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EDITORIAL

In our first article of the December issue of the Bulletin, JOSÉ MARÍA VIGIL, a missionary and theologian in Nicaragua, reflects on the possibility of a change of paradigm in Liberation Theology. After some very interesting deliberations he concludes: "We are going to stick with Jesus' paradigm, the Kingdom".

ALBERT LONGCHAMP, Director of *Foi et Développement*, presents us with a very interesting article on 'global communication'. He shows that, despite the many all too positive expectations and beliefs, "communication-monde" [globalisation] can hide new forms of violence and create new groups of excluded, because too much depends exclusively on the idol of the expanding free market.

MARK S. LANGEVIN and PETER ROSSET give us a short update on the never ending quest for Land Reform in Brazil. The approaching presidential elections are once again a moment to feed the populace with promises. But the organisation of the Landless Workers Movement is succeeding in making its voice heard.

As in every December issue, we are once again able to present to you, our readers in the world, the Annual Report of our Executive Director, Fr WALTER VON HOLZEN. It gives you a good idea on the different activities and projects organised by SEDOS during the year.

The Bulletin ends with a very useful Author and Subject Index of the 320 pages of the current year.

BOOKS



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**SEDOS Secretariat wishes
all its readers a Happy
Christmas and many
Blessings throughout
the New Year.**

IS THERE A CHANGE OF PARADIGM IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY?

José María Vigil

Liberation theologian, José María Vigil, writes from Nicaragua, about the possibility of a change of Paradigm in Liberation Theology. This article is currently available in the Latin-American Electronic Theological Magazine and will be published in the next issue of Alternativas (Nicaragua). It has been translated by LADOC.

I will begin with a description of the external crisis affecting Liberation Theology, then examine it from within to see the changes that are “shaking the ground” of liberation theology, paying special attention to the theological dogma involved in it.

1. The external crisis facing liberation theology

In the first place, there is a fall in the production of materials on liberation theology (LT). Theologians are writing very little, meeting very little and with fewer people. When they do meet they say nothing in public. All that is heard is their silence. Neoliberalism and “globalisation”, which are enemies of the poor and are in full upswing, are not being discussed today by theologians the same way they discussed the enemies of the poor in the past (military dictatorship, and capitalism at that time).

Together with the silence of theologians is the silence of the many courses, workshops and formation seminars on current reality and “theological renewal” that were held throughout the continent only a few years ago and have now disappeared. There are also examples of theological content being toned down, with authors avoiding the issues that provoked the greatest amount of criticism.

Instead of concentrating on the theologians, other analysts have focused on the grassroots base of LT, the base Christian communities, saying that they are in “recession”, that maybe they are too elitist and have not managed to embed themselves in the social fabric.

Others say that LT’s language is no longer appropriate for today: It is no longer pertinent to talk about imperialism, revolution or the poor as historic subjects. LT supported an imaginary social revolution that has been overcome.

Finally, there are others who say LT’s silence is not only understandable, but that it is the most coherent approach because it is not the time to denounce or make prophetic proclamations. It is time for a “sapiential” silence that speaks to daily life not with words but with actions. “It is not a time for prophecy but for wisdom”, they say.

If we transcend the external symptoms mentioned above we can enter into LT’s internal situation and undertake a detailed examination of the changes we are feeling in the world today.

2. Changes at the level of mediations

2.1. Socio-analytical mediation: Societal Utopia

LT never had its own model of society, an ideological socio-political recipe that was proposed as necessary for society. What it did and does have is a Christian utopia that serves as a guide to move history forward. Nevertheless, many of those people who felt inspired by LT or sympathised with it were politically involved in liberation strategies coming from the left wing and at the time interpreted this as a concrete practice within the spirit of LT without recognising the sometimes blurred borders between ideological mediations (necessarily changing according to the socio-political context) and theological positions (permanent). This led some people to the conclusion that the crisis within certain ideologies also meant a crisis in the theological positions closest to them. In each case, the crisis in the societal model inspired by socialism is inevitably reflected in LT, but this is in its practical references not in its principles.

As we move ahead and keep up with the pulse of today’s world, we will be creating, although not perceptibly, the references to the new mediations of the utopia that is on the horizon, which will have to follow “another globalisation” defined by the resistance and struggle against the principal sign of our time: neoliberalism.

2.2. *Socio-analytical mediation: Analytic appraisal of today's society*

For some time we have been hearing that “the social sciences are in crisis”. The “dependence theory” was abandoned, but it has not been easy to substitute it with another theory and the vacuum that this produced will continue in some way. In addition, the neoliberal analytic strategies have gained ground and hegemony.

Without any secure analytical instrument we have been forced to see reality from the perspective of contradictory analyses. It is easy for us to start doubting and to end up thinking, along with the neoliberal economists, that the poverty in poor nations is not due to exploitation. Our era is one in which people are somewhat sceptical about the possibility of eliminating poverty. From simple economic mechanisms we begin to believe that poverty is inevitable and because it is inevitable it cannot be morally perverse. There is no need for prophetic critiques, but for a silent form of welfare. All of this can be presented before us as “evidence” from social analysis, something that is simply “scientific”, above all forms of “ideology”.

But the main question in social analysis is neither strictly scientific, nor theological. Today, it is ridiculous — and unnecessary to maintain that there are “neutral sciences”. Any choice of a tool for social analysis depends on a fundamental ethical and political option, and in this sense leads to a theological option as well.

From the option for the poor (which also guides us when we chose the scientific instrument to be used in social analysis) we cannot accept that the terrible inequality that exists in the world today is not ethically perverse, regardless of the mutations that technology has introduced to the production process, the spectacular economic growth of the “Dragons of South-eastern Asia” or the complexity of our reality. We recognise that there are substantial changes in some areas, but our perception is that basic structural problems continue to exist (qualitatively) and have even worsened (quantitatively) in their most troubling aspects.

We have greater reasons — for more important evidence — that come before the supposed “scientific certainties”. We cannot accept the idolatry of neoliberal economic “scientific criteria”, as we were not able to accept the “scientific certainties” of Marxism. In the face of these kinds of “scientific reasons”, we have “utopian reasons” that are more powerful (God, justice, compassion, the universal destiny of the earth's goods, the centrality of the

person, the non-absolute character of private property...).

We reject a “theology of the inevitable”, a “culture of desperation”, the idea that there is no way out and that we have arrived at “the end of history”.

We are not against development, but want “another” development, another model, based on human ethical values. We do not want a development model designed with profit as the supreme value (as “God”). We prefer, for example, a development model which creates more jobs instead of offering higher profits. And we know that what we are told is impossible is not so in reality, but only in terms of the current environment that demands a level of “confidence” in order to attract investment capital.

When we end up thinking that this level of profit is “natural”, or that the high level of inequality in our world is not ethically repugnant, we have introduced into our analysis the neoliberal “scientific” reality created from the interest of capital that is “not concerned for the affliction of my people” (cf. Am 6:6) and has no feeling for the fate of the majority. Adopting this analysis is not only scientific or socio-analytic, but ethical, and by extension, moral and theological.

It is true that some processes of economic transformation, above all from technological advances, can result in an apparent independence of the productive processes in relation to the exploitation of raw materials and manual labour, which previously were the principal contribution of the Third World to world economies. But this transformation can never forget the historic roots that allowed it to happen, which are not eliminated by the simple acquisition of technology that will supposedly emancipate the productive process from socio-labour concerns.

An uneven distribution of wealth, which continues to grow, as acute as that which exists in the world today is unjust, even in the hypothetical case that there does not exist a “causal” relationship between the two. A rich man who is just cannot stand next to a poor man: This is what we are told in the parable of Lazarus and what Matthew insinuated (cf. Mt 25:31).

2.3. *At the level of the logic employed: A Symbolic reason*

People have been insisting for some time that we move from the dominance of the rational mediation (modern and critical) used by LT to a symbolic logic. Maybe because of its own idiosyncrasies, and the historical context with which it has been in constant dialogue, LT has given special relevance to socio-economic-political aspects (supported by its

passion for justice), which has reinforced the use of this kind of logic. And maybe because of all of this — without it having been historically avoidable — and maybe even because of a lack of time, it was not possible to establish a fruitful dialogue with grassroots culture, which has another rationality.

The modern sensitivity to cultural issues, which is taking on force in the Church and in theology, has made us discover that it is necessary to broaden our mediation and pay attention to the symbolic in theology, at the epistemological level, and even more so pastorally and pedagogically.

Although this intuition, small but growing, is presented at times as though it were a rupture, confusing theology with pastoral and pedagogic work, it is not really an alternative current, but an alternative that has been added, broadened, strengthened and defined. The negative aspect has not been the logical mediation used by LT, but that it was used unilaterally. In relation to everything else, it would not only be absurd, but impossible, to attempt to create a “blank slate” of everything that has been created and start from zero with a supposed “symbolic reasoning” taken from a different cultural universe. In any case, this promising intuition is still a risk in that consciously or unconsciously it could reorient LT to be more cultural and less liberating.

2.4. *At the new imaginary level*

The world of the “imaginary” is not exclusive to theology but pertains to all human existence. Every culture, every society, every era, every hour in history... has its own imagination. And the imaginary of one time fades and is replaced, as eras, societies and the hours in history pass. It is evident that LT, precisely because it is a theology that comes from life, society and history, and is incarnated in the here and now, is generous with references to reality and social imagery. These references put a “date” on the texts, which are not written on the margins of history and “for all eternity”. The abstract theologies, the classics as well as the current writings, are those without any reference to the reality. They are on the margin of the signs of the times, based on a speculative laboratory that is distant from life and history and goes beyond reality.

When the imaginary evolves, grows, changes, is given other feelings, collapses, the LT texts are going to reflect this imbalance. Its references, out of context at the current time, will remain as “minutes” of the commitment this theology had to reality and its time. When time goes by only a superficial glance will confuse the permanent theological context of a text with the references to the reality at the time it

was written. Only the theologies that do not make reference to reality are free from this problem.

If today’s imagery has profoundly changed with the events of the past few years, it is logical that these changes will be reflected in the texts of the last decade. It is the price that LT has to pay — and willingly — for the privilege of being a theology incarnated and for life. Evidently, the new LT creations, faithful to the permanent charism of the incarnation of this theology, should frame its references in the new imagery that is evolving, and should contribute to its creation, but it cannot stop being a living theology full of practical and theological references.

2.5. *At the level of widening subjects, perspectives and new fields*

Years ago, even before the historic changes which we have just discussed, there was talk of emerging subjects: principally Indigenous peoples, Blacks and Women.

In LT’s first years (it is worth remembering that it is still a very young form of theology) all of these subjects fell under the perspective of socio-economic poverty. It certainly highlighted that Women were “doubly oppressed” as women and poor, and that Indigenous people and Blacks were “the poorest of the poor”. This was true, but it was not the full truth. It is not only that indigenous peoples, Blacks and Women are oppressed and even suffer multiple oppression, but that they are the “other”, they are “different” and, as such, have something special to contribute.

There is a broadening of the perspective on two fronts. First, there is a broadening of the perspective of oppression, which is not only socio-economic but also ethnic, cultural, gender-based, etc. Second, theology is enriched by incorporating other perspectives: anthropological, cultural, gender (which cannot be done fully without the participation of these subjects). New fields make themselves present in LT with force: cultures, inculturation, women, feminism, theology of the body, indigenous theology, dialogue with pre-Colombian and African religions, ecology, etc. This broadening of the perspective inevitably redefines the future of LT in its different branches.

We also need to mention here what we discussed earlier in relation to “symbolic reason”: it is not about an “alternative option” but an “additional option”, not only in relation to the past but also what is new. It is a broadening of the concept of subjects and a strengthening of the oppression-liberation concept, which will not only be considered from the economic perspective and will produce new statements. There should be no confusion between

this broadening and strengthening of LT with its “dissolving” into a feminist, Indigenous, Black or ecological theology (although they are liberating). These new statements do not give us an excuse not to pay attention to the classical perspective (of economic poverty), which has not only lost ground, but poverty has increased both qualitatively and quantitatively.

2.6. *At the level of praxis: The liberation strategy*

The militants of the past decade said (at the level of praxis both within and outside LT) that the strategy for liberation was the “individual emancipation of one country after another from the capitalist system by taking power”. It was the “domino theory: If Nicaragua won, El Salvador would win, Guatemala would follow”. A few years ago, the domino theory worked but in the opposite way, contrary of what these militants had hoped. In today’s world, which is so different, that global strategy is no longer viable.

It is obvious that a liberation strategy cannot pursue the emancipation of a country or take power through arms, but must create a new power through civil society, from within. Strategies and paths different from those of only a few years ago need to be followed to achieve the same goal of liberation. Some actions that were revolutionary are considered reformist today and *vice versa*. Objectives that were a priority in the last decades, today are considered secondary or have disappeared. The “paradigm” (if we understand this word as the “historic liberation strategy”) has certainly changed. But if a liberation strategy has disappeared another needs to be found, and if it is not possible to find it then it has to be invented. What has broken down is the model for a liberation strategy, not liberation itself.

Only naïve people “toss out the baby with the bath water”. And only through this naïveté can one confuse the break down of a strategy with the break down of the utopia of liberation, of the Kingdom! The strategy was only a simple method of achieving this utopia. There are people who when they do not see a way out (or do not want to see it) do not see the need for a way out. There are people who cannot see a clear strategy for liberation today, so they do not see the need for a historic praxis of transformation, despite the fact that there is more need for this today than before.

3. *Changes at the level of systematic theology?*

For the past few years people have been talking about a “paradigm shift”, even in LT. By talking about a “paradigm shift” they are adopting an image

from the world of science. It is said that there are two moments in science. The first is a time of stability, of homogenous growth: people research, discover, create new aspects and issues, and the results are added to the body of accumulated science without questioning the general concept, the global framework to which everything subscribes. But there are other times when the scientists perceive that something is wrong at the foundation, that they cannot continue a simple lineal development, but that the global ordering of things needs to be changed. These are times of “paradigm shift”.

Apart from the concrete epistemological terminology, the use of the concept “paradigm” is not precise, but is very flexible, metaphoric or analogical. People talk about a “paradigm shift” for almost everything, referring as much to a change in the model of society as to changes in the imaginary, logic and the liberation strategy.

Paradigms go beyond the diversity of spiritual currents, go deeper than the peculiarities of each school of theology, are above mere changes in context to which one or another theology may feel affinity. Different schools can move within the same paradigm. A theological paradigm, in the strong sense of the word, is found for us at the level of the important interpretations of Christianity, what are called the “interpretation” of Christianity. We want to refer concretely to the most profound level of systematic theology, although we do not deny that paradigms can be discussed at more superficial levels.

The “interpretations of Christianity” as theological paradigms

We are going to limit the discussion to the best known interpretations.

— There is a doctrinal-theoretic interpretation, or reading, of Christianity. In this interpretation God is perceived as the Truth who has come to reveal himself to us and our answer in faith to him implies, above everything else, an intellectual acceptance of the truths revealed by him and given to the Church. This means living “in the faith of the Church”, from which we are separated by heresy or heterodoxies. This interpretation has been prevalent in the Church not only during the time of the Inquisition but in many other times when being or not being Christian has been consistent with accepting certain “truths” considered to be the “depository” of the faith (orthodoxy).

— There is a moralist reading, which conceives the history of salvation as a moral test that God has given to humanity, which is between grace and sin, and leads us to a final prize or punishment in relation

to the merits or sins we have accumulated. More than anything else Christian life is a moral test, which does not stem from a real “mission” in history or an essential task. This world is simply a “chance to see what we deserve”, and once it is over the final destiny will either be fire or we will pass on to eternal life, the only truth that matters, which has little continuity to what we have lived in our personal identity (hetero- salvation).

— There is a ontological-metaphysical interpretation that places salvation on a separate higher plane, which is measured sacramentally. Salvation is supernatural and is played out in “a life of grace”. We participate in this through the Mass and a “spiritual life” (sacraments, prayer), which is central to Christian living. Real truth is found in the supernatural and salvation is achieved by participating in this “other true world”, compared to which our world is shadows and transitory. In this “other world”, which is outside of history, the Christian mission finds its reference point in this interpretation of Christianity.

— There is a historic reading: Reality is conceived as the history of salvation and, simultaneously, as the salvation of history. It is a history that moves linearly, although with ups and downs, toward a goal. “God has a dream”, and has proposed a utopia to human beings, making this their task in history. The Christian mission does not separate us from history, but places us in it. Eschatology and the incarnation are not opposites, but come together: we will get to the future world by turning the present into the future. The person who escapes from this world is not more eschatological than the person who moves it forward (towards the eschaton). The ground of this history is the only path we have to reach the heaven of the future. Salvation is made in history.

— These interpretations are not only found in Christianity but in religions in general. Furthermore, within each religion, including Christianity, we need to recognise the different interpretations. It should be stated that while no interpretation is completely false they cannot be arbitrarily interchanged. Today, it is clear that of all the readings, the historical is that which is least an interpretation and the closest to the life lived by Jesus.

— In each of these readings God is experienced in a different way and the reality of salvation and the mission given human beings is conceived differently. In each of these interpretations there are also lineal, homogeneous and additional developments. Moving from one interpretation to another implies a rupture, a global restructuring, a “paradigm shift”. The different readings of Christianity are “paradigms” in

the strongest sense of the word. When we talk about the crisis in LT we should refer to its underlying paradigm. What is its interpretation, its paradigm?

— Evidently, LT corresponds to the historic interpretation of Christianity. The strongest opposition it has faced and faces comes from readings that are profoundly ahistoric. The paradigm crisis or conflict is not new: the conflict that LT provoked from the beginning has to do with its paradigm coming into contact with the paradigms of other theologies. It is not about minor differences or different schools of thought, but a global diversity, a paradigm. It is quite possible that some of the people who say we need to move ahead and change the paradigm are doing nothing more than trying to return to an old paradigm.

Toward LT's central paradigm

Leaving this point here, we can move forward a bit more into LT's paradigm to see if there really is a need for a paradigm shift within this theology.

In the 1950's, there was a famous debate in the pages of the ‘Dieu Vivant’ magazine. Those were the critical years after World War II, and the debate was about the attitude of Christians in the modern world. The debate divided participants into two categories: the eschatologists and the incarnationists. The first group, among whom were found Danielou and Urs von Balthasar, were in favour of a Church that gave witness to the transcendentalness of the spirit and the need to abandon “the things of this world”. The second group, which included Chenu, Teilhard de Chardin and the movement of worker-priests, insisted on the need for a Church incarnated in reality that could give witness to an historic commitment. The two poles, perceived as opposites in the debate, were eschatology and incarnation.

The eschatologists highlighted the exclusive primacy of the spiritual, abandoning all historic commitments that could take away from the spiritual and the transcendental. In their opinion, human action is nothing more than an “occasion” that “deserves” to be rewarded in eternal life, but does not have a saving value in itself. Eternal life is strictly a gift from God, and our world and our actions are destined for the fire when the *parusia* arrives. Salvation will be a pure gift from God in a complete rupture (heterosalvation) from what we lived in this world.

The incarnationists, on the contrary, placed their emphasis on historic commitment, in the incarnation, in being present in this world. In their opinion, human action itself has a saving value, our historic actions are already salvific (homosalvation).

The debate was not entirely new. The terms had been proposed theologically at other times in history, but in our century they were proposed within the framework of the “relations between eschatology and history”. A solution to the debate would not arrive until the Second Vatican Council. The Council brought the debate to a close with probably the most ingenious solution to the problem: the synthesis solution.

If eschatology and history had also been seen as opposite dimensions, Vatican II not only found them compatible but submerged within each other. The debate had been seen as a dilemma: move toward the transcendental that is not part of this world or opt for the immanence that forgets trans-historic transcendentalism (eschatology or incarnation). The Council discovered synthesis. This was possible given the transformations that had taken place recently in the eschatological proposals. If being eschatological before meant having to be separate from the world and pay no attention to history, in the reformulation of eschatology it was discovered that incarnation in history was the best path to arrive at eschatology: the more eschatological, the more historical”. The people who have the least interest in history are not the most eschatological, the most eschatological are the people who fervently try to reach their eschaton, the Kingdom. The greatest eschatological sign became the strongest historical commitment. The new proposals between eschatology and history reflected in the Council opened the door to the recuperation of the “historical interpretation” of Christianity.

How did LT arise in this context? With what paradigm?

At the foundation was a rediscovery of the historic eschatological character of Jesus’ message that had started at the beginning of the century and had remained within the walls of the European universities. The “return of the historic Jesus” brought the reformulation of the direct relationship between eschatology and history to the forefront. In this context, the rediscovery of the Kingdom as the *ipsissima verba lesu* and as the absolute center of Jesus’ preaching (*ipsissima intentio lesu*) allowed for the rediscovery of the centrality of the Kingdom as a Christological basis for the historical interpretation of Christianity. The inevitable perception of a preference — even theological — for the poor led to the rest. As such, LT rose with a paradigm whose essential elements are:

- * The historic-eschatological interpretation of Christianity, which includes the primacy of a praxis for historical transformation, integration (not dual-

ism), the oneness of history, transcendency in the immanence.

- * The centrality of the Kingdom: The theological and practical recuperation of the absolute character Jesus gave to the Kingdom. Following Jesus in his own faith.

- * The option for justice, for those who suffer injustice, with an emphasis on placing ourselves in the social place of the victims of injustice.

This is the “major paradigm” of LT, its theological-systematic skeleton. Within this framework there can be diverse schools of thought, currents and ways of acting, but if they fit within this model they are part of LT. There can be positions that are more committed and those that are contemplative; some can carry out the historic transformation through socio-political action and others through more symbolic actions: some may adopt a language or imagery that is more militant-utopian and others may adopt the “disenchanted realism” of our times. But if they have the essential elements of this paradigm, they are essential LT. And if they lack any of these essential elements they are not LT, although they might call themselves that.

If we wanted to express the paradigm in one word it would be “Kingdom”. This would be LT’s paradigm because, in reality, it is the paradigm of Jesus. While we have an historical reading of reality, with the Kingdom of God as the omnicentric utopia and we are on the side of the poor, we are within LT.

A paradigm shift in LT?

At the level of systematic theology, we need to ask ourselves if there is a paradigm shift in LT.

While still respecting the vision others have of Christianity, LT has developed in its still short history such a conviction that it could be said that it has imposed upon itself from within an internal force that is “tenacious enough to see what is invisible” (cf. Heb 11:27). LT has not focused on something lateral: a particular devotion, concrete sacrament, dimension, facet or element. It is a theology of universal Christianity, and what is profoundly human, we would say. It has not developed by taking steps outside, but within, moving towards the Christian mystery. It is a theology “centered on the central”, of the mission of Jesus, his message, cause, passion and utopia — the Kingdom!

When a theology has achieved an experience this profound, which has been sealed with martyrs, it has passed the point of no return. The question is: what does it carry with it, something optional or something inadmissible? Is it possible to stop believing in something that has carried away the soul? Can some-

one move to the periphery after having touched the centre?

a) There are many interpretations of Christianity. We cannot say that the historic interpretation is one among others, interchangeable, but that for us it is the closest to Jesus. The historic reading has revealed itself as the least interpretable and is the closest to what is revealed in Jesus. Is the adoption of this interpretation optional or no? Can we change this element of the paradigm?

LT has the centrality of the Kingdom at the peak of theological principles. Although in practice it has not been adopted by too many people, it has become irresistible even to the LT's enemies. Everyone accepts the language of the Kingdom and the option for the poor, although this does not mean that they change their old concepts. Is it possible to abandon the centrality of the Kingdom for other paradigms?

The "option for the poor" has been the most important event in the Christian Churches since the Protestant Reform. It marks a separation of the waters. For those who took the step out of a profound faith conviction, having experienced the theological foundation of the option for the poor, how can we improve this paradigm without betraying the blood of the martyrs and the suffering face of Christ who made them think about the poor?

From the perspective of systematic theology, it is easy to note that these profound levels do not move in the modern world's winds of change, no matter how strong they appear to be. Is it possible that the so-called "end of history" will lead us to abandon the historic interpretation of our faith, which is closest to the vision of the Son of God? Will financial globalisation and the supposed triumph of neoliberalism make obsolete our efforts to put the passion of our lives in the utopia of the Kingdom preached by Jesus? Will the collapse of socialism in the East make the option for the poor no longer valuable? What others have said about the option for the poor we also say about the LT global paradigm: "it is a firm and irrevocable option" and there is no turning back. We can (and must) update whatever is necessary in the field of theological mediations, but the paradigm is something that gives us the feeling of permanence.

For all the rest, *afirmantis est probare*: he who affirms the need for a paradigm shift has to prove it. They would have to show a new kind of relationship between eschatology and history, but for theological reasons not because of socio-economic or cultural arguments. They would have to propose something that can overcome the centrality of the Kingdom and with proof in hand not just vague discussions about cultural post modernity. They would have to show

that the option for the poor does not have a theological foundation, but not watering it down so that this preferential option becomes a "preferential love" for the poor. While this does not happen, the strength of LT's essential elements will remain intact. Maintaining the pertinence of each discourse within its plane and its limits, without mixing or confusing them, is a sane measure of theological cleanliness. We cannot ignore that in the difficult and tense psycho-social context that has worn us down in the past few years there is a temptation to cover up psychological issues with theological reasoning: tiredness, social and ecclesiastic pressures, what is fashionable, fleeing from conflict, social depression.

Finally, we need to prevent suspicion. All paradigms, like understanding in general, have an interest. This stems from the hermeneutic structure of understanding and it is impossible to avoid. All paradigms are "functional" for a social interest. This is true for LT's paradigm as it is for the most substantial in the Bible itself. Those who have other interests prefer other paradigms that are functional for them. A paradigm shift? What new paradigm? A paradigm that is function for what interests? Has God changed his interests? What theological reasons does he have for a paradigm shift? Are we the ones who are changing our interests (that is are we shifting paradigms for theological reasons)?

In conclusion: We are going to stick with Jesus' paradigm, the Kingdom! Within this paradigm we can find all the minor changes and accommodations we find necessary to make.

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LA COMMUNICATION PLANÉTAIRE

Stade suprême de la mondialisation

Albert Longchamp

«Celui qui contrôle l'information et les communications est potentiellement maître de la planète.» C'est en vertu de cet axiome libéral que les transnationales utilisent aujourd'hui abondamment les moyens énormes que leur offrent les nouvelles technologies de la communication. Pour mieux «se vendre».

Le grand marché planétaire - qualifié par certains de «marchandisation du monde» - a généré comme on le sait la «pensée unique». Il a fait de la mondialisation un phénomène éminemment culturel qui déploie ses ramifications à tous les stades de la communication et de l'information. Les enjeux sont tels, qu'avec la mondialisation, la planète est entrée dans une lutte féroce pour l'hégémonie de l'esprit et de la culture.

Qu'est devenue dans tout cela la vision généreuse du «village planétaire» qui visait à impliquer les individus et les peuples dans un échange d'information réciproque et égalitaire? Une utopie, constate avec regret Albert Longchamp, directeur de *Foi et Développement*. La vision d'un «village global» ne «sert guère qu'à masquer des rapports de force d'une rare violence».

Force est de constater en effet que la «communication-monde» crée de l'exclusion, menace l'autonomie de la société civile, instaure de nouvelles disparités entre pays et entre groupes sociaux. Elle est de ce fait génératrice de nouveaux conflits.

Faut-il pour autant tomber dans un noir pessimisme et adopter une attitude de repli? Pas du tout, rappelle l'auteur de l'article. Les autoroutes de la communication peuvent être aussi une chance historique pour les exclus et contribuer à transformer les mécanismes de solidarité nationaux et internationaux.

Mais pour ce faire, il est urgent d'adopter une attitude de résistance à l'encontre de l'idéologie du Marché. Qui est aussi l'idéologie de la mondialisation.

François Bellec

La mondialisation met en évidence la connexion de réseaux de plus en plus complexes. Dans l'écheveau du grand marché global, l'idéal suprême est devenu la suppression de l'espace et du temps. Certains ont vu dans cette gigantesque entreprise la première émergence d'une société sans idéologie, soumise aux pressions «normales» de jeux purement mécaniques sous le seul contrôle des lois économiques. La mondialisation ne serait que la projection planétaire des relations à niveau interpersonnel, un échange de biens, de services et de messages, maillons fondateurs d'une société humaine.

Dans cette optique assez proche des théories sur la «fin de l'histoire», la mondialisation est inscrite dans la nature humaine. Elle représenterait en quelque sorte le stade suprême, à l'échelon du globe, de l'évolution des espèces. On n'est pas loin, avec de telles vues, d'une forme de déterminisme finalement assez primitive.

La loi du marché, extensible à tous les mécanismes sociaux et sans frontières, prend dans

l'esprit des ultra-libéraux la place occupée depuis le siècle dernier par la lutte des classes dans les explications les plus simplistes du «matérialisme dialectique» selon Marx et ses épigones. Lesquels pourraient aujourd'hui appliquer à la critique de la «globalisation» les critères et l'ardeur qu'ils mirent à dénoncer «l'aliénation» du prolétariat. Les philosophes, les économistes et les sociologues marxistes pensent encore dans les catégories du XIX^e siècle. Notre temps ne les interroge plus. Reste que Marx et Engels ont été sinon les premiers, du moins les plus constants à souligner la vocation mondiale du capitalisme.

LA MONDIALISATION, NOUVEAU NOM DE L'ALIÉNATION?

La «marchandisation du monde», selon l'expression d'Ignacio Ramonet, a pris le relais de l'aliénation des travailleurs. Elle en est peut-être le nouveau nom. Elle est sûrement son expression contemporaine la plus éclatante. Elle ne vise pas seulement un marché global, elle met en place le système de la «pensée unique». François

Brune prête même à Alain Minc ce constat d'une stupéfiante naïveté: «*Ce n'est pas la pensée, c'est la réalité qui est unique.*» (*Le Monde diplomatique*, août 1996, p.16.)

A travers la marchandisation, la mondialisation devient un phénomène éminemment culturel, dont les tentacules s'étendent à toutes les étapes de la communication et de l'information. Ramonet ne craint pas de l'écrire noir sur blanc: «*Dans ce nouvel âge de l'aliénation, les technologies de la communication jouent, plus que jamais, un rôle central.*» (*Manière de voir*, hors-série du *Monde diplomatique*, mars 1997, p. 6.). Le même auteur relève que les industries de l'audiovisuel, tous genres confondus, constituent pour les Etats-Unis le premier pourvoyeur de devises, devant l'industrie aérospatiale.

Avec la mondialisation, la planète est entrée dans une nouvelle lutte pour l'hégémonie de l'esprit et de la culture. Le tout à l'abri des principes sacro-saints de la liberté d'entreprise, d'opinion et d'expression! Une mondialisation, précisons-le, qui n'est pas née avec l'électronique et l'informatique, mais avec la révolution industrielle et le colonialisme. «*L'expansion, tout est là... Si je le pouvais, j'annexerais les planètes*», affirmait sans complexe Cecil Rhodes, l'un des Boers fondateurs de l'Afrique du Sud...

Et si la culture anglo-saxonne domine aujourd'hui très largement l'ensemble des réseaux audiovisuels, il n'est peut-être pas superflu de rappeler un mot de P. Ponci, secrétaire général de l'Alliance française, lors de sa fondation en 1883: «*Partout où on parlera le français on achètera les produits français.*» Charles Gide (1847-1932) fait encore plus fort avec un slogan aux accents parfaitement impérialistes: «*Partout où résonne la langue française, là est la patrie française!*» Les Anglais n'avaient rien inventé avec le fameux *Trade follows the flag*, le commerce suit le drapeau. Quant à l'Académie de Berlin, peu avant la Révolution française, elle mettait au concours cette question... qui fait rêver: «*Qu'est-ce qui a rendu la langue française universelle? Est-il à présumer qu'elle conserve cette prérogative?*» On sait ce qu'il en advient.

La mondialisation, donc, avec ses composantes géopolitiques et culturelles, n'a pas créé de toutes pièces l'idéologie de la communication instantanée et universelle que nous connaissons désormais. L'une et l'autre ont suivi une histoire étroitement interdépendante. Depuis le milieu du siècle dernier,

les réseaux du chemin de fer, du télégraphe, du câble sous-marin, du téléphone puis de la «télédiffusion sans fil», donc de la radio et enfin de la télévision, ont créé une nouvelle représentation du monde, basée sur le principe de la communication comme «agent de civilisation». Dans le même temps, les transports aériens et l'automobile passaient de la «préhistoire» au stade d'instruments quotidiens et d'outils de masse.

Mais avant même d'en arriver à l'explosion de la communication, l'opinion publique, plus que la «civilisation», devint très vite l'enjeu, voire l'alibi des industriels de «l'information». Armand Mattelart rapporte une anecdote «fin de siècle» qui en dit long à la fois sur les origines de notre presse à sensation et sur l'instrumentalisation des médias, au service - avoué ou non - des pouvoirs dominants.

Le magnat de la presse américaine William Randolph Hearst (immortalisé par Orson Welles dans *Citizen Kane*) envoie à La Havane un reporter et un dessinateur chargés de «couvrir» le débarquement présumé d'un corps expéditionnaire américain sur l'île de Cuba en lutte avec l'empire espagnol agonisant. Arrivé sur place, le dessinateur télégraphie à son patron: «*Rien à signaler. Tout est calme. Il n'y aura pas de guerre. Voudrais rentrer.*» L'autre répond: «*Restez. Fournissez l'illustration, je fournirai la guerre.*» (Cf. *Le Monde diplomatique*, août 1995, p. 24. Voir aussi, d'Armand Mattelart, *L'invention de la communication*, La Découverte, 1994.). Ce qui fut fait. Et répété en 1991 avec la guerre du Golfe, via la chaîne CNN.

La mondialisation a créé le «village global», avec ses rumeurs, ses fureurs, ses erreurs. Et avec un «centre» directeur incontestable: l'Amérique du Nord. Selon Zbigniew Brzezinski, ancien conseiller du président Jimmy Carter pour les questions de sécurité nationale, 65% de l'ensemble des communications mondiales ont leur point de départ aux Etats-Unis (Cité par A. Mattelart, *Le Monde diplomatique*, op.cit., p.24.)! Lesquels ne font qu'appliquer la doctrine d'expansion culturelle, économique et commerciale déjà commune aux grandes puissances du siècle dernier, comme nous l'indiquons plus haut. Sauf que les moyens à disposition de l'objectif connaissent aujourd'hui une croissance exponentielle.

En novembre 1995, la compagnie AT&T a promis de consacrer 150 millions de dollars pendant cinq ans à relier toutes les écoles primaires et secondaires des USA à Internet et à d'autres réseaux électroniques. Ce beau projet répondait à une

déclaration du gouvernement américain datant de 1993, selon laquelle les information highways - les fameuses *autoroutes de l'information* - étaient censées «*créer des emplois à hauts revenus, résoudre la crise du système de santé, remettre en état le système éducatif et scolaire et renforcer la domination technologique américaine*» (Cf. Alain Woodrow, *Les médias, quatrième pouvoir ou cinquième colonne?* Editions du Félin, Paris 1996, p. 33.). Le dernier objectif est sans doute le plus sincère.

La France avait lancé, non sans succès, une entreprise similaire avec le Minitel. L'introduction du fax (télécopie) et surtout d'Internet et de ses homologues lui ont ravi la vedette, mais sans le détrôner totalement. Comme source d'information domestique, donc décentralisée jusqu'au niveau de la cellule sociale de base, le Minitel a été un pionnier. Mais il lui manquait deux dimensions désormais incontournables: l'interactivité et l'instantanéité planétaire, fondements du «cybermonde», stade suprême de la mondialisation.

LE «VILLAGE PLANÉTAIRE» UNE NOUVELLE CROYANCE

L'expression de «village global», lancée dans les années 60, reste attachée au nom de Marshall McLuhan. Paul Virilio lui préfère celle de «ville mondiale virtuelle». Quoi qu'il en soit, l'émergence des groupes multimédias transnationaux et des réseaux télématiques mondiaux dès la fin de la dernière décennie ont donné consistance à ce qui n'était, vingt ou trente ans auparavant, que musique d'avenir. Mais du même coup on comprend la dérive qui s'est produite. Le «village global» laissait entrevoir un vaste échange de connaissances, un transfert global du savoir et - ne le nions pas - du divertissement.

La globalisation est d'abord le champ clos des géants du marketing et du management. Le modèle de la communication issu de cette prise en main des techniques de production et de distribution de l'information s'est imposé comme mode unique de «mise en relation». Les entreprises, les organisations gouvernementales ou humanitaires, tous les groupes qui, d'une manière ou d'une autre, doivent atteindre le «grand public» ou une «cible» plus restreinte, se demandent d'abord *comment* communiquer. Le *contenu* du message devient subsidiaire dans la mesure où le contenant est *efficace*. La communication est dès lors l'art de la construction d'une image plutôt qu'un service de relation.

La globalisation est moins un objectif qu'une stratégie, une règle de conquête plutôt qu'une loi d'échanges de flux culturels et d'information. Il a fallu, en France, imposer des quotas de productions «made in France» (!) aux chaînes de radio, télévision et de distributions de films, afin d'assurer un minimum de débouchés aux produits locaux sur le marché local! A la fin de 1993, les dures négociations du GATT se sont soldées par l'exclusion des productions audiovisuelles des accords de libre-échange, un échec dû à l'affrontement direct entre l'union Européenne et les Etats-Unis. En l'occurrence, c'est l'axiome libéral de la souveraineté du consommateur sur le producteur qui a prévalu. Peu importe le produit, pourvu que le consommateur en redemande!

Le cinéma américain profite à fond de cette argumentation dont la contrepartie, outre-Atlantique, est très loin d'avantager la création culturelle européenne. Et que dire des produits du Sud! Fin 1996, la doctrine «libre-échangiste à inégalité constante», comme on devrait la dénommer, a trouvé un nouveau défenseur dans le plaidoyer de Bill Clinton pour un réseau Internet libre de tout «interventionnisme».

La vision d'un «village global» tient donc davantage de la croyance ou, au mieux, de l'utopie, que de l'existence réelle d'une société de communication véritablement transparente et égalitaire. Elle ne sert guère qu'à masquer des rapports de force d'une rare violence. Pour Armand Mattelart, il faut perdre toute illusion: «*La planète n'est plus cette société globale ou ce village global qui convoque indistinctement tous les individus et tous les peuples autour des mêmes "global events" (événements sportifs, grandes catastrophes ou fléaux...), mais un archipel avec ses pôles d'excellence technologique et ses immenses marges de laissés-pour-compte*» (*Vers la communication-monde*, Sciences Humaines, hors-série n° 17, juin-juillet 1997, p. 46.).

En simplifiant, on pourrait dire que les années 80 ont été à la fois celles de «l'obsession globale» et celles de l'échec du fameux «Nouvel Ordre Mondial de l'Information et de la Communication» (NOMIC) tel que l'avait envisagé la commission créée en 1977 sous la présidence de Sean McBride. Les principes du NOMIC tendaient à modifier en profondeur le déséquilibre des communications transnationales. Ils demandaient «*plus de réciprocité dans les échanges d'information, moins de dépendance à l'égard des courants dominants de communication, moins de diffusion des messages du haut vers le bas, plus*

d'autosuffisance et d'identité culturelle, plus d'avantages pour l'humanité tout entière.»

Non exemptes de certains présupposés politiques, les conclusions de la commission McBride furent violemment attaquées et jetées dans les oubliettes de l'histoire. Elles n'étaient pourtant pas sans pertinence pour le débat actuel. Notamment lorsqu'elles suggéraient que, le cas échéant, l'introduction de nouvelles techniques pouvait être retardée, voire reportée *sine die*, pour éviter une trop grande dépendance vis-à-vis des pays industrialisés.

Ainsi donc, la construction du «village global» demeure surtout une abstraction à usage publicitaire. La mondialisation de la communication et de l'information est pour l'essentiel un projet à but hautement lucratif.

LA COMMUNICATION MONDE

C'est sur le modèle de la notion d'«économie-monde», dû à Fernand Braudel, qu'Armand Mattelart a forgé le concept de «communication-monde», qu'il préfère à celui de «village global». Ceci afin de prendre en compte une analyse plus fine des phénomènes de globalisation. A l'inverse, nous dit-il, de la représentation «globaliste et égalitariste de la planète», la «communication -monde» rend compte de nouvelles disparités entre les divers pays ou régions, ou entre les divers groupes sociaux. «*Globalisation se conjugue avec fragmentations et segmentations.*»

La globalisation économique, qui se caractérise par la diffusion de mécanismes de marché à l'ensemble de la planète, est une nouvelle étape de «l'économie-monde». Selon Braudel, ce terme qualifie des espaces dans lesquels, tout au long de l'histoire, se sont tissés des liens privilégiés de types économiques, commerciaux et culturels. La «globalisation» est une nouvelle avancée de «l'économie-monde», mais cette généralisation du marché est loin d'être absolue. De nombreux pays y échappent.

La globalisation crée donc de l'exclusion. De même, la «communication-monde» est loin d'être également partagée par toutes les régions. Virtuellement universelle, la mondialisation de la communication est potentiellement génératrice de nouveaux conflits. «*Quel rôle joue la peur de l'homogénéisation culturelle dans le repli nationaliste et la régression identitaire que l'on observe partout dans le monde?*» demande Armand Mattelart (*Les nouveaux scénarios de la communication*

mondiale, dans Le Monde diplomatique, août 1995, p. 25.).

Cette question n'appelle pas automatiquement une réponse pessimiste. La revue *Croissance*, en octobre 1996, a mené enquête autour d'une interrogation simple: «*Internet, autoroute du Sud?*» On s'attendrait à un constat déplorable. Il faut nuancer. Même l'Afrique peut être un laboratoire. Du pire et du meilleur. Internet, relève *Croissance*, «*est parfois même perçu comme une chance historique pour combler le fossé Nord-Sud.*»

Au cours des six premiers mois de l'année 1996, les abonnements à Internet ont progressé de 53% sur le continent africain, contre 18% en France. Reste que l'accès à Internet reste très mal réparti sur le globe: 97% de ses utilisateurs proviennent encore des pays riches. Actuellement, «*la moitié de l'humanité n'a jamais passé un coup de fil*», souligne de son côté le vice-président sud-africain Thabo Mbeki, qui déplore l'état très insuffisant du réseau téléphonique des régions rurales de son pays.

Mais dans moins de cinq ans, affirme Bruno Lanvin, de la CNUCED, la mise en œuvre de divers projets satellitaires devrait permettre de téléphoner partout dans le monde pour un coût équivalent à un dollar la minute: «*Pour les pays en développement, ce sera une révolution.*» Résolument optimiste, Bruno Lanvin, observe avec attention l'évolution des coûts de l'industrie de l'information: «*Jusqu'ici, dans l'histoire de l'humanité, à chaque fois qu'un facteur de production a donné le pouvoir de prendre de l'avance et de gagner plus que les autres, il a coûté très cher. La technologie de l'information, au contraire, est le domaine où les prix unitaires ont diminué le plus rapidement au cours des vingt dernières années, ce qui est dû largement à la compétition que se livrent les entreprises des pays développés. Tout cela au bénéfice des pays les plus pauvres: ils ont à portée de main immédiatement un instrument de richesse, qui n'était accessible qu'aux riches il y a encore quelques années.*» (*Croissance* n° 397, octobre 1996, p. 16.).

LA MONDIALISATION CONTRE LA DÉMOCRATIE

Paradoxe, c'est un Américain pur sucre, spécialiste de sciences politiques et conseiller du président Bill Clinton, qui a écrit le traité le plus sévère sur les vices de la mondialisation. Sous un titre impossible, *Djihad versus McWorld* (Desclée de Brouwer), Benjamin R. Barber examine

avec perspicacité les enjeux décisifs de cette fin de siècle. «McWorld» désigne le capitalisme sans contraintes et sans le contrepoids d'aucun autre système de valeurs, qui vise *«ce que nous pourrions appeler un totalitarisme économique»*.

La domination de McWorld est «usurpée», estime Barber, «elle menace l'autonomie de la société civile et les domaines de la politique de la culture et de l'esprit. McWorld a ses porte-drapeaux favoris: McDonald, Disney et Coca-Cola. Grâce à la liberté des échanges, il diffuse dans le monde un «goût américain de pacotille.» «Djihad», tout comme McWorld, doit être pris au sens métaphorique, même s'il n'est sans doute pas innocent que ce mot soit emprunté au vocabulaire de l'islam. L'auteur, du moins dans la version française de son livre, a dû préciser qu'il ne cherchait ni à stigmatiser le Djihad islamique ni à attribuer aux seuls musulmans le monopole de la résistance à McWorld. «Djihad» représente les forces de désintégration de la société, face aux forces «intégratives» de Mc World.

La question qui intéresse notre sujet est posée sans détour par Benjamin Barber: *«Maintenant qu'ont été démantelées les dictatures et mises à bas les idéologies étatiques, jusques et y compris la démocratie, comment les collectivités peuvent-elles défendre leur bien commun contre l'empire de l'argent et le monopole culture!? Quelle idéologie démocratique va pouvoir rivaliser avec le prétendu «choix» des marchés «libres» pour que nous puissions retrouver le pouvoir de choisir en commun nos biens publics et par là nous libérer des conséquences involontaires de tous les choix privés du marché que l'on veut nous faire prendre pour l'alpha et l'oméga de la liberté?»*

Pour illustrer la pertinence de son interpellation, Barber se réfère, entre autre, au système de communication de la marque de chaussures de sport Nike. A la recherche d'un partenaire efficace, comme il se doit, Phil Knight, le patron de Nike s'est adressé à l'agence de publicité d'Ovitz, qui lui a dit: *«Le sport est désormais beaucoup plus qu'un divertissement.»* Ainsi donc, Nike n'est pas un fabricant de chaussures, mais «exporte du sport». Plus exactement, une certaine image du sport, voire une idéologie associant au sport les notions de victoire, énergie, santé, richesse, sexe. La communication de Nike vise à créer «des liens émotionnels et non des besoins réels». Michael Jordan, affirme M. Knight, est l'homme le plus connu en Chine avec Chou Enlai. Jordan lui-même, au sommet de sa gloire, vendait 190 millions de dol-

lars son nom tandis qu'il en gagnait «seulement» quinze en jouant au basket.

La société Nike devient un phénomène de société, qui acquiert, selon une plaquette de l'entreprise, une *«personnalité réelle.»* Elle attend de ses clients non seulement d'apprécier la qualité de ses produits mais de croire *«en la sincérité de ses motivations.»* Elle associe à sa marque un style de vie qui se doit d'être universel. L'image de marque, dans le sillage de la mondialisation, est ce que nous appellerions une manifestation «typiquement américaine».

Mais Nike, Coke, McDonald ou Disney cherchent à déconnecter leurs produits de leur coefficient national pour l'affecter à une échelle de valeurs universelle. British Airways vient de faire de même en effaçant l'union Jack de la carlingue de ses avions, *«un symbole trop ringard pour une entreprise qui prétend à l'universalité»*, souligne la revue *Capital* dans son édition de juin 1997, non sans ajouter que *«de plus en plus d'entreprises s'affranchissent des politiques de leur pays d'origine. ABB, British Airways ou Nike sont autant de firmes sans drapeau ou culture dominante, qui sous-traitent, délocalisent, achètent, vendent et nouent des alliances, parfois même contre nature pourvu qu'à terme le profit soit au rendez-vous.»*

Djihad versus McWorld insiste pour démontrer que le chemin allant des ambitions strictement économiques -théoriquement neutres - aux interventions très actives dans les domaines politiques, culturels et sociaux, est le passage obligé des sociétés à vocation mondiale. *«Celui qui contrôle l'information et les communications mondiales est potentiellement maître de la planète.»* Les grandes entreprises l'ont si bien compris qu'elles tendent à investir toute la chaîne de la communication. Faire des chaussures, ou vendre de l'eau, des cigarettes ou des voitures, pourquoi pas? Mais contrôler l'agence de publicité, et par elle les journaux, et par eux les groupes de presse, et au-delà les canaux de distribution, et enfin acquérir chaînes de production, satellites, etc. c'est encore mieux, voire indispensables.

Dans la mondialisation, l'intégration prend la forme d'alliances, de fusions ou de rapprochements d'industries qui, a priori, n'avaient rien au départ pour les associer dans une structure relativement homogène. Abdelaziz Mouline public à cet égard une intéressante étude relatant *«Les alliances stratégiques dans les technologies de l'information»* (Editions Economica, Paris, 1996). Il montre notamment combien le facteur appelé «degré

d'incertitude» a pesé sur l'évolution des restructurations dans toutes les industries liées aux techniques de l'information et de la communication. «*Par exemple, souligne l'auteur, les possibilités de convergence technologique entre le câble, le téléphone, le matériel informatique, les logiciels, les médias et d'autres industries liées à l'information plaident en faveur de nombreuses formations d'alliances.*» (p. 20).

Très concrètement on estime que la firme IBM a dû passer approximativement 20.000 alliances pour maintenir son rang dans l'industrie de l'information. L'environnement technologique mouvant pousse les acteurs de cette industrie vers des réseaux correspondant à toute une filière d'activités qui peuvent être regroupées en cinq catégories:

- la production de contenus (presse, cinéma, publicité, livres, productions musicales, émissions radio ou TV);
- la mise en forme et la programmation des contenus (chaînes TV, sociétés de services d'information, logiciels informatiques, chaînes câblées, etc.);
- la transmission et distribution (toutes les opérations de télécommunications au sol et par satellites, les services de distributions presse);
- les interfaces (constructeurs informatiques, opérateurs en télécommunication, etc.);
- les terminaux (construction et fabrication de tous les différents supports techniques de transmission).

Les «merveilles de la synergique» impliquent des filières aux ramifications toujours plus denses et éloignées de leur centre. Prenons un écrivain qui vient d'achever un nouveau roman. Tel conglomérat, raconte Barber, possède la maison qui éditera le livre, l'agence qui en fera la publicité, la société qui le distribuera, le magazine qui le publiera en feuilleton. Mais elle sera aussi derrière le studio de cinéma qui en fera un film, la société distributrice qui va le dispatcher dans les salles, la chaîne des salles qui le projettent, la firme qui le transforme et le vend sous forme de cassettes vidéo, peut-être aussi le satellite qui permettra de le diffuser via la télévision.

Il n'est pas exclu que notre conglomérat ait aussi des participations dans les usines de fabrication des téléviseurs et magnétoscopes sur lesquels le film, enfin, sera vu en Indonésie ou au Nigeria. Certains

passagers des vols long-courriers, notamment avec des appareils des compagnies américaines, sont parfois étonnés de découvrir dans leur fauteuil en plein ciel la diffusion d'un film «actuellement dans les salles», contrairement à la télévision qui n'en aurait pas le droit. La raison, en général, est fort simple: c'est la même société qui contrôle la compagnie aérienne et la production du film!

Dans un registre plus évident, on voit les éditeurs de livres lancer des collections de CD-Rom, ou des producteurs de cassettes vidéo s'associer avec des partenaires de la presse écrite pour assurer le «rebondissement» de l'image et du son par la lecture et la réflexion. Ce qui fait d'ailleurs dire à Dominique Wolton que le livre reste la technique *«la plus interactive, la plus mobile, la moins chère, grâce aux prodiges des éditions de poche, la plus universelle, la plus libre, et surtout la plus imaginative...»* (*Penser la communication*, Flammarion, Paris 1997, p. 287.)

En toute hypothèse, le monde impitoyable de la production communicationnelle n'a pas de place pour le contrôle externe. Sauf si, dernière sauvegarde de la collectivité, on maintient par exemple une télévision de service public qui se présente, en règle générale, sous la forme d'une télévision *généraliste*. Moins soumise aux règles du marché et pour autant qu'elle puisse se soustraire aux pressions du pouvoir, cette télévision est sans doute l'un des lieux de résistance à la standardisation de la communication.

Encore doit-on lui en donner les moyens en temps et en hommes, qui garantiront une information honnête et impartiale. D. Wolton met en garde contre le *«bombardement informatif»*. L'information devient omniprésente mais confine à une véritable *«tyrannie de l'instant.»* L'auditeur, le téléspectateur, sait tout, de partout, sans avoir *«le temps de comprendre, ou de souffler, et sans savoir finalement ce qui l'emporte, du devoir d'informer, de la folie concurrentielle ou de la fascination pour les outils, ou les trois à la fois»* (Op. cit., p. 207.).

L'information amplifie l'événement, lui donne une portée dramatique, émotionnelle. Dire la vérité n'est jamais simple. La montrer tourne au défi. La montrer «en direct» tient de l'impossible. Mais la pression du «village global» est si forte que les médias, au lieu de prendre leur distance, «collent» à l'événement au détriment du recul qu'exige l'analyse. L'information est devenue un flot continu encombré par un mélange d'approximations, de commentaires plus ou moins utiles, de «réactions à

chaud», d'opinions et de rumeurs. De surcroît, la concurrence fausse la vision médiatisée du réel.

Où est la véritable angoisse du journaliste aujourd'hui? Non de manquer d'informations et de nouvelles à servir à son public, mais de choisir les mêmes faits que ses collègues et de leur donner, si possible, la même ampleur ou une égale intensité. Il se préoccupe moins de l'opinion publique et de son droit à connaître les faits qui l'intéressent, que de l'opinion des collègues et des blâmes ou des éloges qu'il peut en récolter! Etrange monde qui vit sous le double couperet de l'audimat, directement branché sur le profit escompté par la diffusion de l'information, et du regard de la profession, qui ne fait qu'ajouter à sa confusion!

Marcel Jullian, lorsqu'il était directeur d'Antenne 2, affirmait que ce qui caractérise le monde actuel de la communication, «*c'est la peur*». Et pourquoi? lui demandait-on. La réponse était cinglante: «*Parce qu'il est tombé dans la crainte que la lumière s'éteigne derrière lui. Que montre d'ours, il s'est pris pour les ours, et qu'il a toujours profité d'une certaine confusion entre l'être et le paraître... En même temps qu'on marche à l'audimat, on en a une peur démesurée... On a peur de s'être toujours trompé, on a peur de fonctionner autrement, sur d'autres critères*». (*Ethique et communication*, ouvrage collectif. Editions Beauchesne, Paris 1991, p. 67. Marcel Jullian ajoutait que lui-même, lorsqu'il était président d'Antenne 2, ne trouvait de répit «*qu'en éteignant la lampe de chevet pour la nuit, en me disant que pendant les quelques heures à venir je ne ferais de mal à personne*»). La mondialisation n'a rien arrangé. «*Quand les médias et les gouvernements se métamorphosent en brigade d'acclamation des marchés financiers, l'orthodoxie libérale devient presque totalitaire*», déplore Serge Halimi, du *Monde diplomatique* (juin 1997).

OU ALLONS-NOUS?

Lors d'une conférence, affirme l'économiste Daniel Cohen, «*j'ai été interpellé par des paysans fustigeant la mondialisation. Ma réponse fut simple: sans elle, vous ne vendriez pas votre blé*». La mondialisation élargit les débouchés de notre économie, affirment en chœur les défenseurs du grand marché virtuel mondial.

La Chine aura besoin de 125 milliards de tonnes de céréales d'ici à 25 ans, note *Capital* dans son édition de juin 1997 (n° 70) avec cette note: «*l'équivalent de 857 ans de production de blé pour l'union Européenne*». Ce que la revue ne dit pas,

c'est comment va se faire le partage du gâteau, quelle sera la part revenant effectivement aux producteurs européens.

La mondialisation a aussi ses arguments faciles, qui pervertissent le jeu démocratique. Ignacio Ramonet va plus loin encore. A ses yeux, les grands groupes de communication ont provoqué un double mouvement de concentration. L'un pour le contrôle des sources (information, publicité); l'autre pour le contrôle des trots paliers de l'audiovisuel (production, droits sur les programmes, canaux et service de diffusion). Le droit des citoyens au pluralisme de l'information s'en trouve amoindri, «on peut se demander également si une nation qui ne maîtrise plus la production de ses images ni le contrôle des nouvelles technologies est encore une nation souveraine» (*La marchandisation du monde, in Culture, idéologie et société*, hors-série de *Manière de voir*, mars 1997, pp. 6-7.).

Il s'agit donc d'identifier les risques courus par la mondialisation de la communication et par ses corollaires: l'immédiateté et l'universalité. La communication mondialisée abolit la distance, aplatit l'espace, supprime le temps. Les médias sont soumis à la règle implacable du «temps réel», présenté comme une valeur infaillible de l'information. Si elle n'a pas (encore) conquis les esprits au point d'imposer la pensée unique, l'information standardisée n'est pas loin d'avoir réussi son rêve ultime: le «temps unique».

L'histoire, notamment à la télévision, se déroule «en direct» devant les caméras relayées par satellites à des banques de données pour aboutir «en temps réel» (fût-ce avec décalage horaire) sur les écrans du monde entier. Peut-on ignorer la puissance d'assujettissement de tels réseaux? Faut-il même parler d'une capacité de nuisance?

Notre réponse devra forcément être diversifiée. Comme elle l'est, *in situ*. Dans son article sur «*MTV-chaîne du rock et de le jeunesse*» (*Manière de voir*, mars 1997), Yves Eudes démonte les processus sous-jacents au succès de cette chaîne, américaine comme il se doit, présente dans près de 300 millions de foyers sur les cinq continents. MTV (Music Television) couvre ainsi le plus gros des zones habitées de la planète, devenant la première, en une quinzaine d'années, à pouvoir se targuer du titre de «télévision globale». MTV sait parler aux jeunes, elle leur offre, écrit Yves Eudes, «*un flot continu d'insouciance, d'exubérance, de modernité, de sensualité et, surtout, de musique, le langage universel par excellence*».

Ses programmes offre un déluge de sons, de couleurs et de mouvements. Elle est donc, aux USA, le symbole d'un conflit moral vieux comme l'Amérique. Pour les puritains traditionalistes, MTV est une entreprise démoniaque. Pour les conservateurs, ce n'est qu'un média hypocrite qui propage les idées dangereusement libérales de la Côte Est; pour les intellectuels de gauche, elle représente le royaume du futile et du décervelage. Mais pour ses millions de jeunes fidèles, elle est la seule chaîne qui leur ressemble, «*prévisible, rebelle, impertinente*».

La chaîne musicale est rentable. D'autant que son produit de base, les *rocks vidéos*, ne lui coûte rien. MTV est capable de lancer un artiste en une semaine pour une bouchée de pain, mais aussi de payer un clip de Madonna 1,2 million de dollars. A New York, dans trois étages du gratte-ciel de Viacom, les séquences de plateau sont tournées dans un studio unique, et toujours à l'avance. MTV ne prend jamais le risque du direct. L'exubérance, le style décontracté, l'apparente spontanéité, tout est soigneusement planifié.

En janvier 1991, après une brève tentative de «résistance», la chaîne branchée diffuse le discours du président Bush avant l'opération «Tempête du désert». Impertinente, MTV, mais sans fausse note. Avec brio, la chaîne jeune résume en elle-même la visée culturelle d'une antenne «mondialisée». Pour Benjamin Barber, MTV «est une affaire de résonance, de «hot» américain et de «cool» américain, une question de style et d'émotions où rien n'est tout à fait ce qui paraît, où «méchant» signifie bon, où les amants sont des chiens, où «tuer» c'est époustoufler, où la politique n'a aucune importance, mai où les images sont une politique».

Quant à Frank Biondi, le directeur de Viacom, maison mère de MTV, il n'a pas son pareil pour défendre la bonne cause: «*Turbulente peut-être, sa chaîne musicale, mais ses dirigeants ne poursuivent qu'un but, ô combien louable et innocent: promouvoir la liberté, la libération, la créativité personnelle, l'amusement sans frein et l'espoir d'un avenir radieux.*» (Benjamin R. Barber, op. cit., p. 103.). Qui a dit que les Américains ne sont que de grands enfants?

En Europe, un Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld se montre préoccupé par les inégalités qui menacent. «*Je dirais que, plus qu'une société à deux vitesses, ce qui nous menace, c'est une société à une marche arrière et plusieurs vitesses avant.*» (Cf. *Pour un*

service universel de l'information, Problèmes économiques n° 2464-2465, 20-27 mars 1996, pp. 73-74.). En marche arrière se trouveraient les «analphabètes de l'information», une exclusion en étroite coïncidence avec l'exclusion sociale. J.-B. de Foucauld espère sur l'école pour apporter les rudiments de l'usage de l'information à ceux qui ne sont pas au départ en situation d'exclusion sociale.

Tous les autres iront-ils gaiement de l'avant? On évoque la *génération Nintendo* pour qualifier ces jeunes qui ayant grandi avec les écrans et les claviers devraient s'approprier sans peine les services et les techniques future. Péchant peut-être par un trop bel optimisme, cette observation n'épuise pas le problème. Pour J.-B. de Foucauld, trois sources d'inégalité sont à étudier de près:

- La génération Nintendo n'arrivera pas aux commandes avant une vingtaine d'années, au terme de la généralisation des nouvelles techniques. On sait que l'acquisition de nouvelles techniques par des adultes est laborieuse et plus longue que prévu. En 1993, moins d'un employé sur deux titulaires d'un CAP, et moins d'un ouvrier sur sept, de même niveau, avaient touché un ordinateur. L'effort d'adaptation ne sera pas facile à maîtriser.

- Il existe aussi un problème d'inégalités territoriales. La dynamique des services à haute valeur ajoutée est concentrée dans les villes et régions urbaines qui offrent la multiplicité des contacts nécessaires et un marché du travail. Elle ne sera pas freinée. La France devra veiller à un accès équitable, sur son territoire, aux nouvelles techniques de l'information et de la communication.

- Les méthodes de travail, grâce à l'informatique, sont en plein changement de nature, aussi bien dans l'industrie que dans les autres réseaux. «*Non seulement on travaille devant des écrans, mais encore de plus en plus on manipule des objets virtuels selon des démarches abstraites.*» Cette approche exige un véritable apprentissage.

Il y aura donc, selon Foucauld, un travail à entreprendre pour «contenir les inégalités». Un travail des pouvoirs publics qui devrait aller dans deux sens:

- *Faire aller les techniques de l'information vers le plus grand nombre.* L'état pourrait remplir les écoles, les hôpitaux et d'autres services publics d'équipements, et diffuser par ces canaux modernes sa propre information. Mais qui en supportera les coûts?

• *Faire aller le plus grand nombre vers les techniques.* Dans ce cas, la priorité est à la formation. Il semble qu'en Allemagne la corrélation entre la maîtrise de l'informatique et la détention de diplômes soit nettement plus accusée qu'en France, ce qui tendrait à montrer que le clivage entre les divers stades de formations professionnelles (de l'apprentissage aux degrés universitaires) tendrait à se prolonger dans l'accès aux outils informatiques. Cela resterait à prouver, mais donnerait une raison supplémentaire à la thèse de J.-B. de Foucauld: ouvrir l'accès aux nouvelles technologies de l'informatique, c'est éviter que se creusent des disparités excessives. La perspective est prudente, car les paramètres sont fragiles.

Mais les voies d'ouverture de l'information «mondialisée» ne s'arrêtent ni aux chaînes de télévision ni à l'appropriation des nouvelles technologies à des fins purement productives.

Internet, pour l'instant du moins, est présenté comme la réalisation d'un vieux rêve des chercheurs et «apôtres» assidus de la communication: mettre en réseau des individus quelconques, sans choix volontariste, sur la base d'un échange égalitaire d'informations en libre circulation, dans le cadre d'un réseau géré par ses seuls utilisateurs. Du même coup, Internet fait naître, notamment aux USA, un engouement considérable, au point d'être considéré comme «l'exploit le plus important et le plus porteur d'avenir de l'histoire de l'humanité».

L'histoire, justement, dira si l'invention mérite pareil enthousiasme. Mais il est probable qu'à court-terme elle modifie déjà notre vision culturelle. Sur simple appel sur leurs serveurs, étudiants, professeurs, chercheurs, techniciens peuvent recevoir du monde entier des «tuyaux» qu'il eût été impossible de rassembler jusqu'à ce jour. Certes, la jolie «préhistoire» d'Internet ne va pas durer. Les signaux d'une circulation marchande de l'information vent déjà en place. Les «démocrates électroniques» se sentiront peut-être trahis. Mais ces utopies fondatrices auront peut-être ancré solidement l'idée qu'une gratuité de l'information n'était pas que pure folie. La «marchandisation» du monde n'est pas une absolue fatalité!

LES NOUVEAUX NOMADES

Le cybermonde nous fait entrer dans l'ère du virtuel. Un monde de jeux, de logiciels, d'images de synthèses, de fantasmes, mais aussi de formation, de création, d'invention. Archi-

tectes, ingénieurs et techniciens travaillent presque exclusivement, désormais, dans un monde reconstitué sur écran et «déconstruit» à volonté jusqu'au modèle «parfait».

Le cybermonde a l'avenir devant lui. Mais il lui manque la mémoire. Non la mémoire électronique, mais cette capacité psychologique, poétique, dramatique, à se glisser dans un passé qui nous appartient en propre, à travers le destin personnel, la famille, la région, le pays. La culture se définit autant par un héritage que par la capacité de créer du neuf «*Le cybermonde*, signale Alain Woodrow, *est une société du nomadisme, où les frontières s'estompent, grâce à l'immédiateté. Dans ce monde qui rétrécit, tout est pensé «globalement» le travail, l'économie, le divertissement, l'information.*» (Op.cit., p.).

La relation humaine est faite de désirs, de départs, de retours, d'appels: à l'ère du téléphone mobile ou satellitaire, il n'y a plus ni attente ni surprise. «*Vous pouvez m'atteindre à tout moment.*» L'homme n'a plus de fil à la patte, il est partout en prison! Avec son «*toutou-téléphone en poche*» (Pierre Georges), que cherche-t-il? Virilio pose crûment la question: est-ce que le prix de la communication universelle ne serait pas un repliement sur soi, une retraite prématurée dans un monde impalpable, transparent mais tellement désincarné qu'il n'en serait plus habitable? Paul Virilio en appelle à la dissuasion sociétaire, une forme de résistance culturelle.

On est donc devant un paradoxe déjà esquissé plus haut: la mondialisation, relayée par le réseau multimédia sous toutes ses formes, conduit en fait au repli et à la résistance. C'est du moins l'un de ses effets notables. Un autre, relevé par Ricardo Petrella, directeur du programme Prospective et Evaluation de la Science et de la Technologie à Bruxelles, tient dans la concentration croissante des instruments de production: «*Il n'existera plus, dans dix ou vingt ans, que deux grands groupes de fabricants de satellites, trois ou quatre constructeurs automobiles, six à huit grands réseaux de communication. Est-ce à cela que l'on songe lorsqu'on revendique la liberté du marché?*» (Cité par A. Woodrow, op. cit., p. 191.).

François Brune nous assure pour sa part que les médias sélectionnent les faits dont ils constituent l'époque à partir d'une «*grille pré-établie*». Et c'est «*pour aussitôt demander aux citoyens d'adhérer à celle-ci et de s'en sentir participants, sans*

évidemment qu'ils aient eu à la choisir» (Le Monde diplomatique, août 1996, p. 17.).

La publicité, l'un des plus puissants moyens de communication de masse, n'agit guère autrement. Elle fait adopter les valeurs définies par une poignée de marchands assistés par une officine de «communication». L'essentiel n'est pas le contenu, mais le message. *«Et l'idéologie publicitaire peut, sans frein, diffuser son opium.»* (ibid.).

«Résistance», clame Virilio. *«Encourager la dissidence»*, reprend Serge Halimi dans *Le Monde diplomatique* de juin 1997, très remonté contre le «journalisme de marché»..

Fin novembre 1995, on vit en France ce qui fut peut-être la première grève contre la mondialisation. Le pays s'est retrouvé, selon l'image suggestive d'Eric Izraelewicz, plongé dans un débat et un même combat à l'issue encore incertaine entre «M» le Maudit, c'est-à-dire le Marché, et «M» le béni, le Multimédia (Voir *Ce monde qui nous attend - Les peurs*

françaises et l'économie, par Erik Izraelewicz, Grasset 1997.).

Le citoyen, y compris l'homme et le militant de la rue, adhère sans opposition massive à «l'ère du numérique», du téléphone mobile, de la puce et de la télé. Mais il se heurte à l'idéologie du Marché, qui est l'idéologie de la mondialisation (C'est la conviction de Philippe Engelhard dans *L'homme mondial - Les sociétés humaines peuvent-elles survivre?* Arléa, p.76.). Ainsi ne peut-on pas exclure une «guerre des tranchées» entre partisans et adversaires de la mondialisation ou, plus exactement de la «communication-monde» détectée par Armand Mattelart.

L'homme n'a jamais rien inventé sans déstabiliser son semblable. Y parviendra-t-il cette fois? Il n'en prend guère le chemin. Il faudra veiller au grain.

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LAND REFORM FROM BELOW: The Landless Workers Movement in Brazil

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Cicero Lourenco da Silva Neto and eight other military police officers rode their motorcycles into Brasilia, Brazil's capital, around noon on 17, April 1997. Cicero, the son of landless rural workers from the State of Rio Grande do Norte, and his fellow officers entered the avenue of the Esplanada dos Ministerios where government buildings form a corridor leading to the National Congress, Presidential Palace, and Supreme Court. Marching behind Cicero were nearly 5,000 landless rural workers, their families, and supporters. They came to demand land reform. Cicero was leading them into the very heart of Brazil's body politic, a year to the day after police forces carried out the country's largest massacre of landless rural families. (On 17, April 1996 over 2000 military police troops attacked approximately 1,500 landless workers and their children as they blocked Highway 150 just outside Eldorado dos Carajas. Within minutes 19 landless were dead and 51 severely injured. The landless were engaged in non-violent civil disobedience to draw attention to their struggle for land and protest the governments failed promise of land reform.) Frustrated by government inaction, the landless in Brazil are today carrying out land reform "from below".

This March to Brasilia was organised by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) or Landless Workers Movement, founded in 1985. Many of the marchers walked for two months to reach Brasilia and galvanised the largest demonstration of opposition to the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. For Brazil's 4.8 million landless families, the march to Brasilia showed the nation how far the landless rural worker's struggle has come.

The MST, Land Reform, and Brazilian Democracy

Since 1985 the MST has been organising Brazil's rural poor to include them in the economic and political life of the nation. During the past six years the MST has organised 151,427 landless families for the occupation of well over 21 million hectares of idle land. Operating on a shoestring budget and despite Government

repression the Landless Workers Movement now organises more landless families to occupy and produce on idle farmland than the Government's land reform measures. Landless workers are carrying out land reform from below and thus challenging the Brazilian *élite's* domination of so-called democratic rule. Gilmar Mauro of the MST's National Directorate explains the role of the movement:

"There is a great and urgent need to restructure Brazil's land tenure system in order to guarantee access to land, promote equitable social and economic development, and insure the citizenship of the rural population. We believe that our struggle for land reform, occupying and cultivating large tracts of idle farmlands, democratises access to land as well as to our society and government".

The MST offers the rural poor an alternative, ensuring their welfare and participation in economic development and democracy. The MST is providing health care and education to landless families. The MST's National Confederation of Brazilian Land Reform Co-operatives is providing agricultural extension services. They assist in organising production and facilitate marketing the surplus produce of the MST's squatter settlements. This has transformed MST land occupations into productive agricultural co-operatives providing ample food, cash income, and basic services for thousands of member families. Moreover, this social movement has created small industries among the most advanced co-operatives, including a clothing factory in Rio Grande do Sul, a tea processing plant in Parana, and a dairy processing operation in Santa Catarina.

The MST's alternative rural development strategy is challenging the political and policy limitations of the Cardoso government by providing a more just and productive alternative to the dominant system's preferential austerity for the poor.

According to Joao Pedro Stedile of the MST, "the struggle for land reform unfolds in the countryside, but it will eventually be resolved in the city where

there is the political power for structural change. Since its formation in 1985 the MST has worked closely with the Workers Party, many of whose leaders and elected officials come from the ranks of landless workers.

Today, the MST's struggle for land reform is supported by a majority of Brazilians and threatens to turn Brazilian politics on its head. A March 1997 public opinion poll sponsored by Brazil's *élite* National Confederation of Industry, reported that 77 per cent of respondents approve of the MST and 85 per cent approve of the non-violent occupation of idle farmland. Even the conservative president of the Brazilian National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves, recently met the Minister of Land Policy, Raul Jungmann, to request that the Government work with the MST to solve the problem of rural poverty. On 20, March 1997, the Brazilian Association of Journalists honoured the MST and sponsored a declaration of support signed by more than 200 journalists, artists and renowned intellectuals. The day before the MST received Belgium's prestigious King Boudouin Foundation Award, given every two years to recognise outstanding contributions to development worldwide. President Cardoso's own political party, the Brazilian Social Democratic Party, is split over the MST and land reform. Many of the party's elected officials, from federal deputies to city mayors, openly support the MST and its demands for a sweeping national land reform.

Land Ownership

Most of Brazil's rich agricultural land is increasingly concentrated in a few wealthy hands after decades of monocrop export agriculture and successive waves of Government sponsored repression against rural workers and their organisations. According to Brazil's new Super Ministry of Land Policy, created immediately after the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre, small family farmers with 10 hectares of land or less comprise 30.4 per cent of all Brazilian farmers, but together hold only 1.5 per cent of all agricultural land. Since 1985 the number of small farms has sharply decreased from just over 3 million to under 1 million.

In contrast the country's largest farms, of 1,000 hectares or more, comprise only 1.6 per cent of all farms, but hold 53.2 per cent of all agricultural land. The largest 75 farms, with 100,000 hectares or more, control over five times the combined total area of all small farms. The consolidation of farmland increased agricultural exports and provided an effective hedge

against inflation for the wealthy. However, the major impact of land concentration has been inescapable poverty and the spread of chronic malnutrition.

Further aggravating rural poverty and hunger is the pervasive use of agricultural land for pasture and the high proportion of fallow land among the country's largest landholdings. 42.6 per cent of agricultural land is not cultivated, and among Brazil's largest landholdings of 1,000 hectares or more 88.7 per cent of arable land is permanently idle. Today, uncultivated farmland may be the most important cause of both rural and urban poverty and hunger in Brazil.

The control and use of Brazil's vast and rich agricultural landholdings is a national problem, challenging the country's decade old democracy. For Dr Ladislau Dowbor, Professor of Economics at São Paulo's Catholic University, "to maintain this situation when millions of agriculturists want to cultivate, but do not have access to land, while millions of people go hungry in the cities, demonstrates the level of absurdity reached in the absence of true participatory democracy. In the context of rising tensions in our cities we can only conclude the obvious; land reform is not just a rural problem, but a key question for urban society. We will all have to subsidize the poor management of our rich agricultural soils if our agrarian structure is not reformed" (Reforma Agrária dados básicos. Estado de São Paulo. 3 Oct. 1995).

Reform and Repression

The transition from military dictatorship to civilian democracy in 1985 promised a sweeping national land reform. Months after the MST was founded to advocate land reform under democracy, the new civilian Government announced the National Land Reform Plan.

The Plan was originally designed to redistribute farmlands to 1.4 million landless rural families during President Sarney's tenure from 1985-89. However, the land reform plan drew strident opposition from large landowner organisations which effectively stalled efforts to redistribute idle lands to rural workers. Since 1985 only a small fraction of the proposed beneficiary landless families have received land through Government measures.

This slow pace of reform was matched with violence and repression against the MST and those struggling for social justice in the Brazilian countryside. From 1985 to 1996 there were 969 assassinations of rural workers and MST activists. (Boletim da

Commissao Pastoral da Terra-CPT. NO. 136 (August, 1996:7) with 1996 data provided by the Documentation Sector of the Commissao Pastoral da Terra).

Between 1985-95 there were 820 documented assassination attempts and 2,412 rural workers, family members, and MST leaders were threatened with death because of their support for land reform. (ibid.) Since 1985 Brazilian Government authorities have convicted only five people of crimes associated with the violence against the landless and the MST.

In 1994 the Minister of the Economy and world renowned sociologist, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, promised economic stabilisation and land reform if Brazil would elect him president. He promised to redistribute land to 280,000 families over four years. Since taking office in 1995 President Cardoso's land reform record has been greatly tarnished by the slow pace of reform, questionable Government claims, the brutal massacres of landless rural families and the continued impunity of those responsible for the violence against those who struggle for land reform.

The Cardoso government reported that 42,912 families were settled by the official programme in 1995 and 50,238 in 1996. However, these claims have been called into question by both the MST and the National Confederation of Professional Associations of INCRA (representing the employees of the Ministry of Land Policy) and the National Institute of Resettlement and Land Reform (known by the acronym INCRA). Moreover, President Cardoso has repeatedly cut the budgets of INCRA and the Ministry of Land Policy to "fight inflation". False claims and budget cuts aside, the Cardoso administration does not appear willing or able to fulfil its campaign promise of redistributing land to 280,000 landless families in four years.

Not only has the current administration raised and then frustrated expectations for land reform. It has also governed over the horrific massacres at Corumbiara and Eldorado dos Carajas. During the first two years of Cardoso's term in office at least 86 rural workers, family members, and MST activists were assassinated, most by the military police. In 1997, violence, sponsored or condoned by the Government, rages on against those who struggle for land and defend democracy. Yet, the Government's brutality against the rural poor is now challenged by the MST's national campaign to cultivate democracy in the countryside, to occupy idle lands, resist repression, and produce food for the nation.

Brazil's land reform from below now plays an important role in shaping the emerging challenge to the global economic and political order imposed by the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation. These efforts are central to the MST's push to replace rural poverty with equitable access to land and participatory democracy.

The struggle for land, social justice, and participatory democracy, from the MST in Brazil to the Chiapas land take-overs in the wake of the Zapatista uprising in Mexico, now depend on our global efforts to guarantee the human rights of those who struggle against hunger, disease, and poverty at the margins of the global order.

"I ask myself if land reform in Brazil is being directed from below, since the Government is not carrying it out".

- Sepulveda Pertence, Brazilian Supreme Court Justice

MST LAND OCCUPATIONS 1990-1996

Year	Occupations	Families	Hectares of Land
1990	43	11,484	-----
1991	51	9,862	7,037,722
1992	49	18,885	5,692,211
1993	54	17,587	3,221,252
1994	52	16,860	1,819,963
1995	93	31,531	3,250,731
1996	176	45,218	-----
Totals	518	151,427	21,021,879*

* This total number of hectares of land occupied by the MST does not include data for 1990 and 1996.

Ref.: *SEJUP (Servico Brasileiro de Justica e Paz)*.
No. 287, 17 September, 1997.

ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE 1997 SEDOS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Fr Walter von Holzen, SVD,
Executive Director.

I. INTRODUCTION

While we are making the final preparations for our second SEDOS symposium on the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, I have pleasure in sending you our Annual Report. The fact that this informative report will also appear in the December Bulletin, gives me the opportunity to greet our faithful readers in all parts of the world.

We can say that it has been a positive year for SEDOS. We held some very interesting activities in the early part of the year leading up to the successful Residential Seminar in Ariccia. For the rest, a fair amount of our time has been dedicated to the preparations for this synodal event (November/December). Once again it is our intention to offer our member Generalates a series of good papers, given the opportunity to listen to the competent voices of the Churches in the Americas.

We have continued to publish the Bulletin in French and English. Our SEDOS homepage on the Internet which offers rich missionary material, now includes a third chapter with articles on: BIBLE AND MISSION.

The many services of our Data bank have been maintained and enlarged, especially the regular reading material on more than a hundred countries which we received via our Internet subscription.

II. STRUCTURE

1. NEW SEDOS MEMBERS

SEDOS is pleased to announce that four *new* Congregations have joined. Our membership is slowly approaching the number of 100.

Congregation of Jesus and Mary, RJM
Superior General: Sr. Aurora Trallero,
Via Nomentana 325,
00162 Roma,
ITALY. — Tel: 84 17 666 — Fax: 84 18 008

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration, SSCC
Superior General: Sr. Jeanne Cadiou,
145, Via Aurelia, int. 10/14, Scala C,
00165 Roma,
ITALY. — Tel: 63 81 140 — Fax: 63 81 013

Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, JMJ
Superior General: Sr. Benedict Melkers,
5262 LS Vught,
THE NETHERLANDS. — Tel: (31) 73 65 61 721 — Fax: (31) 73 65 70 249

Congrégation des Soeurs Auxiliatrices, SA
Superior General: Sr. Silvia Conde,
16, Rue St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle,
75006 Paris,
FRANCE. — Tel: (33) 1 53 69 61 00 — Fax: (33) 1 45 66 94 54

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The members of the Executive Committee for the year 1997 were:

President:	Yves La Fontaine, CMM, Superior General of the Marianhill Missionaries. Elected to the Executive in 1991.
Vice-President:	Joan Roddy, DMJ, Superior General of the Congregation of Mary and Joseph. Elected to the Executive in 1994.
Treasurer:	Anne Quinn, SMSM, General Bursar of the Marist Missionary Sisters. Elected in 1995.
	Cecily Paul, FMM Franciscan Missionaries of Mary since 1991
	Giuseppe Filippi, MCCJ Comboni Missionaries since 1992
	Jean-Claude Ceillier, Mafr Missionaries of Africa since 1993
	Dominique Samne, FSC Brothers of the Christian Schools since 1994
	Cecilia O'Dwyer, IBVM Institute of the Blessed Virgin since 1996

Executive Director: Walter von Holzen, SVD since 1992

3. CHANGES IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On the completion of six years in the Executive, Fr. Yves La Fontaine, CMM and Sr. Cecily Paul, FMM, are finishing their two terms (since 91). — This autumn our Vice-president, Sr. Joan Roddy, DMJ, and Fr. Giuseppe Filippi, MCCJ, have completed their years of service in Rome and are due for new assignments. — Due to poor health, Brother Dominique Samne, FSC, was obliged to retire from the Executive during the year. — The election of new candidates from different continents will be held to renew the Executive Committee during this year's assembly.

In the name of all the member congregations, I take this opportunity to thank all the members leaving the Executive Committee, for their generous service and collaboration in the different functions of the Executive. Wherever they are, the SEDOS Bulletin will remind them of their time at SEDOS.

4. SEDOS SECRETARIAT STAFF

Our secretariat has not changed during the year. We were able to continue with our three very competent staff-people and the volunteer work of *Sr Christel Daun, SSpS*, for the keywording. — *Ms Sulogini Francis* is our head secretary and our computer specialist. She is charged with the printing and layout of the Bulletin. She also maintains our SEDOS homepage, converting the articles in hypertextual language. *Ms Margherita Lofthouse* from Frascati is in charge of the subscriptions department and the documentation centre. She maintains all the contacts with the subscribers to the SEDOS Bulletin in the whole world. *Ms Philippa Wooldridge* comes for two days every week. She proof-reads all the English texts. Thank you very much for your generosity and identification with our missionary organisation.

III. ACTIVITIES OF SEDOS

A. SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

1. SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1997

On **Tuesday, 3 December 1996**, we held our Annual General Assembly and it is SEDOS' custom to offer two good lectures in the morning. Fr **Walbert Bühlmann, OFM Cap.**, from Switzerland, gave a critical review of the development of Catholic ecclesiology since the Second Vatican Council. He showed that in spite of the great enthusiasm during and after the Vatican Council, many of the insights for a new ecclesiology are slow to be implemented. — The second speaker, the Superior General of the Maryknoll Sisters **Sr Claudette LaVerdiere, MM**, took her own institute as a test case and explained how 'traditional' institutes which have been working in many continents, can creatively face the new challenges of our modern times.

2. JESUS — CULTURES — MISSION

On **28th of February**, advantage was taken of the presence of the Indian theologian, Archbishop **Thomas Menampampil, SDB**, at a preparatory meeting for the Asian Synod, to hold a conference on the '*Church in*

India enriched by the local cultures. His optimism and confidence in the future of the Indian Church came from his constant pastoral contact with the poor and their incultured religiosity. — The programme that afternoon was a joint effort with the Roman section of the *Catholic Biblical Federation*. **Sr Teresa Caffi, SMdM**, gave a lecture on Luke 4. To prepare the Jubilee, she stressed, means to look closely at the figure of Jesus *the proclaimer* of the Good News in Lk 4:14-30. A biblical approach to the Jubilee is being taken up in these days by the Justice and Peace Commission of the UISG with more conferences on the topic.

3. THE MIDDLE EAST

After several attempts, on **22nd of April**, SEDOS was able to invite **Mr Afif Safieh**, Head of the Representation of Palestine to the Vatican and Great Britain. Mr Afif elaborated on the many factors that have led to a near break-down of dialogue in the search for peace in the Middle East. Since then, a new wave of violence has broken out, but also new endeavours are being made to try to find a peaceful solution. — **Sr Helen M. Haigh, RJM**, concentrated on her life experience in the Church in Lebanon, which is an integral part of this volatile surrounding. Everyday all the Churches are really engaged in seeking new ways to be “sacrament of peace and solidarity”.

4. TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE IN MISSION — HEALING THE MISSIONARY

Some good contacts with SEDOS Generalates, allowed us on **2nd May** to engage a psychologist and expert on ‘Mission and Trauma’. **Dr Robert Grant, Ph.D.**, had certainly not enough time to consider all the important aspects of this complicated topic, but he was able to show us all, how general the phenomena of trauma is and how much the successful continuation of our mission depends on a wise approach to it. We were left full of curiosity, because we felt we had only heard the outline of a very interesting subject (a book to come out soon).

5. A SPIRITUALITY OF MISSION INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

Again in preparation for the Jubilee Year, we dedicated our **1997 Ariccia Seminar (20-24 May)** to the topic: ***A Spirituality of Mission into the next century***. From the record presence (almost 130 people from 60 congregations) it became clear that preparing mission into the next millennium is a theme that interests people very much.

Dr Ian Linden, Director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, was known to many through his CIIR Bulletin and other conferences. He gave a special place to the role of the laity in the mission of the Church, in all mission indeed, but especially in the elementary mission of the Church “*for Global justice*”. His second lecture reflected on *politics in a secular world*, which has become a primary missionary challenge for all of us.

Sr Marie-Angèle Kitewo, SND, led us into the depth of *religious and healing experiences* in Zaïre. The “*healing dimension*” so important in the Gospels portraying Jesus, is part of the ministry to the culturally rooted African people. In her second lecture, she insisted on the need and courage to believe that such a *thing as African spirituality* (different ministries growing out of it) can exist.

Fr Samuel Rayan, SJ, well known for his writings, lectures and collaboration with the WCC in Geneva, reflected extensively on the topic of a “*Spirituality of mission in an Asian context*”. Many of our member congregations are well established in Asia, while others are looking for new foundations and are gathering information. It became once again very evident, that we must talk about the spiritualities (plural) of mission, because these *cultures, as he showed, are really producing spiritualities* in a mysterious encounter with the *kerygma* of Jesus.

6. THE ARMS TRADE AND MISSION TODAY

Our first autumn session this year, on 26th September, was a combined afternoon organised with the **Italian Antenna of the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)**. In the first lecture, **Mr Fabio Giunti** from Genoa, explained the highly lucrative background of the *international arms trade*. Only the concerted effort and strong lobbies by all those who profit directly or tacitly permit the arms trade, can question this immoral capitalism. — **Ms Giugliana Martirani** is very well known in Italy for her publications and work as president of MIR (International Movement of Reconciliation). She asked us to become more involved as religious in the many basic initiatives that are concerned with non-violence. In both lectures it became clear that our missionary work can bring pressure to bear on the arms trade.

7. The Second SEDOS symposium on the Special Synod Assembly for America (18 Nov. - 12 Dec. 1997)

AMERICA — THE KAIROS OF A SYNOD

While we are sending out this Report, the *Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops* is beginning. Having experienced the success and very good response to our first symposium on the African Synod, the secretariat was asked by many at last year's AGA, to explore the possibility of organising a similar symposium for the one on the Americas. Our congregations which are present with tens of thousands of missionaries in the many countries of America, see in the synod a real *kairos* to listen to the voices of these Local Churches and to renew our options for them once again. Through our many contacts, **eight double conferences** could be organised. One Cardinal, two Archbishops, four Bishops and eight theologians, women and men from north and south, have accepted SEDOS' invitation. —

We are in the midst of the event, which will be part of next year's report.

B. SEDOS WORKING GROUPS

1. CHINA

Our China Working Group has a wide circle of interested followers. It had not met for a few months (sickness of co-ordinator), but has now returned to its regular activities with determination. The arrival of Fr Willy Müller, SVD, now new at the China desk of Propaganda Fide, will help the group. He has been working for several years in Beijing. Earlier the group had invited the Ambassador of the UK. to the Holy See, to present a paper on the legal questions regarding the transfer of the Sovereignty of Hong Kong.

2. PACIFIC

The Pacific Working Group has held regular meetings during the year. The last, only a few days ago, was to study the *Lineamenta* for the Special Synod of Bishops for the Pacific. Br Allan Sherry, FMS, presented a critical reading and the group is taking up several aspects for more intensive study. While waiting for the Working Document, they are already elaborating material to be handed to some of the synod Fathers. The animators of the group are: Sr Pat Leamy, SMSM, Sr Louise Dunphy, RNDM, and Br Allan Sherry, FMS.

3. WORLD DEBT (English and French group)

The two groups have never been strong in number, but their output and study of important basic documents are really impressive. The two years' work has not tired the groups, but constantly opened up new questions and possibilities. The group is in regular contact with other important NGO's working on the Debt problem. The present co-ordinators are: **Fr Michael Seigel, SVD**, (English) and **Sr Monique Fabre (RSCJ)**. — In November, Fr Michael represented the Working Group and SEDOS at the meeting of **EURODAD** in Vienna. At a joint meeting in July, the two Working Groups decided to combine their efforts and collaborate with the international campaign **JUBILEE 2000**. The group sent an invitation to the USG, which accepted it, to widen the *Jubilee 2000* campaign to several hundred congregations. — The Working Group has decided to prepare a bigger meeting in February on "**Debt and Jubilee**", inviting the President of **Jubilee 2000**, Anne Pettifor.

4. FOOD, LAND AND HUNGER

Sr Veronica Brand, RSCM, is one of the co-ordinators of the Group. The group is small but has shown strong conviction at its meetings. One of the topics chosen was: food-security. In the last meeting led by Sr Brand, the group studied the 1996 *Cor Unum* Document: **World Hunger, a Challenge for all — Development in Solidarity**.

C. BULLETIN — INTERNET SERVICE

1. SEDOS BULLETIN

Also this year, the preparation and publication of our SEDOS Bulletin with articles in two languages, was one of our main achievements. I think it can be said that the reaction to the Bulletin is very positive. During this year some African countries — especially Sierra Leone and Liberia — have had some serious mailing

problems, but in general, the postal service to all the continents is going well. On the one side, we publish our own lectures held in Rome or Ariccia, and additionally, we try to select the best material we can find on mission and the related horizons conditioning our work. We are printing 1,150 copies at the moment, of which about 250 go to the Generalates, the rest to the subscribers directly. The fact that many important theological and missiological reviews have agreed to an exchange of publications with our Bulletin, enables us to receive a good number of theological reviews which we would not be able to pay for otherwise.

We are again preparing two diskettes with all the material contained in the 320 pages of the 1997 Bulletin. On one diskette we shall offer the *Ariccia conference*, on the other all the other issues of the 1997 Bulletin.

2. SEDOS INTERNET HOMEPAGE — INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS

From the start SEDOS has taken advantage of the manifold services provided by the Internet. Two years ago we established our Homepage on the Internet (<http://www.SEDOS.ORG>). The homepage allows us to offer an additional selection of missionary articles in French and English. During the year we have extended our *Homepage*, adding a new chapter with articles on: "*Bible and Mission*". In the future, we hope to expand this chapter with more articles. At the moment our missionary homepage contains around 50 articles. They are left on the homepage for six months, before being gradually replaced.

From the very beginning of our connection with the Internet four years ago, we were gradually subscribing to some important services of international documentation. The best of it (PWN — Peace World News / OneWorld Service / Amnesty International / Human Rights Web) is printed out, ordered geographically and made available.

IV. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

SEDOS SEMINAR 1998 — ARICCIA

In 1998 we shall again hold our Ariccia Residential Seminar in the third week of May. The meeting will begin on Tuesday, **19th May and end on Saturday, 23rd May**. As part of the preparatory cycle for the Jubilee Year, we have chosen the theme: ***Proclamation and Dialogue***, especially taking into account the major religions in Asia and Africa.

The resource persons are: Msgr. Michael Fitzgerald, Mafr. (Theology of Dialogue and Proclamation), Br Edmund Chia, FSC, Malaysia, General Secretary of the department of Dialogue of the FABC, (big religions in Asia) and Sr Lucie Nzenzili, FMM, (Africa: Cultural transitions — proclamation — formation).

SEDOS Secretariat and all members of the Executive take this opportunity to greet you in the whole world. We would like to thank everybody who has helped us in various ways to bring to completion the different projects and services this year.

SEDOS Secretariat and the Executive Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped us, in one way or another, in the realisation of the many projects over the past year.

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