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SOCIETY AND CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

SOCIETY AND CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA: AN OVERVIEW

During the last few years Latin America has experienced

... the evolution of a new social and political reality

... the Church's response to these changes

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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SOCIETY AND CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

During the last few years Latin America has frequently made the headlines of newspapers all over the world: guerilla warfare, demonstrations, occupations and sporadic shooting have occurred in one country after another. So much so that one may well say that the Latin American nations, quite apart from being linked by a common language and a common culture, are today living another kind of solidarity: the solidarity of peoples afflicted by the same problems, who find themselves face to face with one and the same enemy. It would be premature to try to define the enemy in this introduction. We shall leave this task to the Latin Americans themselves.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

What has been the reaction of the Catholic Church to the present Latin American situation? A global answer to this question would go well beyond the limits of space set us by these pages. We have preferred to choose three countries, the Argentine, Chile and Bolivia, which seem to us to be representative of the different forms in which the various problems present themselves. Three types of society, different degrees of development, different levels of public sensitivity, and three Churches that are correspondingly different as regards their

dependence on state power, as regards the degree to which they compromised with the capitalist oligarchy.

As our starting point we have taken the second Latin American Episcopal Conference which took place at Medellin in September 1968. The collection of documents we are presenting below could equally well be entitled "Repercussion and Continuation of Medellin in Latin America".

In reproducing these texts we are trying to present and illustrate a certain dialectic that exists in each country: between the documents issued by the hierarchy and those of the unofficial groups, in fact, there is a difference in intensity, a kind of pendulum movement that reaches its leftmost points (if, in the absence of a better term, they may be so described) in the spontaneous documents, while the official documents of the hierarchy tend to define its rightmost limits.

Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that the pendulum is undoubtedly tending to oscillate more and more to the left or, in other words, to shorten its swing on the right.

I. ARGENTINE

The demonstrations of May 1969 at Chaco, Rosario, Corrientes, Cordoba and other provinces of the Argentine Republic have acted as the catalyst of an opening of the Argentine Church in the face of the social problems of the country. The traditional alliance

of the Argentine Church with the government of the moment began to show the first rifts after Medellin, this being due to the principles laid down by the Conference; the widening of the break was later favoured by the removal of Huberto Mozzoni, the Apostolic Nuncio, which gave greater liberty of action to the more open bishops. The spontaneous Catholic groups have found themselves side by side with the demonstrators right from the start of the Argentine May and, similarly from the first moment, some of the bishops have not hesitated in expressing severe criticisms of the government, calling for a radical change in attitude and an effective solution of the country's social problems. The results obtained (radical modifications in the field of education, change of government, announcement of new labour agreements in September) have not gone far enough to touch the basic problems. The government of the country is now in the hands of a group that the Argentinians define as "Social-Christian"; it has a slight left wing tendency.

DECLARATION OF THE ARGENTINE EPISCOPATE ON THE
ADAPTATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE SECOND GENERAL
CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPATE
(MEDELLIN, 21ST-26TH APRIL 1969) TO THE PRESENT REALITY
OF THE ARGENTINE.

We note that a long historical process, which is still continuing, has led to the creation of unjust structures in

our country. Liberation must therefore be achieved in all the sectors in which there is oppression: this applies to the juridical, political, cultural, economic and social field.

We want to point out that there exist conditioning factors that sharpen the injustice:

- a) The morally erroneous conception of the overall economy and the individual undertaking that sees the profit motive as their sole and predominant *raison d'être*.
- b) The subordination of the social to the economic, which is imposed by foreign forces, by internal oppressive groups and sectors, and which manifests itself in regional unbalance, in internal migrations and in rationalizations that cause unemployment and insecurity.

The process of liberation must always be based on the fecund contribution of the authentic values and the healthy traditions that have their roots in the principle of our nationhood and which reflect the genuine spirit of our people.

It is therefore essential that there should come into being a national community that will reflect an organization "in which the whole of the population - but most particularly the popular classes - may exercise, through territorial and functional structures, a receptive and active, creative and decisive participation in the construction of a new society" (1).

It is the particular task of the Church to educate the consciences so that all citizens may live their own dignity as persons and as children of God and that, recognizing the oppressions from which they suffer, they may assume their personal responsibilities and engage themselves in the effort to attain their complete liberation.

We shall work to overcome the resistances to change that are motivated by ignorance, by indifference or by selfish interests:

- a) With our constantly re-elaborated teaching aimed at illuminating the events, the facts and the attitudes that burden our social life.
- b) By bearing authentic witness through "gestures that represent the genuine signs and the real image of a Church renewing itself in service to the world" (2).
- c) By the active exercise of engaged solidarity in the integral development of man.
- d) By contributing a serene clarification and a firm denunciation of the situations of injustice.

We re-affirm the right of the people to create its own basic organizations. These, quite apart from their own activities, will have to contribute to the revitalization and the strengthening of the national organization. This will

make it possible to ensure the integration of all the citizens in provincial, regional and national life. In this way the people and the sectors in which they carry out their activities will be the true protagonists of their integral development, legitimately defending their rights and their claims.

We insist on the re-establishment of institutionalized channels of authentic participation, so that the whole of the people may make its voice heard through them and take an active part in making the decisions that affect the community.

We exhort all those who seek to divide the working class sector and its professional organizations and to exclude them from the levels of economic, social, political and cultural decision to discontinue their attempts in this direction. On the other hand, it is our duty to point out that all the workers, but particularly their leaders, both for their own good and that of the entire national community, must make every effort to achieve a unity that will ensure the practical realization both of their legitimate rights and their duties, and we therefore encourage all those who endeavour to attain this unity.

We appeal to the employers and their organizations to overcome all selfishness, all differences and divisions, and to become the promoters of an effective action aiming at a harmonious and liberating development that will at the same

time ensure the creation and the continuity of sources of work.

.....

Faced by growing manifestations of violence of various origin, we appeal to parents, to educational institutions, to the press and the other means of social communication, as well as to the competent authorities, to reflect seriously about their own responsibilities in connection with the manifestations of juvenile delinquency. While we encourage all efforts that strive to attain the much desired transformation, we much stress the need for not erring in the manner of bringing it about and point out that the relatively frequent attempts that are being made at destroying assets constitute an unjust price and a serious obstacle as regards the attainment of a greater consensus on the tasks of social change.

Our vocation of peace goes beyond the frontiers of our country, in a spirit of service and cooperation it extends to our neighbour countries, our brother countries; and further still, it extends to all the Latin American countries who, by virtue of their bonds of land, language and tradition, by virtue of their common religious, ethical and cultural values, constitute a common "greater mother country" for all our independent and sovereign nations.

(Published by the General Secretariat of the Argentine Episcopate, Ed. Paulinas, Buenos Aires, 1969)

DECLARATION ISSUED BY THE "GROUP OF PRIESTS FOR
THE THIRD WORLD", 1ST - 3RD MARCH 1969.

In response to the appeal made by our bishops assembled at Medellin in front of millions of our brothers whose suffering today renews for us the condition of abandonment of our Lord at the moment of His birth, we DENOUNCE the following facts:

- The starvation which every year destroys forty million human lives in the world, in Latin America and also in our own country (particularly in the inland regions: Santiago dell' Estero, Formosa, Corrientes, Tucuman, Chaco and the region to the north of Santa Fé) is nearly always the consequence of the egoism of a minority that strives to justify, maintain and defend the capitalist social structure based on profit, competition and the private ownership of the means of production.
- The illiteracy that leads to the ignorance and alienation of thousands of millions of men throughout the world and weighs down more than half the Latin American population, an instrument utilized by a minority of the powerful to prevent the mass of the exploited from becoming conscious of their possibilities of action and their strength in combat.
- In the Argentine, too, there are more than two million illiterates; in view of the non-compliance with compulsory education, frequently justified by poverty, the average level of

education does not exceed the third class of elementary school.

- The endemic diseases, which regularly devastate entire regions of the world and of Latin America, are a "logical" consequence of a social system founded on privilege that prevents any form of serious planning, an essential prerequisite particularly in the field of public health. In the Argentine, it is true, the federal capital counts one doctor for every 217 persons; but at Formosa, Misiones and Santiago dell'Estero, for example, there is only one doctor for every 3000 people and this means that it is quite impossible to obtain adequate medical assistance.

- The enormous problem of housing, which particularly in our continent leads to promiscuity, to despair, to illness in millions of families, is not a technically insoluble problem, but rather the natural result of a social, political and economic organization that wastes enormous energies in superfluous expenditures because it takes no account of the real needs of the people. In the Argentine, too, hundreds of thousands of people live in the "cities of misery"; in the federal capital it is nevertheless possible to obtain loans for luxury constructions and more than 40,000 apartments are unoccupied.

- The armaments race, which is constantly fed with the

blood of the innocent people and continuously keeps in being the spectre of a possible war of total extermination, also bleeds the weak economies of the underdeveloped people with the principal aim of maintaining an "industry" that only goes to the benefit of a minority. When this race is a conscious one it deserves to be defined as "criminal".

- The discrimination, which must not be considered as merely a problem between whites and negroes, but rather as everything that places men into the margins of a society (to which they belong by natural right) on account of social prejudices, economic interests and a class mentality.

- The "International money imperialism" that mercilessly loots the underdeveloped countries, buying their natural sources of wealth at absurdly low and ever diminishing prices and selling them manufactured products at an ever increasing price.

This is the same imperialism that mocks the poor nations with "loans" and "alliances" that are nothing other than a more elegant manner of continuing the looting and the oppression.

- The national capitalism which, for the purpose of continuing to defend wretched personal or group interests, does not hesitate for a moment to promote the shameful sale of our natural wealth to the great foreign monopolies. We are all

aware of the recent sales of banks and factories.

- The unjust distribution of the land which prevents any authentic progress in Latin America and is the cause of the often brutal exploitation from which our rural workers and their families are suffering. 50% of the cultivable land in our country often remains uncultivated; it belongs to 1% of the proprietors.

- The unemployment which at the present time envelops in misery an immense mass of families in our country, and which has been converted into an instrument in the hands of the owners that enables them to avoid compliance with even the most elementary requirements of social legislation and to turn it into an abject mockery.

- The present social policy of the Argentine government which, with its freezing of wages (while the cost of living has increased by 43%), with its arbitrary interventions in the organizations of the workers, with its inhuman and often absurd "restructurizations", is contributing to a continuous worsening of the economic situation of our people.

All the evils that we denounce are the logical consequence of a society structured on a wrong basis. They constitute an impediment to the coming into being of the "new man" to which we Christians must aspire.

(Cuadernos de Marcha, 24th April 1969, Montevideo)

TOWARDS A JUSTER SOCIETY". DECLARATION ISSUED BY
GROUP OF PRIESTS AND TRADE UNION AND STUDENT
ORGANIZATIONS OF NORTH-EASTERN ARGENTINE, MAY 1969.

Our political reality is readily inserted in that of the great sectors of the Third World (in which we include the whole of Latin America). It is a policy of submission to "money imperialism", to use the words of Pius XI., and of privileges for the great land-owners and the shareholders of the banks and limited companies who speculate with the products of the people's labour in the stock exchange markets, mercilessly exploit cheap labour and act as monopolistic middle men in national and international commerce.

You know that the juridical legislation of the whole system of exploitation is anything other than casual. You know that our system is what it is because the "traditional" political parties participate in the electoral processes only to the extent to which they adapt their conduct to the canons of liberal capitalism. And when the majority groups might be capable of establishing a regime running counter to these interests, legal proscription constitutes the way out and is invariably proposed for the defence of democracy.

In this way the existing laws serve only the interests of a minority that pockets 60% of the national income without the least toil.

The sterility of the constitutional governments that exclude the people, deny them their inalienable rights and submit to the international capitalisms who show them the policies to follow in economic matters, leads to social chaos and ideological proscription as a logical consequence. You know the process that is taking place in our country. This road leads to the utter uselessness of political parties: their loss of prestige and their deterioration reacts directly on democracy itself. The lack of real power and the non-representative nature of the political parties are used to justify the extreme remedy of the liberal capitalist system: the 'coups d'etat' that are presented under the name of revolution and whose real objective is invariably that of safeguarding the interests of the privileged social classes.

The political parties and the 'coups d'etat' are the two sides of the same coin. Neither the one nor the other expresses or interprets the popular masses, and neither takes any account of their real needs or their rights.

You know the results of all this in our own province: there are a few rich bosses, an unstable and uncertain middle class that is almost always ready to come to terms, and a very numerous class of workers and peasants whose only hope is in the gifts of the rich and in the charitable institutions, institutions that silence and deceive the

conscience of those who give and dishearten and humiliate those who receive, with the only certainty of an ever growing and more inhuman poverty.

(Stencilled document)

ALLOCUTION OF MONSIGNOR ALBERTO DEVOTO, BISHOP OF GOYA (CORRIENTES), 16TH MAY 1969.

The Assembly of the Latin American bishops - meeting at Medellin last year - has already launched an urgent appeal directed to the groups in power saying that "if they jealously defend their privileges and, above all, if they defend them by themselves employing violent means, they will make themselves responsible before history for provoking the explosive revolution of despair".

What we have to deplore in this particular case is the very fact that the brutal repression has been wholly out of proportion to what seemed to be the fully justified demands of the students...

It is only too natural that all this should provoke the just indignation of all those who have a true social sensitivity, of all those who do not live within the fetters of their wretched egoism.

Nevertheless, I believe that in the face of this event, just as in the face of any other important event, it is

essential to undertake a serene reflection in order to evaluate the causes of the event and to measure its consequences.

Although liberty of expression still has legal existence in our country, it is quite obvious that the right of all citizens to express their own opinion is becoming continually more limited, and this is particularly true when it comes to claiming their just rights.

The recent events at Villa Quinteros, in the Province of Tucuman and in the northern part of Santa Fé show quite clearly that the violence used by the authorities is not just an expression of the confusion or the nervousness that prevails at the present time, but rather a premeditated attitude designed to suffocate by means of violence any attempt that may be made to rally in defence of legitimate rights.

When a people cannot express its aspirations through normal channels, it is quite natural that it should seek other means, other ways of expressing its needs. The students demonstrated in the streets because they had no other means for expressing their disagreement with an unjustifiable increase of university fees. And they had every right to do so.

What nobody had the right to do was to abuse the force of arms for the purpose of cutting short a human life in the

full flush of youth and to inflict grievous wounds upon many others.

Has the people perhaps lost its right to think? Or, perhaps, only those in power can express their opinion in the Argentine? Have the responsible authorities reflected about the consequences of this type of repression? Is an unjust situation perhaps not far more serious than disorder in the streets?

(Cuadernos de Marcha, 27th July 1969, Montevideo, p.44)

DECLARATION MADE BY MONSIGNOR CARLOS MARIA CAFFERRATA,
BISHOP OF SAN LUIS, 22ND MAY 1969.

I sincerely believe that our country stands in need of a type of participation in the conduct of the various activities of national life that is truly effective and from which none of the interested parties should be excluded. If there is to be true peace, it is quite essential that justice be done, that this justice be real and authentic, and that it take the concrete form of the recognition on the part of the state of the rights of the human person, of every human person. The human personality, within the general framework within which it moves, develops and perfects itself, i.e. the various natural communities, must occupy the place that

is due to it and not the place that some people arbitrarily want to assign to it because this seems more orderly and more propitious to a false tranquility in a society that is undergoing a rapid change. The Latin American Episcopate assembled at Medellin, thinking of the common good of our continent, has wisely said "that the national communities must have a global organization. The whole of the population, and particularly the popular classes, must be able to exercise a receptive and active, creative and decisive participation in the construction of society through territorial and functional structures within these organizations. These intermediate structures between the person and the state must be freely organized, without any undue interference by the authorities or the dominant groups, and must aim at the development of the person and its concrete participation in the achievement of the overall common welfare. They constitute the vital backbone of society. They are also the real expression of the freedom and the solidarity of the citizens". These words must cause the various authorities to reflect very seriously in the moments that the nation is living. If these concepts were to be applied at the present time to the organizations of the workers, the universities, the professions and the employers as part of an authentic dialogue, I think that

very different results would be obtained and that the outlook for our country would become much clearer than it is at present.

(Cuadernos de Marcha, Montevideo, 27th July 1969, p. 46)

PASTORAL LETTER WRITTEN BY MONSIGNOR PAUL FRANCISCO

PRIMATESTA, ARCHBISHOP OF CORDOBA, 26TH MAY 1969.

We cannot accept a society in which the interests of individual groups take precedence over the common good, in which certain sectors of the people, because of their pitiful social condition, do not succeed in having full control over their destiny and in which the young people cannot fulfil their mission in the maturation process of the national history.

We are faced by a profound crisis of life and civilization in which there is a clash of opposed conceptions of man. In this situation it is essential to imbue everybody with profound convictions and firm attitudes, so that these may make possible the creation of a new order in which the social structures will be consonant with the true dignity of the person and will express the profound and incoercible aspirations of our people.

Respect for the person and true fraternity among men inexorably require that there be an honest search and a sincere

effort to achieve justice as the irreplaceable foundation of any order in which human beings can peacefully live together.

We do not think that the present situation can be resolved in a climate of violence, whatever the quarter from which this violence may come. We therefore exhort everybody not to lend themselves to the radicalization of violence, and we make this appeal with the same anxiety to those who are in power as we make it to those who have the right to express their own ideas.

We profoundly deplore the outrages against the integrity of persons and the irreparable deaths that bring grief into the families of our country.

We ask that solutions be sought in a clear and loyal dialogue, without prejudices, in full respect of persons and at all levels, so that each and all should be responsible for the effective attainment of the general good and of social peace. It is certainly necessary to seek an improved economic situation, but this must be accessible to all. Today, therefore, the revision of the measures taken would be a proof of genuine Christian sagacity on the part of the leaders.

(Cuadernos de Marcha, Montevideo, 27th July 1969, p. 47)

II. CHILE

The hierarchy of the Chilean Church, together with that of the Church in Brazil, is often considered as one of the most open hierarchies in the whole of Latin America. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say "was considered". The reason for this is not difficult to understand. When the possibility of a Christian democracy arose in Chile, a Christian democracy that might have been able to resolve the country's social and economic problems, the Church immediately placed itself at its side and gave it an almost unqualified support. The Chilean Church thus came to find itself at the head of all the Latin American hierarchies in the search for a "revolution in liberty". Little by little, however, the Chilean Christian Democrats began to demonstrate their inability to resolve the country's problems. The young people's groups were the first to realize this. The situation thus culminated in the occupation of the cathedral at Santiago on the eve of the Pope's voyage to Bogotá, an event that had extensive repercussion both within and without the country. Compared with the texts distributed by the spontaneous movements, all of which maintain a critical and accusing tone, the position of the hierarchy is simply an attempt to defend the ideals of the movement it had supported. The dialectical gulf between the texts issued by the young people's groups (the movement that came into being as a result of the occupation of the cathedral has adopted the name of 'Iglesia Joven',

Young Church) and those of the hierarchy is far more marked in Chile than it is in the Argentine.

MANIFESTO OF THE YOUNG CHURCH. AUGUST 1968

Why are we here?

We are meeting in the cathedral, our home,

- because we are moved by a great affection for our Church
- because we ask that it should become the symbolic hearth of the Christian family
- because we want to become a united family with the workers, the students and the professional men
- because we are driven by the truth of the Gospels and not by sectional interests.

We are asking that the Church should go back to being a Church of the people as it was in the Gospels, living the people's poverty, its simplicity, its struggles.

For this reason we say:

- NO to a Church that is the slave of the structures of social compromise
- YES to a free Church in the service of mankind
- NO to a Church that is compromised with power and wealth
- YES to a Church that runs the risk of poverty by virtue of its faith in Jesus Christ and in man

- NO to a heierarchical scheme imposed on the Christian people
- YES to pastors born from the people, to pastors who seek with the people
- NO to a Church that is afraid of facing up to history
- YES to a courageous Church that commits itself to the struggle for the authentic liberation of the people.

We call for a Church that will keep faith with the Truth of the Gospels.

We DENOUNCE:

- The violence provoked by the rich and the powerful, because "every usurpation of law is a form of violence".
- The exploitation of man by means of the iniquitous profit system
- International money imperialism
- The fraud of a false democracy that is manipulated by a few people
- The subjugation of the people's conscience effected by the monopolies, proprietors of the means of information
- Racial, cultural and economic segregation
- The instrumentalization of education to the benefit of the ruling classes
- The division of the people for the purpose of ensuring that it can be dominated.

In other words, we say:

- NO to the existing DISORDER
- YES to the struggle for a new society that will give dignity to the human person and in which it will be possible to love.

(Mensaje, No. 172, September 1968, p. 431)

MANIFESTO OF THE YOUNG CHURCH GROUP; OCTOBER 1968

The motives that have driven us to occupy the Cathedral are to be found in our anguish and our profound preoccupation in the face of a social reality that oppresses us and suffocates us. There are some people who ask what are the situations that produce this anguish and that have driven us to express ourselves in this form.

They are real situations, situations that can be translated into a single word: INJUSTICE.

We know that Latin America is dominated by a capitalist system characterized by the exploitation of man and all his values. We know that there is a minority that continuously enriches itself at the expense of the people. All of us more or less know the monstrous differences of class, misery on one side and abundance on the other, waste here and need there.

A people that is dying of hunger, that sees its children die at a tender age, a people that has no possibility of having

access to culture and whose habitations are unworthy of human beings. Mass assassinations of peasants carried out by the capitalist right. A people that has no hope of seeing better days for its children. A people that will continue to live in slavery for as long as there is no change in the existing structures.

The Church has the evangelical mandate to put itself at the service of the poor, the exploited and the suffering, but it appears compromised with the system that maintains this injustice.

In a world in which exploitation is an everyday reality, Jesus Christ comes to preach love and service. He condemns those who make use of others for their personal profit, and invites us to become the servants of each other.

The Church frequently adopts the structures of the world. It serves itself of the people for the purpose of affirming itself as an organized and powerful institution. Many times, with the good intention of ensuring that the Gospels will be practiced, the Church enchains the consciousness of the people and arrogates unto itself the right to control the conduct of men. In the face of this we Christians cannot just hope. Paul VI., himself, in his encyclical 'Populorum progressio', says that "time is running out. There are many men who are suffering hunger and poverty. The distance that separates the progress of the ones from the stagnation or even the regression of the

others is becoming greater every day". The evangelical imperative does not permit us to tolerate this state of affairs. For this reason we opt for an open, courageous and resolute struggle to bring the Truth of Christ to the world.

(Mensaje, No. 172, September 1968, p. 429)

DECLARATION OF THE CHILEAN EPISCOPATE, 4TH OCTOBER 1968.

An immense longing of justice is running through the world. We have embarked on a revolutionary process of universal dimensions that is putting all the systems and institutions into a state of crisis, capitalism as much as communism, the lay university as much as the Catholic one. We are moving towards a new historical era founded on the fundamental equality of men, on the active and creative participation of all. In the world there is anxiety for sincerity, for liberty, for spontaneity, for justice and for peace.

We are looking forward with immense hope to the new historical era that is approaching. We are afraid. Is there anybody who is not afraid? But this fear is the price we must pay for opening the road to the future.

But there is one point on which we must undoubtedly express ourselves with absolute clarity. Justice is one thing, Marxism is another. We are not saying that the whole of Marxism is mistaken or that it is something evil. However,

on the basis of the experience of half a century of communism, we do say that Marxist philosophy, in which atheism plays an essential part, Marxist morality and particularly its political morality, as well as the Marxist mentality in general, are incompatible with the Christian faith, with the morality of the Gospels and the political conduct that derives from them.

Confusion does no good at all. We must know how to respect each other, but at the same time we must also know how to distinguish one from the other. The Marxists know that one cannot at one and the same time be a good Marxist and a good Christian. In this respect we are in agreement with them and we want to say it with absolute clarity. We Christians have our own way of doing things, we have a style of our own.

There is undoubtedly a great force in the work of Marx. But there is infinitely more force, more light and more truth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the teaching and the practice of the Church unfolded in twenty centuries.

The Christian is a man of peace and peace is "the work of justice". It is a constant search, a search through living together in order (of. Medellin).

Injustice is a disorder, and disorder is only corrected by means of struggle. "Peace is not given as something ready made, it has to be constructed". But struggle is not violence.

A strong temptation of violence is shaking the whole of Latin America. Violence is presented as the only effective solution, its heroism and its mystique are being exalted, and this is unrealistic. Because at the bottom of this impatient violence there is more hate than love, more passion than reason, a greater desire to see and to destroy the present evil than to construct the future good, and most of the time this good remains confused and far away.

We would like to see "fewer fighters and more workers" in Chile. Let us construct before we destroy, let us reform everything that can be reformed and let us replace whatever cannot be reformed, let us conserve the things that must be conserved; let us do all this under the inspiration of a powerful spirit of creative audacity, without hate, but with clear objectives and a sense of responsibility among the leaders.

We Christians, in any case, have our own specific mission in this process, our own characteristic originality: the love of Christ. Who struggles without love is not a Christian. Let us struggle for justice, but let us struggle with love.

(*Criteria*, 1560 (1968), p. 879)

LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE CHILEAN EPISCOPATE BY A GROUP
OF PRIESTS AND LAYMEN, 30TH MAY 1969.

We have to recognize another fact: the Church, in spite of some valid efforts, does not appear to be linked with the

struggle and the interests of the poor. Vast sectors of the workers, the professional men, the employees and the young people consider the Church to be rich and powerful, a pillar of the bourgeois system. The workers, who could find their defence and their interpreter in the Church, feel her as something far removed from their lives. This is not a case of our being pessimists or wanting to deny the signs that have been given in this sense, we simply have to look at reality such as it is: the Church in Chile does not appear to be united with the people. All of us have to accept an equal share of responsibility for this fact.

We believe that the Church should be the principal spokesman in denouncing the situations of injustice, and this not just as a form of demogogy, but rather in response to the call of the Gospels as newly expressed and concretely applied at Medellin. It is quite inconceivable that we should become inured to the existence of the masses at the margins of the nation that we are witnessing today, and that only those who suffer from this state of affairs should be impatient. The impatience of the Church ought to surpass the impatience of those who have to contend with misery in their lives. There is an immense urgency for action in this sense. We cannot defraud those who have the right to expect an evangelical word from us, and general declarations are quite sufficient: there must be facts

and clear words that refer to concrete situations.

In the same sense we would like to see the Church put an end to its enjoyment of political power and privileged situations, an end to every sign or usage that places its ministers by the side of the civil and military authorities of the country. The Church must be free of the established powers, it must be seen to be so, and it must be committed on the side of the Gospels and the poor. This process of detachment must be rapid and significant, it must be carried out without waiting to find a perfect form for putting it into practice, without waiting for everybody to be agreed.

(Stencilled document)

PASTORAL LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR CARLOS GONZALES

CRUCHAGA: BISHOP OF TALCA, 15TH MAY 1969.

Many people consider that our present political system precludes any possibility of a profound change of this system. Others, again, think that it makes such a change at least very difficult. However this may be, the existing system is more of a power play than a search for the common good. The common good only exists when there is real (and not merely juridical) equality. When this equality is inexistent, society becomes divided into oligarchic pressure groups: oligarchies

of trade unions, employers or banks, political oligarchies, parliamentary oligarchies, etc. No attempt is made to seek the common good, but merely the triumph or the equilibrium of the oligarchies.

I cannot here go into the particulars of the technical details. Nor is it my task to do so. My task is simply that of indicating some orientations that can throw some light on the uncertainty and the discord of the present time.

- A society centred on man and the common good

A society in which the dynamic centre will not be represented by money, but by man. A society in which man will be the centre, the cause and the purpose of every action, plan and structure.

A society in which the economy, money, urbanism, education, relaxation, etc., shall all be in the service of man.

A society that will not alienate, but will stand in the service of man: not in the service of "having", but in the service of "being".

A society centred on the common good, and not on individualistic egoism.

Christians seek a society in which efforts and energies will really have the good of the masses as their end and in which the common result of the productive effort will serve the whole of the population. A society that will offer opportunities

to all and which will have the means for defending itself against pressure groups of whatsoever kind.

- A society that will make possible a new man

This means a society centred on new values. A society that will have its centre principally in man and in the values that derive from this: solidarity, service, generosity, fraternity, civic sense, work, appreciation of the human qualities and virtues, enhancement of culture.

A society in which the whole of the productive effort will be in the service of man, a society in which development will be integral. "Development", it has been said, "means developing man, all men and the whole of man. Development is humanism. It must respond to three types of hunger: physical, cultural and spiritual. - that torment man, the individual as much as modern society" (Monsignor Manuel Larrain, Carta sobre el desarrollo, 1963).

(Mensaje, No. 181, August 1969, p. 384)

III. BOLIVIA

The social situation in Bolivia is characterized by the tensions existing in the country's mining areas. The nationalization of the mines, deluding the hopes that some people placed in this measure, has not resolved this problem. Quite the contrary, it seems to

have complicated it. The most advanced groups in the Church are to be found precisely among priests and laymen who have had first hand experience of the problems of the mining areas. As regards the hierarchy, its attitude is perhaps best defined by the word "perplexity": it is afraid of committing itself too deeply in an explosive situation (one only has to recall the death of Che Guevara).

As an item of curiosity it is worth noting the difference between the two texts issued by the Bolivian hierarchy that we are publishing below. The reason is very simple. In the interval between the two documents the Bolivian government protested against the letter signed by the participants at the Oruro Congress; this letter is also included in our collection.

MAY DAY MESSAGE OF THE BOLIVIAN BISHOPS, 24TH APRIL 1969.

We continue to be convinced that one of the fundamental problems in Bolivia is that of a true trade unionism whose objectives cannot be considered as having been obtained by the mere fact of juridical recognition. The trade unions must organize themselves on a regional and national scale and they must fulfill their specific functions freely and jointly, without political pressures of any kind.

The social doctrine of the Church is very clear in this respect: "Among the fundamental rights of the human person one must include the right of the workers to freely found their

own associations that may truly represent them and contribute to the just organization of economic life, as well as their right to participate freely in the activities of these associations without incurring the risk of retaliation. As a result of such an orderly participation, together with economic and social training, all of them will be imbued with a growing sense of their own functions and responsibilities and they will be brought to feel themselves as active parts of the whole work of economic and social development and the construction of the universal common good, according to the capacities and the aptitudes of each individual" (Gaudium et Spes, No. 68).

As regards the mining problems, it seems to us that the concepts mentioned in our collective pastoral letter (The Church in Bolivia and Integral Development) remain topical: "The mining workers deserve a special mention, and this not only because Bolivia is a mining country, but also because the product of their work constitutes the principal factor of our economy".

We all know that work in the mines is hard and dangerous; that it gives rise to occupational diseases that can rapidly destroy the life of a man. We also know the conditions of life in the mining camps with their miserable habitations devoid of elementary services and their almost complete lack of any

means of relaxation or amusement. For this reason the mining worker acquires a mentality of distrust, resentment and emotional reaction. In this situation a mere increase of wages and economic benefits, although very necessary, is not by itself sufficient if the miner is not offered the possibility of developing his own personality. The task of improving the living conditions of the workers is a very difficult one. While fully understanding these difficulties, the pastors of the Church must insist on the search for conditions that will permit all the workers to lead a more human life.

We are particularly thinking about the need for rationalizing retribution, especially in the nationalized mines, in order to avoid the irritating disparities that exist between the staff and the workers. On the other hand, while trade union freedom is proclaimed on paper, in actual practice the free organization of trade unions is not permitted, and this is particularly true in the mining industry. In order to favour social peace and the dialogue between workers and employers we believe that the workers must be guaranteed the right to organize themselves in trade unions and to give expression to their just claims (The Church in Bolivia and Integral Development, p. 21).....

We want to take the occasion of this May Day, fête of the workers, to suggest to all the workers in Bolivia some

lines of orientation destined to give concrete form to our service to the country and the world of labour.

We desire our Church to be limpid and strong in its mission of service and to be present in temporal life and in temporal tasks, reflecting the light of Christ onto them, we desire it to be present in the construction of the world.

It is our task to educate Christian consciences, to inspire, stimulate and orientate all the initiatives that contribute to the integral formation of man. It is likewise our task to denounce all the initiatives that go against justice and destroy peace.

In accordance with our evangelical mandate we desire to defend the rights of the poor and the oppressed, insisting in our demand that the government and the ruling classes should eliminate everything that destroys social peace: injustice, inertias, lack of sensitivity to the grave problems of the poor.

In this connection we want to recall that responsibility for the effort to attain social justice does not only lie with those who govern and lead, but with all those who are capable of recognizing their likes as brothers. The Church can indicate the road to social justice and the common good. But the global solution of all the problems will be the work of all.

We desire to encourage and favour all the efforts of the people for creating and developing their own basic organizations, for claiming and consolidating their rights in the search for a true justice.

We support the action of the Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Man, because it defends the inviolable rights of both persons and organizations.

Every violation of the fundamental rights of man is a source of preoccupation for us, especially when the rights of workers are at stake.

We express our desire to be very close to the priests and the laymen who work among the workers and the peasants, so that they may feel our support and know that we recognize their work as a sign of the true face of the Church, a Church that is for all men, but particularly for the poor and the humble.

Lastly, we know that many people are waiting for our words on account of some particular interests or political motives. We do not want our simple words directed to the workers to become interpreted in a partisan spirit or utilized for ulterior motives of a political character. On the other hand, it is our intention that our words should illuminate the road of justice that is due to the worker, the road to the attainment of his just rights.

(NADOC, Lima, No. 70, 9th July 1969)

THE CHURCH AND THE MINING WORKERS IN BOLIVIA.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ORURO (BOLIVIA) CONGRESS, 31ST JULY 1969.

The undersigned, thirtythree Bolivians (including fifteen naturalized subjects) and seventeen foreigners in the service of Bolivia (bishops, priests, monks and nuns, Christian laymen and pastors), dedicated to the liberation and the integral development of the miner, have assembled in Congress in the town of Oruro and after an extensive and careful study of the socio-economic and political reality of Bolivia, and particularly of the mining areas, a reality that is our everyday experience,

CONSIDER:

First: That it is our duty "to appeal to all men of good will to collaborate in truth, in justice, in love and in liberty in the task of transforming our people at the dawn of a new era" (Medellin, p. 36)

Second: That "all those who do not act in favour of justice, those who do not act with all the means at their disposal and those who remain passive for fear of the personal sacrifices and risks that are implied by every courageous and truly effective action, are themselves responsible for the existing injustice" (Medellin, 2-18).

Third: That capitalism is "a system that unfortunately considers profit as the essential spring of economic progress, ("free")

competition as the supreme law of the economy, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, without any limits and without any corresponding social duties.

This unbridled liberalism leads to dictatorship and was rightly denounced by Pius XI. as the cause of "international money imperialism" (Popolorum progressio, 26).

Fourth: That "the excessive social inequalities represent a systematic obstacle to the satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations of the backward sections" (Medellin, 1-4), "who suffer an injustice that cries to heaven. When entire populations, for lack of essentials, live in a state of total dependence that denies them any initiative or responsibility, any possibility of cultural development or participation in social and political life, there is a great temptation to remedy these very grave injuries to human dignity by means of violence" (Popolorum progressio, 30).

THEREFORE:

First: We denounce the capitalist system that operates in Bolivia and is the cause of the underdevelopment and the poverty of the Bolivian people and particularly of the miners.

Second: We repeat the denunciation of the systematic trampling underfoot of free trade unionism in the mines, which prevents the underground workers from obtaining their just social claims.

Third: We denounce the constant menace that is being exercised in the country's principal mines by the militias of the Army, the National Guard, the Department of Criminal Investigation and the Mining Police; their activities have transformed these mining centers into virtual concentration camps.

Fourth: We denounce the rapidly increasing number of contractors in the nationalized mines, come into being as a result of political favours, who have constituted themselves as the new exploiters of the miners and who have commenced a process of denationalization of the mines.

Fifth: We denounce the false and tendentious campaign of calumnies that has been unleashed against Fathers Gerardo Leclerc, Mauricio Lefebre and José Prats, as well as other priests and laymen, and we express our solidarity with their unceasing struggle for human rights and social justice.

Sixth: Fully aware of the demands made on us by the liberating message of Christ and by our mission in the world, we pledge ourselves totally and integrally to redouble our efforts in the service of the mining workers in Bolivia, their struggle of liberation and their aspiration to the dignity of men.

(NADOC, Lima, No. 81, 20th August 1969)

DECLARATION ISSUED BY THE BOLIVIAN EPISCOPATE,

10TH SEPTEMBER 1969.

Complaints and denunciations have recently been made to us with regard to the activities of some priests in political matters; these complaints have been principally connected with their participation in political demonstrations and also with the pronouncedly political overtone used in their preaching.

After having made an adequate investigation of the matter, we believe it to be our duty to express the following thoughts:

Priests, inasmuch as they are citizens and members of a particular national community, have rights to exercise and duties to fulfil in this community. They can and must do this, bearing in mind above all their condition of priests, bearing in mind that they have received from God the mission to serve their people by administering salvation to all men, without any distinction of race, colour, social class or political party.

We therefore consider that militating in political parties and the carrying out of specific party-political missions are not compatible with the mission of the priest, because the priest's membership of a particular group will close the doors to his being listened to by other groups and will thus reduce the universality of his ministry, his availability in the service of all.

The priests must operate in the lofty realm of a policy of the common good and they must do this in accordance with the spirit and the principles of the Gospels, recently interpreted and adapted to our times by the Vatican II Council and by the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate at Medellin.

.....

In this attitude of service to truth and justice, we Christians cannot and must not remain silent with regard to institutionalized injustice; we must denounce it with courage and with firmness, pointing out the evils it causes to man and to society.

While recognizing the urgent need for a change in structures, the Church must guide this change within the bounds of its work of orientation inspired by the Gospels and in accordance with the admonition given by Paul VI. at Bogotá, as well as by the bishops assembled at Medellin: violence is neither evangelical nor Christian; while it may be justifiable in exceptional cases, it cannot be used until after all peaceful means have been tried. A judgment of this kind is very difficult to make in moments of political agitation and it cannot be left to the criteria of individual people or small groups.

The reason for this norm, quite apart from the one mentioned above with respect to the doctrine, is that violence, as Paul VI. has said, will generally cause greater ruin (death, destruction, poverty) than the good it proposes to achieve.

(NADOC, Lima, No. 92, 1st October 1969)