

## **THE GUERRILLAS — NEXT STAGE IN LATIN AMERICA?**

*The question posed above is answered in the affirmative by the Reverend Richard Shaull who spent more than a decade in Brazil and is presently Professor of Ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary. But equally important, he says — and as yet to be reconsidered — is the response of the United States to ongoing developments in Latin America. Reprinted here is a major portion of Dr. Shaull's article, which first appeared in the most recent issue of The Church Woman.*

Official circles in Washington, and the daily newspaper give us the impression that all is going relatively well in Latin America. Governments are more stable; inflation has been slowed down; there are some signs of economic stability and growth. We hear reports about guerrilla warfare, but the few groups that exist are isolated and controlled, and would seem to have little significance.

After spending one month traveling from Mexico to the River Plate, in contact with a wide variety of people who represent the potential new leadership in that part of the world, I see the situation quite differently. The only conclusion I can draw is that we are headed directly for a number of new Vietnams in Latin America, in which United States military power will be used against these young people who are willing to sacrifice their lives to build a new social order, many of them being the outstanding representatives of a new generation of Christians.

In recent months, a significant number of those who are working most intensely for the economic development of their countries have concluded that development depends upon fundamental structural changes which can be brought about only by political means. As there are now no political instruments by which such changes can come, the only alternative they see is armed insurrection. And as the United States stands to lose most by these changes and is the main bulwark of the old order, the struggle will be ultimately against North American military power.

The logic behind this was best expressed by the intellectual leader of one of the new Catholic movements. We now see, he said, that underdevelopment is not the natural condition of a non-technological society, destined to disappear as that situation is overcome. It is rather the product of the whole colonial relationship of the past. Over the years, the

great powers have used us for their purposes, and have helped to produce economic and political structures in each country in line with their interests. As this entire order is not geared either to rapid economic growth or to the improvement of the lot of the masses, we have no choice now but to concentrate our attention on changing this whole system. For us, development means that we as a nation take our destiny in our own hands, set our goals and mobilize our resources toward its achievement. This involves comprehensive national planning, capital accumulation and the mobilization of labor, administrative and land reforms, control, and in some cases nationalization of foreign enterprises. In order to develop, we must do what Japan and other countries have done in the past: restrict our contacts with the formerly dominant nations until the old relationship gives way to a new one. We had hoped to accomplish this by the democratic political process. As this is no longer possible, the only road open before us is armed struggle, oriented around guerrilla warfare. And let us have no doubts about one point: in this struggle American military power will be the major force working against us. . . .

The shift in perspective which this represents for many people is the result of the interaction of certain subjective and objective factors. Several elements stand out:

There are no models of dynamic economic growth, capable of meeting the population explosion and the rapid growth of urban centers.

At a time of rising nationalism, the dominance of United States power is more and more evident.

In many places, those of a new generation who want to make some contributions to the economic development of their countries and build a new social order are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. For young people from the lower classes, the obstacles in the way of getting an education are formidable.

Most serious of all, at a time when dynamic political action is called for, there are no political forces that seem to offer any basis for hope.

In the face of the present political wasteland, some of the younger generation decide to forget about the political struggle for the present, get the best preparation they can in their chosen profession, and work at it intensely. But many others ask themselves if the

pilgrimage of Father Camilo Torres, from his professional work as a sociologist in the university to participation in a guerrilla movement, is not the more responsible act.

At any rate, the question of supporting armed insurrection focusing in a guerrilla movement is the order of the day. A major stimulus has come from the writings of Regis Debray, a young French journalist-philosopher now a prisoner in Bolivia. Debray argues that a total national struggle of liberation centering around guerrilla tactics is not only possible in Latin America; it is the only solution. He further contends that the laws for the success of such an effort can be worked out scientifically in each situation, especially in the light of the Cuban experience, and proceeds to indicate the main lines of such an effort. By doing this in a powerful way, Debray has given a tremendous impulse to the movement toward armed insurrection in Latin America. . . .

It is still too early to predict what will be the future of these movements. But my guess is that we are now witnessing the beginning of a new stage in the revolutionary struggle in Latin America, in which guerrilla warfare and the type of political action related to it will play a central role. Whatever happens to the guerrilla groups now in existence, new focal points will appear across Latin America; and their existence will confront the new generation with a problem of conscience and a call to revolutionary action, as nothing in the past has been able to do.

If this should materialize, and if the United States continues to follow its present policy, we will eventually be involved in a struggle in Latin America that will make even less sense than our present war in Vietnam. We will be caught with the impossible task of shoring up regimes that will be unable to bring about development, to offer a viable political structure, or to mobilize a new generation for building a new society. We will create a situation in which our involvement will increase at the same time that pressures for independent, national selfhood become greater, and thus we will be hated by all those except the small ruling class who will depend on us to remain in power.

We will thus be seen as the major cause of growing social disintegration in a situation in which our military intervention will of necessity increase.

There is no reason why we have to fall inevitably into this trap. But to avoid it will require a radical reorientation of perspective toward Latin America on our part, as well as in intense long-term political struggle to change our policy, by all those who are unwilling to sit back with folded hands and await the approaching apocalypse.

# REVOLUTION & HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

*Ulf Goebel*

"Be like God who destroys  
with His left hand what  
He created with His right . . ."

B. Traven

I know what you are going to say. Revolutions are bloody. In the end the pathology of power grinds under foot not only the King-priest, Louis XVI, but also Saint-Just and Robespierre. Heads roll left and right. All dams are torn down and the unrestrained waters rush on to crush all who dare to raise their heads above the intoxicated masses. Not unreasonably you mention Edmund Burke. His nostalgia for continuity and change contained by the scaffolds of time speaks very forcefully to my informed human instincts. In part, yours is the voice of heredity and sacred traditions, and Burke reflects truly on a monster when he launches himself against the national decapitation wrought by the Assembly. It is always an ugly sight to watch a son slay his father. But we should never be so foolish as to forget *Oedipus Rex* and the tragic realities of unavoidable generational battles. Your Burke tries to ignore what must be confronted. The myth of English stability is exploded the moment one looks closely at the seventeenth century. You see, it is just as easy to understand Judy Collins when she sings of liberty and tearing down the walls!

I venture to suggest, somewhat timidly to be sure, that the hope for humanity in the future lies with those who today foment revolution throughout the world. You can justify denouncing Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Che Guevara, César Montes, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Black Panther Party, the Viet Cong and Haight Ashbury hippies all you wish on the basis of reasoned examination. But you cannot ignore them and the undeniable fact that they have a strange and oddly attractive sense of fascination about them! Look around yourself.

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