

effect on human behavior. The corrective for such one-dimensional thought and behavior—and Ellul does not say this—is subtlety and incisive analysis. Nevertheless, *The Technological System* is an important book. If it raises more questions than it answers, the questions are extremely important. Ellul's next book, on "the dysfunctions of the technological system," will have to address the specifics that have been neglected so far. **WV**

### **CRY OF THE PEOPLE**

by Penny Lernoux

(Doubleday & Co., 535 pp., \$12.95)

Richard Armstrong

There are several ways to read this important book. As a religious document it witnesses the rebirth of the Catholic Church in Latin America through the ages-old path of persecution. As a political thesis it shows how the seizure of power by military forces in at least eleven Latin American countries has made the United States, which fought a world war to defeat fascism in Europe, actively promote the rise of fascism in our own hemisphere. As an economic analysis it provides an update to the Barner-Muller argument in *Global Reach* (1974) that responsibility for the underdeveloped world's worsening condition must be fixed to the masthead of multinational corporations.

The political and economic facts have been presented more extensively elsewhere, though it is no had thing to have the facts of U.S. support of repressive regimes brought to our attention once again. But it is not the CIA-ITT-assisted overthrow of Allende in Chile, the economic "miracle" of Brazil at the expense of the poor, the ruthless repression of leftist guerrillas in Argentina, or that country's indigenous form of anti-Semitism that commands our attention. It is, rather, that out of the blood and ashes of a continent that is politically and economically worse off than it was fifty years ago an unlikely institution has arisen as the sole champion of human rights: the Catholic Church.

It is a divided church. Archbishop Lopez Trujillo of the Latin America Bishop's Conference, Roger Vekemans, the boin-again right-wing Jesuit, and their Vatican supporters are on one side; progressive or moderate leaders like Cardinal Arns of São Paulo, Brazil,

are on the other. And it is not mainly the foreign clergy who have led the people to a greater sense of personal dignity and thirst for justice but local bishops, priests, nuns, and thousands of no longer fatalistic people. A striking appendix lists the clergy and laity known to have been murdered from 1964 to 1978. Under the Doctrine of National Security derived from the Pentagon's training courses for Latin American military officers, anything was justified to defend the region from communism—defamation, prison, torture, death.

With the help of a grant from the Alicia Patterson Foundation and support from the editors of *The Nation*, author Lernoux was able to travel throughout Latin America starting in 1976 to collect first-hand information and documentation for her book. Experts like José Ignacio Torres of the Indo American News Service in Bogota guided her through the maze of church politics and showed the journalist the importance of the *comunidades de base* that form the popular foundation of the people's awakening to their rights. There are said to be a hundred thousand of these small prayer-and-action groups in Brazil alone.

*Cry of the People* is also a guide to the infighting that preceded the 1978 conference of Latin American bishops at Puebla, Mexico. According to Lernoux, the speeches of Pope John Paul II, despite early reports to the contrary, encouraged the progressive forces in the Church. Although John Paul never mentioned the controversial "theology of liberation" by name and discouraged the participation of the clergy in politics, his strictures against the rich and ringing calls for activism among the poor represented a major step beyond the 1968 Medellín Conference, which had launched the spirit of liberation theology. The Puebla document reflects the split among the prelates: an activist stance regarding the poor and human rights, and a conservative, scholastic treatment of Church doctrine. "In some cases," writes Lernoux, "there is considerable repetition, even contradiction. But both the document and the tensions that produced it are signs of a vigorous church."

This powerful volume concludes that the best thing U.S. Christians can do for the people of Latin America is not to send more missionaries, investment, or foreign aid, but to reexamine

and reverse those policies which give aid and comfort to the oppressors of the people. That would require an awakening of North American Christians to the activist elements in their own faith. Short of a Pinochet-like regime in the U.S., one wonders what could bring our collective faith to that testing point.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE LIBERAL STATE**

by Bruce A. Ackerman

(Yale University Press; 392 pp.; \$17.50)

J. F. Donnelly

The "A" to "Z" of Ackerman's *politeia, Social Justice and the Liberal State*, runs from "abortion" to "zoosemiotics." Ackerman's treatise is admirable for its range of topics but is, in my view, narrow and essentially unhistorical in its definition of "citizen," the subject of justice in the liberal state. Though I disagree with the most important point of Ackerman's book, it is comprehensive, clear, and fairminded.

Ackerman's liberal state comprises people who are "citizens," and he defines "citizens" as people who can assert a claim to equality while engaging in dialogue with other "citizens." For Ackerman "the only context in which a claim of right has a point is one where you anticipate the possibility of a conversation with some potential competitor." Such a conversation must be rational, consistent, and "neutral." The rationality and consistency of our political conversation guarantee that my use of a power for my benefit that you want to use for your benefit is truly defensible, since "whenever nothing intelligible can be said in justification of a power, its exercise is illegitimate." But "God told me so" has served so many persons and polities as an intelligible and consistent norm for conversations about distributing shares of power that Ackerman has added "neutrality" as the third leg of his negotiating table. "Neutrality" is a set of conversational restraints based upon the conviction that political life is only possible when nobody "has the right to vindicate political authority by asserting a privileged insight into the moral universe which is denied the rest of us." The norms of rationality and consistency mark the civilized state; the constraints of neutrality mark the liberal state.