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The Church in Latin America WHAT DOES LIBERATION MEAN?

The Pope is visiting Brazil. Here **Peter Hintzen** from the Netherlands, who recently spent two months in Latin America, writes of the dilemma which confronts the Catholic Church in that continent:

EUROPE has a one-sided picture of Latin America. There is a great deal more there than poverty, exploitation and revolution.

In that growing, fomenting continent the Catholic Church is one of the principal forces. Christian institutions reach infinitely deeper and further than Marxism, for instance. In no other continent are there as many Christians.

But the Church is passing through a period of uncertainty and struggle. For centuries its main concern was men's spiritual needs—though it also devoted itself to education and the care of the sick and aged. Since the beginning of this century, the Church has begun to search for its role in combating social injustice.

A Dutch Jesuit priest and I recently spent eight weeks in Columbia, Peru, Chile and Brazil. In that time we saw the Church from many angles.

The innumerable Church universities and schools, often going back to the 16th century, are impressive. In a continent where many can neither read nor write, this is meeting an urgent need.

Marxist analysis

The Church is doing much too in the social field. Together with Luiz Pereira, a Brazilian *favela* (shanty-town) leader, we visited Archbishop Ricardo Durand of Callao in Peru. Under his direction, hundreds of Christian social centres give help, faith and hope to the poor people who are migrating to the city. We talked to worker-priest Manfredo who, with others, shares the lot of the workers to bring the Gospel to the industrial suburb of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. We saw the work of Sister Dulce, taking the sick from the streets, and of Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity. In Salvador da Bahia they give a chance of survival to totally undernourished children, and teach the Bible to the *favelados* who know nothing of it.

The Marxists are clear in their analysis of the situation: Latin America is being pushed into economic and political dependence. 'Break the chains,' they say. Change the

structures, otherwise there is no hope for the bottom half of Latin America's people, who live in unspeakable poverty.

What does the Church say to this? Cardinals, bishops, priests and nuns are faced daily with poverty and the absence of basic rights. As we talked one Saturday with Cardinal Paulo Evaristo of Sao Paulo, Brazil, the phone on his desk rang. It was a cry for help from a *favela*. The *favelados* were being evicted by the municipal authorities. This is often done at weekends, when judges are unavailable, the Cardinal told us.

The Church has helped organise hundreds of communities in the *favelas*. In these the Bible is read, hymns are sung, prayers said; the *favelados* find unity and solidarity. They have often come from remote parts of the country, and know nothing of papers and documentation. Through the communities the Church gives legal and material help. It fights for their rights—while not taking matters out of their hands.

In Medellin in 1968 the Latin American bishops concluded that it was their task to help the oppressed find liberation. But what kind of liberation? Here there are many different views.

The Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez says that the Church should give up its hostility towards Marxism. It should read 'the signs of the times' and enthusiastically back Marxist revolution, for only in that way would it be able 'to obey God's will'.

Puebla resolutions

But when the Latin American bishops were gathered in Puebla last year they rejected Marxism. Not only did they condemn 'rigid' liberalism and the 'ideology of National Security', but also Marxism that, in the words of the Puebla document, is violent and unrealistically Utopian. Pope John Paul II declared in his address to the bishops in Puebla that only the authentic and complete truth of the Gospel liberates.

Bishop Claudio Hummes of Santo Andre, the industrial suburb of Sao Paulo, pointed out to us that it was decided at this confer-

ence 'to opt for the poor'. 'We are carrying out the Puebla resolutions,' he said. But we were bewildered when he went on to say that as Christians one should not bring poor and rich together as this 'would be offensive to the poor'. The Church ought to fight for 'the conversion of an entire social class', he believed, and personal conversion seemed irrelevant to him.

On the other hand, the Chilean theologian Miguel Poradowski feels the theology of liberation is 'man-centred': 'As long as theology was God-centred, Marxism could not infiltrate, only combat Christianity. But as soon as the theology becomes man-centred, particularly if it adopts a typically sociological attitude, Marxism finds the door open: it can infiltrate, dominate and use Christianity for its purposes.'

Martyred

Auxiliary Bishop Karl Romer of Rio de Janeiro appeared, in his talk with us, more even-handed. He was no less indignant than Bishop Hummes about the social injustices. Income differences in Brazil, he told us angrily, are 1 to 20. 'But,' he added, 'without God, without the complete Gospel and a Christian conversion, without the vertical dimension, the much needed structural changes will not produce liberation and change.' That this fear is legitimate is demonstrated in Nicaragua which, in the words of *The Economist*, seems to be switching from a 'right-wing authoritarian past', to a 'left-wing totalitarian future'.

The Church faces a dilemma. In Salvador da Bahia we attended the memorial meeting for the murdered Archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero. He felt he had no other choice but to speak up for an oppressed people, and was martyred as a result.

In that other Salvador we talked with Vicar General Gaspar Sadoc, a black priest. 'Above all we need good, straight Bible instruction,' he said. 'Everyone, including the rich, must know the claims of the Gospel on them, and what deep changes this means.'

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WHO WILL BE THE DANIELS IN THE STRUGGLE?

At the heart of last month's riots in South Africa was the Coloured community of Cape Town. 'Educatio', the journal of 12,000 Coloured teachers of the Cape Professional Teachers' Association, carried the following editorial:

WHAT ARE WE OUT FOR? It is a safe bet that most would answer—Freedom. The right to choose for ourselves; the right not to be told by others what is good for us. Isn't this the underlying urge beneath the boycotts? Bad conditions, no books—these are important. But we all know that these are not the issue.

Freedom is a concept that has captured minds throughout the ages. It is indestructible. Jesus, St Paul, Voltaire, Rousseau, Marx, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King—all have lived for freedom, though in very different ways and for very different concepts. That is a study in itself.

But what is the picture of freedom which we claim? It is important to be clear, otherwise we will sell ourselves short. Equality of votes; equality before the law; equality of opportunity. No one would argue with these. But are they enough? The reason we remember the men above is because they articulated their philosophies of freedom and then paid the price of putting their philosophies into action. With this in mind, let us pose certain questions:

By whom is the fight for freedom most often betrayed?

History would answer—by the freedom fighters themselves. Why? Because they were not truly radical (the Latin 'Radix': root). They did not go to the root. They fought against the fruits of selfishness, greed,

fear and the lust for power in others, but left untouched the same forces in themselves. So, when freedom was achieved, it turned once more to oppression, but with a new lot on top. Is this what we want?

When is a revolutionary really a reactionary?

When he knows what he is *against*, but not what he is *for*. In this context we must each answer one fundamental question: What authority do I accept? Do I need an authority?

Some people never get beyond a childish naive idea of freedom—I must be free to do what I want. Can we accept that? No family can operate on that basis. No society, no system. Anarchy is not our aim.

Nor will we accept dictatorship—the right of any other man or group to impose on us what we should do. So where does that leave us?

Some may say, 'Democracy, the will of the majority, must decide.' Fine. But is that enough? In the name of democracy you can have virtual dictatorship if one group takes it that numerical superiority means a monopoly of rightness or of power. Europe, the Americas, Russia, Asia, Africa, all provide examples of 'My group is in a majority here; therefore what I say is right'. But is it necessarily?

True democracy is not the right to impose my will on others just because I am in the majority. Democracy is the right to search together for what is just; a search that must be based on respect for the other man, on mutual acceptance of agreed standards of right and wrong; and on a belief that what is right is more important than who is right.

To make democracy work, each individual must choose what authority he obeys. Each

of us does obey some authority—even if it is only the authority of what I want. Some people choose to obey another individual because it lets them off the hook of taking responsibility while leaving them the luxury of criticism or blame of others. Some sell their souls to their party or group. Many in this country do this.

If, however, I do not accept dictatorship of any form, be it of any individual, party or group, then where does that leave me?

It leaves me with one choice, a difficult choice: to obey honestly the inner discipline of obedience to my own conscience and the highest teachings of my faith.

A man who compromises with his own inner conviction as to what is right and what is wrong betrays himself. A man must do what he truly considers to be right and constructive. Criticism or the fear of being criticised is reactionary.

In our struggle there will always be differing viewpoints. To expect anything else would be the height of naivety.

Can we, in our struggle, demonstrate the strength of a freedom, the maturity of a freedom, the trust of a freedom where each is set free to speak his mind as inner conviction leads? A freedom from the fear that paralyses; from the control which would force others to conform; from the personal lust for power that would cut others down?

The freedom for which we struggle begins now, in each of us. It begins in how we treat each other, respect each other, encourage each other. Let each of us be free to walk tall.

'Dare to be a Daniel;
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose true;
Dare to make it known.'

Spur to Action

'SPUR', the newspaper of the World Development Movement, described the new book *200 million hungry children* by dairy expert Stanley Barnes, as 'an education for those



The Maltese Minister of Education, Philip Muscat, receives a copy of *200 million hungry children* from Ian Sciortino, Malta.

who would think for themselves'. The book's proposal for the use of milk in answering Third World malnutrition, it says, is 'an extremely effective concept warranting the deliberate directing of aid to such channels.'

In a full-page article in *Action for Development*, Mr Barnes, who has established dairy-product factories in several Third World countries, outlines proposals that he believes could save the lives of millions of children through the massive use of milk surpluses to support the growth of dairying in the Third World. 'Answering infant malnutrition,' he points out, 'is the essential first step in equipping the men and women of the future to meet the challenge of the 21st century.'

Service to poor

West Africa, describing the book as 'well-written and very readable,' emphasises the importance to Africa of his theme. 'Milk, in one form or another,' it says, 'can make the biggest contribution to the health of children in the Third World'.

The book also looks at the problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment in the Third World, and offers a number of ideas

on how they could be alleviated.

'The early chapters retell in vivid language the struggle of poor people for access to sufficient food,' wrote *Appropriate Technology*, the journal of the Intermediate Technology Development Group. 'The reader is allowed a glimpse of the underlying competition limiting the availability of grains to poor people; the purchasing power of the rich man's cow is greater than that of the poor man's family.'

In Malta, where Mr Barnes established a milk pasteurisation scheme in the 1930s, the *Sunday Times* pointed out that the book was 'a reminder of the promises made during the International Year of the Child, when so much was said to make people aware of the rights and needs of children'.

'Mr Barnes' life has been a striking example of the practical expression of a deep Christian faith worked out in service to the poor of the world,' the reviewer concluded.

'200 million hungry children' by Stanley Barnes, published by Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ, hardback £4.95, with postage £5.65, paperback £1.50, with postage £1.95.

INDIA

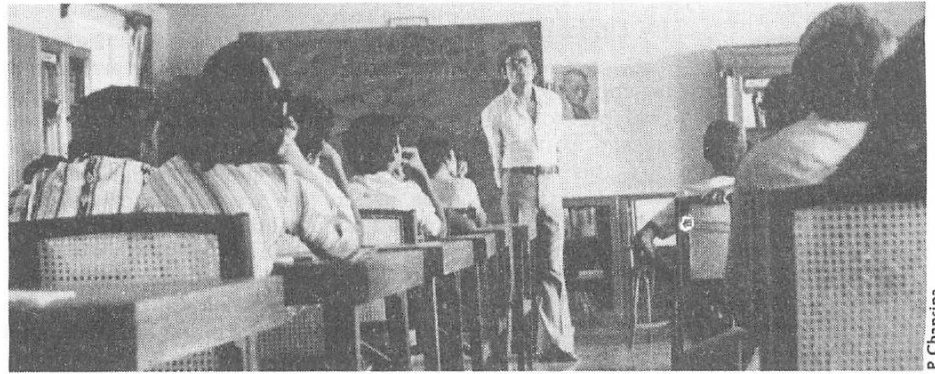
Why should it be me?

by Anand Divekar and Charles Aquilina

'IS CORRUPTION essential for our national life?' was the subject of a lively debate among young people at the MRA centre in Panchgani, India. Coming from all over India and eight other countries, the 56 students were taking part in a three-week 'Course in Effective Living' last month.

The participants saw documentary and educational films, and listened to lectures on energy, electronics, big city problems, appropriate technology, village health work and bridging the world's rich-poor gap. They took part together in farming, sports, and cooking and serving meals. Most were surprised to discover that even washing up could be fun! Practical workshops were held in journalism and yoga, cartooning and housekeeping, karate and first aid, drama and music.

In seminars such as 'The Art of Teamwork', African and Indian participants with Rajmohan Gandhi



A seminar

and 'Architecture of Men and Buildings', students discussed the connection between how they lived and the needs of their families, communities, and nations. A student wrote a song about the need for someone to tackle these problems. 'Why should it be me?' it asked.

But the end of the song was, 'It must start with me,' and during the session many students decided where they needed to start: working for better relationships at home, giving up cheating, drinking and gambling. Several decided that they would work in poor areas of the country.

A young student told the conference how his best friend was beaten to death by a group of twenty, and he had been preparing

to take revenge. During the course, something in his heart told him, 'You are not the one to take revenge.' 'I felt powerless,' he said. 'I realised that I must apologise to them for my hatred.'

In a report on the conference the *Poona Herald* told of other decisions—the young farmer from Maharashtra who said, 'Instead of becoming an accountant, I am going to work to improve the lot of the farmers'; the Allahabad University student who was going to help fellow students from rural areas by teaching them English; and the girl student who decided to stop buying imported clothes and to use a quarter of her weekly pocket money to buy milk for poor children in her area.

Welsh warmth and steel

IN THE MID-19th Century, Merthyr Tydfil, with its four giant iron works, could claim to be 'the industrial capital of the world'. This year the town celebrates the 1500th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Welsh princess, St Tydfil, after whom it is named. As part of their festival the play *Keir Hardie—the man they could not buy* was performed there last month.

The Mayor and Mayoress, members of the council and other community leaders were among the audience which responded with enthusiasm to the story of the man who was MP for Merthyr for 15 years.

The cast were welcomed to Merthyr with warmth and friendship, as they have been everywhere in South Wales. But they also learned something of the causes of those class divisions which tear apart so much of British industry and society.

There is the story from South Wales of steelworkers singing as they went to work on the day they paid the final instalments to purchase their houses from the steel company, only to be told later that day that the company was closing the steelworks and moving to the coast.

Class war is the legacy of such events in the valleys. In the play *Hardie* is challenged to build a movement to 'cure bitterness and

hate as well as greed'. He learns that 'bitterness is like a baby's dummy. You can suck on it all day and never get fed.' He decides he is not going to bow to his bitterness: 'I've decided to grow up. We're going to set men free—free from all that degrades them. And bitterness degrades a man—aye, and enslaves him; and it doesn't cure what's wrong.'

"'Thy will be done on earth'; he says '—on earth, not just in heaven. There's a

goal there for society—and I've decided to make it my goal.'

Bitterness is not limited to one class. Today there are still those who blame the bosses, but as many blame the unions for all the troubles. We have met families too, broken by bitterness. Perhaps this is why the play has brought a deep response too from many who know little of politics or industry.

Ian McLachlan

Lion roars

'VERY CHALLENGING,' said a university lecturer. 'It is a long time since I have been so moved in a theatre,' added his wife.

They were emerging from a preview performance of *Song of the Lion* at the Collegiate Theatre, in the heart of London University. Over 1500 people packed the three performances there last week.

Song of the Lion, the latest Aldersgate production, is the story of C S Lewis, Oxford don, Cambridge professor and arguably the best-known Christian apologist of the century. The play, by Fr Daniel Pierce, is the story of his voyage of discovery in search of faith. C S Lewis is played by Hugh Manning, well known to British theatre, cinema and TV audiences.

Song of the Lion has now embarked on an extensive tour of England.



Hugh Manning as C S Lewis



1900 years later

by Linda Pierce
India

TO THE OUTSIDER Malta conjures up a picture of a paradise to which Europeans escape to soak up the sun and feast their eyes on idyllic scenery. It is this—and so much more.

My impression was of a people content to live with the essentials. Malta is poorer than most other European countries, and it is perhaps this lack of wealth that gives her people the sensitivity to the needs of others that I discovered in those I met. For instance, a group goes each year to work with Mother Teresa in Calcutta.

Many Maltese consider February 10 as their 'freedom day'. On this day in AD 60 the apostle Paul was shipwrecked on Malta on his way to stand trial before Caesar in Rome. He spent three months on the island waiting for a ship, and though a prisoner of the Romans, he brought Christianity to Malta.

He founded three churches, still very much in use today.

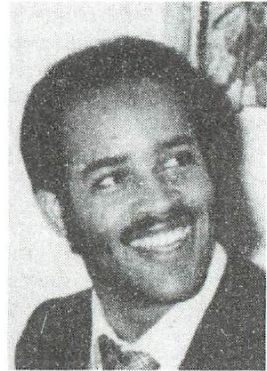
There are 450 churches in all. Eighty per cent of the 318,000 inhabitants are churchgoers, and they are predominantly Catholic. Many young Maltese are committed Christians, active in social work. But drugs and pornography are there too. Will Malta copy the best or the worst traits of the more sophisticated nations?

There is a great task for her in the world. She is a natural link between Europe and North Africa, between Christendom and Islam, between developing and developed nations.

As a Catholic myself, it was a privilege to be in Malta. There I had the freeing experience of laying down past resentments. Too often they have squeezed the Holy Spirit out of my life and taken up room in my heart meant for other people. In the past I have been afraid of a terrible God taking advantage of my willingness to serve Him! One day I saw I needed to say 'yes' to Him. And this I did.

Repairing the damage

by Miguel Richards



Weeks

I AM JAMAICAN and feel responsible for helping to cure the bitterness that has erupted into violence in Bristol, and in Miami in the USA. It is increasingly obvious that more caring people are needed if we are to anticipate the flashpoints of our multiracial society and bring answers. I have only started to care in the last few years.

I work in a small building business with my Dad. So that can be a potentially explosive situation! But I am learning to sort out differences by starting with myself. One day, after I had lied to my Dad as to my whereabouts on a particular night, I decided to tell him the truth. To my surprise it restored our trust and freed my spirit.

My building work takes me into homes of varied cultures. Once I repaired windows in an African home after a break-in by a West Indian. I realised what they were feeling about my people and apologised for what had happened. In that way my Dad and I were also able to repair the broken trust. We all ended up having an African meal together, and our friendship still continues.

If we in Britain can understand what it feels like to be rejected by society, we will find the way to reach the bitter young blacks and help them find the priceless part they have in building the new Britain.

Made a friend

by EUNICE STADE from New Zealand, who attended an MRA conference in Australia earlier this year:

I WENT TO SCHOOL in the country. Then my working days were spent looking after other people's children and keeping house. It was an isolated life. Having only a limited education, I felt inferior.

The first day or two at the conference I felt a little confused. There were so many people to meet, and many ideas being expressed. Some of the things the speakers said from the platform I couldn't grasp—they just went over my head.

In spite of this I felt the Spirit was present. I realised that people were taking time each day in quiet to seek God's direction. I

decided there were some questions I wanted to ask Him.

When I did, in my heart He said to me, 'I need simple people—people who will be themselves. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Live up to what you know of Christ.'

I suddenly felt a new person. Life became a great joy and I began to enjoy the conference. My experience of life and faith had previously seemed insignificant. Now they were something I could share with people.

Since then that experience has stayed with me. God has become a friend, someone who I can have a conversation with at any time during the day. The only condition is that I give my whole self to Him and what He wants. I am learning the meaning of the phrase, 'Be humble and have the faith as of a little child.'

Hard to swallow

by Toshiko Ichihara
Japan

IT IS NINE MONTHS since I came to England to stay at a busy house, one of the MRA centres in London. There have been many things to learn.

In the house we try to create the peaceful surroundings where people from many different backgrounds can meet to work out their difficulties in an atmosphere of honesty. Sometimes a good meal is a help in this.

I find it really enjoyable and interesting to look after these dinner parties.

I believe the first impression the guests receive when they enter the dining room is very important, and the work of preparation is not only to get the things onto the table but is part of creating a good atmosphere for them. Each occasion is different, so we need to work out everything with care for the different people there.

I like to plan the whole process of the party early that morning. And before the meal begins we have a rehearsal of how to serve it best. Then we pray together. This is very important in making us calm and relaxed.

Recently we had a big working dinner. I prepared everything carefully and talked

over the serving of the meal from beginning to end with the others who were helping. I wanted to do it perfectly.

Once the dinner began, everything went differently. I was not happy because it was all so different from my plan, which was how I had thought God would like things to be. My pride was hurt even though everybody was satisfied with the dinner party.

Then somebody said that maybe God sometimes interrupts your plans so that you can learn something. I realised that I always stuck rigidly to what I had worked out beforehand. I realised that I needed to free my mind to receive God's gift of flexibility.