freshness and precision. Its continued popularity in Brazil is good proof, for any who doubt it, that this country is in a "pre-revolutionary" stage.

What was the original meaning of the word *conscientização*? What is the proper, most effective direction of the process it represents? In what significant forms has this process been tried out successfully? Again, since many organizations associated with the Church have made the word their war cry, what is the connection between *conscientização* and the Church's evangelizing work? Is this a proper task for the Church?

These are the questions I would like to treat briefly for North American readers. I hope my explanation will interpret for them one of the key aspects of what is going on in Latin America.

Initially, *conscientização* was something strictly pedagogical, a technique used in Brazil's unique basic education program. It meant a "first step in the revolutionary effort, the effort to liberate the Brazilian man." Once one decides to give a community of persons a certain amount of new knowledge and stimulate its members to break the bonds of their subhuman or marginal life, he is obviously going to seriously

change the awareness that that community has of itself. The new self-awareness will be a more dynamic one. The people's hopes will be higher; they will take a fresh and critical look at situations that heretofore they had viewed with limp fatalism.

But to bring about such a self-awareness, a particular kind of basic education is required, one that questions the community's global situation, its style of life, its attitude toward the challenges it must face—in a word, its *consciencia* (awareness). That explains why *conscientização* very soon became a burning topic of discussion among militants working in the nation-wide campaign, the Basic Education Movement (MEB), jointly undertaken in the early 1960's by the Brazilian Bishops Conference and the government. As the discussion went on, the serious implications of the topic became clearer. In fact, they determined the evolution of MEB and in the long run brought on the crisis that obliged it, under government pressure, to water down its program into a traditional sort of basic education with none of the explosive, revolutionary character of *conscientização*.

The whole thrust of MEB's now famous primer, *Viver E Lutar* (To Live Is to Struggle), confiscated in late 1963 by the police of the Governor of Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda, was toward *conscientização*. It not only taught reading and writing but aimed at changing people's outlook, their way of life and the community's collective attitude and even behavior. Few were surprised when