

## **A New Political Environment: The Church and the Military in Conflict**

Leonidas Proaño, one of the best known Latin American bishops, invited some church leaders whose friendship he had made during and after Vatican II to his home in Riobamba, Ecuador. There seventeen bishops, including four from the United States, and twenty-nine priests, sisters, and lay persons, were to reflect on the current state of affairs in the church.(1)

On the second day of the meeting, men dressed as civilians, carrying pistols and automatic weapons, entered the house. For the most part, they were silent, refusing to speak; they offered no identification and gave no explanation. Then they manhandled two of the bishops and took all forty-six participants to Quito and jail.

After a day of confinement all were let go or were sent out of the country, except for Proaño who was questioned through the night and held for another twenty-four hours. His questioners were agents of the military regime. The issue at stake was a working document of the Center for Nonviolence with which Proaño was associated. This harassment, involving one of the most prominent progressive bishops in Latin America, was meant to stifle criticism of the social order under military rule. The subsequent smear campaign and the manhandling of Chilean delegates at the Santiago airport by secret police were signs of a regional military conspiracy.

The break-in and the jailing of the bishops illustrate a tense and tortuous church-military relationship as it has existed in much of Latin America. A change in the relationship began taking place when the military as an institution took over rule in one Latin American country after another. As Penny Lernoux points out, "Nelson Rockefeller in 1969 was one of the first to predict that the military and the church would be the principal actors in Latin America's coming political drama."(2)

Why is the church, a religious institution, concerned with the political environment? As a major institution in society the church has to act in the political arena. The church achieves its corporate goals in a social environment that in large part is governed by the rules of the political order.

Before Vatican II churchmen considered most of the goals of the church to be internal, realizable within the confines of the church. Its major goals-praise of God, sanctification of members through prayer and sacraments, and education in the gospel message-could be achieved internally. Twenty years ago the only major goal that was overtly political was organization/maintenance. And at times national churches spent vast amounts of energy to maintain the organization, given a political environment of antichurch liberals or populist revolutionaries.

Since Vatican II and the Medellín and Puebla conferences, the self-understanding of the church has changed. The church created a "new" ideology for itself. This ideology holds that goals of the church that were to be accomplished internally are now to be achieved externally as well. Praise of God, sanctification of members, and communication of the gospel message are all to be oriented to activity in society. In a word, church leaders and their ideologues began changing an otherworldly religion to a this-worldly religion, with at least indirect political consequences.

The deaths of dozens of priests and sisters and thousands of lay persons at the hands of military and security forces leave many questions. Why is the military frequently in conflict with the church? What in the military character allows some officers to look upon the church as an enemy and ranking clerics, such as Dom Hélder Câmara, as communist "plants?" What moves the military in El Salvador and many other countries to employ paramilitary as death squads?

### *The Changing Political Scene*

Until recently, more than half the population of Latin America has lived under military rule. No longer was it a caudillo who took over the government and controlled it personalistically but a whole institution that took command of the regime. This was a major shift from the days of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Marcos Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, or the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua. The change occurred largely since 1964.

The government in many Latin American countries became in part a military institution. Even where the military did not occupy the presidential chair, it was usually a considerable force in the governing elite. The size and strength of the military, its virtual monopoly of force, enhanced its sharing of power. As a large corporate body, the military established new game rules in the conduct of national life. This corporate aspect is seldom considered. But corporate features -- hierarchy of command, impersonal quality of military behavior, and diffuseness of responsibility had profound consequences for those attempting political activity or social reform.

The military also developed an ideology that purported to explain social, economic, and political reality. This is the doctrine of national security. The church, for one, actively opposed that doctrine.

The military has given up the personalistic politics of the *caudillo* general. That type of politics is disdained as unprofessional. Instead, military regimes have tended to rule from institutional authoritarian platforms, having consequences for all who enter the political sphere.

The focus here will be on the South American situation. The discussion has relevance for Central America and the Caribbean, but these subregions will not be taken up directly. Employed will be middle-level analysis based on recent country-by-country

studies and interviews conducted from 1964 to 1984.(3) The year 1964 is an appropriate entry point for the discussion because "permanent" military rule began that year in Brazil, marking a new order of things in Latin America. Similar military takeovers would be taking place soon in neighboring countries. For its part, the Catholic Church concluded the Second Vatican Council in 1965, also marking the beginning of a new era.

One by one, South American countries came under military rule. First Brazil and Bolivia in 1964, then Argentina, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, and Ecuador. Centering the lower triangle was General Stroessner and the Paraguayan military who had been in power as long as anyone could recall. All but the northern perimeter with Colombia and Venezuela were run directly by the armed forces.

In Colombia and Venezuela, too, the army at times has acted as a shadow government. During the 1950s and '60s in Venezuela and at least since 1960 in Colombia, the army has monitored critics of the government, dissolved or controlled labor unions and universities, and conducted a general overview of political activities. Amnesty International reported in 1980 that the Colombian army maintained thirty-three prisons or detention centers where political activists were held. In a sense, Colombia has been in a state of seige for more than twenty years, maintained largely by the army and national police. Security forces maintain a highly visible, extensive, and dominant presence. In daytime one sees soldiers alone or in pairs patrolling with rifles or automatic weapons in many districts of Bogotá; at night one finds a soldier or policeman on every block or two in more fashionable sections such as Chapinero.

In countries not directly run by the military, the physical and psychological presence of the army is felt by those who play the political game or who have attempted even episodic political action. The army lays down the rules of the game or enforces the limits beyond which one may not go. This has been true throughout much of the contemporary history of the "democratic" Dominican Republic and Venezuela. In the Dominican Republic the army routinely breaks up strikes of sugarcane workers, blocks unionization efforts, and monitors certain political parties and university political activity.

This chapter will first point out three key themes that permeate the political environment. Then it will enlarge upon concrete issues in church-military relationships, specific aspects of the new political environment of the church. This will lead to an examination of the changing stance of the church and of the armed forces in politics.

The first of the three major themes of this chapter is that the church has not and does not fully comprehend the nature of its new political environment. Having made dramatic changes at the Medellín conference, it did not consider systematically what the changes would mean to other political bodies. The new self-understanding of itself as a "servant church" and a church that would give preferential treatment to the poor would have enormous consequences in the political order.

Because the Latin American church did not think of itself as a regular (and important) political factor, it did not reflect on the political effects that would result from its changes. Rather the church (encouraged by Rome) thought of itself as above, or at least outside, politics. If ever it had to act politically, it would be on an episodic basis. Thus, the church ignored, at least at the beginning of this period, the effects on its political environment of the changes it proposed for itself. It also ignored for a long time changes taking place in its former political ally, the armed forces.

The second theme running throughout this chapter is that, inasmuch as the church only partially understood the political environment with which it was dealing, its own political responses have often been inadequate. Further, its actions have often been misunderstood as inappropriate, out of step with what had already been decided by authoritarian governments. The military became impatient with the "meddling" of the church-its prophetic criticism of authoritarian tactics-or enraged at questions of legitimacy or corruption. The extent of this impatience and rage is seen in the deaths, disappearances, imprisonments, and banishments that the church has had to endure.

The third theme is one that has already been developed: the church is counteracting authoritarian regimes in the best possible way: it is building grassroots communities, thereby preparing the masses for participation in national life. This counteracts the tendency of military governments to do away with or severely curtail popular participation.

### *Conflict Issues*

In the years since the first military takeover and the beginning of "permanent" military rule in 1964, conflicts that the church has had with the military have arisen especially over four issues: specific military practices, military doctrine, the goals of military rule, and the consequences of military rule.

#### *Specific Military Practices*

The first type of conflict has to do with specific military policies, especially when the military is in power. But this conflict also exists in countries where the military has not ruled directly for a number of years -- for example, Colombia. The church has long criticized indiscriminate repression, torture, censorship, and denial of *habeas corpus*. These are human rights in the narrower sense. But the church has also consistently criticized the military for the lack of extensive and free participation in the political and social life of a country. These are human rights in a larger sense, a topic not emphasized even by President Jimmy Carter's overseas human rights campaign.

When the military seized power in eight of the ten South American countries beginning in the mid-1960s, the correlation of military intervention and social conflict became most notable in the southern tier countries -- Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay. These regimes systematically violated a whole range of human rights. Priests,

sisters, and lay persons have been killed, expelled, imprisoned, or have disappeared in notable numbers.(4) Violations of human rights in the larger sense will be considered in the fourth area of conflict.

What was happening in those five southern tier countries mirrored what was happening in a number of other countries, though usually in an intermittent or milder manner -- with the conspicuous exception of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua under the Somozas. Also notable in those five countries was the organized way that the church has attempted to fight back, even though at the time it did not fully comprehend the "enemy" it was fighting.

At the beginning, in 1964, conflict over human rights was relatively mild. By 1969 the situation had grown much more serious. In that year popular magazines reported that torture was now systematic in Latin America. The five years between 1964 and 1969 were to witness a much greater involvement on the part of the United States in training Latin American police and military in riot, subversion, and counterinsurgency techniques.(5) But from whatever source Latin American military and police learned their tactics, they were good at what they did.

The arsenal of weapons against "subversion" has grown steadily; Amnesty International reported in 1980 that the Colombian security forces were now employing fifty different torture techniques. Systematic, technically sophisticated torture is but one of the accusations the church has made against military governments. Repression of various sorts-including censorship and the shutdown of publications and radio stations, harassment, illegal break-ins, exile, imprisonment without the right of *habeas corpus*, and the disappearance of citizens-has also been objected to.

Basically, the rules of the political game have changed on a systematic basis. With it, the environment accompanying the game has changed too. Subtleties observed before the changes were no longer in effect. The right of sanctuary (if persons could make it to a church or a religious building, they were safe) was no longer observed in many places. Those offering sanctuary, sometimes begrudgingly, were subject to arrest, imprisonment, and the threat of death (as in the case of Father Gerald Whelan, a Holy Cross priest who was sentenced to death, a sentence that was forestalled by the efforts of President Theodore Hesburg of Notre Dame University and others).

Under the old rules, those who held power could be expected to exile political opponents who threatened conflict. The number of those exiled was often determined by the number of seats on the next plane out of the country. In the case of imprisoning one's opponents, rulers would not want to go "too far," because they feared that some day they might be deposed and held answerable.

Amnesty, too, was granted on an almost calendarlike basis. It is still granted now, but much less frequently and on a much more restricted basis. Fear of retaliation, a strong cultural tendency, is not a strong deterrent for the military.

The Catholic and mainline historical Protestant churches have become important counterweights to the abuses of human rights. Pentecostal groups, sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and Mormons, and syncretist religious elements such as *macumbá* seldom involve themselves in human rights efforts in the five countries in question. Efforts to combat human rights violations have been made at international, regional, and national levels. At the international level churches have acted as reliable and sustained sources of information for the outside world. They have elicited informal and formal pressure from the Vatican and from other international bodies. They have also furnished considerable financial and material help.

From an organizational perspective the Catholic and Protestant churches offer a number of advantages in that they are transnational bodies. They serve as reliable sources of information in an atmosphere where information about human rights violations is carefully guarded. The five regimes strongly resisted efforts by fact-finding groups. Amnesty International, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and ad hoc groups from the Vatican, the U.S. State Department, and other organizations typically encounter resistance to or denial of requests for investigations.

The southern tier churches have sent information to other countries through formal and informal networks. The National Council of Churches (New York), the U.S. Catholic Conference (Washington), the World Council of Churches (Geneva), and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace (Rome) -- each with its own publications -- have important channels for the information pouring from Latin America. So too have less formal organizations that have sprung up, such as the ecumenically-based Office on Latin America (Washington) and the North American Congress on Latin America (New York), and numerous other organizations such as the Sojourner Community (Washington). They share concern about human rights along with other justice issues.

To stop this flow of information would be impossible but at times incoming and outgoing mail is subjected to "surveillance." At times in Bolivia a third of the normal incoming mail would be missing; sometimes the reason, though, was simply theft, not counterintelligence. Attempts to survey information from Latin America have taken place in the United States as well. Father Louis ("Mike") Colonnese, former director of the Latin American Bureau (LAB) of the U. S. Catholic Conference took it for granted that U. S. intelligence agents had bugged his office. In the middle of a conversation he would pick out a homing device from his desk, adjust the antenna, dial, and say, "See, this tells what channel they're on."(6)

With reliable information in hand, personnel from the Vatican, foreign embassies, and other international agencies can apply pressure on repressive governments. Usually these efforts to redress human rights violations are first attempted "diplomatically," when a visitor from Rome (Vatican), Geneva (WCC), or an ambassador visits a minister of foreign relations to discuss or protest the jailing or threatened expulsion of church

personnel. (The majority of religious personnel in many Latin American countries are foreigners.)(7)

There are several reasons why such efforts have seldom had much success: 1) visitors frequently do not know all the facts of the situation and may have doubts about the ideology or orthodoxy of the aggrieved religious parties; 2) the foreign minister does not control the defense or interior ministries and may not like or approve of the behavior of the military and the police anyway; and 3) most visitors have little power over the host government, in the sense of posing a real threat.

In contrast to the informal efforts just described, formal international efforts of fact-finding, publication, and ultimately public pressures for reform of violations have had a somewhat stronger effect. Initiatives taken by church personnel have led to published reports by various international bodies of the specifics and extent of rights violations.

The threat of the loss of international esteem is no longer as strong a threat as it was once, as has been evidenced in the Philippines, Iran, Korea, El Salvador, Chile, and Guatemala. The response of Argentina to the 1980 OAS report was typical. The government categorically denied the validity of investigations leading to the contention that, among other things, that as many as fifteen thousand Argentinians had simply "disappeared." Nonetheless most observers believe that these international efforts have moderated or reduced the volume of human rights violations in Latin America. (It is noteworthy that in Argentina some of the grosser violations ceased after the OAS report.) International efforts have been most effective when reinforcing strong national initiatives.

At times individual cases have gained widespread international attention-for example, Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga, a Spaniard threatened with expulsion from Brazil, and Doctor Sheila Cassidy, an English Catholic doctor sentenced to long-term imprisonment in Chile but eventually released. Both have since published moving accounts of their interior lives and their personal commitments.(8) What sorts of persons pose a threat to military governments can be discerned in these accounts.

International church bodies most strongly aided human rights efforts in Latin America by contributing financial and material help. These groups sent millions of dollars in support of efforts for improving human rights in both the narrower and wider sense. European and North American churches have contributed large amounts of clothing and food as well.

In addition to formal and organizational initiatives, vigorous efforts have also been expended by informal groupings of persons who have come to know one another through shared interests. The tracing of these networks is intriguing. Network members met one another in the national and international commissions for Vatican II, or at similar congresses or conferences at summer institutes or seminars and courses in theology or the ministry. They continue to communicate with one another and

disseminate new ideas.

Formation of one of the earliest networks grew out of the threat to Catholic intellectuals and activists that by 1970 had become widespread. The network was called MIAU, after the sound a cat makes when its tail is walked on. The group went out of existence, in part because its coordinator, Father Colonnese, was removed in 1971 as executive director of the Latin American Bureau. Other groups arose to fulfill the need for communication and publicity about human rights violations. The First Conference of Latin American Christians in Exile met in 1978 in Brussels. It is a grassroots organization set up to represent two million exiles. Another group, of key leadership figures, created HABEAS (Human Rights Group for Latin America and the Caribbean). Cardinal Arnz of São Paulo and other leading Latin Americans started the group as a Mexican-based foundation.

Leadership at the regional level has been reinforced by the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM). The bishops stepped up their public condemnations of the abuses of power. At their meetings at Medellín and Puebla they discussed structures of injustice in Latin America. They pointed to the deeper underlying causes that engender the escalation of systematic violations of human rights: unjust economic structures, maldistribution of land and wealth, inadequate social and political participation by the poor in national life, and the pervasiveness of an ideology of national security that subjugates personal rights to elitist expediency.

Thus in the bishops' minds there is a connection between repression of rights and the desire of elites-especially wealthy elites-to maintain their power. There is also in their minds a connection between poverty and repression.

These statements were foreshadowed in pastoral letters from various bishops, especially in Chile, Brazil, and Argentina.(9) The bishops did not stop with simply calling for an end to repression and torture. More importantly, they urged secular leaders to make more radical changes: to effect a more equitable distribution of land and other resources, to respect worker organizations, to allow greater participation in the social order for the rural and urban poor, and to enforce laws impartially.

This vision led the way to the setting up of a whole new series of social and pastoral programs at the grassroots level and the establishment of church-sponsored organizations for the defense of human rights. The documents of the bishops and their commissions have received wide publicity. But until the awarding of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize to Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, little attention was given to lay or grassroots leadership.

Human rights organizations have provided considerable assistance for the victims of violations of human rights and for the poor generally. But they have also caused serious tensions between church and state, and within the churches.

## *Military Doctrine*

The second area of conflict between the church and the military is that of military doctrine. The church strongly opposes the ideology of national security, which identifies government, nation, and the military. It makes national security the highest goal of a country and it postulates a mentality of perpetual readiness for warfare.(10) It has led the military from being arbiter of the regime to being arbiter of the nation.

The church did not immediately comprehend or react to the shift in military doctrines, although an occasional chaplain in the 1960s underwent lengthy training at the Brazilian command school where the new doctrines formed the basis of much of the instruction. In 1968, the year of the Medellín conference, very few prophets saw what the military presence would mean. But Bishop Cándido Padín was one of those prophets.(11) His acquaintance with the Brazilian military led him to a study of the ideology (which he perceived to be new) prevailing in Brazilian military elites. Padín prepared a detailed analysis of new military doctrines given the unfamiliar title of the doctrine or ideology of national security.

He presented his analysis at the national meeting of the Brazilian bishops. The document he presented went unsigned by the Brazilian bishops. His argument was beyond the ken of most of them, a notable instance of cognitive dissonance (the inability to believe what is too far away from one's value system). Within a decade, bishops in Brazil and Latin America would understand what Padín was arguing. For many in the church, agreement with Padín would come not so much because of reasoning but because of painful experience, that of the repression of human rights, torture, and the disappearance of clerical, religious, and lay members. A new church was facing a new political environment.

By 1975, the first formal analysis of the doctrine of national security was made by an important subregional group within CELAM, at the meeting of the Andean Regional Social Action Commission. But the topic was only a secondary one on the agenda. The three cardinals and nine bishops read and discussed the working paper on the doctrine of national security, as well as papers on other topics related to the military (extreme nationalism and the arms race).(12) In the intervening years before the Puebla Conference (1979), many other studies, statements, and discussions of military philosophy and conduct would be made within the Latin American church.

The official preparatory document leading up to the Puebla Conference reflected little of this debate because the document had been controlled tightly by conservative Archbishop (later Cardinal) López Trujillo. Nonetheless within the hectic two-week meeting at Puebla three of the twenty-two commissions interposed considerations of the military and their doctrine of national security. The problem was clearly on the minds of many bishops. In the end, they said:

To those in the military we would reiterate what the Medellín conference told

them: "They have a mission to guarantee rather than inhibit the political freedom of citizens." They should be mindful of their mission, which is to guarantee the peace and security of all. They should never abuse the force they possess. They should be the defenders of the force of right and law. They should also foster a societal life that is free, participatory, and pluralistic.(13)

The bishops at the Puebla Conference took up explicitly the question of national security in five places in the final document; the question was very much on their minds. They speak of the nature of the doctrine (§ 49); they define it (§ 547); they argue against it generally (§ 549) and specifically state that the ideology opposes a Christian view of human nature (§§ 12 and 1262).

The ideology of national security that the church opposed was changing its formulations, but the church was not fully aware of the changes. José Comblin and other intellectuals in the church saw the military ideology as primarily focusing on East-West conflicts. Military planners were shocked in 1973 by the Arab oil crisis and mounting external debts owed to banks outside their own sphere of influence. Military thinking turned to North-South conflicts rather than East-West. Argentina went to war with Britain. The church has not tracked well the shifts in military ideology.

### *Goals of Military Rule*

Another area of conflict has to do with the goals of military rule. Two goals are singled out by the church: national development and what is called *armamentismo*, "armamentism."(14) The church holds that development must be integral and universal that is, applying to the whole person and to every person. Military rulers defined development differently among themselves. The two most prominent models were the Brazilian and the Peruvian. The Brazilian model tended to ignore the lower sectors of society. It was thought that they would benefit at a later date as a fallout effect of economic growth. The Peruvian model aimed at improving the conditions of the lower classes. The church, which by then proclaimed that preferential treatment should be given the poor, found itself more easily aligned with the Peruvian than the Brazilian model.(15)

*Armentismo* leads the military to continuously update and augment its military stock. Some attention was given by the church to the enhanced potential for warfare among nations caused by the arms race. But the church based its criticism of military buildup primarily on the argument that poorer countries can ill afford such expenditures. The needs of the masses are too great to be sacrificed for additional armaments.

### *Consequences of Military Rule*

The last area of conflict has been over the consequences of military rule. This is a relatively new area of criticism for the church: only after a history of some years could a clear judgment be made on the effects of military rule. Moreover, in countries such as

Brazil the economy was booming for a while and there was talk of an "economic miracle." Even so, the final assessment, whether made by church-related observers or by most social scientists, is the same: the masses (rural and urban poor) have borne the costs of development, and the privileged classes have advanced.(16) In most countries where the military has been in power, its rule has not really benefited the rural and urban working classes from the standpoint of improved real income levels or availability of public services. In fact, for many the situation is worse than it was in the mid-1960s.

There are some exceptions -- select groups of skilled workers, for example. But the general picture is bleak. Even of Brazil, with its much publicized boom, Sylvia Ann Hewlett can say, "The existence of massive poverty, the extreme concentration of income, and the increase in inequality during recent years are now accepted facts of contemporary Brazilian development."(17)

### *The Military and Politics*

In Latin America the military is an extensively political enterprise. Most countries there have been ruled at one time or other by the military. Many countries recognize, constitutionally or unofficially, the armed forces as moderators of the regime, meaning that the armed forces are the ultimate judges of what is constitutional or not, a power unknown in the United States.

In most Latin American nations the armed forces receive a sizeable portion of the national budget, more than most other governmental agencies, despite the fact that major wars are virtually unknown in this century. Attempts to cut military spending are almost always unsuccessful, at least in the long run. Military men on active duty or on leave often fill governmental positions. Aside from a few Caribbean or Central American countries, most Latin American nations pay officers well, both in salary and in benefits, relative to other professionals in their countries.

Salaries, arms purchases, moderator role, governmental positions--all these are the result of frequent and effective political action. Despite the myth of being apolitical, the military is one of the most highly political institutions in Latin America.

The church has been changing since the mid-1960s, but the Latin American military has been evolving for a considerably longer period. Changes took place in the professional character of the military in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century; additional and important changes occurred during World War II and the period immediately following it. These changes include: major technological advances, new professionalism, new military doctrines, enhanced corporate character, and new identity and awareness of institutional interests.

A caution must be expressed lest the church or the military be thought to be monolithic. Among most progressive Catholics there is general agreement about positions taken at

Medellín and Puebla (where the vote on the final document was unanimous), but there are diverse interpretations among Catholics and an even greater variety of behavior patterns. Among Latin American military officers there is an even greater variety of positions and behavior patterns. There is less agreement about doctrines and an ever greater number of factions among and between branches of the armed forces.

Given the problematic inherent in any attempt to study a semisecret organization, at times it is difficult to ascertain the nature and extent of factions within a particular armed force. Glimpses are afforded by debates that take place in organizations such as the Clube Militar in Brazil or changes in political direction following a shuffling of chairs in a cabinet. These and other indications are sufficiently frequent to divulge the number of factions and the depth of cleavage among the factions. Often it is the little publicized, unsuccessful, and frequent coup attempts that are the best indicators of factionalism. (In Argentina alone there were sixteen unsuccessful coup attempts in one ten-year period).

Military rule in Latin America (except perhaps in Paraguay) is not rule by a *caudillo* with whom one bargains one's fate. Military regime means rule by a more or less faceless organization that has numerous power bases within it. Many of these power bases are hidden from public view. How are nonmilitary political activists to bargain with or attempt coalitions with such opaque political partners? In addition, the bureaucrats in power are armed and they are trained to use force. Unfortunately for many Nicaraguans under Somoza or Bolivians under Garcia Meza, to name but two countries, armed bureaucrats used tactics (indiscriminate firepower) and weapons (tanks and fighter planes) designed for use against other armies, not against civilians.

Military rule in Latin America means a regime of military and civilian elites in government. Military men dominate in that mix when controlling the presidential office and when setting overall policy orientations. But civilians fill many more positions in government. Often these positions are key: thus the minister of planning in Brazil is sometimes thought of as more important than the president. Even in the heyday of the military takeover in Peru, military men in direct governmental positions numbered no more than 175. In countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, or the Dominican Republic, where the regime is said to be civilian, there are many military men (active, on leave, or retired) in government positions. Officers sometimes fill posts in the military and "coordinate" their policies and tactics with civilian counterparts. Thus military "civic action" planners influence and are influenced by civilian colleagues in regional and national offices of the ministry (or secretariat) of planning.

In many ways, then, the distinction between military and civilian regimes is blurred in Latin America. In a general way one may say that almost all regimes, including Cuba, in Latin America are military-civilian regimes. This does not negate what has been said about "military" government in Latin America but rather emphasizes that the military organization and its characteristics have to be taken into account when discussing governments in Latin America, no matter whether a civilian is president or not.

New military regimes seek legitimacy from civilian elites in the government. Under the old political rules, new regimes sought legitimacy from other key political groups in the political system, groups that represented the people. Civilian elites in government generally continue their support of military regimes, in part because the armed forces bring to the government goals and ways of acting that civilian governmental elites readily understand and agree with. The military knows how to manage the government because military officers understand bureaucratic procedures and generally act them out well. This makes civilian bureaucrats comfortable, unless, of course, they question goals and means.

The symbiosis of military-civilian elites in government and the elimination or delimitation of the democratic political process leaves military regimes without a widespread political base. More importantly, Latin American military governments often do not have extensive, reciprocal interfacing with civilian political elites. This leaves military regimes open to the likelihood of being blind and deaf to other political groups and to the needs and will of the people as articulated through political groups. The degree of blindness and deafness varies from country to country.

Given the changed nature of the Latin American military, what does it mean for such an organization to occupy the presidential office or to act as a shadow government? The corporate nature of the armed forces, the doctrine of national security, and preoccupation with preservation of corporate interests all have consequences on the character of military rule (or tutelage): 1) the exercise of political power is carried on by the military high command in an institutional manner; 2) democratic processes for the most part are done away with for an indefinite period; 3) political parties, labor unions, and student political organizations are proscribed or closely watched; 4) a political economy is established that sooner or later welcomes foreign investment, does away with many of the measures designed to protect national industry, and redistributes national income in terms that are negative for many workers; 5) the government intervenes in universities and "restructures" them according to military thinking or limits severely the political activities of faculty members and students; 6) published thought that is critical of the government is proscribed, daily censorship of the mass media is often imposed, and newspapers are frequently "restructured" to fit better the "needs of the people;" 7) new technical forms of repression are used that tend to have at least a mild terrifying effect on the nation, and punitive operations, sometimes on a grand scale, are conducted against dissidents of the regime.

Why new rules for the political game? Loveman and Davies observe: "According to the military leadership, the old political institutions and practices gave rise to corruption, failed to solve national problems, and allowed advance of internal subversion."(18) Further, as Edward Feit puts it:

The world, as they [military and civilian bureaucrats] perceive it, is essentially plagued by poor organization, and it is organization that can provide the means by which problems can be overcome. Organization is the key. The solution of

problems is merely a matter of finding the right key for the particular lock. Conflicting factions and structures of bureaucracy tend to center in the "right" organizational form and the "right" persons to control the organization.(19)

Participatory politics is seen by the military organization as sloppy and ineffectual, not at all in keeping with the values that it holds dear. Moreover, the old politics produced chaos and brought the nation close to ruin, anarchy, communism, et cetera. Given the situation, the military had to step in and rule or, in the current case of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic, the armed forces had to keep a close surveillance over what was happening in the political life of the country. Security demanded it. So did the preservation of the armed forces. And it is hard for the military to separate these two elements of national life.

### *The Church and Politics*

How did the church respond to "permanent" military rule and subsequent changes in national political life? At first, awkwardly and disparately: a statement of protest appeared from a beset bishop here or a troubled bishop there (Jesús de López Lama in Bolivia, Cándido Padín in Brazil). Then came group statements with long lists of signers, clerical and lay, Catholic and Protestant. There would be other statements by national conferences of bishops. Then in 1968 the bishops at the Medellín conference told the military, in effect, to cool it, to go back to its old role: "The military has a mission to guarantee rather than prohibit the political liberty of citizens."(20)

For the church, as for other political bodies in Latin America, it was a matter of learning how to live with the new military. It took time to size up the creature that had been growing in semisecrecy. The church had not been paying attention to the characteristics of a changed military. And despite its prophetic stance, it still does not understand fully the new character of the military organization.

Whatever judgment one made of the political effectiveness of the church before 1965, a new assessment is called for.(21) The rules of the political game in many countries have changed and the self-definition of the church has changed. How well does the contemporary church do in the political arena? Its performance varies from place to place. Many upper-level and grassroots leaders play a political role with expertise. However, many others flounder in political situations. They lose the political game and sometimes their resources, including their lives.

What the church lacks politically is a clear and explicit view of power/conflict and a realistic conception of the state as crafted by ruling elites. There are several reasons for this lack.

For one, elements within the church persist in thinking that the church should remain out of politics. Vatican officials have argued that to get into politics is to divide the church.

That view, regarded by many in Latin America as simplistic, was rejected at Puebla. Instead, the Latin American bishops stated clearly and forcefully: "The fact is that the need for the church's presence in the political arena flows from the very core of the Christian faith."(22)

Secondly, the ideological basing of the Latin American church, the theology of liberation, offers another reason for the lack of clarity about power and about the current practice of statehood in Latin America. Paradoxically, liberation ideology (which many claim is too political) is not at all clear about political realities. This is because liberation theology is largely undergirded by sociological analysis, with some economic analysis. Very few influential liberation authors discuss at length political power, policy-making, or the de facto practice of statecraft, the main concerns of political scientists.

What political thinking has gone into the liberation ideology has explicit ties with European "political theology," the type enunciated by Johannes Metz and others, German and Dutch intellectuals for the most part. That type of political theology tends to moralize about what should be; it seldom bothers itself with descriptions of how national political agents wield power or how national policy is formed. That moralizing tendency influences how the church conceives of the state. The organizational church thinks of the state and deals with it on the basis of a medieval conception of the state as "the administrator of the common good," as looking out for the common welfare of its citizens.(23) In reality, and this is crucial, the modern state in Latin America has been a corporate bureaucratic entity. In practice, the state looked out for its own corporate interests, not primarily the interests of its citizens.

This lack of attention to structural matters of power and conflict and to a realistic conception of the state severely limits the political effectiveness of the church. The church loses in the political arena when it assumes naively that the government is looking after the good of its citizens. Thus the Dominican government co-opted and corrupted Catholic cooperative movements and diffused church land reform efforts.

Corruption within the ranks (the Bolivian military government was described as a "kleptocracy"),(24) military defeat (the defeat of Argentina by Britain), and, above all, mounting external and internal pressures because national economies turned sour has forced some armed forces to abandon the presidential palace or at least to promise elections.

The resulting decompression and opening of the political arena has brought an easing of tensions between the church and the military in some countries. The church welcomes the greatly diminished occurrence of deaths and disappearances, even the recognition by the Argentinian military that such things have occurred. But church publications continue to report human rights violations in some areas of national life, notably labor organization, land reform, and among Amerindian populations.(25)

Both the military and the church promise to be prominent forces in Latin America

throughout the 1980s. Both are going through a process of change and are adopting new ideologies. Whether they will enter into new disputes remains to be seen. At any rate, the outlines of potential conflict are marked off far more clearly than they were in 1964.

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## Notes

1. Press conference at CENCOS, Puebla, Feb. 1, 1979. See also Rafael Roncagliolo and Fernando Reyes Matta, *Iglesia, prensa, y militares* (Mexico City: Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales, 1978).

2. "The Long Path to Puebla," in John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, eds., *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979).

3. The body of works on the role of the military in society has grown immensely since 1960. Many writings on the military in developed societies proved to have limited application to the contemporary situation in Latin America. However, several works on the military in the Third World that have appeared in the last ten years are especially helpful: Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers and Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977); Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times: of Professionals, Pretorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Amos Perlmutter and Valerie Plave Bennett, eds., *The Political Influence of the Military: A Comparative Reader* (New Haven: Yale, 1980); Steffen W. Schmidt and Gerald A. Dorfman, eds. *Soldiers in Politics* (Los Altos, Cal.: Geron-X, 1974); Edward Feit, *The Armed Bureaucrats: Military Administrative Regimes and Political Development* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973); Kenneth Fidel, ed., *Militarism in Developing Countries* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1975); William R. Thompson, *The Grievances of Military Coup-Makers* (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1973) and Gavin Kennedy, *The Military in the Third World* (New York: Scribner's, 1974). Excellent essays and full-length studies and dissertations on the Latin American military have built up a noteworthy corpus, lead by Alfred Stepan's pioneering work, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton University Press, 1971). See also Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies, eds., *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Abraham F. Lowenthal, ed., *Armies and Politics in Latin America* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976); Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Philippe C. Schmitter, ed., *Military Rule in Latin America: Functions, Consequences, and Perspectives* (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1973); Philippe Faucher, *Le Brésil des militaires* (Montreal: l'Université de Montréal, 1981); Henry H. Keith and Robert A. Hayes, eds., *Perspectives on Armed Politics in Brazil* (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1976); Frederick M. Nunn, *The Military Coup d'Etat as a Political Process: Ecuador, 1948-66* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1977); James O. Icenhour, "The Military in Colombian Politics," Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington

University, 1976; Victor Villanueva, *Ejército Peruano: Del caudillismo anárquico al reformismo militar* (Lima: Mejía Baca, 1973); José Z. Garcia, "Military Factions and Military Interventions in Latin America," in Sheldon Smith, ed., *The Military and Security in the Third World* (Boulder: Westview, 1978); Robert H. Miller, "Military Government and Approaches to National Development: A Comparative Analysis of the Peruvian and Panamanian Experiences," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Miami, 1975; Virgilio Rafael Beltrán, "The Army and Structural Changes in 20th-Century Argentina," in Jacques van Doorn, ed., *Armed Forces and Society: Sociological Essays* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968); Bruce R. Drury, "Civil-Military Relations and Military Rule: Brazil Since 1964," in George A. Kourvetaris and Betty A. Dobratz, eds., *World Perspectives in the Sociology of the Military* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1977); and Luis A. Perez, Jr., *Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976).

4. Violations are well documented by international groups such as Amnesty International and by national and diocesan commissions on human rights such as the Vicaría de Solidaridad (Santiago). Two very useful descriptions of human rights violations and the activities of human rights commissions are those by Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People* (New York: Doubleday, 1980) and Brian H. Smith, "Churches and Human Rights in Latin America: Recent Trends on the Subcontinent," in Daniel H. Levine, ed., *Churches and Politics in Latin America* (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1980), pp. 155-83. Extensive reporting of human rights violations since 1975 is provided by Human Rights International (1502 Ogden St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010).

5. See W. F. Barber and C. N. Ronning, eds., *Internal Security and Military Power: Counter-Insurgency and Civic Action in Latin America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), and M. Francis, "Military Aid to Latin America in the United States Congress," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, 6 (July 1964) 389-401. *NACLA Report* has documented, since the mid-1960s, U.S. military assistance to Latin American countries. See also Lernoux, *Cry*, pp. 155-202.

6. Interview, Washington, D.C., March 26, 1970.

7. Statistics on the proportion of foreign clergy in the Latin American churches are nonexistent or have been collected in only a few countries. The single exception seems to be the 1965 calculations of the CELAM secretariat. Of the twenty-one national churches listed, twelve had more than 50 percent foreign clergy. See *Pro Mundi Vita*, 22 (1968) and *Pro Mundi Vita Special Note*, 15 (1970).

8. Sheila Cassidy, *Audacity to Believe* (Cleveland: Collins/World, 1978), and Pedro Casaldáliga, *I Believe in Justice and Hope* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides/Claretian, 1978). See also Tebfilo Cabestrero, *Mystic of Liberation: A Portrait of Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga of Brazil* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981).

9. "Latin American Bishops Discuss Human Rights," LADOC Keyhole Series, nos. 15

and 16 (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, n.d.). See also "Repression against the Church in Brazil, 1968-78," LADOC Keyhole Series, no. 18; Paulo Evaristo Arns, *En defensa dos direitos humanos: Encontro com o repore* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1978); Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo (Frei Betto), *Against Principalities and Powers* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976); Smith, "Churches and Human Rights," pp. 184-85.

10. For a summary statement and bibliography of the doctrine of national security and the reaction of the church to it, see "Las iglesias latinoamericanas frente al estado a ideología de la seguridad nacional," *Pro Mundi Vita Boletín*, no. 71 (March/April 1978). A shorter summary is found in "The Brazilian Church and Human Rights," *Pro Mundi Vita Dossiers* (Sept. /Oct. 1977), pp. 5-16. José Comblin has written the most extensive response from the point of view of a philosopher-theologian in *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979). (Comblin, though, assumes military men have all internalized the doctrine and he tends to give an abstract doctrine a life of its own). CELAM issued the conclusions of an ad hoc study group that reported to the bishops: *La seguridad nacional.- ¿Doctrina o ideología?* (Bogotá: CELAM, 1977). Relationships of national security doctrine and human rights are explored at length in "National Security Ideology and Human Rights," in Margaret E. Crahan, ed., *Human Rights and Basic Needs in the Americas* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1982).

11. Padín's name is variously spelled with an "n" or "m." The CBLAM *Guía eclesidstica latinoamericana* (Bogotá: CELAM, 1980), p. 64, uses Padín. His working paper, "La doctrina de la seguridad nacional a la luz de la doctrina de la Iglesia," appears in Roberto Magni and Luis Zanotti, *America Latina: La Chiesa si contesta* (Rome: Editora Ruiniti, 1967), pp. 240-67.

12. Departamento de Acción Social, CELAM, meeting in Lima, April 30 to May 5, 1975. José Comblin prepared the background paper, "La doctrina de la seguridad nacional," published in *La Iglesia y la integración Andina* (Bogotá: CELAM, 1976), pp. 237-56.

13. Puebla General Conference, Final Document, § 1247.

14. Puebla General Conference, Final Document, §§67, 480ff., 1260, and 1267. In the bishops' Preface, "Letter to the Peoples of Latin America," they stated: "Another thing that sends a shudder through our heart and marrow is the arms race, which continues to engender instruments of death. It involves the sad ambiguity of confusing the right of national defense with the ambitious pursuit of illicit profits. It will not serve to fashion peace."

15. See, however, A. Ferner, "A New Development Model for Peru: Anomalies and Readjustments," *Bulletin of the Society of Latin American Studies* (April 1978), pp. 42-62, and E. Dore and J. Weeks, "The Intensification of the Assault against the Working

Class in 'Revolutionary' Peru," *Latin American Perspectives*, 3, 2 (Spring 1976) 55-83. See also Victor Villanueva, "Peru's 'New' Military Professionalism: The Failure of the Technocratic Approach," and Henry A. Dietz, "Mobilization, Austerity, and Voting: The Legacy of the Revolution for Lima's Poor," in Stephen M. Gorman, ed., *Post-Revolutionary Peru: The Politics of Transformation* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), pp. 157-78 and 73-99.

16. Loveman and Davies conclude: "In none of the five countries [Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Peru] has military rule truly benefited the rural and working classes from the standpoint of improved income levels or availability of public services" (*The Politics*, pp. 226). See chapters by Thompson, Rock, Fishlow, Flynn, Saunders, Lowenthal, and Coder in Loveman and Davies, *The Politics*, pp. 229-306. See also Evans, *Dependent Development*, passim; Alejandro Portes, "Housing Policy, Urban Poverty, and the State," *Latin American Research Review*, 14, 2 (1979) 3-24; Oscar Catalán and Jorge Arrate, "Chile: La política del régimen militar a las nuevas formas de desarrollo en América Latina," *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 25 (Dec. 1978) 51-72; and Elizabeth W. Dore and John F. Weeks, "Economic Performance and Basic Needs: The Examples of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela," in Crahan, *Human Rights*, pp. 150-87. The bishops at the Puebla conference, not singling out military governments, spoke of the poor getting poorer (§§ 30 and 1264). One of the more recent criticisms of the way the Brazilian military government was handling the economy took place at the Brazilian Bishops' Conference annual meeting, April 6-15, 1983 (NC News Service dispatch no. 780, 1983).

17. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *The Cruel Dilemmas of Development: Twentieth-Century Brazil* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 166.

18. *The Politics*, p. 224.

19. *Armed Bureaucrats*, p. 11.

20. Medellín Conference, Document 7, § 20. Repeated by the Puebla Conference, Final Document, § 1247.

21. See esp. Brian H. Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile: Challenges to Modern Catholicism* (Princeton University Press, 1982); Thomas C. Bruneau, *The Church in Brazil: The Politics of Religion* (Austin: University of Texas, 1982); and Daniel H. Levine, *Religion and Politics in Latin America: The Catholic Church in Venezuela and Colombia* (Princeton University Press, 1981).

22. Puebla Conference, Final Document, § 516.

23. *Ibid.*, § 549.

24. James A. Malloy, "Bolivia: The Sad and Corrupt End of the Revolution," *USFI*

*Reports South America*, no. 3, 1982, p. 1.

25. See esp. recent issues of *Clamor* (Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en el Cono Sur, Comisión Arquidiocesana de la Pastoral de los Derechos Humanos y Marginados de São Paulo); *Brecha* (Centro de información y Documentación Pedro Velázquez, Mexico City); and Latinamerica Press (Lima).