

CASTRO AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN CUBA

On October 20, 1977, in Jamaica, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and president of the Council of State and of the Government, met with representatives of the Churches of Jamaica to discuss the status of the religious community and freedom in general in Cuba. The following article contains excerpts from Castro's speech.

I would like to start by saying that in our country a very profound revolution took place which brought about a radical change in the relations of production and in social relations. History shows that whenever such revolutionary events have taken place all sorts of conflicts have arisen, including conflicts between the Church and the state. In Cuba certain conflicts arose in the beginning. In my opinion this was due on many occasions to the leadership of a given religious congregation or to the social group most closely connected with such a religious congregation.

I can indeed assure you that at no time was the Cuban Revolution moved by antireligious feelings. We were deeply convinced that contradictions didn't have to exist between the social revolution and the religious beliefs of the population. Even during our struggle, there was broad participation in it by all the people, and believers participated as well.

Some problems arose mainly with the Catholic Church. And I must be sincere here as I am anywhere else. There's nothing to be gained by our gathering here to create an idyllic image of the world and things. I will not try to fool you, just as I know you will not try to fool us either.

Problems actually arose with the Catholic Church when the nature of the Revolution was revealed as a profound social change, when the first revolutionary laws--the Agrarian Reform Law, the Urban Reform Law, and several other laws which affected the interests of the rich in Cuba--were enacted.

The Church was served in Cuba by a clergy of foreign origin, most of the clergymen coming from Spain, it being the Church of the rich people. That wasn't the same as in Latin America. In many countries in Latin America, the Catholic Church exerts a broad influence in popular sectors. In Cuba the Catholic Church relied mainly on the religious schools to exert its influence. Unlike in France, for example, we had no priests who worked with the industrial workers or who went out into the fields and became one of them. That was not the situation that prevailed in Cuba. Suffice it to say that in Cuba there wasn't a single Catholic church in the whole of the countryside. The churches were mainly in the large cities.

In the cities, religious education was given at private schools. Generally, they were expensive schools only within the reach of the moneyed classes. I myself was born into a family of landowners, and I was sent to a private school right from the first grade. (ed. Fidel Castro graduated from the prestigious Jesuit high school, Colegio de Belen, Havana.)

Cuba was generally considered to be a Catholic country, but I don't agree with that, because there appears to be some confusion. The Catholic Church had baptized many people. Generally speaking, whenever a priest went out into the countryside he did so to baptize people who had received no previous instruction.

I believe religion is not a question of imposition. I can only conceive of it as a question of awareness, as a person's own decision. It

was customary in our country to baptize a three or four-month-old baby. They'd simply baptize him, have his name entered in the church register and thereafter no concern was shown for that child, during the rest of his life.

I was born in the countryside and I can say that although nearly everyone had been baptized, a Catholic religious feeling was lacking there. On the other hand, the immense majority of the people in the countryside were believers. Yet what did they believe in? Well, I think it was a kind of cocktail with all beliefs thrown in.

For instance--I recall this very well because my family were also believers--when St. Lazarus Day came around, a whole series of activities would be held in the countryside in his honor. By then I had a certain notion of the Catholic religion and was aware that St. Lazarus, depicted as a sick man covered by festering sores, was not a saint recognized by the Church, and that such veneration of St. Lazarus amounted to what could have been termed as superstition: an incorrect practice from the Catholic standpoint. Yet everybody lighted a candle to St. Lazarus, prayed to him, offered him sacrifices and so on.

Other times it was the festivities in honor of the Virgin of Charity, whom the Church officially recognized. Many people believed in her, confided in her, made promises to her and so forth.

In general, our countryside was characterized by people believing in everything. Some professed forms of animism, many believed in spirits. In short, no given religion was systematically, officially professed.

The other non-Catholic religions did not have much influence in our country. However I for one could see that the persons who claimed that they belonged to other evangelical religions were generally more disciplined and engaged in systematic observance of their standards and beliefs. That much I could see.

In the capital and in the larger cities the main Catholic churches were located in residential areas where the rich people lived. They went to Mass, of course, on Sundays; that was compulsory. But there was no religious practice. That was the situation in our country. It might be hard for you to understand that because your customs are different, your experiences are different.

In the United States I noticed how a Catholic was a Catholic and how he consistently observed his beliefs. In Cuba it wasn't like that. Many people called themselves Catholics. Those rich people went to church but they did not abide in the least by the Church's standards and principles. They led a dissolute, luxurious, carefree existence, and I'd say that they broke all the commandments and committed all the capital sins.

Then a conflict did arise but not between the Revolution and religious beliefs: the conflict was between the Revolution and a social class that tried to use the Church as a weapon to oppose the Revolution. That's what happened.

Notwithstanding my remarks regarding the conflicts that have arisen between revolutionary movements and the Church throughout history, I think that in Cuba such conflicts were reduced to the minimum. And this was due to the fact that before the world, before our people, before other peoples, we took special care to avoid presenting the Cuban Revolution as an enemy of religion, because if that had happened we would have really been doing a service to the reactionaries, to the exploiters, not only in Cuba but above all in Latin America.

That's why we acted like that, not only because of the principle involved--and I say this in all frankness, because to us respect for religious beliefs is a principle--but also for strategic reasons: for reasons of political strategy and tactics because we could not allow this to happen in Latin America. I'm not talking about Cuba, since in our country religion did not constitute a political force. I'm talking about Mexico or Colombia or Chile or Argentina or other countries where religion is a political force.

We were not thinking of Cuba; we were thinking above all of Latin America. For we asked ourselves, why do the ideas of social justice have to collide with religious beliefs? Why do they have to collide with Christianity? I know quite a lot about Christian principles and the teachings of Christ. In my opinion, Christ was a great revolutionary. He was a man whose doctrine was in favor of the humble, the poor and aimed at preventing abuse, injustice, the humiliation of the human being. I'd say that there's a lot in common between the spirit or essence of his teachings and socialism.

Besides, I've said on occasion that he condemned the rich, the merchants and the pharisees with very strong words. He washed the feet of his disciples. What worthier example can one find? I've even said that the miracle of the fish and the bread and turning water into wine is what we socialists also wish to do. I say this very seriously, I say it very seriously because this is what I believe, think and feel.

We've all read the history of the first years of Christendom and we know what it meant to be a Christian in Rome and in many other places. To be a Christian in the era of the emperors was worse than being a Communist in Pinochet's Chile, worse than being a Communist in Brazil or Argentina.

Of course, just as Communists have been much persecuted during the last decades--thousands of Communists were shot during the Paris Commune uprising, Hitler had Communists shot and they were shot in Spain. Everywhere in the world, from the time of the Chicago Martyrs, workers have been murdered and tortured for allegedly being Communists--so that was the history of the Christians for many centuries. Why? Because the ruling classes, the slave owners, the ones who ordered the gladiators to kill each other in the circus, the ones who enjoyed all the social privileges, all were the sworn enemies of the Christians because the Christians opposed all that.

Who were the first Christians? The poorest people, the humblest people, the slaves were the first Christians. And they were persecuted for centuries until at last one emperor became a Christian himself. Christianity's whole first stage reminds me of this stage the fighters for social justice are going through.

In effect, such conflicts did arise in our country but we abided by the principles and ideas I mentioned before. One step we had to take, I guess the strongest step, was when we had to ask the Spanish priests to return to Spain. Yet no church was ever closed down, nobody was persecuted on account of his religious beliefs.

There's something more: there were priests who plotted and acted against the Revolution to the extent that, when the CIA-organized mercenary invasion at Playa Giron was launched from Central America--which cost many Cubans their lives--several priests came with the invaders. And no severe punishment was ever inflicted upon a priest. Never was a priest--or any other citizen for the matter--physically mistreated in our country. To us the principle of not laying a finger on a man or subjecting prisoners to

mistreatment is a sacred principle that we haven't broken even once. We have a number of severe penalties, including the death sentence for certain crimes, but never was such punishment meted out to a priest.

I'm going to tell you something more. When it became necessary to send some priests to jail for serious counterrevolution crimes, they were always set free after a short period of time. We did that deliberately. Such was the attitude adopted by the Revolutionary Government during the initial period of the conflict.

The situation improved gradually and progressively as a different spirit began to unfold in the top echelons of the Catholic Church. And I'd say that the papal nuncio then appointed--Monsignor Zacchi, a very capable man who really worked very intelligently--contributed a lot to that. He worked to improve relations between the Church and the state, and he also tried to guide the Catholic Church into doing its religious duty instead of engaging in counterrevolutionary activities, because that was not an intelligent thing to do.

I'll tell you why. The immense majority of the people supported the Revolution: the peasants, the workers, the poor. The people opposed to the Revolution, very rich people, left for the United States. Nobody threw them out of Cuba; they left voluntarily.

The Revolution carried out extraordinary social changes. I will not detail here how millions of persons benefited from the measures adopted by the Revolution--from wiping out illiteracy, eradicating many diseases, to bringing about full employment throughout the country; but, above all, the Revolution brought man dignity. Millions of people had felt as if they were inferior beings for they were humiliated, exploited and despised; blacks were mercilessly discriminated against; women were forced to prostitute themselves since no other employment was available to them; a lot of people pinned their hopes on gambling, a deceitful hope that left them open to exploitation. In addition, drugs were available anywhere in the country.

It was at this juncture that the Revolution wiped out racial discrimination, opened up the doors of society and of life to all the citizens of the country; no more aristocratic clubs where blacks couldn't go, hotels blacks couldn't stay in, beaches blacks couldn't swim at, schools black children were barred from.

The Revolution eradicated prostitution, and it did so in a humane way: it trained, fed, clothed and sheltered those women while helping them adapt to another type of activity and another type of work. There used to be 100,000 prostitutes in Cuba out of a population of six and a half million. I mean straight prostitution, since indirectly prostitution reached even greater figures. Take the case of a man with plenty of money who perhaps used to go to Mass every Sunday but kept five or six women in five or six different homes and all that sort of thing.

The Revolution wiped out prostitution, gambling, drug addiction, all those things. So millions of people were in agreement with those measures.

To oppose the Revolution was to earn the hatred of the people. Both the nuncio and the Church understood that. But not only that, some changes were introduced by the Catholic Church itself, new guidelines were issued by the Church, specifically by John XXIII. Also, stemming from Latin America's Catholic Church, there emerged progressive currents that accounted for a change which allowed for harmonious relations to develop between the Church and the Cuban state. I can assure you that no revolutionary process as radical and profound as the Cuban Revolution has had less conflicts with

religion than our Revolution. At present, relations are normal. We hardly ever hear of conflict with the Church at present. I'm not denying that there are indeed some conflicts of another type. In the beginning we had conflicts not only with the Catholic Church. We also had them with Jehovah Witnesses, this being a religious group very much influenced by the United States--it gets all sorts of support and aid from the United States--and it had a militant attitude against the Revolution. Except for this, I can say that at present relations between the Revolution, between the Cuban state and the churches are really excellent. In our recently Constitution, freedom of worship, freedom of religious belief is expressly and very specially guaranteed.

Let me say something else. When I was in Chile in 1972 I had an extensive meeting with Church representatives. It wasn't like this meeting; in 19 years of revolution this is the first time I have had a meeting like this one. I met with progressive Church representatives, a broad movement in Chile at that time, and I took advantage of that occasion to set forth our opinions on how relations between religion and the revolution should be conducted, because to me it isn't enough to respect each other, we must cooperate with one another in order to change the world. We must cooperate to change the world, we must work together. I maintain that the basis for this cooperation must be established before the revolution takes place. Why? Because I believe that revolution will happen anyway, I believe that socialism will finally succeed in the world not because I want it so, or Manley wants it so, or many of you want it so, it's not because of that or because Marx and Engels said so or because Lenin said so. By now it's not only a question of doctrine, it's not only a question of political theory but a necessity which can be mathematically proved. For how else can the world solve its present and future problems? How can the world solve them? We're now 4000 million, later we'll be 7000 million, still later, 15000. I don't see how the world's problems can be solved unless everybody behaves like a single family and unless the effort, the talent and the energy of mankind are truly dedicated to solving the world's problems.

We can't go on being selfish as nations, we can't go on being selfish as human beings. We must give up individualism that makes people want to have everything for themselves while others starve. I even think that, unless we have economic development planning on a worldwide scale, we're going to deplete all natural resources and poison the environment, and human beings will end up eating each other. I'm not merely thinking about this very minute or about 30 years from now, but I'm not thinking about three centuries from now either. Twenty-three years from now there'll be 7000 million people in the world. I ask myself, what will man live on?

Observing Jamaica by helicopter or by plane, I've seen rocky, arid, formidable mountains and I've seen a lot of people scattered all over the country. There are two million Jamaicans and 23 years from now there'll be 3.5 million. I ask, can a single country live by itself? Can Jamaica? Can Cuba? There are other countries, on the other hand, that have enormous natural resources and don't know what to do with all their money. In actual fact, a day will come when mankind shall live like a single family, making use of all available natural resources. I think that the only solution is socialism on a worldwide scale.

Since I believe that these changes must take place, I told the Chilean Church representatives that we had to work together so that when the political idea triumphed the religious idea would not be far removed, appearing like an enemy of change. There are no contradictions between the aims of religion and the aims of socialism.

I told the Chileans that we should make an alliance, but not a tactical alliance. I was asked whether it was tactical or strategic and I said a strategic alliance between religion and socialism, between religion and the revolution. I said it in all honesty. When we look to history we see evolution. There was a time when the Christian religion, which used to be the religion of the slaves, became the religion of emperors, of the court, the religion of patricians. As we go further into history, we see how men have made serious mistakes in the name of religion. I'm not going to talk to you about how men made even worse mistakes in their role as politicians. It was on the basis of such realities that I said we had to fight together to achieve these aims for, I ask where do the contradictions between Christian teachings and socialist teaching lie? Where? We both wish to struggle on behalf of man, for the welfare of man, for the happiness of man.

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From Background notes of the U.S. State Department, Feb. 1978:

People

POPULATION: 9.5 million (1977 est. based on 1970 census). ANNUAL GROWTH RATE: 1.7%. DENSITY: 215 per sq. mi. (83 per sq.km.). ETHNIC GROUPS: Caucasian and Negro mixture. LANGUAGE: Spanish, LITERACY: 96%. LIFE EXPECTANCY: 60 yrs.

Geography

AREA: 44,200 sq. mi. (114,477 sq.km.); about the size of Pennsylvania. CAPITAL: Havana (pop. 1.8 million). OTHER CITIES: Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey.

Government

TYPE: Communist state. INDEPENDENCE: May 20, 1902. DATE OF CONSTITUTION: 1976.

BRANCHES: Executive-President, Council of Ministers. Legislative-National Assembly of People's Power, headed by Council of State. Judicial-subordinate to Council of State.

POLITICAL PARTY: Communist Party (PCC). SUFFRAGE: Elections were held in 1976 for the National Assembly of People's Power. ADMINISTRATIVE SUBDIVISIONS: 13 Provinces, 321 municipalities.

FLAG: White star centered on red equilateral triangle at the staff side, 3 blue and 2 white horizontal stripes in the background.

Economy

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT (GNP): \$8 billion (1977 est.). ANNUAL GROWTH RATE: Approx. 3% (1977 est.). PER CAPITA INCOME: \$840 (constant 1957 prices). PER CAPITA GROWTH RATE: 3%.

AGRICULTURE: Land 65%. Labor 34%. Products-sugar, tobacco, coffee, rice, beans, meat, vegetables, tropical fruits.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Labor 17%. Products-refined sugar, metals. OTHER INDUSTRIES: Oil refining, cement, electric power, food processing, light consumer and industrial products.

NATURAL RESOURCES: Metals, primarily nickel.

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IS THERE FREEDOM OF WORSHIP IN CUBA?

--An Eye-Witness Report

By Herbert Meza

Everybody wants to know whether or not there is freedom of worship in Cuba.

The answer is yes and no. There is freedom of worship. While there I preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Havana, on my first Sunday, and worshipped at the University Methodist Church on the second Sunday. In Santiago, we spent an evening with the ecumenical leaders of that area. In Matanzas, we had a frank discussion with the faculty of the Ecumenical Seminary, headed by Sergio Arces Martínez, a Presbyterian. On our last Sunday evening in Havana, we had a profoundly challenging discussion with the leaders of the Student Christian Movement. The subject, by the way, was whether or not a Christian could be a Marxist.

All eight of us had private conversations relating to church matters with individuals from our own denominational backgrounds. A Presbyterian missionary in Cuba, Lois Kroelee, is still there. She stayed after the revolution and as far as I know is the only United States missionary in Cuba.

There is freedom of worship in Cuba and there is freedom of theological inquiry, but there are limitations. There is no freedom to criticize the revolution...i.e., to engage in counter-revolutionary activities. That freedom does not exist for anyone in Cuba. Indeed, Fidel Castro made this quite clear in his WORDS TO THE INTELLECTUALS: "Within the revolution, everything, outside the revolution, nothing.

There is no freedom to engage in mass evangelism. While churches have kept their religious symbols on their buildings (we could see a blue neon cross on the spire of a church near our hotel), few other opportunities exist to permit placing the Church above the revolution; furthermore, the culture and the state make little attempt to hide their atheistic bias.

The question is not whether or not there is religious freedom in Cuba but whether or not there is a role for the Church within the revolution. If so, what is it?

It needs to be stated clearly that something very significant has happened in Cuba and you have to see it to believe it. The story of the Cuban revolution has to be told in terms of food, housing, education, work, and solidarity. There is no possible way of denying that what the Cuban revolution has accomplished in 18 years is simply startling. In 1959, 7000,000 people were unemployed in a country of six million people, not counting seasonal workers who worked only five months of the year in the cane industry. Now, Cuba can't find enough workers:..women are being encouraged to work...680,000 women are in the work force...and vagrancy is a crime.

Illiteracy in Cuba in 1959 was 25 percent. Now it is less than two percent, and a national campaign is trying to raise every citizen to the level of a sixth grade education by 1980. Nobody is hungry in Cuba, There is rationing still, but that is the reason nobody is hungry. Prefabricated housing is springing up like mushrooms all over the island. In the city of Santiago alone, 3,000 apartment units are being built each year.

There is no begging, no prostitution, no gambling, no alcoholics, and no tipping in Cuba. Permeating it all is a profound sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment, an awareness of destiny, a social vigor that cannot be overlooked. The Cubans call it "solidaridad." Others have called it "social vision."

"I was shocked to see the Communist government accomplishing the very things for which I have been praying for 10 years," Lois Kroeler said.

"Christ is here." declared Miriam Ortega, an ordained Presbyterian woman who traveled with us, on seeing what the revolution had done for children.

In the light of these accomplishments, the question is: What part did the Church play in this revolution? Though there were some authentic Christian martyrs, like Frank Pais, a young Baptist student and church choir director, who organized the underground movement in Santiago and was killed later, it is accepted commonly that the Church as an organization played little or no part in the revolution. "If the pre-revolutionary Church in Cuba was to be judged by its concern for the poor and needy, there was no Christian Church in Cuba prior to the revolution." explained Sergio Arce Martínez, dean of the theological seminary in Matanzas.

There is no doubt that something significant has happened in Cuba and it has happened in the main without, and in some cases in spite of, the Church; thus, immediately after the revolution the Church and the revolution appeared to be at odds, each wanting to go its own way, each concerned with its own agenda.

It became evident early, however, that the revolution enjoyed such support that the Church had to begin to call itself into question, and thus it found itself deeply torn. Some wanted the Church to devote itself to its "rosary" while others wanted it to prove to the revolution that it could make a contribution. That dialogue is still under way. Interestingly enough, the two denominations which have found the largest measure of accomodation to the revolution have been the Pentecostal and the Presbyterian. The Pentecostal, coming from the lowest economic class in the society, gained the most from the revolution. It lives comfortably with it. The Presbyterians have provided a vanguard of theological perspective, intent on proving that the Church can and should support the revolution. Many are among its best workers.

The role of the Church now is to prove itself faithful to the revolution without having to commit adultery with Marxism. The theological question then is: What does it mean to live in a Marxist world in the light of the Gospel?

Raul Fernandez Ceballos, president of the Cuban Ecumenical Council of Churches stated it best, the night of our farewell dinner, when it was his turn to make a toast:

"Some of us in this room are Christians and some of us are Marxists... but all of us are obligated by our respective ideologies to give ourselves in behalf of all our brothers and sisters in Cuba. There are many similarities in our ideologies...giving according to one's capacity and receiving according to one's need...caring for one another...feeding the hungry...etcetra. Socialists believe these things and Christians believe them, too. The only difference is the additional belief, on the part of the Christian, in the after life.

"But if a Christian works hard to achieve a just society in this life, no Marxist is going to begrudge him a belief in the after life, because it is of no concern to the Marxist. As long as Christian faith doesn't

generate a passive attitude, Christians and Marxists can work side by side."

Another element in the revolution has caused much reflection among Christians in Cuba: What is the role of the Church in a society that provides many examples of caring and respect for human beings? How should the Church respond? There are those who think the Church needs to learn from the experience. Raul Gomez Treto, a Roman Catholic jurist, working in the Ministry of Justice, gives us this insight in a review of the New Family Code promulgated in Cuba:

"We Christians ought not to be preoccupied with formalities...It is encouraging to find such things as affection, mutual aid, respect, equality, the protection of the weak and the under-privileged, paternal and family responsibility as the cornerstone of the same socialistic morality which so very much resembles an authentic Christian morality...deeply rooted in the Gospel. In the final existence, it is we Christians, personally and generally, and not our Communist brothers, atheists and non-believers, who should manifest the transcendental and divine sense of human morality. I pray that you may discover that so that you may be prepared to respond more adequately to the need of our peoples."

The Church in Cuba is alive and engaged in a profound experience of soul-searching in the light of its recent history. It has returned to the Scriptures in a serious and existential way. It is free to worship and to serve; it is not free to claim either prestige or influence.

One is reminded of Paul's affirmation about the Church in II Corinthians 2:14: "thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph..." How often have we misread those words of Paul? We have assumed, out of our sense of triumphalism, that those words always meant victories and trophies for the Church; yet, when Paul wrote those words, they were written to a congregation hemmed in on all sides by overwhelming odds, dismissed, overlooked, hardly able to settle its own affairs, possessing neither influence nor prestige. Should we not look at them again? Paul refers here to the pageants of triumph staged to honor Roman generals returning from victory. No doubt, Paul, citizen of Rome and world traveler, must have witnessed such an event:

A victorious general returning home and marching through the streets of Rome celebrating a great triumph. It was a very formal arrangement. First came the officials of the Senate, followed by trumpeters and the spoils of war. Then followed pictures and models of the conquered land, citadels or ships; then the white bulls for the sacrifice. Then came the wretched enemy, leaders, and generals in chains; and, after musicians, priests, and finally followed the general, himself, with his family and his army. As the procession marched through the streets all decorated in splendor, the crowds shouted and cheered.

The Greek word used in this passage, and used only in one other place in the New Testament (Colossians 2:15), designates forces being led captive (in the case of Colossians, evil forces) in a triumphal pageant. The passage can be translated, "Thanks be to God who leadeth us captive into triumph..."

It is apparent that Paul's reference is not so much an identity of the Church with the Roman victors as it is the identity of the Church with the Roman captives. Paul saw that young Church being led captive by the forces turned loose in the world, submitting itself to history even as its Lord did, not imposing its will upon the designs of the day, but somehow in submission to the world, being led about, helpless, without power, in the captivity of triumphant processions. Through it all there is a note of joy, "Thanks be to God in all things..."

It is not clear whether this joy is based upon the fact that God still has a place for us as captives or whether or not the joy is over the fact that even in captivity God's will shall be brought into vindication by forces outside the Church, yes, by the victors of the passing parade. God does not limit the exercise of His will merely to the captives of this world.

That is where the Church in Cuba is. It has realized that the world, not the Church, is the center of God's concern. It has understood that God is not just pro-Christian, but pro-people. It has discovered that its vocation as a Church is not to run the world but to serve it. It is engaged in a profoundly reflective exercise to discover how to do that in Cuba.

The Church in Cuba has discovered that its responsibility is not to see how it can extricate itself from the whole affair or how it can promote itself, but rather how it can live as a captive and keep its integrity before God. It has discovered that winning or losing is not important, not to a community whose Lord was crucified. What matters is that God is in the world and working out His purposes and that the Church must find where God is going and join that parade whether it be as victors or as vanquished. The Cuban Church is struggling with that providence, and I heard some of them saying:

"It doesn't matter what our status is. What matters is that we keep our integrity before God, and God's integrity before man. We can do that only if we are committed to the cause of justice and equity. Even captives can rejoice in the victories of God, and we can witness through them."

Ref: Occasional Essays--CELEP LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CENTER FOR PASTORAL STUDIES - Year IV: No. 3, October 1977.

RELIGIOUS IN CUBA

Diocese	Religions	Congregations	Inhabitants	Catholics
Pinar del Rio	2	1	666.590	500.000
La Habana	181	14	2.626.000	1.270.000
Matanzas	6	4	501.270	270.000
Cienfuegos-Sta.Clara	2	1	1.363.770	625.000
Camagüey	4	1	863.400	380.000
Sant. de Cuba	15	2	3.100.000	980.000
TOTAL	210		9.121.030	4.025.000

Ref: Mensaje Iberoamericano, No. 152, June 1978, p. 22.

Etat Actuel de L'Eglise
par
Oscar Maldonado Perez

Pendant tout le processus révolutionnaire, cet ensemble de facteurs a joué sur le catholicisme et sur l'Eglise à Cuba. La situation actuelle, après 17 ans, est la suivante dans ses grandes lignes:

-L'Eglise, en tant que telle, est en marge de la société actuelle où elle manque des appuis politiques dont elle disposait avant. L'Etat et le gouvernement actuel, laissant de côté les principes et les organisations religieuses, ne se voit pas dans le besoin tactique de lui octroyer des privilèges, même si elle a la majorité dans le pays, puisque la grande masse des catholiques adhère plus aux nouveaux leaders qu'aux évêques et aux prêtres. En effet, la révolution s'est faite malgré l'opposition officielle de l'Eglise dont, par ailleurs, la résistance fut rapidement désactivée, sans même avoir laissé de marques irréparables ou de litiges négociables politiquement. La masse des travailleurs, dépositaire du pouvoir politique, baptisée le plus souvent et attachée à l'usage de quelques symboles et rites catholiques, n'a pas établi de lien manifeste entre son activité révolutionnaire et ses croyances religieuses; mais de plus, elle considère le catholicisme officiel comme un allié résiduaire des anciens secteurs dirigeants, neutralisé certes, mais potentiellement dangereux. Et le groupe catholique le plus attaché à l'Eglise manque du pouvoir politique; il n'a aucune possibilité immédiate de le récupérer ou d'y participer, un jour quelconque, parce qu'il forme un des secteurs les plus passifs sinon l'un des plus opposés à la révolution.

-De plus, le nombre des paroissiens a beaucoup diminué pendant toute ces années, les groupes les plus dynamiques ont disparu et la contribution du catholicisme à la société n'est plus aussi claire qu'avant. La moitié peut-être de la population actuelle se considère comme catholique et "à sa manière, parce qu'elle croit en Dieu et pas aux curés". 2% au plus des 9 millions de Cubains d'aujourd'hui assistent régulièrement à la messe du dimanche au lieu des 17% sur les 6 millions que comptait l'île avant la révolution. Les mouvements catholiques ont disparu et, seules, quelques personnes appartenant à l'élite chrétienne d'avant 1959 maintiennent leur attachement au service de l'Eglise à Cuba. Quant aux autres, ou bien ils choisirent la révolution et le communisme; ou bien, soit en prison, soit en liberté, ils se retranchèrent dans l'incertitude et le scepticisme. D'autres encore abandonnèrent Cuba ou sombrèrent obscurément lors de Playa Giron. Et les différents essais tenté jusqu'à présent pour organiser l'apostolat des laïcs n'ont vraiment pas été couronnés de succès.

-Il est clair que l'Eglise poursuit le même objectif qu'avant la révolution; mais si, auparavant, l'oeuvre du salut offrait à la société un produit dérivé en l'espèce, un bon citoyen, théiste, démocrate, partisan de l'initiative privée et de la libre entreprise - actuellement, le salut éternel proposé aux Cubains par les 200 prêtres dans les 200 paroisses des 6 diocèses du pays ne passe ni ne peut passer par la formation du bon communiste ni

même du bon révolutionnaire.

Mais le catholicisme, aussi bien que les autres religions universelles, a autant besoin de la terre que du ciel: dès lors, la hiérarchie, en s'ouvrant à la révolution en 1969, posa comme conditions à l'avenir du catholicisme à Cuba la naissance d'un nouveau type de catholique. Pour le réaliser, il fallait passer par une purification de la religiosité de ses tares ancestrales - par le renouvellement de la morale sociale catholique - par la participation, religieusement impérative, du développement en évitant la contagion du communisme, c'est-à-dire en collaborant à la tâche révolutionnaire sans en adopter le langage.

Ce programme, démesuré par rapport au dynamisme, à l'organisation et aux moyens actuels de l'Eglise, a, depuis son lancement, remué les contradictions du catholicisme cubain qui, lentement et sous les formes les plus diverses, apparaissent à la surface sereine de l'Eglise cubaine actuelle. Il est très difficile que celle-ci forme ce nouveau type de catholique par la voie qu'elle a choisie sans compromettre ses intérêts immédiats. Si la participation des catholiques, motivée religieusement, dans le développement cubain réel, était recommandée, par l'Eglise, elle minerait sans doute l'adhésion des plus fidèles d'aujourd'hui, pour qui la révolution est communiste plus par ce qu'elle fait que par ce qu'elle dit. De plus, pour eux, le communisme est inséparable de ce qu'ils ont entendu dire pendant des années par les évêques et les prêtres ou autres défenseurs du théisme démocratique.

-Une morale sociale catholique, renouvelée selon les exigences du développement à la cubaine - au cas où il serait possible d'accommoder au socialisme une doctrine conçue pour humaniser le capitalisme - contredirait sur plus d'un point l'enseignement en vigueur dans le reste du monde catholique, très accentué en certains pays, spécialement d'Amérique latine, où l'Eglise critique par principe la voie du développement cubain...lorsqu'elle ne propose et ne soutient pas des types de développement acceptables pour les Etats-Unis et leurs alliés.

Enfin, pour la religiosité traditionnelle, la purification de ses tares ancestrales entrerait en opposition avec la masse catholique nominale pour qui certains rites et symboles catholiques jouissent d'une réelle efficacité sur les forces occultes. Les catholiques les plus proches de l'Eglise ne pourraient pas le supporter et, de plus, cela entraînerait dans plus d'un cas, la disparition de toute orientation religieuse. Car, l'expérience le prouve, lorsque les catholiques se libèrent de la tyrannie de la tradition ou de la magie, ils tombent dans l'abandon de leurs croyances plus que dans l'approfondissement de ces mêmes croyances.

Obligée de renoncer dans son activité courante à un programme aussi nécessaire, l'Eglise accentue l'incertitude des catholiques qui se sont ralliés à la révolution alors qu'elle-même la combattait. Ces catholiques sont parmi ceux qui ressentent le plus les contradictions entre Eglise et société actuelle - qui ne s'expriment pas comme auparavant entre théisme et athéisme, mais entre le message chrétien original et son interprétation d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. D'où les questions qui se

posent à ces catholiques, sur le contenu réel de leur religion, sur le rôle de l'Eglise dans une société comme celle de Cuba. Et dans l'impossibilité actuelle de trouver une réponse valable, ils en arrivent alors à la question définitive sur le rôle de la religion dans la vie des hommes et des peuples.

Le capital de réflexion et d'expérience accumulé dans l'Eglise cubaine actuelle ne permet de répondre à toutes ces questions que par les phrases stéréotypées du langage bureaucratique. Une réponse insuffisante encore est celle des pressions de moins en moins adroites et efficaces pour que les catholiques acceptent des compromis ambigus entre ce qui pourrait être regardé comme authentiquement chrétien et ce qui est possible. Ainsi l'Eglise culpabilise-t-elle les crises inévitables... tandis qu'elle continue à s'appuyer sur ses propres sécurités surnaturelles à mesure que tombent ses autres sécurités.

(Un extrait de "La révolution cubaine et le catholicisme" SPIRITUS, No. 66, février 1977, pp. 93-5).

From Information Letter, No. 21 of the Lutheran World Federation p.11...

Cubans in Africa - (U.S. government estimates)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Function</u>
Ethiopia	11,000	Combat troops
Uganda	25	Probably military forces
Tanzania	350-500	Mainly technicians
Madagascar	30	Military advisers
Mozambique	600-750	150 of them technicians
Angola	19,000	Military forces
	4,000	Civil advisers
Congo	300	Military forces
	100-150	Technicians
Equatorial Guinea	300-400	1/2 military advisers
Sao Tome und Principe	70-80	Medical workers
Benin	10-20	Security advisers
Sierra Leone	100-125	Military advisers
Guinea	300-500	Mainly military advisers
Guinea Bissau	100-200	2/3 military advisers
Capo Verde Islands	10-15	Medical workers
Algeria	35	Medical workers
Libya	100-125	Military advisers

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From the ADRIS Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 2, Winter 1978:

Scholars from four continents have established the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS). The Association plans to hold regular international and national conferences and to publish an annual serial. For further information contact A. K. Narain; Department of South Asian Studies; 1242 Van Hise Hall; 1220 Linden Drive; Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

CUFA - Bibliography of documentation at SEDOS

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Title of Document, Article or Book</u> (number of pages in brackets)
2. PDE (AE17-18/74)	Cuba: Migliori rapporti tra Chiesa e governo, In MONDO E MISSIONE, No. 17/18, 1974. (3)
5. L (8/2/77)	Toward community renewal: Evangelized and evangelizing, Episcopal Commission of Pastoral ministry, Cuba. In IADOC, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1977. (6)
5. MI (115/75)	Cuba: Fidelidad, renovacion y confrontacion en los dos documentos eclesiales by Manuel Fernandez. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 115, 1975. (3)
5. MI (141-142/77)	El futuro de la evangelizacion en Cuba by Manuel Fernandez. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 141-142, 1977. (3)
5. MI (103/74)	La iglesia en Cuba ante nuevas expectativas by Manuel Fernandez. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 103, 1974. (4)
5. MI (128/76)	La religion en la nueva Constitucion cubana by Manuel Fernandez. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 128, 1976. (6)
5. IM (66/263/77)	Evangelism in the socialist society of Cuba by Adolfo Han. In INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MISSION, Vol. 66, No. 263, 1977. (6)
5. B (IDOC) (30-31/75)	Church and society in Cuba, IDOC Documentation Team. In IDOC BULLETIN, No. 30/31, 1975.
5. L (47/74)	The Cuban Church in a Revolutionary Society In IADOC, No. 47, 1974. (20)
5. MI (128/76)	La Iglesia de Cuba en el proceso revolucionario by Jose Ignacio Lasaga. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 128, 1976. (8)
5. 136 (OE/3/77)	Is there freedom of worship in Cuba? by Herbert Neza. In OCCASIONAL ESSAYS, No. 3, 1977. (5)
5. MI (128/76)	Comunidad y evangelizacion by Cuba de Obispos. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 128, 1976. (5)
5. DC (1710/76)	Rapports entre politique et religion, Parti Communiste Cubain. In LA DOCUMENTATION CATHOLIQUE, No. 1710, 1976. (2)

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Title of Document, Article or Book (number of pages in brackets)</u>
5. IE (2/77)	The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba, 1977. In WCC EXCHANGE, No. 2, 1977. (20)
4/2654	Cuba y su revolucion: Part I - Contexto socioeconomico y politico, PRO MUNDI VITA. (33)
4/2655	Cuba y su revolucion: Part II - Contexto religioso en torno a una revolucion, PRO MUNDI VITA. (37)
4/2114	Cuba and the Lucharest Conference by Thomas G. Sanders. (11)
2. CSSP et al. (S66/77)	Cuba: Revolution et Catholicisme por O. Malceonado Perez, No. 66 of SPIRITUS, I 1977. (90)
5. MI (128/76)	Una "nueva fase" de la Revolucion cubana? by Nelson P. Valdes. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 128, 1976. (3)
5. WE (1/78)	Fidel Castro on Church-State relations in Cuba, WCC EXCHANGE, No. 1, 1978. (20)
5. MI (115/75)	Cuba: Fidelidad, renovacion y confrontacion en los dos documentos eclesiales by Manuel Fernandez. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 115, 1975. (3)
2. PIME (17-18/74)	Cuba: Migliori rapporti tra Chiesa e governo, in MONDO E MISSIONE, No. 17/18, 1974. (3)
5. MI (152/78)	Cuba: Testimonio de vida religiosa. In MENSAJE IBEROAMERICANO, No. 152, 1978. (2)

NOTICE

Corporate Investment and Social Responsibility

Fr. Michael Crosby, ofm-cap, author of Catholic Church Investments for Corporate Social Responsibility and Thy Will be Done: Praying the Our Father as Subversive Activity, will visit the United Kingdom from 5th to 15th November, 1978. Father Crosby will be available for public and private meetings with those interested in the problems of responsible investment. For further information about the visit, please contact Pax Christi, Blackfriars Hall, Southampton Road, London N.W. Tel. 01-485-7977.

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The following letter may be of interest to you. It is addressed to Mr. J. Christ, 12 Lakeview Terrace, Capernaum, Galilee 00666.

Dear Mr. Christ,

We have acted upon your commission to administer a coordinated battery of psychological tests to the twelve candidates whom you are considering as collaborators in an organisation you are assembling.

It will be some time before all the data have been processed and interpreted, but certain preliminary findings are, in our judgement, of such significance that we are sending them on forthwith.

With regard to Mr. Simon Johnson (or Bar Jona), the profile for this candidate is marked by consistently unsound judgement, excessive emotional reactions, unreliability, and an unrealistic estimate of himself. He tends to be blunt in speech and quite rigid. Luckily you appear to have sensed this already, as the nickname that you gave him implies. It is our opinion that Johnson, who has been conspicuously unsuccessful as a fisherman and who has had illness in the family, is only speciously magnanimous in his offer to leave all to follow you. It is accordingly our urgent recommendation that you terminate speedily the association of Johnson with yourself and your organisation.

We shall be forwarding further recommendations about the aptitudes of the remaining candidates at an early date. You will want to know that Mr. Thomas Didymus failed to appear for his appointment with our evaluation team. This is usually an indicant of a latent hostility that will impair his usefulness in a corporate effort.

On the evidence assembled thus far, we can certainly recommend your associating Mr. J. Iscariot with your enterprise. He has the profile of a completely dependable, hard-working realist. He is open-minded and ready to change. Though he will be a hard-headed, no-nonsense administrator, he has a deep concern for the poor and shows marked potential for growth and advancement in your organisation.

In closing, we might note that the mission statement that you submitted to us for your organisation, with its description of goals and strategies, struck our staff as incapable of attainment, not to mention verification by the scientific procedures that would make it credible to the world today. Should you, on further consideration, decide to jettison the whole enterprise, we would like to offer you a position on our staff. You have a certain natural flair for dealing with people that, with a few years of professional formation, ought to be of real service to your fellow human beings.

Consultation Service Centre of Galilee

Tiberias, Galilee