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EDITORIAL

Our November issue of SEDOS Bulletin opens with the final message of the 'LATINO-AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONGRESS' held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in July 1995. — Fr. **JOSÉ MARIA VIGIL** and Mgr. **PEDRO CASALDALIGA** accept in their article that the 'Option for the Poor' may be in crisis in the Church, but they are convinced that the proclamation of our God who is "Solidarity" must continue. — **CHRISTIAN RUDEL** reflects on the different reasons — political, economical, geo-political — why North America is interested in a further continental integration. — **FREI BETTO** shows in his short contribution that Liberation Theology did not fall and finish with the Berlin Wall, but must respond with new flexibility to the changed contexts of modernity. — Mgr. **LORENZO ALBACETE** considers in his Conference on Faith and Culture the different contributions the 'Latin Church' can make to the Church in the United States. — Fr. **ALOYSIUS PIERIS** shows us how important it is for our reflections on the 'Poor and the Kingdom' to return to the authenticity of the Gospel language. — We conclude this edition with a contribution on China by Fr. **SERGIO TICOZZI**. He elaborates shortly on two important issues of the present religious situation: Religious Reform and Patriotic Education.



MESSAGE DU 5e CONGRES MISSIONNAIRE LATINO-AMERICAIN

Régler la dette immense que nous avons avec l'Afrique pour avoir déraciné tant de ses fils avec l'esclavage.

Avec ce Congrès, nous nourrissons l'espoir de pouvoir éveiller de nouvelles vocations missionnaires. En célébrant la marche de l'Église, nous vivons une véritable Pentecôte par la présence de l'Esprit Saint. Nous nous unissons au cri en faveur de la justice et de la fraternité, en solidarité tout particulièrement avec nos frères et sœurs les plus pauvres, avec les noirs, et avec les populations indigènes...

Le thème central "*L'Évangile dans les cultures: chemin de vie et d'espérance*" et la devise "*Venez, voyez et annoncez*", se sont concrétisés durant le Congrès...

Nous avons pris en charge solennellement les **priorités et les engagements** qui doivent orienter la vie missionnaire de nos Églises dans les prochaines années.

Nous voulons prendre une conscience plus claire de la responsabilité et de la signification historique de notre vocation missionnaire qui découle du mandat du Christ (Mt 28, 18-20) à l'égard d'autres pays et des autres continents, **pour rendre avec gratitude le don reçu** au cours de ces siècles d'évangélisation (cf. RM, 34). Nous voulons, de manière toute particulière, régler, sous forme de foi et de libération, la dette immense que nous avons avec l'Afrique pour avoir déraciné tant de ses fils avec l'esclavage. Toutefois, nous avons constaté avec une joie immense que les Africains avaient enrichi nos cultures, et plusieurs d'entre eux, aujourd'hui, travaillent comme missionnaires dans notre Continent, dans une communion profonde de sang, de culture et de foi.

Nous sommes convaincus que, à mesure que nos Églises deviendront missionnaires dans leurs propres régions, elles enrichiront la dimension missionnaire de l'Église tout entière. Et, d'autre part, à mesure qu'elles s'élanceront au-delà de leurs frontières géographiques, en annonçant l'Évangile à d'autres peuples, elles en retireront vitalité et dynamisme missionnaire pour elles-mêmes.

Pour réaliser cette vocation missionnaire, il est indispensable que les Églises particulières fassent entrer "l'animation missionnaire comme élément primordial de leur pastorale ordinaire" (RM, 83).

Nous nous sommes engagés à annoncer et à apporter notre témoignage **au-delà des frontières en un sens plus vaste encore**. Les religieux et les religieuses contemplatives, les malades, les personnes âgées, réalisent cela dans leur vie quotidienne par la prière, par l'offrande de leurs souffrances. D'autres doivent affronter le monde moderne, marqué par d'innombrables nouvelles frontières ethniques, économiques, politiques, culturelles, religieuses, qui divisent les personnes, qui isolent et excluent des millions de personnes. Dans ce sens, nous sommes missionnaires au-delà des frontières, quel que soit l'endroit où nous vivons parce que, partout, nous trouvons certainement des frontières à dépasser et à vaincre.

La **pédagogie divine de l'Incarnation** nous oblige à dépasser les horizons restreints d'une vision monoculturelle du christianisme. Elle nous enseigne à nous ouvrir, sans préjugés, à l'expérience pluriculturelle et pluri religieuse des peuples et de notre Continent lui-même. Pour cette raison, l'inculturation s'impose comme une nécessité interne de toute évangélisation. Et elle se réalise de l'intérieur des cultures, avec leurs symboles, leurs mythes, leurs coutumes, leurs valeurs, leurs rites, et dans le dialogue respectueux avec les personnes. Elle comporte, en outre, la conversion des peuples et des changements des structures de péché à l'intérieur de leurs cultures. Dans l'inculturation, s'enrichissent et les évangélistes et les évangélisés. Il y a un mouvement "dans deux directions, donner, et recevoir", "dans une attitude de respect absolu pour les hommes et leurs cultures, mais aussi, dans le même temps, dans la fidélité absolue, dans l'authenticité à suivre le Christ, dans une foi vivante, cohérente, et sincère, dans la patience, dans la disponibilité au dialogue et dans le

discernement de la Vérité révélée", comme nous l'a rappelé le Légat pontifical dans son message d'ouverture.

Nous reconnaissons que, selon l'esprit de Jésus, l'inculturation doit être sous-tendue par l'**option préférentielle pour les pauvres**, vécue de manière expressive, dans notre Continent, depuis Medellin (1968). Cette option inclut une dimension universelle de solidarité face aux grands attentats contre la vie, en Afrique et en Asie surtout.

Au milieu d'une floraison étonnante de spiritualité, nous voulons centrer **notre mystique chrétienne en suivant Jésus**, en embrassant sa cause d'annonceur du Royaume, d'évangéliste des pauvres (Lc 4, 1; Mc 1, 14 ss), de révélateur de la miséricorde de Dieu Père qui pardonne et sauve (Lc 15)...

Malgré les effets sécularisants du **processus croissant d'urbanisation** de nos pays, nous désirons mettre en valeur la force et la vitalité de la religiosité populaire qui devient, en même temps, source d'évangélisation. Nous devons recréer des formes plus adaptées aux changements culturels et aux aspirations de libération. Nous nous engageons dans la construction d'une Église totalement missionnaire et toujours plus pluriculturelle dans ses cérémonies, dans ses ministères et dans ses structures.

Réconfortés par cette vie chaleureuse et fraternelle que nous avons trouvée à Belo Horizonte, nous apportons à nos pays et à nos communautés la flamme de vie et d'espérance qui a été allumée ici. Nous faisons nôtre le projet d'évangélisation du pape Jean-Paul II à la veille du Troisième Millénaire, afin que, au-delà de toutes les frontières, Jésus-Christ soit annoncé et reconnu comme Seigneur du Monde et de l'Histoire.

Ref: *Mission de l'Église*,
n. 109, Octobre 1995.



SOLIDARITY IN CRISIS

A Reflection on the Spiritual Reality of Solidarity in Latin America

Jose Maria Vigil and Pedro Casaldaliga

Now We Know that Solidarity Is in Crisis

To speak of the crisis of solidarity may seem trite, but it is a powerful truth that affects us all in one way or another, both those who should be giving solidarity and those who need to receive it. Or, perhaps a better way to put it is that we all need to give and receive solidarity, because it is an unavoidable mystery of fraternal reciprocity.

Data on this crisis is not lacking, especially in reference to solidarity with Latin America. Of the thousands of solidarity committees that arose around the world, solidarity with Nicaragua is an example, the majority have disappeared. Curiously, in Spain the "political" committees have disappeared while the "Christian" committees have remained. It should be noted that some of the former committees were founded as part of global solidarity groups. Nevertheless, Enrique Dussel made an observation that remains valid. He said that in moments of historic deception, when the "scientific" hope has been defeated by the facts, the Christian hope may remain alive in the light of the faith that lies beyond the scientific truths. This, however, does not mean that the crisis does not profoundly affect Christians, especially when they give history and science their proper value.

To start by acknowledging the crisis in solidarity is not negativism. Ultimately, it is a crisis in growth. One should always remember and assume responsibility for solidarity in the light of faith.

Solidarity is a complete form of charity with an integrated, critical sense of history, politics, geopolitics and spirituality. Solidarity is charity made more powerful by the option for the poor. The crisis that the option for the poor is undergoing in many hearts and many sectors of the Church, is, logically, affecting solidarity.

The Option For the Poor Has Entered a Dark Night

Many people are wondering "what remains of the option for the poor". It is understood as the

option for the causes of the poor, and not just for the poor's suffering or marginalisation.

Some of the roots of the crisis in the option for the poor, and in solidarity with the poor, which are many, loud and total, are the following:

- * The break-up of Eastern Europe and the fall of socialism. The failure of some popular revolutions. And the supposed triumph of the new empire of liberalism and the all-powerful market.

- * The absence of a visible alternative project for the poor that is viable at this moment of globalised politics and economics. Today the option for the poor has to swim against the tide without a sensitive organisational structure or a plan to back it, and without the force of a mechanistic hope that would give it the credibility of being realisable in the near future. The option for the poor and for their causes, in this dark hour, has to carry its message in the air of faith, like a wind from utopia.

Speaking in Christian terms this is not new, it has always been true. Our "hope against all hopes" is a hope against all that appears to be true; it is faith against all evidence; it is love against the impossibility of love. In other words, the option for the poor and solidarity with them is more theological than ever.

- * The post-modernity, that in a certain sense is the exhaustion of modernity or its self-deception, has renounced the "great stories" and the somnambulism of the "Great Causes", because they are not viable or useless. It opts systematically for a pragmatism one can touch and for daily consumerism.

- * The psychological state of the moment — which is a product of the convergence of all of these factors — is of exhaustion or depression, of an end-of-the-day tiredness, of an allergy to what has made us suffer so much, and to what so many of our companions along the road have given so much, sometimes even their lives. There is a feeling of deception, as well, because many of our companions have let us down. Once the strong wind that blew the

flags had passed, many people accommodated themselves to the calls of opportunism or security.

Today to talk of social analysis, the socio-political condition, of rational criticism, of ethical evaluation, of theological judgement, given the all-powerfulness of the system and its evidence, leads to the "intolerable language" that was attributed to Jesus of Nazareth by those who were not radically committed to following him (cf. Jn 6: 60).

Do Not be Fooled

We are often crushed because we magnify the negative and are taken in by the popular perception that "socialism has fallen" and that neo-liberalism is victorious. At times we also end up believing, recklessly, that we are "at the end of history".

Faith is a "lamp for lighting a way through the dark", as the Apostle Peter said (2 Pt 1:19). And it must be used critically to illuminate the ignorance of history, the lies of power and the fascination of the idols.

* This implies a better analysis of "what happened", be it with the real socialism (or nominal) of the East or with the "triumph" of neo-liberalism. Many people, even those who earlier were critical of the capitalist project and imperialistic domination, now — introducing the vision of the oppressor — accept the version that capital and the empire give of "what happened". What this version says is that the project for the poor — whatever its name or its form — has collapsed, because it was, is and always will be an unworkable project. In this history only the project of the rich is viable.

The Cold War, in our case the low (high) intensity war carried out by the most aggressive power on Earth, the international condemnation by the World Court in the Hague, the violation of the human rights of the people in the invasions of the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama..., the growing foreign debt that prevents us from returning to the light of normality, ... all this now apparently does not exist and never did exist. Everything was simply the self-collapse of the "impossible" project for the poor.

* This implies a critical rejection of the supposed "triumph" of neo-liberalism. Because we do not see any evidence of this triumph looking at the vast majority of humanity. One can add to this that the triumphant neo-liberal capitalism does not feel very sure of itself either, given the many internal contradictions. But even if this triumph of structural selfishness had taken place, it would have represented an ethical failure of the human family,

since it would have been proof of the impossibility of an honestly fraternal political and economic project. It would have represented a return to an "ethic of the wolves" as the only possible path.

* This implies a rejection of the false certainties that are being fed to us almost without our awareness by the hegemony of the rising power. Our "lost decade", for example, has been the decade in which they gained the most. Wall Street has convincing data: it was the decade of the highest sustained profits by the world banking community.

* It means we must not believe in the god of war, the god that always wins, that crushes the other, that is always on the side of the winners. In the Bible, God changed Himself. The Lord of the armies, the blesser of the flocks and harvests, became ever more the "go'el" of those seeking justice and the mother of mercy, until He became the poor God, the child God, the marginalised, the persecuted, the crucified and the defeated God in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

* We can never lose our historical memory, which is based on our identity as a people and the self-awareness of its future viability. The triumphs and falls of successive empires form the cycle of human history. What we are living in today is simply a short period in the empire of the moment, nothing more. Here, the history of the 500 years can help illuminate the situation of the Indigenous and Black peoples. Today, these people are starting to build a new, and different 500 years of history.

* It is not true that "all times in the past were better". Not in the remote past, nor in the recent past. Firstly, because the best time for each of us is the time God grants us to build our lives. As Christians we must always live the now of God in the human now. Someone even has called the entire Bible "a time called now".

* The domination of evil is seen more easily than the hidden force of the seeds of good. There is a lot more alternative vitality than there appears to be in society and in the Church. This is true in our Third World and in the First World as well. There are many voices and forces that are joining together in response, in prophecy and in solidarity. If we do not see them during the night, it does not mean that there are not stars and the light of a new dawn waiting. Today, certainly, the conscience, the self-criticism, the will to change is more generalised in the world because it is more realistic and communicates more with itself. There are other stations available than CNN, Televisa or La Globo, thank God.

Our God is Solidarity

Always, although now more than ever, we must lay a theological foundation for our solidarity. Only with such a basis will we be able to be in full Christian solidarity and calmly defeat the avatars of history or the heart itself.

In God, in His original mystery, we see the complete solidarity of three people in one life. As the Christian communities in Brazil say that "the Holy Trinity is the best community", so we can say that "the Holy Trinity is the best solidarity".

The mystery of the Incarnation is the maximum historical expression, submitted to our vicissitudes, of the solidarity of God with humanity. Jesus is the solidarity of God made flesh and blood, life and death, passion and resurrection. In him and through him we know that God is solidarity and love.

We do not have many commandments. In fact, we have only one: "love each other as I have loved you". The new commandment of the new love becomes daily practice and a part of social life, political organisation and the economy, through solidarity — disinterested and effective solidarity. It becomes practice through solidarity with everyone, but above all with our "smaller" brothers and sisters, as Jesus himself called on us to do. In the Old Testament God asked: "where is your brother?" In the New Testament he asks: "Where is you little brother and sister?" Even more, God becomes brother and sister to the littlest brothers and sisters.

Our faith always passes, necessarily, through the cross. Our solidarity as well. Faced with the deceptions that I alluded to before, faced with any type of failure, Christian solidarity appeals faithfully to the hope of resurrection. No true life dies forever. Solidarity that is given completely is always a gesture, a celebration, of the "Paschal sacrament".

The Kingdom of God is the society of solidarity. The hidden seed, the sweeping net, the hidden treasure for many, but the project of God: His Cause. The Cause of total solidarity. In time and beyond, solidarity continues to be, in eschatological hope and in policies of charity, what lies "after the end of history".

Walker, If There Is a Road...

We must be realists. To know reality, we must take charge of it, carry it; this is what the theologian martyr Ellacurra asks of us. Always to call the changing reality by its proper name. To abandon the nostalgia for the past which will never return. We must not go "in search of the lost time". Our memory and a responsible awareness of the

struggle and the blood we inherit is another thing.

We walk on the very real soil of neo-liberalism and look for its cracks. We must find the resources that can exist, that must exist, for our struggle in the new neo-liberal reality (with certain zones of freedom); in our democracies which are only formally so (but with some democracy in the end); in the supposedly free market (where they transmit ideas and causes, as well as merchandise); and in the levelling globalisation (but where there is also a globalisation of fraternal exchanges and human communion).

Without turning up our noses at themes that would have seemed pretty bourgeois only a few years ago, we must enter this battle. One effective way to fight neo-liberalism is to fight it — without contaminating oneself — on its own ground.

This realism demands of us a **new faith in solidarity** that could be characterised as the practice of solidarity:

- In the dark of night, apparently without exit, in the tense exercise of the faith.
- Free, without compensation. It is the faith of those who point out the path and progress of the victors and not the car they travel in.
- That is always prophetic, because it keeps on believing that God hears the cries of his people and descends to free them, and consoles the poor and proclaims the happiness of the marginalised as a victory.
- That makes the option for the poor the option of the Gospel, "firm and irrevocable", according to the words of John Paul II in Santo Domingo.
- That does not forget the possibility of surprises or the unexpected in this situation.
- That responds like an echo to the extreme faith of our martyrs, both men and women. A Church is only faithful when it accompanies the testimony of the faithful, Jesus and the many other faithful witnesses that have followed it.
- That knows how to learn from the tenacity of those who have stayed faithful to historically defeated causes for centuries. For example, the Indigenous cause, the Black cause, the women's cause, the workers' cause, the cause of minorities...

This realism also demands that we search for and find **new forms of solidarity** that are more current and effective today, planting seed for the future.

- We must globalise; firstly for the most universal communion ever and also for an ever more universal and rapid communication. As there is a war of death by the North against the South, there should be an alliance of life between the North and the South. Besides, not everything in the North is part of the North of Death.

- We must construct a civil society, with its various structures and solidarity mobilisations. Today, citizenship is a universal claim. Most of our citizens here, in one way or another, want to participate. Let us let them participate in solidarity.

- We must continue being a "fifth column" within the neo-liberal capitalist environment, and make the evidence of its perversity, its contradictions and its inability to offer a future to humanity, come to light.

- Still, today and forever, we must cultivate the form of permanent solidarity among the small that reproduces itself and can end up becoming large. With many small "common pots" we can set a large social table.

- We will prepare for the future, and pass on the torch. The unsatisfied rebelliousness and the inexhaustible generosity of youth await us. Today there is more solidarity in the world than ever before. Tomorrow there will be more than today. Tomorrow is called solidarity.

- At times we will have to enrich our language to speak without Manicheisms of oppression and liberation; or we will have to change our tone when the analysis appears too rational or pessimistic; or change the way in which we do things, cultivating a confidence in ourselves and in others, greeting the bad humour of the imposed death with our own good humour; or change our perspective because humanity is not suicide and the Kingdom of God is more than the Church, and our God is the God of Life. Ours — and yours — is, clearly, the Kingdom of God.

- We keep on learning. The taking of power will be through the arms of community conscience, participative and alternative. And similarly, the greatest defeats will be ethical defeats of conscience, of solidarity, of love. The continent's most recent rebellion, that of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, still rings in the region like a cry, teaching us a new way to rebel, with broader perspectives, penetrating the different levels of society without canonising taking up arms, only canonising causes.

- In particular: here is the daily reality of solidarity, the memorable dates, the publications, the visits that come and go, the other organisations

— Christian or not, but committed with some of the great causes — the concrete help as well — campaigns, donations, shipments of medicine or food or clothing — the vigils, artistic statements, the daily militancy by and for them that sensitizes and commits them in the family, the workplace and in the community.

We will end this paper, so that we do not truly end but continue travelling together, with a neo-biblical sonnet that, in the middle of the night of the poor, may help us remember from where the day came and who has the final word. One of the sonnet's verses says that "the night of the poor is awake". All the poor "in spirit" and those who wish to be in solidarity with the poor must fully enter this ardent Easter vigil.

SENTRY, HOW GOES THE NIGHT?

Only a wreath of flowers stands in the sentry's box, the pastures are free.

The rain is late, but in the stifling atmosphere our thirst for redemption explodes.

So that God can be seen as God today, the Kingdom must be built, against the flow of other kingdoms; it is the hour when the wolf becomes human.

What happened to the land owner, sentry?
What hope is there, friends?
The night of the poor is awake,

and the Owner of the earth has decreed that all the furrows and barns be opened because the era of profit has passed.

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L'AMERIQUE LATINE

SOUS L'EMPRISE DE LA VOLONTE

INTEGRATIONNISTE NORD-AMERICAINE

l'ALENA étendue au continent

Christian Rudel

Christian Rudel examine ici les conditions économiques, politiques, sociales et culturelles dans lesquelles ce projet a commencé à prendre forme, en même temps que les conséquences sur la vie et l'avenir des pays latino-américains et de leurs populations d'une opération qui, menée à son terme, revêtira clairement le caractère d'une entreprise hégémonique.

Tous les chefs d'Etat américains (à l'exception de Fidel Castro, qui n'avait pas été invité) réunis à Miami, en Floride, du 9 au 11 décembre dernier, ont adopté l'idée de la création d'une zone continentale de libre échange qui devrait s'étendre de l'Alaska à la Terre de Feu. La ZLEA (*Zone de libre échange américaine*) sera, même si cela n'a pas été dit, sous le contrôle, la direction, la protection des Etats-Unis, première puissance économique de l'Amérique et du monde. Et même si le président Clinton ne semble pas aussi enthousiaste pour ce projet que son prédécesseur, réapparaît ainsi, à peine camouflée, la vieille visée de domination du continent: à maintes reprises, Washington a exprimé que le «destin manifeste» des USA est de placer tout le continent sous la bannière étoilée; et, pour faire bonne mesure, on ne s'est pas privé d'ajouter que le «destin manifeste» était voulu par la Providence.

Une vieille visée hégémonique

D'un point de vue historique, la marche vers la réalisation de ce «destin» a commencé, au milieu du siècle dernier, par l'annexion, en partie militaire, d'environ la moitié du territoire mexicain de l'époque. Elle s'est poursuivie par les diverses interventions militaires, suivies d'occupation, dans les États de l'isthme centraméricain et des Caraïbes — le dernier en date étant l'occupation d'Haïti, de 1915 à 1934. Le percement du canal de Panama, inauguré en 1914, avait été un grand pas vers la concrétisation du «destin manifeste».

Mais aujourd'hui, il ne peut être question de conquête militaire violente: la conquête économi-

que, pacifique, se chargera d'apporter le même résultat, la domination politique, totale, de fait.

La proposition de la ZLEA prend place dans une liste de propositions à objectif semblable. Citons, par exemple, la grande initiative, lancée par le président Kennedy au début des années 1960, de *L'Alliance pour le Progrès*: il s'agissait d'aider les pays les plus pauvres du continent à construire une économie moderne — ceci comme contrefeu à la révolution cubaine, qui menaçait alors de se propager au continent tout entier. Mais l'aide nord-américaine — capitaux, technologie, études et plans de développement etc. — visait à l'intégration du continent.

Plus tard, à la réunion de Punta del Este en 1967, le président Johnson avait lancé l'idée d'un vaste marché commun, mais il n'y eut pas de suite. Plus récemment, le 26 janvier 1990, le président George Bush présentait aux ambassadeurs latino-américains, réunis à cet effet, une «Initiative pour les Amériques» sous le drapeau du libéralisme. «Nous avons assisté, disait-il alors, à une marée grandissante de démocratie, comme jamais auparavant dans l'histoire de notre cher hémisphère... Mais la transformation politique, qui s'étend à l'ensemble de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes, a un parallèle en matière économique. Dans toute la région, les nations rejettent les politiques économiques qui étranglent le développement; elles tournent maintenant leurs regards vers les aptitudes du marché libre à permettre à notre hémisphère de mettre en oeuvre son potentiel inexploité... Le nouveau plan «Initiative pour les

Amériques» est une incitation à reconnaître de plus en plus fortement qu'en Amérique latine les réformes pour une liberté de marché sont la clé d'une croissance soutenue et de la stabilité politique. On ne pouvait guère être plus clair sur la définition et l'objectif de «l'Initiative pour les Amériques»-

Le plus grand marché du monde

Il ne peut faire de doute que la mise sur pied de l'*Association de Libre Échange nord-américaine (ALENA)*, qui regroupe le Canada, les États-Unis et le Mexique et qui est entrée en vigueur le 1^{er} janvier 1994, doit être considérée comme une étape importante en direction de l'objectif final. Les dirigeants nord-américains ne se sont pas cachés pour dire que l'*ALENA* présentait un plus grand intérêt géopolitique qu'économique. C'est du moins ce que déclarait au journal mexicain *El Financiero* (15 avril 1991) Norman Bailey, ancien membre du Conseil national de la sécurité: «si George Bush avait directement pris en main l'affaire, c'est parce que, pour la Maison Blanche, elle a une valeur plus géopolitique qu'économique».

Mais si le président Bush mena quasiment à terme les négociations conduisant à l'*ALENA*, il n'eut pas le temps nécessaire pour mettre en route son «Initiative».

Le plus grand marché du monde — rassemblant «plus de 850 millions de consommateurs achetant pour 1,300 milliards de dollars de marchandises et de services» — fait rêver les responsables de l'économie et les chefs d'entreprise nord-américains.

Il fait aussi rêver les dirigeants des autres pays, pauvres ou sous le coup de diverses difficultés passagères ou chroniques. D'ailleurs, les pays d'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes sortent tout juste de ce qu'on a appelé la «décennie perdue»: pendant les années 1980 (période qui, pour certains pays, avait commencé avant et/ou s'est achevée après) le niveau de vie du Latino-américain «moyen» avait connu une baisse sensible et avait parfois rejoint le niveau des années 1965-1970; certains pays classés «développés» étaient retombés, tels l'Argentine, dans les Tiers Mondes; l'exode vers les villes, en fait vers les bidonvilles avait pris des proportions dramatiques et la pauvreté et la misère avaient frappé plus de la moitié de la population.

La politique de démarrage économique par substitution d'importation avait fait long feu par suite de l'étroitesse des marchés nationaux qui devaient la mettre en application. Et les diverses unions douanières et zones de libre-échange étaient restées à l'état d'embryon parce que, la plupart du temps,

les économies des pays concernés par ces ensembles n'avaient presque rien à échanger entre eux. Ainsi, lorsque fut constitué le *Pacte andin* (1969), qui regroupait à l'origine le Venezuela, la Colombie, l'Équateur, le Pérou, la Bolivie et le Chili, l'économie de presque tous ces pays reposait sur l'exploitation et l'exportation de matières premières (pétrole et minerais de fer, de cuivre, d'étain, etc.), tandis que, quelques années plus tard, la drogue (marijuana, cocaïne), bien qu'illégale, devenait une des bases de l'économie de la Colombie, du Pérou et de la Bolivie. Par ailleurs, les infrastructures de communication (routes, voies ferrées, lignes maritimes) entre les pays membres faisaient, et font toujours, grandement défaut. Dans ces conditions, le «Pacte andin» n'avait guère d'avenir.

Pour des motifs presque semblables, la *Communauté caraïbe*, inaugurée en 1975, et le *Marché commun centraméricain* qui, fondé le 13 décembre 1960, regroupait le Guatemala, le Salvador, le Honduras, le Nicaragua et le Costa-Rica, n'ont jamais atteint les objectifs qu'ils se proposaient.

En fait, pour qu'une zone de libre-échange ou un marché commun fonctionnent à l'avantage de tous leurs membres, il faut que les économies des partenaires soient homogènes, diversifiées et de même niveau; faute de quoi les ensembles mis sur pied périssent et finissent par disparaître.

Unions douanières et accords de libre commerce

Cependant, malgré de nombreux échecs, les projets et tentatives de regroupement économique continuent de voir le jour. Ainsi, le *MERCOSUR* est entré en fonction le 1^{er} janvier 1995: il regroupe le Brésil, l'Argentine, le Paraguay et l'Uruguay — soit environ 200 millions de consommateurs. On tente de donner un sang nouveau au groupe du *Pacte andin* (dont ne fait plus partie le Chili), au *Marché commun centraméricain* et au *CARICOM* (Association de libre commerce des Caraïbes) lequel regroupe Antigua, les Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, la Dominique, la Grenade, le Guyana, la Jamaïque, San Cristobal, Santa Lucia, San Vicente et Trinidad.

A côté de ces quatre unions douanières existent de nombreux accords de libre commerce. Ainsi, sont liés par des accords bilatéraux le Mexique et le Costa-Rica, le Mexique et le Chili, le Chili et la Colombie, le Chili et le Venezuela; des zones «secondaires» de libre commerce ont été créées par le Venezuela et le *Marché commun centraméricain*, le Venezuela et le *CARICOM*, ainsi que par le Mexique, le Venezuela et la Colombie, groupe que l'on appelle simplement: *Groupe des Trois*. Si l'on ajoute que des négociations pour un accord de libre commerce sont en cours entre le Chili et le Pérou,

on peut voir qu'est en train de se reconstruire, sous une autre forme, le groupe du *Pacte andin*. Par ailleurs, le Chili sera sans doute bientôt le quatrième partenaire de l'*ALENA*; ses nombreux accords bilatéraux, et sa possible association au *MERCOSUR* (des conversations exploratoires ont eu lieu) semblent le désigner, pour l'heure, comme le pôle rassembleur autour duquel l'Amérique latine se rapprochera peu à peu de l'*ALENA* du nord. Le *Groupe des Trois* peut jouer le même rôle pour l'ensemble Amérique centrale-Caraïbes. Mais le *MERCOSUR* — de loin l'union la plus importante et riche d'Amérique latine — 200 millions d'habitants et 640 milliards de dollars de PIB — et aussi la plus industrialisée, pourrait être ce leader.

Les grands ensembles américains

ALLENA: Canada, Etats-Unis, Mexique.
Population: 373 millions.
PIB: (Produit intérieur brut): 7100 milliards de dollars E.U.

CARICOM: Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Bêlize, la Dominique, Grenade, Guyana, San Cristobal, Santa Lucia, San Vicente, Trinidad.
Population: 6 millions
PIB: 14 milliards de dollars.

Marché commun centraméricain: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Salvador
Population: 28 millions.
PIB: 26 milliards de dollars.

Pacte andin: Bolivie, Colombie, Equateur, Pérou, Venezuela.
Population: 96 millions.
PIB: 134 milliards de dollars.

MERCOSUR: Argentine, Brésil, Paraguay, Uruguay.
Population: 200 millions.
PIB: 640 milliards de dollars.

Groupe des trois: Colombie, Mexique, Venezuela
Population: 145 millions.
PIB: 400 milliards de dollars.

Car on parle beaucoup de «convergences» des divers traités de libre commerce, qu'ils soient bilatéraux ou de zone amenant à la mise en place de l'aire de libre commerce embrassant la totalité de l'Amérique latine. A moins que le *MERCOSUR*, dominé par le Brésil, ne reprenne un vieux rêve brésilien, rêve d'indépendance et de conquête, celui de se tourner vers l'Afrique lusophone (et ses environs) et de l'intégrer dans une zone afro-brésilienne, ou afro-latino-américaine, afin de négocier d'égal à égal aussi bien avec l'*ALENA* qu'avec l'*Union européenne*. C'est un rêve, bien sûr, qui, s'il doit se concrétiser, demandera de nombreuses années et beaucoup d'efforts, mais il y a quelques décennies, au temps de la dictature militaire, Brasilia avait fait deux ou trois petits pas dans cette direction.

De grandes disparités internes

Tout ce qui vient d'être dit relève parfois de la fiction. Les divers blocs économiques qui se dessinent ou se renforcent sont loin d'être homogènes, économiquement et socialement. Ainsi par exemple dans le *MERCOSUR*, alors qu'en Argentine il ya a un véhicule pour 5,7 personnes et un téléphone pour

En partie conséquence de cette chute des cours — perte de pouvoir d'achat — l'augmentation de la dette extérieure qui, pour l'ensemble de l'Amérique latine, est passée de 228 milliards de dollars en 1980 à 533,8 milliards de dollars en 1994. Une dette qu'il faut rembourser par des exportations de matières premières.

7, au Paraguay on ne compte qu'un véhicule pour 36 habitants et un téléphone pour 33. De même, dans le groupe du *Pacte andin*, le Pérou compte un véhicule pour 35 personnes et un téléphone pour 28 (encore que dans les Andes les proportions soient nettement plus basses) alors que le Venezuela dispose d'un véhicule pour 10 personnes et d'un téléphone pour 11. Dans le *Marché commun centraméricain*, le Costa-Rica, qui s'est maintenu à l'écart de toutes les convulsions, guerillas et guerres internes, fait figure de pays «très riche» à côté du Honduras, dernier de la liste, et des trois autres (Guatemala, Salvador et Nicaragua) qui ont connu, ou connaissent encore, la guerre interne et ses lourdes conséquences.

Par ailleurs, dans tous les ensembles économiques, de larges fractions de la population ne peuvent accéder au marché, par suite de la pauvreté et de la misère, elles-mêmes conséquence de la très inégale

répartition des revenus. Il faut rappeler ici que les 10% plus riches de la population accaparent 40% du revenu national du Mexique, 47% du Guatemala, 48% du Honduras, 49% du Chili, 51% du Brésil et 52% de l'Equateur. Ajoutons, si l'on veut avoir une perception plus fine de l'énorme fracture sociale, qu'au Brésil (en 1990) 1% de la population dispose de 14,6% de ce revenu national tandis que la moitié de la population doit se répartir les 11,2%!

D'immenses poches de misères existent un peu partout. On cite toujours le nordeste brésilien et ses 30/40 millions d'habitants; en fait, au Brésil, il n'y a que le tiers de la population intégré au marché formel du travail, donc disposant de quelques revenus fixes. Le reste est sous-employé (pour 22%), au chômage ou vivant de délinquance, d'expédients et de petits travaux aléatoires. Au Pérou, la moitié de Lima (environ 9 millions d'habitants au total) vit dans la pauvreté et la misère. Le tiers de la population argentine (33 millions de la population totale) vit en dessous du seuil de pauvreté, etc., etc.

Indiens et Noirs sont exclus

Et, à travers l'Amérique latine, deux grands groupes de populations sont marginalisés, rejetés dans la misère, exclus de l'accès aux bénéfices du monde moderne, les Indiens et les Noirs, ces derniers descendants des esclaves autrefois arrachés à l'Afrique.

Du Mexique à la Terre de Feu on comptait — estimation moyenne — en 1989 40 millions d'Indiens, les pays à plus forte densité indienne étant la Bolivie (71% des 7 millions de la population totale), le Guatemala (66% de 8 millions), le Pérou (47% de 24 Millions), l'Equateur (47% de près de 10 millions), le Mexique ayant cependant la plus nombreuse population indienne: au moins 12 millions.

S'il y a de petits noyaux de populations noires en Colombie, en Equateur et même en Bolivie, et des populations plus importantes vivant sur la côte caraïbe (Venezuela, Amérique centrale, Belize) et dans les îles, le gros de la population noire vit au Brésil. Mais là, bataille de chiffres. En 1992, le gouvernement, selon le dernier recensement, fixait à 66 millions la population «non-blanche», c'est-à-dire noire et métisse; mais les associations noires avancent le chiffre de 102 millions pour cette population «non-blanche»; quoiqu'il en soit, on estime que la moitié de la jeunesse noire est sans travail; que, sur 23 millions de jeunes en âge scolaire, non scolarisés par manque de salles, 20 millions sont des Noirs; que près de 90 % des enfants de la rue sont des enfants noirs et que les Noirs remplissent à 80 % les prisons; d'ailleurs, un dicton brésilien affirme tranquillement: «La prison n'est faite que pour le Noir et le pauvre».

Au Mexique, où le tournant néo-libéral a été pris dès 1982, avec le président Miguel de la Madrid, la pauvreté et la misère sont allées en s'accroissant à partir de cette période.

Indicateurs de développement humain

	Taux de mortalité infantile (0 - 1 an)	Taux d'analphabétisme adulte
Bolivie	80%	20%
Brésil	3%	19%
Guatemala	53%	44%
Guyana	46%	11%
Honduras	44%	26%
Mexique	27%	11%
Paraguay	27%	10%
Pérou	45%	14%
Réf. France	7%	2%

Dans l'État du Chiapas — où le soulèvement de l'*Armée zapatiste de libération nationale* a éclaté le jour même de l'entrée en vigueur de l'*ALENA*, le 1^{er} janvier 1994 — 19% de la population économiquement active (PEA) n'a aucun travail, donc aucun revenu; 33% ne dispose que d'un «salaire minimum», ce qui ne permet d'acheter, par jour, que 700 à 800 grammes de viande «avec os»; le tiers de la population de plus de 15 ans est analphabète et les trois quarts des Chiapanèques vivent dans des logements surpeuplés manquant le plus souvent d'eau et d'électricité. Dans l'État de Oaxaca, en 1990 — et rien n'a changé depuis — 82% de la PEA vivait dans la pauvreté, 53,4% ne disposant d'aucun salaire, et l'analphabétisme touchait 26% de la population de plus de 15 ans. Dans l'État de Guerrero, où l'analphabétisme affecte 31,2% de la population, 67,8% de la PEA touche, au plus, deux «salaires minimum». Dans l'État de Chihuahua, 63% de la PEA gagnait, au plus, l'équivalent de 3 dollars par jour et des populations indiennes sont laissées à l'abandon, en particulier les quelque 600 000 Raramuri de la sierra Tarahumara. Dans l'État de Puebla — 4 120 000 habitants — on estime que 60% de la population est marginalisée; 72,5% de cette population dispose d'un salaire égal ou inférieur à deux «salaires minimum»; les conditions d'habitation et d'hygiène sont déplorables et, ces dernières années, c'est dans cet État que le choléra a fait le plus de ravages: 777 morts en 1991, 640 en 1992; et 60% des enfants en âge scolaire ne peuvent aller à l'école. Dans l'État de Yucatan, il faut signaler tout particulièrement la très mauvaise

alimentation et la dénutrition, qui affectent 62% de la population de la zone de culture du maïs, 31% dans celle des citriques, 30% dans la zone d'élevage et dans la zone de culture du sisal et 14% sur la côte. Une récente étude a montré que, dans cet État, la taille moyenne de la femme indienne a baissé de 3 à 4 centimètres depuis 1950.

Aujourd'hui, les Mexicains — qui, à une petite majorité, selon les sondages, étaient favorables à l'Association de libre échange — voient, ou pressentent, ce qu'ils vont devoir payer pour être entrés dans le «Premier monde». D'abord, pour préparer cette entrée, dès 1992 des amendements à l'article 27 de la constitution avaient mis fin à la réforme agraire et à la répartition de terres aux paysans sans

Le plus grand marché du monde — rassemblant «plus de 850 millions de consommateurs achetant pour 1,300 milliards de dollars de marchandises et de services» — fait rêver les responsables de l'économie et les chefs d'entreprise nord-américains.

terre. La fin de la réforme agraire a signifié que quelque 3 millions de paysans ont définitivement perdu tout espoir d'acquérir de la terre. Leur seul avenir passe désormais par le village (c'est-à-dire les bidonvilles) et l'émigration vers les États-Unis, avec les nombreux risques inhérents au «statut» de clandestin. D'autre part, les terres communautaires, qui étaient la base économique permanente des familles paysannes indiennes et la garantie de leur survie, parce qu'elles avaient été déclarées inaliénables, incessibles, insaisissables et imprescriptibles, ont perdu tous ces caractères et peuvent donc être l'objet de toutes les opérations financières et commerciales. En fait, on est en présence d'une guerre sournoise livrée aux petits paysans pour qu'ils abandonnent leurs parcelles pour la formation de grandes exploitations agro-industrielles ou d'élevage, tournées vers l'exportation.

Des modifications fort semblables de la politique agricole ont été adoptées ailleurs, en particulier au Honduras et en Équateur. Partout, la politique de fin des réformes agraires, de suppression des terres communautaires — plusieurs fois appliquée par le passé en divers pays — et l'introduction de ces terres sur le marché signifie le démantèlement des structures économiques et sociales des

sociétés indiennes survivantes et la fin voulue de ces sociétés. Autrement dit, il s'agit d'un ethnocide. Ces mesures ont provoqué protestations et réactions de défense. En Équateur, ce fut, à la mi-juin 1994, un soulèvement presque aussi important que celui de 1990, avec marches, routes coupées, marchés non approvisionnés... et lourde répression militaire, mais finalement, la loi devait être quelque peu révisée.

Au Brésil, il n'est pas question de réforme agraire, malgré les promesses des présidents plus en plus dure contre les petits paysans et les paysans sans terre qui revendiquent ou qui occupent de grandes propriétés — et les listes de morts (par assassinats, tortures ou autres) ne cessent de s'allonger.

Au Mexique, dès le départ des négociations

qui devaient conduire à l'*Alena* (négociations diverses menées presque secrètement) qui furent menées presque secrètement) mexicain d'action contre le libre échange» avaient mis en garde contre les effets perturbateurs et néfastes sur une économie qui, malgré ses efforts et ses succès, était loin d'être aussi solide que celles de ses partenaires. Ces avertissements ne furent pas entendus — ne voulurent pas être entendus par les autorités. Le président Carlos Salinas de Gortari avait fait de la signature de l'*ALÉNA* et de l'entrée du Mexique dans le «Premier monde» le but de son mandat. De plus, les officiels pensaient que l'entrée dans la zone de libre-échange favoriserait l'implantation de nouvelles industries et donc permettrait de faire reculer le chômage et le sous-emploi, fléaux du Mexique depuis de longues décennies. Du côté nord-américain, on était tout aussi pressé de conclure l'accord car, outre la dimension géopolitique de l'affaire, il y avait un aspect plus immédiat: la mise en concurrence de la main-d'œuvre mexicaine et de la main-d'œuvre nord-américaine permettrait de «contenir» cette dernière et de désamorcer ses revendications.

Certes, dans une première étape, et même avant le début officiel de l'*ALÉNA*, au vu de la politique néo-libérale menée par les Mexicains les capitaux étrangers avaient afflué, permettant, pendant quelques années, une croissance de l'économie de 4% l'an. Mais, faute d'un véritable marché intérieur, l'économie mexicaine est nécessairement tournée vers l'exportation. Quelque 2 000 «maquiladoras» — sortes d'usines de sous-

traitance des grandes compagnies transnationales nord-américaines, japonaises, sud-coréennes ou autres — installées le long de la frontière mexicaino nord-américaine, côté mexicain, sont depuis deux décennies le symbole et le pilier de l'économie du pays. Mais elles travaillent pour l'exportation: aussi, le Mexique est-il à la fois dépendant des capitaux étrangers et de l'exportation — donc très fragile. Et, s'il se relève de la tempête financière provoquée par l'effondrement du peso, sa monnaie, à la fin de 1994, le Mexique industriel risque fort de devenir une annexe des États-Unis et des grandes transnationales. D'ailleurs, les négociateurs nord-américains de l'ALENA ne faisaient guère mystère que l'Association leur permettrait de tirer parti et profit de la main-d'oeuvre mexicaine, assez bien formée, et surtout très bon marché: à travail et compétence égaux, un travailleur mexicain gagne de 8 à 10 fois moins que son homologue nord-américain. Même raisonnement vis à vis de la main-d'oeuvre de tout le continent. Aujourd'hui on s'aperçoit que l'économie mexicaine, appartenant encore largement au Tiers monde, n'était pas en mesure, dans de nombreux secteurs, de soutenir la concurrence avec le grand voisin du Nord. Des milliers de petites et moyennes entreprises devaient s'adapter ou périr: elles ont disparu, entraînant des chômeurs par dizaines de milliers et une baisse de production, aussi bien dans l'industrie que dans l'agriculture. L'appareil productif mexicain est en cours de destruction, reconnaissent quelques économistes — et ce n'est pas dû uniquement à l'ALENA mais à la douzaine d'années de politique néo-libérale qui l'ont précédée.

Au vu des résultats mexicains, des résistances s'organisent. Ainsi, les communautés mapuches du Chili s'opposent à l'entrée du Chili dans l'ALENA. Car, disent-elles, l'Association «attentera à notre système économique auto-soutenu, fondé sur l'équité et la réciprocité» et elle «violera nos formes de vie communautaire et l'équilibre avec notre mère la Terre et la biodiversité». D'une façon plus générale, les délégués mapuches, réunis à Temuco (Chili) du 30 novembre au 2 décembre 1994, avec des délégués indiens du Pérou, d'Argentine et du Mexique, ont critiqué et rejeté l'ALENA, parce qu'elle a pour objectif «l'exploitation des territoires où nous vivons, nous les indigènes, ainsi que l'exploitation des ressources naturelles».

La résistance des peuples indigènes

Mieux que d'autres, sans doute, les peuples indigènes savent que l'avance de l'économie

occidentale-capitaliste, de quelque nom qu'elle se pare, se traduit par l'exploitation, sans aucun profit pour eux, des diverses ressources naturelles, et que cette exploitation entraîne une dépendance politique et la négation, non seulement des autochtones, mais de toute forme d'expression populaire. Ainsi, les nations indigènes de l'Amazonie équatorienne savent que l'exploitation du pétrole par des compagnies étrangères s'est traduite par un massacre de l'environnement, la pollution des cours d'eau, la destruction des parcours de pêche et de chasse et, finalement, l'obligation d'abandonner l'habitat traditionnel. Les Indiens de l'Amazonie bolivienne sont confrontés aux mêmes problèmes, causés cette fois par les grandes compagnies forestières à la recherche d'essences précieuses. Les forêts tropicales du

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sud-est mexicain ont été soumises au pillage et à la dévastation par les mêmes compagnies. Quant aux Indiens de la forêt brésilienne, ils reculent depuis longtemps devant l'avance des fronts agricoles, qui réduisent continuellement les espaces de leur vie traditionnelle.

Les pays d'Amérique latine savent aussi que les États-Unis ont toujours considéré leurs territoires comme des réserves de matières premières (minérales et agricoles) qu'ils exploitent selon leurs besoins et qu'ils défendent par tous les moyens.

L'histoire n'est pas si ancienne pour que l'on ait oublié les pressions de Washington sur la Bolivie pour que, pendant la Seconde guerre mondiale, elle livre l'étain — métal devenu stratégique — à des prix nettement inférieurs aux cours mondiaux, cette obligation se maintenant jusqu'à la fin de la guerre de Corée. Quand Jacobo Arbenz voulut moderniser les structures économiques du Guatemala et entreprit de récupérer les terres incultes mises «en réserve» par la puissante compagnie bananière nord-américaine *United Fruit*, les USA, s'estimant lésés, firent appel à des mercenaires entraînés par la CIA pour le renverser: c'était en 1954. Près de vingt ans plus tard Salvador Allende, qui entendait rendre au Chili les mines de cuivre passées en des mains étrangères, tomba sous les coups d'une conjuration militaire qui avait l'aval et l'appui des États-Unis.

Et ce n'est un secret pour personne que Washington considère comme siennes les réserves de pétrole mexicaines.

L'histoire récente a aussi montré que les producteurs de matières premières sont les perdants, ou les vaincus, de la compétition économique: pendant la «décennie perdue», le sucre latino-américain a perdu les deux tiers de sa valeur, le pétrole, près de la moitié et le blé, un tiers.

En partie conséquence de cette chute des cours — perte de pouvoir d'achat — l'augmentation de la dette extérieure qui, pour l'ensemble de l'Amérique latine, est passée de 228 milliards de dollars en 1980 à 533,8 milliards de dollars en 1994. Une dette qu'il faut rembourser par des exportations de matières premières, puisque, la plupart du temps, il n'y pas autre chose. Rappelons que les pays les plus endettés sont le Brésil (151 milliards de dollars), le Mexique (136), l'Argentine (75), le Venezuela (38,8), le Pérou (23), le Chili (21) et la Colombie (21,4).

Les dirigeants latino-américains voient-ils dans la future *Zone de libre échange américaine* la possibilité d'effacer quelque peu cette dette tout en donnant quelque travail à une partie des millions de chômeurs qui menacent constamment un très fragile équilibre social, ou bien les dirigeants nord-américains espèrent-ils profiter des difficultés des économies du Sud pour imposer leurs projets géopolitiques? Il y a sans doute rencontre et conjugaison des deux perspectives et raisonnements.

Mais l'on peut déjà — au vu des récents événements — s'interroger sur les résultats (au moins ceux à court et moyen terme) de la future zone de libre échange.

Objectifs (trop) ambitieux

A Miami en décembre dernier, les présidents latino-américains se sont fixé, outre des objectifs tels que prévention commune contre le terrorisme, lutte commune contre le lavage de l'«argent sale» de la drogue, ou études sur les télécommunications continentales, des objectifs socio-économiques que l'on peut déjà qualifier d'ambitieux. Ainsi veulent-ils réduire des deux tiers avant l'an 2 000 la mortalité infantile tandis que, dans le domaine de l'éducation, à la même date, tous les enfants devront terminer les études primaires et les deux tiers-

tiers devront pouvoir achever le cycle secondaire. Il est permis de se demander si ces présidents et leurs conseillers ne rêvent pas quelque peu tous ensemble — ou bien s'ils ont oublié de consulter les statistiques (même gonflées à l'optimisme) que leur présentent leurs services spécialisés.

Où trouver, en effet, l'argent pour financer ces grands projets sociaux? Dans tous les pays, la théorie libérale du «moins d'État» a conduit à un désengagement de l'État. Ce qui a d'abord signifié la réduction drastique des budgets sociaux

concernant l'éducation, la santé... Par ailleurs, le désengagement s'est concrétisé par la privatisation des entreprises étatiques ou nationalisées; et l'argent retiré de ces privatisations — qui ont donné lieu ici ou là à de vives résistances de la part des travailleurs — a parfois servi à alimenter des organismes gouvernementaux de lutter contre la

pauvreté, mais aussi à soulager quelque peu le fardeau de la dette extérieure. Désormais, un peu partout, les privatisations touchent à leur fin ou ne concernent plus que des entreprises de peu de poids ou de rentabilité, dont se détournent les investisseurs étrangers et nationaux. L'afflux des capitaux étrangers est en baisse: 65 milliards de dollars en 1993, 56 en 1994 et sans doute guère plus de 40 milliards cette année. Les pronostics concernant les perspectives de développement économique sont actuellement au pessimisme et, à l'échelle continentale, avancent seulement une croissance du PIB de 2% l'an.

Or en 1989, le conseil consultatif de PRONASOL (*Programme national de Solidarité*), l'organisme gouvernemental mexicain de lutte contre la pauvreté, annonçait que, «faute d'une politique délibérée de redistribution des revenus» s'appuyant sur une croissance soutenue de l'économie de 3% l'an, les 10% des foyers du pays, les plus pauvres d'entre les pauvres, mettraient... 64 ans avant de pouvoir satisfaire leurs besoins essentiels! Autant dire trois générations!

L'Amérique latine serait-elle condamnée, malgré ses richesses et ses potentialités, à toujours vivre dans la pauvreté et la misère?

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DID LIBERATION THEOLOGY COLLAPSE WITH THE BERLIN WALL?

Frei Betto

(Frei Betto is adviser for, or active in, groups concerned with human rights, labour unions, and journalism. He wrote *Against Principalities and Powers: Letters from a Brazilian Jail* while imprisoned from 1979-1983. Other books include *Batismo de Sangue* (which received the Jabuti Award), *Fidel and Religion* (23 hours of conversation with Castro), *Diário de Puebla*, and *Catecismo Popular*).

For critics of liberation theology, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of liberation theology. These critics claim that by using Marxist theory to analyse society, liberation theologians put socialism on a *utopian* par with the cause of liberation. Liberation theology was so 'ideologised' they claim, that when socialism collapsed, it lost all credibility as a symbol of hope for the poor. As a result, it is no longer a legitimate reflection of the divine mystery within Catholic doctrine.

Liberation theology does critically analyse capitalist society and it does point out how certain social achievements in socialist countries are close to Gospel ideals. However, this is not what sets it apart from other theological trends. What distinguishes it is its method: it reflects the faith of the poor and it uses the situation of the poor as a historical reference point and as the real focus of the Gospel.

'Poor' is a biblical term that takes in all people who are, in one way or another, deprived of the benefits that are vital to human dignity. One has only to read the Gospel to see that Jesus was in solidarity with the poor but not in such a way that he made poverty itself something sacred. Instead, he sought to bring the poor from the edge of things to the centre, from being marginalised to winning their rights, from death to life. Liberation theology, in the line with Jesus' teaching, underlines the fact that poverty is an evil in the sight of God. It is not God's will, but instead has structural causes. This means, strictly speaking, that there are no poor people, but rather impoverished people (because no one chooses to be poor and those who are would like a better life). The fundamental rights of the 'impoverished' have been unlawfully removed by social injustice and oppression. But when liberation theology refers to the poor as oppressed, cynical rationality denounces it as pure political ideology.

To discount liberation theology as simply left-wing politics is, at the very least, to ignore what ideology can do in a situation of oppression where poverty is the principal experience of all. Liberation theology was not born behind closed ecclesiastical doors of seminaries or universities, but rather in Church-based communities and in pastoral movements where the faithful gather. In the face of all their difficulties they ask themselves what God wants. In looking for 'signs of the times', they establish links between faith and politics, between Gospel values and the challenges of real life. This is a theological methodology which is systematised by theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff.

'Victory' of Market Forces

If we recognise that socialism has collapsed in Eastern Europe, we must also remember that capitalism suffers from an incapacity to respond to social demands. By nature, capitalism is inequalitarian and exclusive and tends to concentrate its resources. Each rich capitalist country is the product of at least 20 poor satellite countries. Foreign debt obliges the poor to give their rich creditors what they do not have. The internationalising of the economy has reduced competition to the minimum. Cartels, by means of multinational enterprises, impose prices and dictate conditions.

The 'victory' of the free market is nothing but a smokescreen that reinforces the hegemony of the capitalist powers. In so doing it transforms the liberal criterion that associates liberty and happiness with consumerism into a categorical imperative. As a result, the poor have become poorer. It is disturbing in the light of faith to realise that important sectors of the Catholic Church accept the politics of neo-liberalism. This is a policy that gives priority to the reinforcing of institutions — including Church ones — over the defence of the poor. When neo-

liberals seek political reform, they do not include the economic conversion that would ensure the basic right to survival. This shows that these reforms, under the pretext of bringing democracy, have as their sole objective the introduction of the free market — in other words, the total freedom and supremacy of private capital.

Liberation theology was not buried under the Berlin Wall because it has never allied itself with any project that could totally engulf its theme. Liberation theologians have always been critical of the actions that caused Eastern European socialism to fail. It has always emphasised both the social victories in countries that have succeeded in rooting out pockets of misery, as well as the dead structures which predominate in the Christian countries integrated into the capitalist system.

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Liberation theologians insist on the supremacy of life, especially in the midst of the oppression that produces death. They oppose those who empty its content of the theological gift of hope. Affirming the Christian faith as Good News for the poor is the supreme sign of the Church's faithfulness to Jesus Christ. It is also a sufficient criterion for sorting out who is close to the Gospel message and who is distanced from it.

Pressures from Rome

If some liberation theologians are retreating, it is not because of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reason is pressure from the centre of power in the Catholic Church. This is pressure to restore institutional hegemony to the detriment of local Churches, the advances of the Second Vatican Council, and inculturated evangelisation. In the past ten years, certain theologians have received reprimands and censure without any evidence that their words contain doctrinal formulations contrary to Roman orthodoxy. Certain Dioceses now forbid the publication of works in the field of liberation theology. Rome has also tightened up on the criteria for granting an *imprimatur*.

These developments point to a confrontation between two different conceptions of the Church.

On the one hand, there is a hierarchically centralised model that turns to the poor for help. On the other, there is a model based on 'communion and participation', inculturated, immersed in the efforts to liberate the poor and which, like the primitive Church, has integrated into each nation and ethnic group.

Even without this tension questions still weigh heavily on Rome as a result of the new international configuration. The cultural factor in Africa, Asia and Latin America cannot be ignored. The progress of biogenetics, the transnationalism of the economy, the misery of half the world population all pose contemporary moral theological questions. Even the new democratic winds call into question the imperial profile which the Catholic Church has adopted since the 4th century. And for good measure there are certain polemical issues, such as the celibacy of priests and the ordination of women.

In their effort to address cultural values without departing from their structural and historical roots, certain ecclesiastical sectors seem to avoid stepping into the present day. They cannot get used to the fact that the faithful — poor, uneducated, driven by the wisdom of life and of the Spirit — share in the life of the Church and in theological debate with a love that is no less critical for being authentic. The world has become like a small village. It is no longer possible to put up iron curtains. The electronic eye of the news media captures everything. Another factor that seems to escape those who seek to restore the balance of power is the weakening of Christianity's international hegemony with the growth of other religions. The great religions of Buddhism and Islam are ceasing to be regional and are rapidly becoming inculturated everywhere. In addition to these, two other trends are emerging. One is the growth of autonomous religious movements that are not linked to historical traditions and are, therefore, easily adaptable to the customs and the culture of new initiates. The other is the syncretism of the young, who draw from each religious trend one or more strands in order to make up their own model of spiritual life.

New Challenges

In addition to these intra-ecclesial pressures liberation theology is also facing new and difficult challenges. Its liberating *utopia* needs to translate into feasible *'topia'*, realisable by the poor as a condition for social transformation. In reality, nothing indicates that violent revolutions are going to occur as frequently as in the past. It may be better, therefore, to work through instruments of 'socio-analytic mediation' like popular, trade union and political movements. This includes the need for pastoral work in the political sphere.

If liberation presupposes a conquest of hegemonical positions, one cannot ignore interaction between different sectors of society that in one way or another influence the political self-expression of ordinary people. Serious thought has to be given therefore to pastoral work among sectors of the middle class, among intellectuals, artists, scientists, and shapers of public opinion.

Ecological questions are important. Uncompromising work for the preservation of the natural world, however, should not lead to a deification of nature that mobilises multitudes of people to ensure the survival of whales and forests while forgetting the millions of starving human beings in the Third World. An ecology that embraces all things — and that does not separate human beings from nature — will have unmistakable liberating consequences.

Liberation theology's emphasis on social morality should be extended to personal morality. Theology needs to address squarely a whole gamut of new situations in sexual morality. These include homosexuality, abortion, extramarital relations, prostitution and even the theology of marriage.

In its analytical work liberation theology must not remain in thrall to the concept of social classes. Realities like women, children, Blacks and Indigenous people require a different approach. One can no longer talk of evangelisation without carefully tackling the question of inculturation.

Increasingly rapid progress in technology and scientific research means new presuppositions and new horizons in the theological debate. All subjects in the First World have a bearing on the Third World. Interaction in all fields of learning and prac-

tical activity is increasing and shaping a new epistemology.

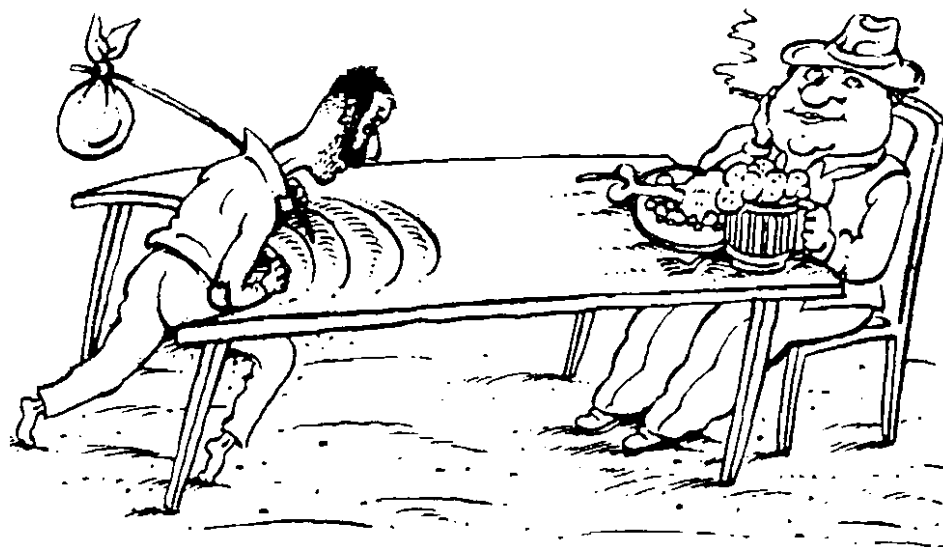
The crisis of socialism presents theology with the ethical duty of saving the hope of the poor. We must delve more deeply into the question of socialism and the search for alternative models. Emphasis must be put on the idolatrous presuppositions that govern the laws of the market as much

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as they govern the centralised power of the State. The question of democracy should always include the economic mechanisms which directly effect the population's quality of life. It is vital to re-evaluate the methodology of mass education in impoverished sections of society.

Finally, theological debate on the Church must continue. The theology of ministry must be brought up-to-date as the poor experience a more active community role in Church life. In particular, Canon Law and the primacy of Peter deserve deeper theological analysis.

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THE HISPANIC PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete

(Msgr. Albacete is a theologian at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Washington and a consultor to the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Hispanic Affairs.)

The following is Msgr. Albacete's English translation of the address focused on faith and culture he delivered at the Hispanic Convocation, 24 June 1995, in San Antonio, Texas).

Since this is the first General Conference of the Convocation, I have been assigned the topic of the convocation itself, that is, "The Hispanic presence in the New Evangelisation in the United States". Obviously, it is not possible for me, nor do I have the capacity to do it, to treat all the items and respond to all the questions that come to mind when we reflect on such a topic as this one. It is precisely to this purpose that we have dedicated the Convocation: to treat the different aspects of this topic, both theoretical and practical.

Listening to the different speakers, discussing the different topics of the workshops in the light of the call to a new evangelisation and, above all, exchanging experiences of our work in pastoral service to Hispanics, we hope to understand better the nature and the magnitude of the challenge which such a call conveys for those committed to serve our Hispanic communities as well as to the leaders of the Church, above all the Bishops of this country, if we wish to be faithful to the model of Church proposed by the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry:

"To live and promote, by a means of a *pastoral de conjunto*, a model of Church that is communitarian, evangelising and missionary, incarnate in the reality of the Hispanic people and open to the diversity of cultures; a promoter and example of justice that develops leadership through integral education... that is leaven for the Kingdom of God in society".

For my part, in this introductory conference I have decided to limit myself to only one topic

which, it seems to me, encompasses what could be the most important contribution of the Catholic Hispanic communities to the new evangelisation in the United States. I have in mind the topic of the relation between faith and culture.

Undoubtedly this topic is only one of the many questions raised by the meaning of the Hispanic presence for the Catholic Church in this country, and other concerns may appear to have a more urgent importance. Certainly, although central, the faith and culture relation is not all that is necessary to understand what evangelisation is. I am conscious of the danger of reducing evangelisation to a programme of social or cultural renewal. Nonetheless, I maintain that an adequate evangelisation has not been realised without it having an impact on the cultural level.

By its very nature, the Christian faith in Jesus Christ generates culture. The words of Pope John Paul II support this, repeated always when he treats this subject. The Pope insists that a faith that does not become culture is a faith not totally received, a faith not totally thought through in all its depth, a faith not faithfully lived".

It is in this area, I think, that our Catholic Hispanic communities can make a tremendous contribution to the Church in this country. For it has to be clearly said: The Hispanic presence within the Catholic Church in the United States is not simply "another pastoral problem". The Hispanic presence is not a problem; it is a blessing. This presence is, above all, a privileged ecclesial opportunity.

On this weekend we have come to commemorate the anniversary of the Bishops' special recognition of our needs 50 years ago; it is also time to insist that we not only wish our needs to be recognised, we wish also that the great contribution we can make to the life and mission of the Catholic Church be recognised as well, especially at this moment of its history in this country. The Hispanic Catholic presence in what is today the United States started long before the modern pastoral service to

Hispanics, and we are proud of this history. When the invasion from the North put an end to the great evangelising work taking place in this part of the country where we are meeting, the faith generating culture, and when other customs were imposed by force, the Catholic Church in this country was deprived of a great missionary resource, and the country was deprived of what would have been a singular contribution to its culture.

Eventually open-eyed Catholic leaders recognised the needs of the Hispanic peoples and committed themselves to help us. But it is only in our own times at last that it has been recognised that the Hispanic presence is not a problem, but a resource that the Catholic Church in the United States urgently needs now that the failure of its efforts to maintain the Catholic identity of the faithful in the midst of an alien culture is more and more visible. Or so it seems, since the Bishops have called prophetic the Hispanic presence.

But words are not enough. It is necessary to act, and we can ask how exactly the Church intends to respond to this prophetic presence. A valid response cannot consist only of help to survive in this country as Catholics and as Hispanics; it requires also learning from the fruits of our profoundly Catholic roots, which still, in spite of all, remain as characteristic of the way of thinking and living of the great majority of our people. In this effort we cannot forget those large numbers of Hispanics who have achieved success in American society, but at the cost of sacrificing or at least hiding attitudes and ways of thinking originating in the inculturation of the Catholic faith in our history as Hispanic peoples.

Other immigrants from cultures infused by the Catholic faith were similarly forced to pay this price, in spite of the impressive "ghetto" constructed by the Catholic Church in the United States. We must insist that we are not prepared to pay this price. The solution clearly is not the construction of another ghetto. The solution is a strong campaign of evangelisation which clearly recognises that faith either generates a culture or it is lost. The Hispanic presence offers a new opportunity to undertake this new evangelisation.

This presence constitutes what the Second Vatican Council called one of the "signs of the times", which are ignored at the risk of ignoring what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church at the present moment of its history in the United States. As such, the Hispanic presence has what we can call "theological meaning" for the Church in this country for all of the Church.

By *theological meaning*, I mean what an event or reality tells us about the nature of God's plan in Christ, of the mystery as it becomes incarnate at each moment and place of the pilgrimage of the people of God in history. The theological meaning is that which speaks to us about our identity and mission as people of God, of our relationship with Jesus, of our origin and destiny in him, the "centre of history and the universe" (*Redemptor hominis*, n.1).

Theological in this sense does not refer to any system of scientific reflection on divine revelation; rather it describes the experience itself of the mystery of salvation incarnate in human history. It is precisely what the Bishops have called a *prophetic presence*. As with all prophetic realities, it constitutes a call to retrieve the experience of being that people, that communion in solidarity, which constitutes the true presence of Christ in the world, conqueror of sin and death. In biblical terms we could speak of a "spiritual meaning", where *spiritual* designates all that is part of the realisation of the reign of God in the world. That is why we could also speak of a "salvific meaning".

How can we understand better the theological meaning of the Hispanic presence for the Church in the United States?

I propose that the theological meaning of the Hispanic presence in the Catholic Church in the United States consists in the call and the opportunity to retrieve the experience of the "preferential option for the poor" as the point of departure to understand what the call to a "new evangelisation" says about the inculturation of faith in this country.

The term *preferential option for the poor* has its origins in the efforts of the Church in Latin America to understand how to proclaim and promote the liberation which the Gospel of Christ announces to the poor. The so-called "theology of liberation" contributed the awareness that the preferential option for the poor is essential to understanding the mission of the Church. The experience of the poor's struggle for liberation is a privileged point of departure for theological reflection and the proclamation of the faith.

The poor today constitute a world made up of subjugated peoples, exploited social classes, despised races, marginated cultures and women discriminated against. It is important to underline that the preferential option for the poor does not mean only the efforts to better their economic situation. That would be the concept of *development* rejected by the theology of liberation. The *poverty* in question goes beyond the lack of economic resources. *Poverty* refers to a socially and culturally structured

marginalisation of people by the famous "social structures of sin" at the service of political and economic power. It could be said that this poverty is more a cultural than an economic reality. It defines indeed what we could call a *world*. This is the world composed by those at the margins of society who struggle for the "space" for self-determination. The poor are the "absent ones" of history.

In the Gospel of Luke, the word *poor* could be translated as "bent down", those with their backs bent by a socially dominant power. Another translation would be "the scared ones". The commitment to the struggle for liberation of the "bent and scared ones", an authentic praxis of liberation, is an appropriate base for theological reflection and pastoral work. This commitment prevents the degeneration of theology into abstraction and thus subject to manipulation by the powerful.

Many think that with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and with the disappearance of its threat in Latin America, the theology of liberation has been effectively surpassed. At least it is said that it no longer challenges the Church (and society) with the same urgency as before. As if the poor had disappeared! If they have disappeared, it is unfortunately from our conscience as we follow one theological fashion after another.

Today who speaks of a need for an integral liberation? Who insists again and again that if Marxist solutions do not work, the problems and social realities that tormented Marx have not disappeared but evolved, acquiring even more alienating and cruel characteristics for the "absent ones of history"? Where do we hear a strong voice denouncing the price the world's economic powers impose on dependent countries to allow them to play at the triumphant economic neo-liberalism? We hear the voice of the Pope and of the Church's Magisterium.

As a lonely prophet, John Paul II repeatedly says that the world faces today a danger far bigger than that of communist imperialism. The world confronts a culture of death that reflects a way of perceiving reality (better, of reducing or doing violence to reality) whose point of departure is no different from that of communist praxis and that therefore leads to similar exasperated situations of poverty and exclusion. With the power of its communist opposition gone, the culture of death has accelerated its devastating destruction. The struggle for liberation from the clutches of the culture of death is today even more urgent. Whatever one thinks of the achievements or errors of liberation theology, its great questions continue to challenge the Church at the present time.

The Catholic Church in the United States has assumed worldwide leadership in the past through its Bishops' famous Pastoral Letters on the economy and on peace. Confronting the efforts of the powerful to ridicule them, the Bishops did not back down from denouncing economic and political programmes that invoked individual liberty and national security to ignore the rights of the human person in the area of economics and the solidarity that transcends frontiers. Many American Catholics were confused, thinking the Bishops were interfering in purely political matters, but this concern did not prevent the Bishops' prophetic witness. It is similar to the position of the Bishops against abortion, euthanasia and the destruction of the family. Retrieval of the preferential option for the poor would continue the prophetic mission of the Church, especially here in the very centre of the present empire of economism.

The opportunity to learn what this preferential option comprises and how to exercise it is one of the most important contributions of the Hispanic presence to the new evangelisation in the United States.

In order to take advantage of this opportunity, it is necessary for us (beginning with Hispanics) to understand why our Catholic faith generates culture, why it is that faith becomes a "culture of evangelisation".

It seems to me that Catholic intellectual thought in the United States has not reflected adequately on the relation between faith and culture. Perhaps it could be said that due to Protestant prejudices against culture as mediating or expressing faith, the discussion has been limited to the legal and constitutional protection of freedom of conscience and the requirements of religious pluralism in a democracy. The present discussion about freedom of choice and about religious convictions as a purely private matter continues under the same purely legalistic terms. That is why I consider it important for the Catholic Church to move the discussion to a more profound level, to the level of faith, culture and the human person.

I do not think there is a more important task than this one for the Catholic Church in the United States. All the great problems it faces, even in the strictly spiritual area, of what it means to follow Christ in this society will not be adequately dealt with without consideration of this level. The "solutions" not rooted in this level will be at best only temporary, if not inadequate or unreal.

Pope John Paul II could not have said it more clearly again and again, especially in his recent Encyclical on "The Gospel of Life". Let us recall

his words: "In the background there is the profound crisis of culture, which generates skepticism in relation to the very foundations of knowledge and ethics, and which makes it increasingly difficult to grasp clearly the meaning of what man is, the meaning of his rights and his duties" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 11). And in terms reminiscent of the theology of liberation, the Pope writes: "We are confronted by an even larger reality (than that of individual morality) which can be described as a veritable structure of sin. This reality is characterised by the emergence of a culture which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable 'culture of death'. This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency. Looking at a situation from this point of view, it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak" (*ibid.*, n. 12).

It is therefore urgent to acquire an experience of the inculturation of faith. Faith is not only an intellectual position concerning divine realities. Faith is above all the "taking of a position" in the face of reality, all of reality: before creation and nature with its resources, before other persons, before the mystery hidden behind the visible. Faith is a personal "stand", from which comes a form of "understanding". Faith is an act of the entire person, not only the intellect. It is an engagement with reality. As such, the faith embraces all levels of human existence: the private, the public, the spiritual, the material, and the individual and social levels.

On the other hand, culture is precisely all of that through which the human person is expressed and nourished as such as a unique and unrepeatable subject. The word *culture* comes from the verb "to cultivate". Culture is all that through which the human person cultivates its identity as such. That is why we say that faith, as a profoundly personal "taking of a position", always becomes culture. The culture born from the efforts to follow Christ becomes a mentality in the ethos of a people. The truth about Jesus Christ reveals the truth about the human person at all levels, and faith in Christ configures the human subject according to that truth. That is why faith in Christ always become culture.

The preferential option for the poor, being a constitutive element of faith in Christ, is also meant to become a cultural reality reflected in the different social, economic, political and religious relations through which human persons discover their identity as members of a people. That is, faith in Christ becomes necessarily a liberating force on behalf of the oppressed and it awakens the conscience of the powerful to the dignity of the poor,

so that they no longer will be those "bent down" by the powerful.

The Hispanic presence can help the Catholic Church understand the preferential option for the poor not because all Hispanics are poor. All Hispanics in the United States are not poor. On the contrary, as we said, many have found success in society, and we must do all we can to increase their number. Moreover, the contribution of these professionals, industrialists, business leaders and intellectuals to the inculturation of the faith is essential.

It seems a disgrace to me that in a large part of the intellectual Catholic world in which the Church's future in this country is discussed no effort is made to include the contribution of Hispanic intellectuals. This is another proof of the reduction of the Hispanic presence to "folklore". In the great majority of times that I have complained about this situation, my proposal has been ridiculed, at times with clearly racist commentaries.

Not long ago, for example, Spanish was not considered an adequate foreign language for students in graduate theological studies, and this is still the case in some educational centres. This is clearly part of the influence of the "black legend" against Spanish culture. Behind this prejudice lies anti-Catholicism, and it is our Catholic origins that scare the *élites* of this country, who are scared by the large number of our peoples in their midst. The current campaign against immigrants from Latin America often hides this anti-Catholicism behind economic concerns. I think that intellectuals and other Hispanics who have achieved recognition in their fields have an obligation to ensure that decisions in the field of immigration are not inspired by the anti-Catholicism typical of American *élites* who fear — not the dogmas or doctrines of the Catholic Church — but precisely the inculturation of the faith.

Not all Hispanics are poor, no, but a great number still are. And it is not only a matter of a lack of resources, but of a lack of opportunities to better their life and that of Hispanic youth. Moreover, poor or not, all of us constitute a people, a world spiritually in conflict with the dominant culture. This gives all of us the experience of those living at the margins of society in a continuous struggle for our identity and dignity, the experience of being excluded, the experience of the poor.

In our efforts to incarnate the preferential option for the poor in our society, we are certainly united with many non-Hispanics who struggle for the same cause. Among these we must give special recognition to our African-American sisters and brothers, who certainly have been leaders and teachers of this

struggle in the United States. That is why we are so happy that our celebration here this weekend has been supported by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for African-American Catholics, and here with us are Bishop Curtis J. Guillory from Houston, its chairperson, and Ms Beverly Carroll, Executive Director of the Secretariat. Welcome! This is proof of the solidarity that must exist within the world of the poor.

Let us not be paralysed by those who insist on our differences and divisions, be it with other marginalised people or among ourselves. Of course there are differences in emphasis, customs and priorities! Instead of separating us, these can contribute to a deeper understanding of our common task. And speaking about differences between us, Hispanics or Latinos (and the very discussion about these two terms reflects these), our cultural variety demonstrates more profoundly what unites us in a common identity, and this is precisely that all of us are the fruit of the very same process of inculturation of the Catholic faith.

All of us are daughters and sons of the dramatic encounter between Spanish Catholicism, the spirituality of the Native Americans and the profound African religiosity. It is true that many different cultures emerged from this encounter, a variety of *mestizaje*, and that these differences characterise also the Hispanic presence in the United States. But these do not constitute a difference in identity, for in the end, identity has its roots in the religious experience of the sacred. In this we all have the same Father, the one revealed in Jesus Christ, and the same mother, the Catholic Church. This is the basis of our common identity.

From this common identity emerge those qualities, attitudes and experiences that characterise all inculturation of the Catholic faith. It is enough to recall the words of the Pope about the culture of death. It is a culture "contrary to solidarity", he says, with a conception of society "based on efficiency".

The priority of solidarity over efficiency is one of the characteristics of a culture generated by faith, since faith insists on the priority of persons over things, ethics over technology and spirit over matter. From the point of view of efficiency, what matters is not the human person as such, but that person's capacity to contribute to the material progress of society. The individual without resources to make himself or herself known does not even exist. The preferential option for the poor is above all the affirmation of the value of the person, without any criterion of importance. A culture characterised by the preferential option for the poor is a culture that

expresses the sense of the human person as (in the words of Vatican II) the "only creature on earth created by God for its own sake" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 24). This truth is the basis of all Christian morality, individual and social. That is why the preferential option for the poor proves the inculturation of the faith.

In this convocation we will discuss the most important areas of Hispanic pastoral work today. I suggest that you reflect on how in each of these areas we can give witness to the preferential option for the poor, to the priority of the human person, always from the perspective of the faith and culture relation and not only as immediate solutions to our current problems. The most important areas of this pastoral service have already been identified by the national pastoral plan, a fruit of the *Encuentro* process that emerged from the experiences of our people.

This Convocation does not pretend to change this process, but to respond to the opportunity offered to us by the call to a new evangelisation. In our statement of commitment we shall let our Bishops know that we take this call seriously and that we are willing to serve the entire Church in the United States, giving witness to a culture generated by faith. The National Pastoral Plan itself is the result of this fact, and that is why it is urgent that its promises be fulfilled.

Some will say that we cannot contribute anything until we ourselves give proof of a life in accord with the Gospel. Beware of this position. It is not our holiness that we offer as example! We are sinners like anyone else. A new evangelisation is also urgent in our countries of origin. We recognise how far we are from being faithful to the riches of our faith. But despite our infidelities and our sins, we are the people who just last night sang proudly — without fear of being called integralists or enemies of religious freedom, foreign to pluralism, threats to democracy — the words which all of us, from North and South, East and West of the United States, whether citizens of this country for generations or newly arrived from the varied regions and cultures of the immense continent beyond the Rio Grande, all of us recognised and exclaimed with one voice: "You will reign! This is the ardent cry of our faith. You will reign! Oh blessed king! For you said: 'I will reign'. Let Jesus reign forever; let His heart reign in our land, in our soil, because our nation belongs to Mary". Yes, also here in this land, in this soil, for also to Mary does this nation belong. May it be so.

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LES PAUVRES ET LE REGNE DE DIEU

Aloysius Pieris

Le langage de l'Évangile est immuablement façonné par deux thèmes du kérygme qui sont étroitement liés: le **Règne de Dieu** qui est le contenu de la Bonne Nouvelle et les **Pauvres de Dieu** qui en sont les premiers destinataires et, en fin de compte, les propagateurs. Jésus récapitule en sa personne le Règne de Dieu, il est le Pauvre de Dieu et, par conséquent, il constitue la trame même de ce langage de l'Évangile. De ce fait, le résumé, traditionnel en Israël, de la Loi de Vie éternelle (Lc 10,27) comme «Amour de Dieu» (Dt 6,5) et «Amour du Prochain» (Lv 19,18) a acquis une clarté pénétrante et une urgence évangélique précisément parce qu'il a été explicité par Jésus lui-même dans ce langage vigoureux.

Malheureusement, nous avons remplacé ce discours évangélique par d'autres formulations dans lesquelles le dynamisme kérygmatic et prophétique de la Parole de Dieu a été émoussé. La Parole de Dieu est le glaive à deux tranchants de l'Esprit (Ep 6,17; He 4,12; Ap 1,16; 19,15). Elle perd son tranchant et cesse d'être la Parole quand elle n'inclut pas explicitement le Règne de Dieu et les Pauvres de Dieu.

RETROUVER LE LANGAGE DE L'EVANGILE

Nous relèverons, dans un premier temps, deux tendances qui s'écartent notablement de la façon dont Jésus s'exprime. Elles concernent les couples contemplation-action et foi-justice. Le paradigme de l'Eucharistie nous permettra, dans un deuxième temps, de retrouver la force du langage évangélique.

action/contemplation, foi/justice

Suivant une mode dont l'origine, chez les chrétiens, remonte aux tout premiers siècles, nous avons appris que «contemplation» était l'équivalent de «expérience de Dieu», reléguant ainsi l'amour du prochain au niveau prétendument inférieur de «l'action». Parfois, le mot «mysticisme» est employé comme synonyme de contemplation et le mot «action» pour désigner l'engagement apostolique.

Ce genre de discours est manifestement absent des évangiles. Il évoque un *dualisme* qui déprécie le second précepte de l'amour. On peut noter les efforts faits pour pallier à cette déficience dans l'utilisation d'expressions telles que «contemplativus simul in actione» (Jérôme Nadal), «mysticisme de service» (Joseph de Guibert) ou encore «mysticisme apostolique» (J.M. Lozano).

Après le Synode de 1971, «**Foi en Dieu et justice envers les pauvres**», une manière plus pertinente d'exprimer la double Loi de l'amour est apparue. Elle fait ressortir plus clairement la relation entre Dieu et les pauvres mais souffre encore de bien des ambiguïtés.

On retrouve, en premier lieu, la *distinction scolastique* entre la foi, vertu théologale, et la justice, simple vertu morale, encore que cardinale. La première est d'un ordre plus élevé que la seconde.

Notons aussi que ni la *notion biblique de justice*, plus riche et plus compréhensive, ni l'insistance de la bible sur la *coresponsabilité* basée sur la communauté — ce qui tranche avec la perspective individualiste du discours sur les droits de l'homme —, n'ont été pleinement intégrées dans le courant théologique dominant de l'Eglise.

Enfin, la formulation du Synode associe la proclamation de l'Évangile à la «rédemption» ou au «salut», rachat des péchés, et la *promotion de la justice* à la «libération» des structures sociales oppressives. Péché et oppression sociale sont envisagés comme des dimensions du mal, indépendantes ou séparables, qui nécessitent deux sortes d'action différentes, l'une en faveur des pécheurs et l'autre en faveur des pauvres.

Les enseignements pontificaux et synodaux ultérieurs ont cherché à faire disparaître toute trace de dualisme dans la formulation, faisant pour cela appel à des binômes tels que «salut intégral», «libération totale» ou même «libération salvatrice», qui combinent «salut», équivalent de rédemption, et «libération».

Ce genre de phraséologie (action contemplative, la foi par la justice, libération salvatrice, salut

intégral, libération totale) a engendré une confusion supplémentaire avec *l'introduction de la géométrie dans la sociologie chrétienne*. Je fais allusion ici à la manière dont nous situons Dieu «au-dessus de nous», *verticalement*, et nos frères humains «en face de nous», *horizontalement* et dont nous appliquons cette distinction aux deux formules foi-justice et contemplation-action.

le paradigme eucharistique comme correctif

Pour nous convaincre de la nécessité de revenir au discours de Jésus sur le Règne de Dieu et les Pauvres de Dieu, il nous faut nous demander si le discours eucharistique de Jésus s'accorde avec cette représentation abstraite. Dans notre foi, l'eucharistie n'évoque-t-elle pas une dimension horizontale?

Dans ce sacrement, mon expérience biologique d'ingestion des espèces du pain et du vin correspond à la prise de nourriture qui me fait grandir dans le Corps et Vie du Christ. C'est par ce moyen que *Je communie spirituellement à la personne de Jésus*. En outre, l'Eucharistie est essentiellement un événement ecclésial, un célébration de foi qui crée une communauté. Elle trouve sa signification ultime dans le commandement de Jésus: «Faites cela (c'est-à-dire: ne ménagez ni vos corps, ni vos vies, au service les uns des autres) en mémoire de Moi», autrement dit: «Aimez-vous les uns les autres comme je vous ai aimés». La foi qui rend tout cela possible est **personnelle et sociale**. Pour décrire cette expérience, le terme «vertical» convient encore moins que le terme «horizontal».

Ainsi, quand nous considérons l'Eucharistie comme *paradigme de l'expérience de Dieu*, nous remarquons que «verticalité» signifie en fait «intérieurité», cette conscience aiguë que nous avons d'une puissance intérieure nous entraînant au-delà de nous-mêmes. Cela signifie que nous sommes en synergie avec l'Esprit, l'Esprit qui non seulement nous fait crier: «Abba, Père!» devant le mystère insondable de Dieu révélé au plus profond de notre être, mais qui nous fait aussi nous écrier: «Christ, mon Frère» devant le même Dieu qui, à travers Jésus, nous met **face à notre prochain**, spécialement les plus petits de ses frères et sœurs, ceux dont on va jusqu'à méconnaître l'existence, les multitudes sans défense.

Le Christ lui-même a déclaré que les pauvres étaient, pour ainsi dire, un signe sacramentel de sa «présence réelle», signe qui nous offre l'accès au Royaume de Dieu (Mt 25, 31-46). La foi en Dieu est toujours eucharistique, c'est-à-dire un **rendez-vous de tout notre être** avec une présence salvatrice qui rejoint notre sensibilité, exigeant de nous des actions politiques concrètes.

JESUS ET LE REGNE DE DIEU PARMI LES PAUVRES

Le langage de l'Évangile coïncide avec le langage du corps de Jésus lui-même. Ce n'est pas une synthèse intellectuelle entre deux sphères d'expérience, l'une centrée sur Dieu et l'autre orientée vers le monde, mais la Parole Vivante qui est à la fois la **Parole humaine de protestation** s'élevant des «pauvres de Dieu» et la **Parole divine de la promesse** émanant du «*Dieu des pauvres*». Cette Parole divine, qui demeure parmi nous, est beaucoup plus qu'une «harmonie» ontologique entre les natures divine et humaine en une personne. Elle renferme plutôt en elle-même la souffrance de la radicale «dysharmonie» existant entre *l'empire de Mammon*, où règne la pauvreté, et *le Royaume de Dieu*, où les pauvres dictent les priorités de nos vies.

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L'avènement du Règne de Dieu nous engage dans une lutte contre un **ennemi précis**, Mammon, en compagnie d'**alliés** clairement identifiés, les pauvres. Car Dieu et les pauvres se sont engagés dans une alliance, une sorte de **pacte de défense**, contre Mammon et ses adorateurs. De plus, la per-sonne, le message et la mission de Jésus ne sont rien d'autre que la concrétisation historique de ce **conflict**, entre Dieu et Mammon, et de ce **pacte**, entre Dieu et les Pauvres.

Le **conflict** explique ce que l'amour de Dieu signifie pour Jésus; le **pacte** explique pourquoi Jésus identifie l'amour du prochain avec le service des pauvres. L'implication est claire: **là où Dieu est aimé, les pauvres règnent et là où les pauvres sont aimés, Dieu règne**. Telles sont les dimensions réciproques du double précepte de l'Amour qui caractérise le Règne de Dieu.

l'amour de Dieu et le règne des pauvres

Aimer Dieu de tout son cœur, de tout son esprit et de toutes ses forces, c'est permettre à Dieu d'être

le seul Maître dans notre vie (obéissance évangélique). Exprimé négativement, cela signifie renoncer à Mammon, le seul rival de Dieu (pauvreté évangélique). Ce sont là les deux serments prophétiques du Règne de Dieu. Ils sont notre profession de foi baptismale et non pas de simples conseils de perfection. Personne n'est sauvé, c'est-à-dire personne n'a accès au Règne de Dieu, sans le choix de l'obéissance et de la pauvreté évangéliques.

Mammon est toute chose, même bonne, qui revendique mon allégeance totale. Evidemment, l'usurpateur le plus rusé de la place de Dieu dans ma vie, c'est mon petit moi propre. Ignace de Loyola, dans ses «Exercices», avait donc raison de soutenir (n° 189) que le progrès spirituel doit se mesurer à la manière dont nous disciplinons notre moi propre pour accomplir la volonté de Dieu qui est le Règne de Dieu. Indifférence (n° 23) est le terme chrétien traditionnel pour désigner la liberté intérieure résultant de l'abandon total à la souveraineté de Dieu en quoi consiste le Règne de Dieu. Tous les autres dieux prospèrent sur l'esclavage. Seul Yahweh promet à l'homme la liberté.

Les créatures peuvent abusivement être utilisées comme instruments pour satisfaire l'appétit primordial de l'homme d'«être comme Dieu» (Gn 3,5). Ainsi tout instrument utilisé dans ce but devient finalement un maître auquel j'aliène ma liberté. Cette sorte d'«instrument/maître» est généralement reconnue comme une «idole». Toutes les créatures de Dieu et chacune de nos créations sont des candidats tout prêts pour ce sinistre rôle.

Cependant, ceux qui aiment Dieu, les «coeurs purs», voient Dieu en toute créature et savent apprécier toutes choses en Dieu. Tous les êtres créés sont pour eux comme des *sacrements* de l'amour de Dieu et des *icônes* de la beauté de Dieu. Ils savent que toutes les créatures sont sources de joie dans la mesure où elles ne sont pas vénérées comme des idoles. En fait, la pauvreté évangélique se caractérise par deux qualités qui assurent une jouissance de la création de Dieu qui ne soit ni consumérisme, ni esthétisme, à savoir une «non-dépendance» et une «distance critique» par rapport à toute créature. Cela explique l'espèce de «sensibilité chrétienne» si manifeste chez les amoureux de Dieu tels que le Poverello d'Assise.

Ce qui est contraire au premier commandement, celui de l'amour de Dieu, c'est l'idolâtrie et non pas l'athéisme en tant que tel. C'est l'idolâtrie qui nous fait violer tous les canons de la vie morale. Voilà l'origine de tout péché. Un athée peut rejeter Mammon et combattre aux côtés des pauvres et ainsi hériter du Royaume de Dieu. Les idolâtres, eux,

sont les adorateurs de Mammon qui violent les humains et violent la nature, *contribuant ainsi au règne de la pauvreté et au chaos écologique*. Ils ne peuvent pas plus entrer dans le Royaume de Dieu qu'un chameau ne peut passer par le trou d'une aiguille (Mc 10,25; Mt 19,24; Lc 19,25), à moins qu'ils ne soient prêts à restituer le quadruple de ce qu'ils ont volé aux pauvres comme le fit Zachée (Lc 19,8).

Il s'agit là d'un enseignement très exigeant. Ce qui peut nous consoler, c'est le fait que Jésus lui-même a trouvé en Mammon une source de conflits sans fin. La tension entre l'amour de Dieu et la séduction du pouvoir est rapportée dans les évangiles comme une des nombreuses «tentations» de Jésus. Ce qui est arrivé au désert (Mt 4,1-11; Lc 4,1-13) était l'anticipation symbolique de l'expérience de toute une vie, à savoir l'écoute attentive de la Parole de Dieu au milieu d'une cacophonie de voix en compétition. Ce discernement continu constitue l'étoffe même dont est fait l'amour de Dieu.

C'est pourquoi un christianisme qui minimise la tension entre Dieu et Mammon, considérant les Béatitudes comme un idéal utopique, bon seulement pour les sociétés primitives, ou comme une spiritualité obsolète face à une technocratie envahissante, a déjà cessé d'être la religion de Jésus. Un chrétien qui se laisse entraîner dans l'engrenage thésaurisation-consommation comme conséquence inévitable de la modernisation, a renoncé au combat qui a été la raison d'être de Jésus, de sa vie et de sa mission. «Le Fils de l'homme, quand il viendra, trouvera-t-il la foi sur la terre?» (Lc 18,8b).

le Règne de Dieu et l'amour des pauvres

Le second précepte, celui de l'amour du prochain, qui est semblable au premier (Mt 22,39), a été l'objet d'une interprétation inopinée dans la parabole du Bon Samaritain (Lc 10,30-37). C'est la réponse à la question directe d'un scribe: «Qui est mon prochain?» (Lc 10,29). Jésus identifie le prochain à celui qui est tombé entre les mains des voleurs sur le chemin que vous et moi empruntons aussi.

Le prochain est, d'abord, celui qui est «dépossédé» (dépouillé), «blessé» et «laissé à moitié mort» (v. 30) par les voleurs. Dans la littérature biblique, la violence (hamas) est associée au vol, à l'exploitation ou à la trahison par manquement à la parole donnée. Dans la tradition biblique, les pauvres englobent les victimes de la violence et de la spoliation. Dans l'enseignement de Jésus, ils deviennent mon prochain.

Notons qu'il y a deux sortes de pauvres. Ceux

qui aiment Dieu (qui renoncent à Mammon), partagent leurs biens et n'amassent pas de surplus. Ils sont *pauvres par choix*. Mais ceux qui sont soumis à la violence et à l'exploitation par les adorateurs de Mammon sont *pauvres en raison des circonstances*. Leur pauvreté est une pauvreté imposée. Ces deux catégories de pauvres sont **les héritiers et les messagers du Royaume de Dieu**. Cependant, les pauvres par force, les victimes de la violence et de la spoliation, ont ceci de particulier: ils sont **mon prochain par excellence**, et cela d'autant plus qu'ils se trouvent sur mon chemin.

Ce prochain me dérange, car il accapare mon attention, s'immisce sans avertissement dans mon emploi du temps chargé et menace de retarder et même d'interrompre mon voyage, me forçant, en quelque sorte, à «passer à bonne distance» (v.31) pour ne pas être éclaboussé par son sang, c'est-à-dire à ne pas m'impliquer dans les conséquences des circonstances dont il est la victime. Et pourtant, ma vie éternelle dépend de ma disponibilité à l'égard d'un tel prochain, car, dans ma vie, **il est le prochain**.

Il y a plus. Jésus mesure ma responsabilité envers la victime, qui doit retrouver son intégrité physique, **à des gestes concrets**: panser ses plaies, la transporter, lui assurer un refuge, la soigner, la soulager, prendre à ma charge les dépenses occasionnées par tout cela (v. 34-35). Les ressources dont je dispose: temps, argent, compétence, influence, n'acquiescent leur valeur salvatrice que lorsqu'elles sont *consacrées au pauvre, mon prochain*. A moins d'être mises au service des victimes de l'exploitation, de telles ressources deviennent Mammon, source de mon inimitié avec Dieu. Je deviens un exploiteur et je suis déchu de mon droit au salut car je suis responsable de la mort de mon prochain. En vérité, celui qui posait la question: «Suis-je le gardien de mon frère?» était un meurtrier (Gn 4,9).

Finalement, c'est à travers les nécessiteux qui perturbent le train-train de ma vie que Dieu exerce *sa souveraineté sur moi*. Il me fait ainsi renoncer à mon confort, à mes richesses, à mon temps, à mon énergie, en faveur des pauvres, m'invitant à **faire pauvre pour le Royaume de Dieu**. Renoncer à Mammon pour Dieu (premier commandement), c'est renoncer à Mammon pour l'amour des pauvres (second commandement). Dieu et les pauvres sont, en effet, inséparablement liés par contrat.

implications pour la mission

Opter radicalement pour le Règne de Dieu (amour de Dieu), **dans, parmi et avec les pauvres** (amour du prochain), c'est accomplir la substance de la Loi et des Prophètes, incarnée comme modèle

vivant en Jésus Christ. Cette option constitue aussi *le contenu et la méthode de notre mission*. Nous ne pouvons annoncer Jésus Christ comme libérateur qu'à la condition de nous engager nous-mêmes au plus fort de la bataille qui fait rage actuellement entre le Dieu-Argent (le capital considéré comme un absolu) qui ne cesse d'étendre son empire de pauvreté, et le Dieu de Jésus qui lutte aux côtés des pauvres pour qu'ils aient leur juste part dans sa création.

L'amour de Dieu et l'amour du prochain, tels qu'ils sont explicités par Jésus en termes de Règne de Dieu et de Règne des pauvres, *nous engagent dans la mission de Jésus*: la transformation de notre terre pour qu'elle soit ce que le Créateur a voulu qu'elle soit:

- **un foyer avec une seule table**, où tous aient leur part des dons de la création, de sorte que certains ne soient pas ivres tandis que d'autres ont faim (1 Co 11,21);

- **un temple consacré au culte**, que Mammon n'ait aucune chance de transformer en caverne de voleurs (Lc 19,46), ou en maison de trafic (Jn 2,16);

- **un jardin de délices**, où la création reste l'icône agréable de la beauté du Créateur, le fruit de la sagesse, et non pas la monstrueuse idole de la technocratie, ce fruit défendu de la connaissance qui engendre le pouvoir (Gn 1,1).

Le Règne de Dieu, en gestation, est justement cette terre (foyer, temple, jardin) qui, à la fin des temps, débouchera sur une autre dimension de l'existence, celle qui nous a été promise comme «un ciel nouveau et une terre nouvelle où la justice habite» (2 P 3,13). C'est de cela dont Dieu et les pauvres rêvent ensemble.

Ref: *Spiritus*

n. 140, septembre 1995.



POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN CHINA TODAY

Sergio Ticozzi, P.I.M.E.

Recent Chinese news releases reveal that researchers on religion and religious leaders in China have been and still are engaged in dealing with the relationship between politics and religion in a socialist country. The initiative for the debate and campaign has been taken up by the authorities who are concerned and worried to keep everything, religion included, under their control.

RELIGIOUS REFORM

In its 1993 autumn issue, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published an article written by Su Zhitian, a research fellow of the Shanghai branch of the same Academy. It was entitled, *"Discussion of the Present State of the Reform of Religion in Our Country"*. The first part reads: "In October 1982, during the Sixth Five-Year programme and during the national symposium of the Research Institute on Philosophy of our Academy, Comrade Hu Qiaomu mentioned the need to discover the roots of and reasons for the origin, continuation and development of the religious phenomenon in China". Hu asked: "How can religion in China be harmonised/coordinated with socialism and become useful to it?" Under the influence of the ideological opinion then leaning towards the left, this kind of proposal seemed new and original, clear and stimulating, thus encouraging the theoreticians to think on the subject and spur them to do some objective research. The concept of *mutual adjustment* between religions and socialism, according to Su, had already been put forward by Comrade Li Weihuan.

Su continues: "If we follow this train of thought, we have to go back to Zhou Enlai who, in 1950, during a meeting with religious leaders, made a similar statement: He proposed that all Christian Churches should break off any relationship with imperialism, become fully autonomous, self-administering, self-supporting and self-propagating". Zhou Enlai said that religious leaders have to complete their historical mission. "All religious bodies and religious sects should foster unity among themselves, cooperate with each other and

search out the best ways to serve the Chinese people, to make religious activities more useful to society in the new situation". Su is convinced that 'serving people and being useful to society' is the same as ways and means to 'harmonise/coordinate' and 'adjust/adapt'.

Su continues: "The 1982 document of the Central Committee of the Party on *The Basic Viewpoint and Basic Policy on the Religious Question During Our Country's Socialist Period*, pointed out that, after liberation, the religious atmosphere in our nation changed fundamentally. As far as basic political and economic interests are concerned, believers and unbelievers are united and differences in ideological faith are secondary. The basic duty of the Party is to unite both believers and unbelievers alike so that together they can labour to build a modern socialist nation". The author considers these statements to be, "the theoretical foundation for mutual harmony and adjustment between religion and socialism". He goes on to add: "The National Conference on Religious Work, held in December 1992, clearly pointed out that political guidance regarding religious work, that is, holding on to the political directives and the main directional policy, as well as carrying out the proper work so that religion and socialism can mutually adjust is what is most important for the leadership of the Party".

Su then maintains that, "during the last ten years, the debate on whether religion can become harmonious and adjust to socialism has become a burning issue in the theoretical research on religion. Since this is a debate, there are varieties of opinion. For example, in 1988, during the Second National Meeting on the *Theoretical Work of the United Front*, there were people who insisted that 'Basically, this is a question of the right understanding of the nature of religion. Religion is the opium of the people; this is the most prevalent and objective present reality. Therefore, for a society which openly proclaims and advocates atheism to consider that religion is still somehow adaptable, is to have a false view which is not consonant with the real nature of the problem'".

In a paper presented to the People's Political Consultative Conference, Su stressed that the viewpoint which considers atheism to be of the very nature of a socialist society raises the ideological difference between atheism and theism to the highest possible levels. He maintained that, "this opinion deviates from the spirit of the policy of religious freedom stated in our Constitution and goes against the implementation of its principles of 'unity and cooperation in politics, mutual respect for beliefs', and for 'building up together our socialist country's modernisation'".

He further explains that there are other people with a similar theoretical orientation, "who believe that for religion to adapt to socialism, it must, under the leadership of the Communist Party, undertake a religious reform which includes a reformation of doctrine". Upon reflection, our author concludes that those who hold the opinions expressed above fall into two groups and approach the matter from two different ideological viewpoints: "the first group consists of those who are unfamiliar with the history of the work of the Party towards religion and who lack the awareness that the Party has already, and on several occasions, rejected this proposal". He maintains that the Party's concepts of reform and liberalisation are much broader than those held by many of the comrades. The second group "are those who hope that, through reform, religion can eventually be eradicated. Ever since liberation, these comrades...have strongly reiterated the need to implement 'religious reform'..."

Su continues, "Since the present society determines the social consciousness, adjustments and reforms carried out in different degrees within religions, they are a historically necessary phenomenon. The crux of the question is who has proposed and carried out this 'religious reform?' Through reform and liberalisation, our religious authorities, motivated by the love of the motherland and the Church and in order to help the masses of believers to participate in this trend of reform and liberalisation as well as to assure that religion can continue to exist and develop under socialist conditions, implemented a form of adjustment which was already on-going and related to doctrine, rites, theological thought, religious activities, etc. Since these adaptations foster the progress of society, they should be welcomed by everybody and be a matter for research. However, they cannot be construed as a request for 'religious reform' proposed by the Party and Government departments".

This debate also deals with the relationship between religion and the economic modernisation of the country, as several articles in the official press clearly demonstrate.

In this debate and, most probably, as a consequence, Chinese authorities have launched efforts to guide all religious bodies to "adapt themselves to the socialist society". These efforts were carried out during 1993 and 1994, especially after Jiang Zemin's appeal: "Adaptation should take place between religion and the socialist society". This topic has already been addressed by *Tripod*.

PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

Within this ideological debate on religious reform and adaptation with socialism, another kind of political concern regarding religion was raised last year: love for the motherland.

Patriotism, understood mainly as indoctrination in Communist ideology and love of the Party and its leaders, has been the rule since the Communists came into power in 1949, albeit with some ups and downs. After the 4 June 1989, Tiananmen tragedy, conservatives blamed student pro-democracy demonstrations on the lack of patriotic education. As a result, the Government increased its efforts to create a new generation of loyal citizens. The focus was mainly on youth in their school years and on the masses through movements to "imitate models".

Within this context, since the winter of 1994, all religious organisations have been required to strengthen their patriotic education by fostering a deeper love of the motherland among all their followers.

In a seminar for religious leaders in Beijing, in November 1994, Zhao Puchu, President of the Chinese Buddhist Association said:

"Following the 'Essentials to Implement Patriotic Education' and to carry out properly the work of socialist education among religious followers, I think that...first, it should be well planned: all national and local religious bodies, during this winter and the following spring, should carefully study the document, absorb its spirit, raise the level of their understanding and, considering both their religion and their situation, decide on a working plan and devise concrete steps for developing patriotic education so that this important duty can be counted among the greatest concerns of all the religious bodies and be properly carried out".

This was the main speech given on the first day of the seminar held in Beijing to study the "Essentials for Implementing Patriotic Education", a document issued on 23 August 1994, by the Central Committee of the Party and prepared by its propaganda department. The seminar was called by the Religious Affairs Bureau, whose chief, Zhang Shengzuo, gave the opening speech entitled, "*Hold High the Banner of Patriotism and Socialism and*

Manage the Church Well in Accordance with the Three-Self Principles". Officials of the Religious Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference and the United Front were present, as well as the highest representatives of the religious organisations. In all these were eighty-nine standing committee members and non-voting delegates.

Zhao Puchu pointed out the importance and the urgency of patriotic education:

"The religious believers in China enjoy a glorious tradition of love for the motherland, which is part of the patriotism of the entire Chinese people. Our five great religions during their historical beginnings, their process of growth and development, of adaptation and change, have given birth to a very rich religious culture, whose spirit and essence are a treasure in the treasure house of the entire nation. They also form the basis of the traditional culture of some ethnic minorities in our country. Religion is also an important vehicle and channel of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. Religious culture is a very rich cultural heritage, a precious source for any kind of patriotic education, especially for that of the religious organisations. In order to carry out this duty properly, the work for the patriotic and socialist education of religious followers should be well planned, have solid foundations, be provided with tools and materials, as well as with qualified persons and models".

Another important speech of the seminar was given by the Anglican Bishop, Ding Guangxun, President of the Protestant Three-Self Movement. He gave a few examples of ways and means to help foster patriotic education in Protestant circles. He saw the correct interpretation of the Bible and following Christian principles as the basic tools for strengthening patriotic and legal education within the Three-Self Movement. The Bishop pointed out that guiding believers towards a correct understanding of the Bible would help increase their love for the motherland. The Bible is replete with examples of patriots who performed many deeds of valor for their country. In strengthening patriotic education, religious organisations are not only being patriotic themselves but are also following biblical directives.

Other speakers at the seminar were An Shiwei, President of the Chinese Islamic Association, Bishop Zong Huaide of the Catholic Patriotic Association, Yan Zhiting of the Taoist Association and Que Xi, the living Buddha of the Superior Institute of Tibetan Studies, etc.

The main message of the seminar is clear:

The circular of the Central Committee and the Essentials point out: Patriotism has always been

the banner under which Chinese people have been mobilised and encouraged to unite and struggle together. It has been the great force to push socialism forward in our country, the spiritual supporting pillar to unite the people of all ethnic groups of the entire nation. In the new historical situation, to strengthen patriotic education and to inherit and develop the patriotic tradition has a very important and practical meaning and a long-range historical value towards inspiring the national spirit, strengthening national cohesion, united peoples of all nationalities to rely upon themselves to work hard to overcome difficulties and to struggle together for the great cause of building up a socialism with Chinese characteristics. Patriotic education is the basic process for raising the quality of the entire nation and to reinforce the construction of the spiritual socialist civilisation, as well as to serve as the common foundation to guide everyone to set up correct ideals, convictions and beliefs, a world view and set of values; therefore, it is an extremely important work of the whole of society.

Therefore, the task for religious believers in 1995 is to deepen their love for the motherland and for the Party. As a circular of the Buddhist Association of China, dated 26 January 1995, suggests, the task is to "organise within the first half of this year special periods of time to study seriously and to grasp deeply the contents and the spirit of the Essentials".

All religious bodies and religious leaders are expected to follow the work plan, devised by the authorities and consciously to strengthen their work in patriotic education.

Ref.: *Tripod*

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mission moments

WOMEN WORKING WITH WASTE

(BRAZIL)

My home country is Brazil, a so-called Third World country. Under the impact of capitalism and the social, economic and political model it has spread all over the world, the population of my country has experienced a scandalous degree of social stratification and therefore disparity.

The sub-proletariat makes up 50 per cent of the population. The anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro describes them as "non-people", "sub-people", barely more than fuel for the engine of the international economy. Brazilians are being squashed by the weight of the country's external debt with industrialised countries and international financial institutions.

The first thing you feel when you see these women working with waste and rubbish is a sense of amazement. Where do they find the strength to resist? How do they manage to stay alive?

They belong to no social class because it is impossible for them to work in either the formal or the informal economy. They have in fact been "thrown out". Somehow, they subsist on what has been thrown out by consumers.

In the world of waste the family unit is composed of women and lots of children. A man is simply somebody who comes and goes. And every time he comes he leaves you pregnant. To keep the man, the

women lets herself get pregnant and the man leaves because she is pregnant. Every child has a different father.

The women working in the rubbish with the children and usually a few animals make up a unit not only in terms of colour but also of feelings. They too are waste, rejects. Having no self-respect, they are aggressive with each other and towards other members of the community.

In the film "Island of Flowers" (second prize in the 1990 International Berlin Film Festival) some of the shooting was done in this wasteland that inspired the story of the film. When the women realised they were being filmed, that the camera was showing them as they grovelled for food among the debris destined for the pigs, they hid their faces, started swearing and even tried to break the camera. The cameraman said that never again did he want to be called to shoot a scene like this. He said that he had felt as if he was pointing a gun at these women. Those doing community work saw this as a good sign. It means that these women still had pride, that somehow each of them had managed to retain a sense of dignity.

These are women and children that are not alive. They survive. And this survival seems to be reduced to the level of two basic instincts: the search for food to sustain life and the search for sex to reproduce life.

One is reminded of the words of the Brazilian scholar Menfil: "Whenever the species is threatened, females come to the fore".

Our challenge in expressing solidarity to these women was to help them recover their dignity. We

did not want to stand before them, we, the enlightened, come to free them from their destiny. We came as friends, we wanted to walk with them, we wanted to be the same.

We knew absolutely nothing about the immense universe of the excluded. We had no rules. We simply embraced the challenge. We did not worry about making mistakes, but worked and learned together. "There is no path, you make it as you go" (A. Machado).

The outcome was a dual learning process: a sharing of our knowledge and theirs. Ten years ago I was ignorant about waste not to mention recycling. The learning process started with my physical, bodily presence in the world of waste. My hands tried to do what their hands did. I tried to identify with them completely. By the end of the first day, I had already learned a very important lesson: identification is an illusion. We looked at our hands. My hands and their hands. All covered in dirt and grime. And one of the women said something I will never forget: "Now you will go home to a nice warm shower. And what about US?" Their only "shower" was a filthy river.

And so I learned everything that they had learned about recycling. What neither of us knew, we learned together. Gradually we organised our work from individual production to production in small groups with the help of an organiser they selected themselves. Four years later we are producing all the materials ourselves and splitting the earnings.

You could feel the women gradually recovering their self respect. A later film shot in 1992 and projected

in the *Pianeta Femmina* of Rio de Janeiro shows that they no longer mind being filmed. In fact they like it. Whenever ecological programmes are broadcast on TV or the radio, they are happy to talk about their work.

The first impression you get when you see these sheds is CHAOS. The same level of disorganisation and social inequality you find in every day life. As the women use their hands to classify the various materials, a new order gradually emerges from the chaos. As they recycle waste, they themselves are recycled. They resurrect and are transfigured: "humans make things and things make humans" (Vinicious de Moraes). It is like looking upon a new creation, society and social relations are recreated. Once again life is a natural cycle in which nothing is lost and all is in harmony.

Just like the energy cycle specific to life: it is fed and regulated by the energy of the sun, the evaporation of the seas, clouds, rain and rivers returning to the sea and ever recycled with the help of the sun.

Everything in Nature is Part of a Cycle (women understand this particularly well because they feel this cycle in their own bodies).

Humans are the only beings who, in the process of civilisation whose end is death, have interrupted this cycle and practically exhausted nature to feed an industry of useless objects producing mountain upon mountain of waste.

The women of the South of the world, themselves waste, are successfully transforming a non-cyclic reality into a cyclic one. Waste is no longer over and done with, but matter to be returned to the life cycle by their hands, moved by the energy of the sun and subdivided, selected and returned. Having no place in the stratified society, socially excluded and without dignity, these women now proclaim their right to equal dignity in a sharing society where all women and men are equal and the phenomenon of social exclusion ceases to exist.

In other words humans recreate the life cycle together with other

humans, their fellow companions in the long, marvelous adventurous journey of life.

This is what is emerging and this is what I feel and live among the women working in wasteland.

Ref: WIN (Women's International Network)
Eleonora Barbieri Masini
n. 2, May 1995.

THE NUBA OF SUDAN FACE GENOCIDE (SUDAN)

London (APS) August 7 - The Government of Sudan is waging "a war of annihilation" against the Nuba people of Southern Kordofan in Northern Sudan, as the international community keeps "almost completely silent" in the face of this "genocide by attrition".

In a new 358-page report, African Rights, a human rights watchdog based in London accuses the Government of subjecting the Nuba to appalling human suffering inflicted in a "scorched earth policy". They have also experienced "nightmares" in "peace camps" where the population is forcibly concentrated.

In addition, Nuba Mountains, which is home to about 1.5 Nuba, have remained off internationally sponsored peace talks, including the recent cease-fire negotiated by former U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, charges the report entitled "*Facing Genocide: The Nuba of Sudan*".

This "war of annihilation" is ten years old and is the most guarded secret in Sudan, the report further says adding that the region in question has been sealed off for six years while Government forces engage in "an all-out assault on the rural Nuba".

The African Rights Report also says that because successive Sudanese Governments have seized Nubaland, blatantly discriminating against the Nuba people in education, development, social services

and political office, many youth have turned to armed resistance and joined the Sudan People's Resistance Army (SPLA).

The report accuses the Sudanese Government of committing "genocide by attrition in the region": "It is slowly and methodically grinding down the society and economy of the Nuba to a point where they simply do not exist". The strategy of this policy is huge "combing" operations in the rural areas in which the army burns undefended villages and loots them with the aim of creating permanent famine.

The strategy benefits the Government in two ways: It starves SPLA soldiers while at the same time forcing villagers into Government "peace camps". In the camps the "returnees", as the Government calls them, are virtual captives. They never see their families again, the report says.

Facing Genocide gives gory details of what goes on in the "peace camps". Men, it says, are either killed or forcibly conscripted into a militia known as the People's Defence Force. Women are raped or conscripted for forced labour. All but the youngest children are separated for "schooling", which is nothing but forced conversion to Islam. The depths of poverty in rural Nuba are so extreme that African Rights says it was unable to interview some people because "they were ashamed to appear in public without cloths".

The testimony of seventeen-year-old Fawzia Jibraal, who was held at Mendi "peace camp" for three months, confirms the Sudanese Government policy of raping all encamped Nuba women and girls. "After dark the soldiers came and took the girls to their rooms and raped them. The soldier who has taken you will do what he wants, and another one will come. It is impossible to count the men who raped me, sometimes four or five men per day...", said Fawzia.

Ref: All Africa Press Service
APS Bulletin, 31/95,
7 August 1995.

COMING EVENTS

WORKING GROUPS

- 21 November Pacific 16.00 hrs
 - 24 November World Debt (English) 15.30 hrs
 - 6 December Philippines 15.30 hrs
 - 20 December World Debt (French group) (Brs. of the Christian Schools)
-

5 December

SEDOS General Assembly 1995

THE PAPAL DOCUMENT 'ECCLESIA IN AFRICA' — AN AFRICAN WOMEN'S VIEW

Veronica Openibo, SHCJ

LE DOCUMENT PAPAL — PERSPECTIVE D'UN MISSIONNAIRE

Pierre Schouwer, CSSP

Brothers of the Christian Schools, via Aurelia 476, 9.15 — 13.00 hrs
