

Uruguay: A Marxist Alleluia

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Uruguay, with a tradition of democratic stability similar to that of Chile and, to a certain extent, Costa Rica, has characteristics which distinguish it within the Latin American continent. Some of these were highlighted during the last few months of 1971 when Uruguay became a center of world attention: The traditional two-party regime was confronted with a conglomeration of political parties of the Left which appeared capable of coming to power through the elections, thus repeating the phenomenon of Chile.

On November 24, 1971, the largest political demonstration in the history of Uruguay took place. An enormous crowd, wild with enthusiasm, marched through all parts of Montevideo and gathered in front of the parliament building to express its support for the Frente Amplio (Broad Front). The euphoric estimates of the Party press spoke of 500,000 people. (One should remember that 1,200,000 live in the capital and that the population of the whole country is 2,600,000.) More sober estimates put the figure at 300,000—in any case a very large number, which justified the assumption of extraordinary party strength. Nevertheless, when the returns were opened in the early morning of November 29, only 18 per cent of the country's electorate proved to have voted for the Frente Amplio.

This phenomenon can be partially explained by a brief look at the political history of Uruguay. Traditionally, power has been in the hands of one or the other of two major parties: the Blanco Party and the Colorados. Also known as the Nationalist Party, the Blanco Party's main strength is in the rural areas of the country and it is traditionally considered to be the guardian of national sovereignty. (During the Second World War it was stubbornly opposed to the

support which Uruguay gave to the Allies on the grounds that it was a war between two empires and that it should not involve us.) The main strength of the Colorado Party is in the city of Montevideo and in the towns in the interior; it is favorable to industry, open to world contacts and therefore modernist and subject to many foreign influences. In general this is the party which has been in power. During the first half of the twentieth century a socialist tendency developed within the Colorado Party, and on this basis it was possible to gain acceptance for some progressive laws securing advantages for the proletariat: an eight-hour day, early pensions (in Uruguay a mother who has worked for ten years can retire for the rest of her days), etc.

This political scene was based on an economy of dependence. Uruguay is an agrarian country mainly engaged in cattle raising. It became autonomous as a result of British arbitration between Argentina and Brazil, and from that moment it remained subject to the economic influence of the British Empire. This was no burden, since the Uruguayan economy was complimentary to the British. But as the British Empire gradually abandoned its position to North America, the dependency shifted to North America and the advantages of economic complementarity disappeared. The United States does not need the basic products of Uruguay; on the contrary, in many things they are competitive.

The term "dependency" should also be understood as meaning national economic stagnation, almost regression. Uruguay's gross national product has not increased in any substantial way since the beginning of this century. The unequal distribution of the land which made possible the existence of large *latifundias* and small *minifundias* has meant insufficient motivation to introduce technical methods and modernization and the financial impossibility of planning production on a scientific basis. Consequently, the production indexes have remained stationary, aggra-

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vated by the fact that during the major part of our century international prices for Uruguayan exports have continued to go down. Thus there is static production, bringing in less and less hard currency, and a population increase resulting from European emigration and a small but steady natural increase. This contributes to a constant atmosphere of tension between a relatively educated population encouraged to desire luxury goods and the economic infrastructure that is finding it impossible to maintain a socialist superstructure.

The country has continued to resolve this tension by means of a consistent policy of postponing its problems. On two critical occasions the problems of Uruguay were solved by wars outside the country. During the Second World War and the Korean War the price of the raw materials exported by Uruguay went up, and imports from the industrialized countries sharply decreased. But the Vietnam war did not bring the same favorable consequences. The countries of Europe and the United States were no longer dependent on what the Third World could produce. Another delaying action takes the form of internal buttresses set up to ward off the outbreak of social conflict. One Uruguayan solution is early retirement. Any person over forty who is dismissed from his job is entitled to receive a pension. The law recognizes that, in a stagnant economy, it is difficult to find permanent employment for an older person. While the pension is not sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living, it does make the recipient an accomplice to the situation and removes his desire for radical change.

Still another tension valve is state employment. When, in a country of 2,600,000 inhabitants, 300,000 are receiving pensions of different types, it is all the more surprising to learn that yet another 300,000 persons are state employees. Thus more than 10 per cent of the population, 30 per cent of the working force, is receiving a salary directly from the state apparatus, though the state owns no basic industries. Ninety per cent of these employees are engaged in providing services. This vast bureaucracy is actually a hidden employment subsidy. Once again, the salary is not sufficient for a decent standard of living, but it inhibits strong protests against the stagnation of the national economy.

This policy of postponing conflicts and solutions is also supported from the outside, since there is a continual possibility of refinancing the national debt from the International Monetary Fund or from other credit institutions. Logically, these offer a way out of critical situations, but at the cost of onerous conditions increasingly difficult to bear and to fulfill. Thus, a country whose exports average \$200 million per annum has an external public debt of \$580 million and an additional private debt of about \$300 million. As a result, the country is expected to pay \$300 million in 1972 for services and amortisation of debts,

which is an absolute impossibility. For how long can this policy of postponement continue? That is the continuing political issue in Uruguay.

The country has expressed itself politically through its two large parties, the Blancos, and the Colorados, but over the past fifty years a critical Left minority group has functioned to a certain extent as leaven in the lump and has done service as an adornment to the democracy. There is a Socialist party, a Communist party, and a number of anarchist groups. Uruguay is proud of its liberal laws which permit such divergent views to be expressed. However, respect for the leftist minority began to waver, and even to disappear, during the last electoral campaign when the Frente Amplio appeared on the scene with the potential of coming to power.

Traditionally, Socialist, Communist and anarchist movements have been responsible for the organization of workers, especially in the large towns, obtaining advantages in certain sectors. The trade union movement in Uruguay is proportionately the strongest in Latin America. A general strike it declared completely paralyzed the capital, Montevideo. In general it follows a moderate line inspired to a large extent by the Communist Party, but it has not managed to make the mass of the proletariat aware of the necessity for fundamental changes in the structure of society itself.

The role of Christians in the country is of great political importance. The separation of Church and State took place in Uruguay in 1917, but positivism had taken hold of intellectual circles many years earlier. The Catholic Church began to feel itself subject to attack from a secularist culture and adopted a defensive attitude. It organized its own political party, traditionally known as Unión Cívica (Civic Union), published its own periodical, *El Bien Público* (The Public Good), set up and guarded its own chain of private schools, struggled to influence public opinion in an attempt to prevent the adoption of certain laws like that on divorce, and so on. The Unión Cívica Party always had a small representation in parliament and also constituted part of the democratic adornment of our political life. As a consequence of the so-called "German miracle" in Europe, the prestige of Christian Democracy grew and the Unión Cívica Party adapted itself to the new situation, adopting the name Democracia Cristiana. It was not only a change of name but also of attitude: to bring about the transformation of this political group from a confessional grouping, organized for the defense of the Church's position, into a secular political community, certainly of Christian extraction but concerned to come to power in order to introduce substantial socio-politico-economic reforms.

The Christian Democratic Youth, in particular, became aware of the crisis threatening the whole life

of the country and demanded more radical solutions. This was the generation which received with delight the news of the Second Vatican Council and which discovered that its grave concern received official sanction from the 1968 Conference of Bishops at Medellín, where the word "liberation" rang out as the major emphasis for the continent's Christian community. Over the past few years an intense internal debate has been going on in the life of the Church, centering not on the Church itself but on different options relating to the problems of the secular community. The approach of Catholicism has changed completely, from a defensive position to an attitude of openness to society and of militant participation in the quest for new forms of social organization. The same phenomenon can be observed in the small Protestant community which amounts to only 2 per cent of the country's population.

In order to maintain the two-party system in Uruguay, an electoral system known as the *Ley de Lemas* has developed. Instead of the parties holding their own internal conventions, any sector of one of the parties can present a complete list of candidates to be voted for by the public. The presidential candidate who receives the most votes within his own party is credited with the votes cast for the other candidates of the same party. Thus, a person can obtain the highest office in the country when only 18 or 20 per cent of the total electorate has voted for him directly. The result is that the various streams within one party do not feel themselves bound to the newly elected president but, on the contrary, consider that he is obliged to them because they contributed to his electoral success. Ministerial posts and various state activities are then distributed in proportion to the votes contributed by the various groups, which entails a chaotic settling of ideological differences and makes it difficult to work in unity.

A few months after General Oscar Gestido became President in March, 1967, he suffered a heart attack. Mr. Jorge Pacheco Areco succeeded him. Pacheco was an obscure member of the parliament who, at the last moment, had been chosen by General Gestido as his second in command because others to whom he had offered the post did not accept it. Pacheco Areco reorganized his team of ministers and surrounded himself with people representing major financial interests. On the advice of these people, he took a radical economic action: the freezing of prices and salaries in June, 1968. But this decree fixed the salaries of workers at a low level, since wages were generally reviewed on July 1 of each year—while prices, already reflecting the anticipated July wage increases, were at a relatively high level. In consequence, employees were obliged to finance an austerity program intended to put an end to an inflation of 136 per cent in the preceding twelve

months. This sudden decrease in the purchasing power of the working classes naturally produced a reaction. The government adopted a rigid attitude and tried to repress the trade union movement. Then the university students took the initiative and came out onto the streets in solidarity with the workers' movement to confront the police force. This was the most important new phenomenon of 1968.

The same year witnessed the first student martyrs. Three students fell before the bullets of the police. This increased the conflict of opinions, the Executive maintaining an attitude of firmness both by introducing the *Medidas Prontas de Seguridad* (Rapid Security Measures—a state of siege) and by arresting trade union leaders. It succeeded in keeping inflation down during the next twelve months to about 20 per cent, and people began to speak of the "Uruguayan economic miracle." But a few years were sufficient to show that this was an entirely transitory situation. One of the factors—salaries—which contributes to inflation was controlled, but because it did not affect production and/or the agrarian structures this solution proved to be ephemeral, the source of social conflicts and, in the long term, suicidal for the economy of the country. The students gradually became an important factor in the social struggle and finally in the political struggle. Indeed, the political involvement of students began to spread to the secondary school level; pupils between the ages of thirteen and sixteen were in the forefront of the combat against the police authorities. This union of workers and students combined with the rise of general political awareness to fuel the rise of the *Frente Amplio*.

Other factors contributed significantly to the political climate. The first is the growing participation of Christian groups in the social struggle. The whole phenomenon of internal reforms in the Church was accompanied by a growing social militancy of its young people. Thus, in both Catholic and Protestant parishes, workers accompanied their petitions with hunger strikes, pastors and priests formed *comunidades cristianas* (Christian communities), and ecumenical groups supported the trade unions in their struggle for social improvements.

Another new and important factor has modified the national situation in Uruguay: the rise of the Tupamaros, the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (M.L.N.—National Liberation Movement) and of other, smaller groups which are seeking access to power by means of violence. The Tupamaros originated in a small trade union of sugar-cane cutters in the North, but they soon discovered that their only possibility for success was in the large urban area of the city of Montevideo. They have dramatized their activity by events which attract public attention: for example, by uncovering trade negotiations, by kidnapping persons of importance in commercial and banking activities to whom they attribute eco-

omic crimes, and by escaping twice from the women's prison and once from the very well-guarded prison of Punta Carretas. Their style of action has gained the respect of large sectors of Uruguayan youth from whom they draw the majority of their cadres. Although they do not seem likely to come to power in the short term, nevertheless they are sufficiently well organized to develop into a parallel power. Many people, looking for a way of changing the country radically but unable to support the Tupamaros, saw the Frente Amplio as a visible, peaceful electoral option.

A group with no clearly defined political style but with a common socialist concern began to meet at the offices of the weekly *Marcha* in an attempt to create a political electoral instrument for the youth and the workers which, if it did not come to power, could at least create a parliamentary bloc to support the claims of workers and students. An appeal was launched on October 7, 1970, inviting various political groups to come together to organize a broad political front. Some years earlier the Communist Party had attempted this, but had little success. Constant propaganda over many years had created a resistance to the very word "communism." Six years later the Christian Democratic Party made a similar appeal. The Communist Party responded immediately, since this fitted into its earlier position, but the Christian Democrats made it clear that they were not interested in a direct alliance with the Communist Party and that they would only accept its participation if a larger number of different political opinions was represented. It became evident that a new political reality was coming into existence, not merely an opportunistic alliance aimed at the election.

The 1970 appeal of the Independents was answered not only by the Communists and Christian Democrats but also by a series of small leftist groups like the Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Trotskyist Workers' Party, the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation and by large sections of the Blanco and Colorado parties. The latter group was made up of those who considered themselves imprisoned within their parties because, as a consequence of the *Ley de Lemas*, they were constantly casting votes supporting candidates whose ideological positions were diametrically opposed to their own.

These groups together set up a Frente Amplio, the goal of which was not only electoral participation but wakening political consciousness of the masses to an understanding of the necessity of profound changes in the nation.

The Frente Amplio was basically an agreement between political groups centered on common candidates for national posts. The candidates sought were independents. In General Liber Seregni they found someone who provided an image of security

for a country which feared for its future, who had roots in the national traditions (in this case, the ranks of the army), and an awareness of the changes needed by the country. (The General had resigned from the highest office in the National Army because of a disagreement with the government of President Pacheco Areco.)

A joint program of thirty points was also set out. It demonstrated a moderately leftist nationalism, trying in the midst of a basically capitalist structure to establish the basis for a more just distribution of goods, increased national production and greater personal and ideological freedom. Basic reforms such as the nationalization of the bank, foreign trade, etc., which were included in the program and were among the principles of the Frente, did not contribute anything new to the ideological discussion in Uruguay. They did, however, indicate *a will* to put these reforms into effect and brought with them *a political instrument* capable of implementing them. This was new and it frightened the leading sectors of Uruguayan economic life: The possible triumph of the Frente Amplio would mean that reforms to which everyone had paid lip service would become concrete realities.

The Frente read the subconscious of the nation and presented it in a program, perhaps the basic reason for the enthusiasm it generated. There was an immediate, spontaneous upsurge of people's committees in different parts of Montevideo, in factories and other bodies, which took the initiative in organizing publicity and financing the Frente. Poets, folklorists, artists in ceramics, drawing and painting joined in, all inspired by the mystique of a movement which seemed to have been called to effect a radical change in the mental attitude of the Uruguayan nation. The *mot d'ordre* was "participation." Thus, by means of sales and popular bazaars, by selling vouchers, producing various *objets*, organizing festivals and processions, and by voluntary sacrifice, a special mystique was created. A large number of students dedicated all their time to the work of the Frente and sacrificed a year of their studies out of devotion to the country.

All this led observers to attribute the possibility of victory to the Frente Amplio, especially after the freak political act of November 24 when popular mystique, revolutionary fervor and nationalistic affirmation all came together. They were symbolized by the three pieces of music with which the November 24 rally began: the national anthem, Handel's "Alleluia"—sung by a volunteer choir of 500 and listened to with reverence as an affirmation of hope and a symbol of Christian participation in the political movement—and then a specially written revolutionary song that expressed the feeling of that vast crowd. The Frente seemed capable of leading the country not only beyond its immediate problems but to a new style of community life.

Still, when the elections took place on November 28, this hope was dashed: only 300,000 voters of an electorate of 1,600,000 supported the lists of the Frente Amplio. One could argue that this constituted an increase of more than 150 per cent in the votes for the country's Left forces and the resurgence of a political structure capable of mobilizing large masses. But it is impossible to conceal the contrast between the strength displayed, the rising hopes, and the meager electoral result. What produced this disparity?

Traditional Uruguayan politics have been based on electoral patronage. It is clear that the *lumpen*, the fringe of the proletariat, living from the day-to-day subsistence provided by the *changa*, or favor, opted for the immediate, concrete possibility offered by the local chief official and not for global solutions to the problem of unemployment offered by the Frente Amplio. The average age of the electorate was very high because, for the first time in Uruguay, voting was obligatory. There were repeated threats of sanctions against those who did not vote, including even the threat of losing one's pension. The life expectancy in Uruguay is now sixty-eight years, and the greater part of the voting public is probably over forty years of age. Statistically speaking, such an electorate does not readily desire radical changes. Of course there were great numbers of youths who were the militants of the Frente Amplio; a large nucleus of young people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen devoted themselves to activity in the local committees of the Frente Amplio—but eighteen is the voting age.

Another factor is an historical inertia which had produced fatalism. Those who won were always the Colorados or the Blancos. It was difficult to believe that anything new would arise which would challenge what was already in existence. And there was repeated a phenomenon already observed in the political life of Uruguay: The masses of the workers who accept the trade-union leadership of the leftist groups do not provide major support for the political options of this same Left. When it comes to voting they vote on the basis of much more personal considerations, such as their direct relationship with a local chief official from whom they can obtain this or that favor for their own family.

But we can certainly identify errors which the Frente Amplio made in its political campaign.

First, too much importance was given to ideological discussion rather than to contesting the election as such. For example, the discussions about violence as a valid revolutionary option created problems of conscience and divisions at the level of the local community. While the other parties were concentrating their energies in simply calling for a vote on a particular day, the Frente Amplio tried in the short period of eight months to bring about a collective

change of heart. From an ethical point of view one can say that its position was more honest, and from the political point of view that its voters were highly conscious, politically aware and involved in genuine political participation. But in practical terms, when the votes come to be counted, highly informed votes have the same value as any others.

Second, the ethics of the Frente Amplio led its spokesmen to outline a number of sacrifices which would be required of the whole Uruguayan nation. The word "sacrifice" pronounced by a political tribune is not popular in a country in which the system of electoral patronage and of the social buttresses described earlier has accustomed people to receive promises and gifts from a beneficent state. Over against this demand stood the promise of maintaining the familiar style of life and a return to some idealized golden age, which was extremely effective.

Third, the Frente Amplio lacked time to reach all levels of society. It was constituted as a political force in the month of February, 1971. Hardly eight months for an election campaign which had to change the thought structures of more than 100 years! One must remember that in Chile Allende was the Minister of the Interior in 1941 and only came to power as President of the Republic in 1970.

Last, the "enemy" also played his cards very skillfully. One is led to think that certain international bodies, concerned to avoid the triumph of the Left in yet another Latin American country, not only advised but also financed the opposition to the Frente. On television and in the Uruguayan press the attacks against the Frente were more important than praise for the virtues of the candidates of the traditional parties. During the last five days of the campaign, the city was papered with just one slogan: *frentismo es comunismo* (Frente-ism is communism), while on T.V. there were images of families being swallowed up by a giant spider bearing the badge of the Frente Amplio, scenes at the Berlin Wall, of Russian tanks in Prague. It amounted to real hysteria. At the same time, a para-police organization, the J.U.P. (Juventud Uruguaya de Pie—Uruguayan Youth on Foot), emerged on the streets shouting anti-Communist slogans and ran around creating an atmosphere of terror, insinuating that if Frente Amplio triumphed one could expect only civil war and chaos. Among the workers a rumor was subtly spread: all foreign capital would be withdrawn from the country, creating major unemployment. Fear, too, thus checked the advance of the Frente Amplio.

The triumph of the Right will undoubtedly help polarize Uruguayan political forces and encourage a radical opposition. Encouraged by its success, the Right wishes to "set the house in order" in all sectors of society. Already certain large factories have dismissed people who militantly and openly voiced support of the Frente. To what extent will the Frente be able to maintain itself as a political option in such a

situation? Can such a high degree of political awareness among an organized democratic minority last for as long a period as five years? In the words of one observer, on the day of the elections 50,000 new Tupamaros were born! How will the adolescents of today be assimilated into the political process? Will they be attracted by the direct action groups or will they believe in a democratic process despite the experience of failure so early in their lives? Will the legal limits of dissent, already very restricted, continue to be tightened? New repressive measures which began immediately after the election lead us to think that in five more years Uruguay may attain the extremes of cruelty reached by other Latin American countries.

The present politico-legal framework offers possibilities for joint action between the parliamentary bloc of the Frente Amplio and liberal sectors within the traditional parties. There could also be an active mobilization of the people, a sort of liberating pressure on the parliament. But at the moment nothing is certain. The Frente Amplio has analyzed the situation seriously and self-critically and has resolved to remain united and active. This holds the promise of a radical change in Uruguayan political life; for the first time in many years there is a political action group, created not solely for election purposes, which can undergird its demands for a solution to the socio-political problems of the country with militancy in the streets.

What the Frente has already achieved is very significant. But it created such expectations that certain doubts remain about its ability to surmount the post-electoral shock and to keep its supporters directed to electoral solutions. Other groups are trying to split the Frente with a campaign of rumors and accusations, attempting to eliminate it both as an electoral rival for the long term and as a participant in the present political struggle. But if the Frente can maintain its local groups and combine parliamentary activity with militant support in the streets, it will be difficult for any effective government measure to be realized without its express support.

What may be the consequences of this phenomenon for the rest of Latin America? As events in Chile served to stimulate the Uruguayan experiment, what has transpired in Uruguay will stimulate other national situations. I dare hazard that the next experiment will take place in Argentina, where the Peronist movement represents basically the same type of program as that offered by Uruguay's Frente Amplio: a sense of nationalism, the firm involvement of Christians, and an interpretation of society that is strongly influenced by Marxism. If the Chilean experiment succeeds and the Peruvian experience looks promising, the action undertaken in Uruguay will have middle-range conse-

quences for every Latin American country.

The cooperation of Christians and Marxists within the Frente Amplio was new in Uruguay and it is full of possibilities for Latin America as a whole, for the Church presence is fundamental to any social experiment here.

The encounter between Christians and Marxists in the Frente Amplio can be considered at three different levels. First is the level of faith. Shortly before the elections, the Catholic Episcopal Conference published a document which stated that in the Uruguayan political situation none of the available options could be disqualified on the basis of faith since all contained various ambiguities. With this freedom granted by the ecclesiastical authorities, those who decided to cooperate with the Marxists in the Frente Amplio argued that urgent common tasks needed to be undertaken. "The dying must be saved"; "First things first"; "This is an earthly task"; etc. The discussion took place between those who recognized that it was not possible to separate the forces which were concerned with the advancement of the less privileged sectors of the community and those who cooperated only on the basis of political opportunism. In reality, the program of the Frente was not basically Marxist but rather a re-ordering of the country's life. So while some people cannot conceive of collaboration with Communists in any field, others recognize that the first priority for Christians is to tackle situations of injustice and of social inadaptation. They feel that ideological problems can be profitably discussed within the framework of cooperation in the solution of human problems.

The second level concerns the personal encounter between Christians and Marxists. This is where the surprise of mutual recognition was experienced, where situations arose in which witness was possible, when the one who had always been in the opposite trench in the fight or had simply been a label to attack turned out to be a brother with whom it was possible to act in many ways.

The major area of doubt was that of the structure of the Frente itself. Since the strongest of the initial groups was the Communist Party, there was a suspicion that its superior organization and party discipline would mean that the Frente was no more than a facade. The response within the Frente was very clear: first find a structure which would provide guarantees against this possibility. Thus the joint candidates for national posts were independents, and each sector was free to draw up its own list of candidates for parliament, using the mechanism of the *Ley de Lemas*. The electoral results show a substantial progress of the Christian Democratic and Nationalist forces within the Frente, while the Communists only maintained their electorate. Fears that the Communist Party would become the dominant force within the Frente Amplio were not confirmed — on the contrary, they were disavowed.

Next, each of the party groupings which made up the Frente tried to develop a better organization which would enable them to work on an equal footing with the Communist Party. Third, within the Frente an attempt was made to transfer the real power to local committees. The constant strength of these committees is a safeguard against any abuse of power by a party of the political organization. Last came the search for a style of militancy which would gradually transfer the loyalty of the different groups to the unifying figures, that is, the leaders who had been set apart to hold key positions in the Frente today and in the life of the nation tomorrow.

There was alarm within the Church community about this new Christian-Marxist collaboration in the Frente Amplio. And some political and economic groups tried to use the Church for their own ends. A conservative bishop from the interior, for example, was brought to Montevideo to proclaim his rejection of communism just two days before the election. Groups of young people, on the other hand, were demanding more radical statements from the Church authorities. For the first time in the Uruguayan political struggle, clear notice was taken of the public positions of pastors and priests, often causing problems in their respective Church communities.

It remains to ask what, at the present moment, should be the attitude of Christians and what, in particular, is the task of the Uruguayan Church? Can the Church now be an agent of reconciliation? It should always be so. The difficulty arises with the interpretation of this expression in a climate of advanced ideological discussion in which

the fundamental problems of poverty, fringe existence and exploitation subsist. What does reconciliation mean under such circumstances? The Church can consider ways of humanizing the social conflict and of helping to establish the limits within which the socio-political struggle should be conducted. Perhaps in concrete cases of torture or kidnapping the Church could say or do something to try to avert the worst excesses of political polarization. The Church can devote itself to the work of conscientization by means of its educational programs. Will it find time for this when there is a passionate search by our communities for forms of action and methods of action? It is certain that it can renounce neither its prophetic nor its reconciling task, neither the task of explanation nor that of humanization. At present the Church is becoming the target for attacks from rightist groups which are trying to obtain posts of authority within it for their own representatives. Much will depend on what the Vatican has to say.

As for the Protestant churches, many of them are still subject to the influence of a missionary presence which makes them wary of anything which challenges the social status quo and of the opinions of the United States of America. Nevertheless, large sections of these churches—especially among the Waldensians and Methodists (which are larger bodies and have a longer tradition in the country)—are rooted in the Latin American situation and are undergoing within themselves the same debate as is going on in the Catholic Church. Here the future does not depend on the Vatican or on some external power but on the way in which the militant youth maintains its political activity *and* its loyalty to church institutions.