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J.E.C. BRASIL

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# A CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION

Dialogues on Social Justice and  
Democracy Between Europe and the Americas  
(1945-1965)

Edited by Marta Busani – Paolo Valvo

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MARTA BUSANI – PAOLO VALVO (EDS.)

# A Christian Revolution

*Dialogues on Social Justice and Democracy Between  
Europe and the Americas (1945-1965)*

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**Studium**  
edizioni

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to Manuel Ceballos Ramírez (1947-2022),  
*in memoriam*

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A WORLD FIT FOR THE GOSPEL<sup>1</sup>  
MARTA BUSANI - PAOLO VALVO

1. *Christian Revolution: the origins of an idea*

In April 1933, the Morcelliana publishing house, founded a few years earlier (1925) by a group of Brescian Catholics that included Don Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Pope Paul VI) and Oratorian priest Don Giulio Bevilacqua (a future Council Father, created cardinal by the former in 1965), published a volume by Igino Giordani entitled *Segno di contraddizione*. In it, the author – who a few years after the Second World War would meet the Focolare community founded by the young Chiara Lubich, becoming co-founder of her ecclesial movement – dedicated the first chapter to «I termini della rivoluzione cristiana» (The terms of the Christian revolution), identifying the content of this revolution (which, in Giordani's original intentions, should have been the very title of the work, later modified by the publisher for reasons of political expediency)<sup>2</sup> in the “beatitudes” presented by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Taken as a whole, according to Giordani, the beatitudes traced an unbridgeable hiatus between Christian revelation and the logic of the “world” – with decisive repercussions on the social and economic level – and for this reason destined to recur in all ages and at all latitudes of human existence<sup>3</sup>.

Two years later, in France, the volume *Révolution personnaliste et communautaire* (1935) was published by Emmanuel Mounier, editor of the journal «Esprit», in whose intellectual magisterium entire generations of

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the translations from the originals are by the authors.

<sup>2</sup> On this point see F. DE GIORGI, *Introduzione. La rivoluzione cristiana di un parroco del novecento*, in P. MAZZOLARI, *Rivoluzione cristiana*, Edizione critica a cura di F. De Giorgi, EDB, Bologna 2011, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> I. GIORDANI, *Segno di contraddizione*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1933, pp. 22-23. On the theme of the Christian revolution understood first and foremost as service to one's neighbour rendered out of love, Giordani would return several times later. See for example ID., *La rivoluzione cristiana*, Città Nuova, Roma 1969.

Catholic thinkers were to be formed up to and beyond the Second Vatican Council. In Mounier's perspective, on which thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, Nikolaj Berdjaev and above all Charles Péguy had influenced, the historical vicissitude of Christianity was the fruit of a never resolved tension between a revolutionary aspect and a conservative aspect, both intimately linked to the very essence of the Christian proclamation, even if in the modern age the revolutionary dimension of Christianity had progressively dimmed. As Giorgio Campanini has pointed out, for Mounier «Christianity [was] a spiritual revolution that – in the absence of a lucid, rigorous, coherent commitment to witness on the part of each Christian generation – continually threatens to transform itself [...] into a revolution that was missed, with the practical adaptation of the Christian to a political and social situation more or less distant from the evangelical ethic». The first sphere in which this revolution had to take place was that of the personal conscience: in fact, only a «moral revolution, which at first took place on the level of the conscience, [could then have] descended on the level of history and through intimate growth and natural expansion [...] become [...] also a political and social revolution, even in the awareness of the impossibility of a full adaptation between moral values and social values»<sup>4</sup>.

Indispensable conditions for this «moral revolution» (an expression that Mounier retrieved directly from Péguy, who had affirmed that «the revolution will either be moral or not at all») to take place in the contemporary social context were, on the political level the creation of a «pluralist State» – which distanced Mounier from the prospect (also dear to some circles of progressive Catholicism) of “Christianising the State” and made him to all intents and purposes a preconceptor of that overcoming of the “Constantinian age” later sanctioned by the Second Vatican Council<sup>5</sup> – and, on the economic level, the realisation of a «decentralised economy down to the person»: only these conditions could

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<sup>4</sup> G. CAMPANINI, *La rivoluzione cristiana. Il pensiero politico di Emmanuel Mounier*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1968, pp. 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

in fact allow the creation of «community bodies» aimed at preserving «the space and freedom necessary to guarantee the person»<sup>6</sup>.

While the shadow of the great anti-Christian ideologies was progressively extending over the Old Continent, the idea that the most effective response to the totalitarian seduction (nazi-fascist as well as communist) did not simply lie in the condemnation of the errors of the time (though necessary), but first and foremost in a profound inner renewal and a vast programme of social action, was making its way into European Catholicism. This was an idea that, apart from the differences in style and terms, also found a significant echo overseas, where, for example, in the columns of the fortnightly «America», the American Jesuit John LaFarge never tired of repeating how the only way to face Bolshevism (both the “red” communist and the “brown” national-socialist ones, which according to the Jesuit share the same materialistic matrix) was action inspired by Christian charity and the principles of the Church’s social doctrine<sup>7</sup>.

A reflection of this sensitivity could perhaps also be seen beyond the Tiber, where if on the one hand the expression «Christian revolution» must have sounded like a contradiction in terms to most, on the other hand Pope Pius XI’s almost simultaneous publication of three encyclicals in March 1937 (*Mit brennender Sorge* on the situation of the Church in Germany, *Divini Redemptoris* on atheistic Bolshevism, *Firmissimam constantiam* on the situation of the Church in Mexico) had offered more than one food for thought on the subject of social renewal of which Catholics were to be

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<sup>6</sup> E. MOUNIER, *Rivoluzione personalista e comunitaria*, Edizioni di Comunità, Roma 2022, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> J. LAFARGE, *Fascism of communism: which the greater danger? And what are the means to combat both*, «America», October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936, pp. 4-5. It was this reflection that formed the backdrop to LaFarge’s famous volume *Interracial Justice* (1937): precisely in order to combat the spread of communism among blacks in the United States, the Church – according to LaFarge – had to deal with the racial question in a charitable and just manner, as the Jesuit also stated in 1937 in an intervention published in the «Lettres de Rome». ID., *Le communisme aux Etats-Unis*, «Lettres de Rome», a. III, n. 24, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1937, pp. 371-380. Also worth mentioning is LaFarge’s booklet *Communism and the Catholic Answer* (America Press, New York 1936).

standard-bearers. This emphasis was traceable both in the text of the encyclicals<sup>8</sup>, and in the complex drafting process that had preceded their publication<sup>9</sup>.

The perspective of renewal outlined so far would be further deepened in the years of the Second World War, arriving at more or less radical outcomes. In this regard, it is worth remembering how, when the war had already begun (in the autumn of 1943), another leading protagonist of Italian Catholic culture – Don Primo Mazzolari – began drafting a volume entitled *Rivoluzione cristiana*, destined not to see the light of day until years after its author's death<sup>10</sup>. From the very first lines of the book, Mazzolari highlighted the need for «a firm and continuous revolutionary will» to overcome the now irremediable «decay» of contemporary society<sup>11</sup>. A decadence for which those Christians for whom «concepts of order and hierarchy [prevailed] over those of justice and charity», and who read of the Gospel «only the words that suited their interests» bore grave

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<sup>8</sup> It is easy to note, in this regard, that in all three encyclicals published by Pius XI in March 1937, the need for Catholics to bear witness to a life more consistent with the principles of the Gospel was emphasised.

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, it should be noted, for example, that in one of the first preparatory notes of the encyclical on communism, the draftsman (probably Monsignor Luigi Valentini or the Secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs Mons. Giuseppe Pizzardo), after emphasising the need to «separate the responsibility of the Church from that of exploitative capitalism and to go sincerely and everywhere to the people», highlighted the urgency of having «a clergy equal to the times and to the needs of souls» and to promote «a deeper and more supernatural formation of the faithful» especially through Catholic Action. “Il Comunismo. Il pericolo ed i rimedii”, 1936, Città del Vaticano, Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato - Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati e le Organizzazioni Internazionali (ASRS), Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (AA.EE.SS.), Pio XI, Stati Ecclesiastici, pos. 548 (P.O.), fasc. 573, ff. 3r-8r. On this topic cf. T. BRECHENMACHER, *Der Heilige Stuhl und die totalitären Ideologien. Die März-Enzykliken von 1937 in ihrem inneren Zusammenhang*, Historisches Jahrbuch, 133 (2013), pp. 342-364 and P. VALVO, *Firmissimam Constantiam. Le Mexique dans la « Pâque des trois Encycliques »*, in F. BOUTHILLON - M. LEVANT (eds.), *Pie XI, un pape contre le nazisme ? L'encyclique Mit brennender Sorge (14 mars 1937)*, Actes du colloque international, Brest, 4-6 juin 2015, Éditions Dialogues, Brest 2016, pp. 153-155.

<sup>10</sup> On the book's complex publishing history (and the ecclesiastical censorship it faced after the end of World War II), see again F. DE GIORGI, *Introduzione*, cit., pp. 5-22.

<sup>11</sup> P. MAZZOLARI, *Rivoluzione cristiana*, cit., p. 127.

responsibility<sup>12</sup>. In the face of this situation, the change advocated by Mazzolari coincided with a return to the radical nature of the Gospel proclamation, and for this he moved first and foremost from a continuous inner conversion<sup>13</sup>.

Far from exhausting itself in an intimist dimension, however, the Christian revolution was called to renew its surroundings, challenging the dominant social structures and arrangements<sup>14</sup>. Here too, Mazzolari's judgement on the shortcomings of the Catholic world – guilty of having ceased to be «the ferment of every revolt against evil» to become an element of supine acceptance of the constituted disorder<sup>15</sup>, pushing many non-believers towards materialistic ideologies» – was categorical: «absences, like infidelities to Christian commitment, are paid for harshly»<sup>16</sup>. From these premises derived a lashing attitude towards a certain lukewarm and partial way of putting the Church's social teachings into practice, which lost its deepest soul, thus allowing the most diverse subjects, «from the conservative to the liberal, from the democrat to the fascist»<sup>17</sup> to be able to claim a licence of catholicity. No less important, as a consequence, was the judgement on communism, of which Mazzolari highlighted the yearning for social justice and the value as a «sign of contradiction» for Catholics, who were called to abandon bourgeois conformism and rediscover

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<sup>12</sup> «A meekness that is not a thirst and hunger for justice, that closes its eyes so as not to be burnt by the tears of the many who weep because of us and our laws, that adapts itself to everything, even to the horrors of this civilisation, so as not to be thoughtless, that let us blaspheme Providence so as not to pull our hands out of our pockets, is not the meekness of the Lamb of God, who died on the cross for the salvation of all, but a surrender at discretion before those human fatalities that man is proclaiming to repair his own sloth and his own usurped wealth.». *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> «The revolution starts in me (I am the revolution), but it does not end in me». *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Among the notions to which Mazzolari was indebted to Mounier is undoubtedly that of «constituted disorder» by which the bourgeois order was designated. See again F. DE GIORGI, *Introduzione*, cit., pp. 42-45.

<sup>16</sup> P. MAZZOLARI, *Rivoluzione cristiana*, cit., pp. 134-135.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258 ss.

themselves capable of a charity towards their neighbour that was not afraid of confrontation by communists<sup>18</sup>.

While the “Christian revolution” envisioned by Mazzolari was destined not to be fully understood by the ecclesiastical authority (which would prevent the publication of the work in 1946), other thinkers were tackling the theme of the relationship with communism by trying to develop the intuitions of the papal magisterium that were potentially more fertile on a social level. This was the case, for example, of Francesco Vito, professor of political economy at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (of which he would become rector on the death of the founder Father Agostino Gemelli). In his essay *Comunismo e cattolicesimo* (published in 1944 by Vita e Pensiero) Vito took up in particular a passage from Pius XII’s Christmas radiomessage of 24 December 1942<sup>19</sup> to affirm the need to «consider and approach those currents which, driven by an irresistible yearning for justice, urge vast and profound reforms of the present economic order without, however, wishing to arrive at the integral collectivisation of wealth». To crown his reflections, the economist quoted the following thought of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdjajev: «The position of the Christian world in the face of communism is not only that

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<sup>18</sup> «To love we have the measure of Christ, whose blessed name is humbled and blasphemed when in matters of social justice we allow ourselves to be overcome in charity». *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>19</sup> «Motivated always by religious motives, the Church condemned the various systems of Marxist socialism, and condemns them even today, as it is her permanent duty and right to preserve men from currents and influences, which endanger their eternal salvation. But the Church cannot ignore or fail to see, that the worker, in striving to improve his condition, runs up against some contrivance, which, far from being in conformity with nature, conflicts with the order of God and the purpose, which He has assigned for earthly goods. However false, condemnable and dangerous the ways that were and are, who, and especially what priest or Christian, could remain deaf to the cry that rises up from the depths, and which, in a world of a just God, calls for justice and a spirit of brotherhood? This would be a guilty and unjustifiable silence before God, and contrary to the enlightened sense of the apostle, who, just as he inculcates that one must be resolute against error, also knows that one must be full of respect for the errant and with an open mind to understand their aspirations, hopes and motives». PIUS XII, *Radiomessage Con sempre nuova freschezza on Christmas Eve 1942*, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1942, [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1942/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19421224\\_radiomessage-christmas.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1942/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19421224_radiomessage-christmas.html).

of the one who carries within himself the eternal and absolute truth; it is also the position of the guilty person who has failed to realise this truth»<sup>20</sup>.

Even in the aftermath of the war, the idea that the Gospel in itself postulated a (mostly non-violent) social revolution, capable of finally restoring dignity to every man, as made in the image and likeness of God, continued to resonate in the minds and words of exponents of the Catholic world on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, called upon to personally participate in the post-war reconstruction or in any case to face the contradictions of a capitalist development model that, while in Europe seemed able to guarantee a level of widespread wellbeing hitherto unknown<sup>21</sup>, in the Americas (especially in Latin America) showed its most inhuman and anti-Christian face, segregating the weaker segments of the population and thus contributing to deepening that furrow between «a sad and fearful indigence on the one hand and [...] a superb and provocative opulence on the other» that Pius XII had denounced in his Christmas radiomessage of 1943<sup>22</sup>.

As evidence of the enduring interest of the Western Catholic world in the prospect of a “Christian revolution” such as the one outlined so far with various accents and sensitivities, it is worth mentioning that at the end of 1952, the magazine «Humanitas» – founded after the end of the war by Don Bevilacqua’s group and published again by Morcelliana – had launched a poll, open to the contribution of all interested readers, entitled “Social subversivism and Christian revolution”, with the aim of deepening «the problem of the temporal efficacy of Christianity in relation to the

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<sup>20</sup> F. VITO, *Comunismo e cattolicesimo*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1944, p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> Although the social situation in the large urban suburbs appeared increasingly problematic, as shown in the recent volume *Periferie europee. Istituzioni sociali, politiche, luoghi*, vol. I, *Una prospettiva storica*, ed. by A.M. Locatelli, C. Besana, N. Martinelli, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2021 (open access: <https://series.francoangeli.it/index.php/oa/catalog/view/680/510/3873>).

<sup>22</sup> PIUS XII, *Radiomessage to the Peoples of the Entire World*, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1943, [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1943/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19431224\\_radiom-natalizio-popoli.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1943/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19431224_radiom-natalizio-popoli.html).

social and political problems of the contemporary world»<sup>23</sup>. More than 50 authors responded to the survey, the results of which would be published a few months later in a thick issue of the magazine<sup>24</sup>. Most of them were from Western Europe (Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland), but there was also a significant presence of Americans and Latin Americans. Even though the magazine had been keen to reiterate, at the same time as launching the survey, its position on the issue – namely that «the only revolution that was always relevant [was] Christianity also with respect to social problems, that is, the transformation of the structures of society» and that «any other so-called social revolution and Marxism in particular [were] negative forms of subversion without being substantially innovative»<sup>25</sup> – the contributions published were notable for the considerable diversity of approaches to the relationship between the “Christian social programme” and the revolutionary perspectives of Marxist ideology. There was no lack of those who, for example, such as the philosopher Cleto Carbonara, supported the possibility of a structural convergence between Christianity and socialism around the idea of man as a «social person»<sup>26</sup> or those who, like Domenico Antonio Cardone, postulated the need to achieve an overcoming of both Catholicism and Marxism by sublimating both into a non-denominational «genuine Christianity», also known as «Christian communism»<sup>27</sup>.

Apart from audacious positions such as those reported here, what prevailed in the pages of «Humanitas» was a vision that tended to be in line with the Magisterium of the Church of the time, which found a particularly successful synthesis in the position expressed by the Catholic philosopher Vittorio Agosti – for whom «the first severe examination and the first revolution take place in man and, subordinately, in his external manifestations, including social ones»<sup>28</sup>. Agosti’s insistence on the primarily personal (and only consequently social) dimension of change

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<sup>23</sup> «Humanitas», VII, 1952, 12, p. 1168.

<sup>24</sup> *Sovversivismo sociale e rivoluzione cristiana*, in «Humanitas», VIII, 1953, 8-9, pp. 737-963.

<sup>25</sup> «Humanitas», VII, 1952, 12, p. 1168.

<sup>26</sup> *Sovversivismo sociale e rivoluzione cristiana*, cit., pp. 740-744.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 745-751.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 755.



found an echo in the interventions of the American philosophers James Daniel Collins – who insisted on the Pauline concept of «metánoia» (conversion) – and John Arthur Mourtant – who urged not to give in to impatience in considering the need for a transformation of the world in a Christian sense<sup>29</sup>.

For his part, Vincenzo De Ruvo denounced the tendency of Christian Europe to conform to some of the cornerstones of the Marxist model (such as the increasing interference of the state in economic and educational activities and in the social life of citizens) and, conversely, identified in the United States of America a fertile ground for social progress lived under the banner of freedom (political as well as religious) and the conscious acceptance of risk: characteristics that, in his opinion, marked a distance that was difficult to bridge between the United States and Latin America<sup>30</sup>.

It was precisely from here, on the other hand, that an ideal “counter-song” to De Ruvo’s assertions arose, which the Spanish Jesuit (naturalised Argentinean) Ismael Quiles took on in the pages of «Humanitas». The analysis of the latter – a pedagogue and philosopher, whose future pupils would include a certain Jorge Mario Bergoglio – did not fail to denounce the impostures of the communist system and the serious dangers connected to the propagation of communist ideas in the western hemisphere, but at the same time communicated a sense of urgency: faced with the very serious social inequalities present in a significant part of the so-called “free world” (and in particular in the very Catholic Latin America), Christians could no longer allow themselves to remain at the window. The failure to bring about a Christian revolution inspired by a Social Doctrine of the Church that – at least on paper – was able to reconcile the just demands of all the actors involved in social and economic processes, was all the more scandalous in a context such as Latin America, where the Catholic religion was largely predominant. On this point, Quiles commented: «The tremendous question that presents itself is precisely: why has so little been

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 954.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 764.

done to date to remedy such a grave situation and raise the material, moral and cultural level of so many millions of human beings?»<sup>31</sup>.

2. *From «Christian revolution» to revolution? Itineraries from the post-war period to the Council*

In the face of the increasingly clearly perceived need to provide concrete answers to the inevitable social imbalances of the capitalist system, the path imagined by most Catholics in the post-war West was still through a full acceptance of the democratic political system and its logic. The lesson imparted by the French philosopher Jacques Maritain in the preceding years, particularly through works such as *Humanisme intégral* (1936), *Les droits de l'homme et la loi naturelle* (1942) and *Christianisme et démocratie* (1943), had in fact acted deeply in the Catholic culture of the Western world, opening it up to the dimensions of political democracy and social pluralism. This openness, on the other hand, found convinced support beyond the Tiber, where Pius XII, in a war still in progress, had indicated democracy as the system of government most in keeping with the dignity of the human person in his 1944 Christmas radiomessage<sup>32</sup>. This radiomessage would prove decisive, for example, for those Italian Catholics who, as Maria Bocci shows in this volume, in the years immediately preceding the fall of Fascism and the delicate challenge of the transition from totalitarianism to democracy, had launched a fruitful season of reflection on the nature and objectives of the State, which would have allowed them not to be found unprepared.

Maritain's prospect of Christianising contemporary society starting from its structures evidently attributed an enormous task to politics, with which the various European and American Christian Democrat

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 940.

<sup>32</sup> PIUS XII, *Radiomessage to the Peoples of the Entire World*, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944, [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/speeches/1944/documents/hf\\_p-ii\\_spe\\_1944224\\_natale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/speeches/1944/documents/hf_p-ii_spe_1944224_natale.html). On this subject, see the still useful reflections of A. ACERBI, *Chiesa e democrazia. Da Leone XIII al Vaticano II*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1991.

exponents<sup>33</sup>, who in the immediate post-war period would try to translate ambitious projects for the reform of the state and the economy into practice, felt personally invested<sup>34</sup>, on the basis of widely tested ideas (such as corporatism) but also under the banner of less usual slogans for the social magisterium of the Church (at least before the Johannine encyclical *Mater et Magistra*) such as co-management of enterprises.

Against this background, the essay by Maria Bocci offers an overview of the models of socio-economic development elaborated by Italian Catholics in the mid-twentieth century, and of the ideas formulated in relation to the postwar reconstruction. The essay highlights in particular the influence of international models (such as the New Deal, the Beveridge Report and the Soviet Union of the five-year plans) on Italian Catholicism, focusing on one of the nerve centres of Catholic reflection in both interwar and post-war periods, namely the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. A particular attention is devoted to the contribution made by groups of professors and assistant professors, at first clandestinely, and later in political and institutional bodies, to the reconstruction of Italy.

Alongside political organisations, other social actors – such as trade unions – also participated in the same ideal horizon, as shown in the essay by Simon Unger-Alvi, who, on the basis of the most recent Vatican documentation on the pontificate of Pius XII, examines the impetus given by the Vatican to the creation of trade unions of Christian inspiration in the context of West Germany, highlighting their aims and limits and setting their story in the framework of a broader effort to counter the spread of Marxism. In this context, the positions expressed by German Catholicism were still strongly influenced by corporatist ideas and the ideal of a “third Catholic way” between capitalism and communism.

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<sup>33</sup> See in this regard M. CONWAY, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1968*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2020, pp. 162-198.

<sup>34</sup> A small but significant testimony in this regard was publicly offered by Italian Senator Domenico Magrì on the occasion of his vote in favour of the seventh De Gasperi government on 3 August 1951. Cf. D. MAGRÌ, *Rivoluzione cristiana. Discorso tenuto al Senato della Repubblica nella seduta del 3 agosto 1951*, Tipografia del Senato del dott. G. Bardi, Roma 1951, pp. 15-23.

Catholics in the United States were not exempt from this perspective. The contamination between European and American experiences is, in fact, the focus of the contribution by Susanna De Stradis, that opens a new glimpse on the spread of the corporative idea – which in Western Europe had been in part polluted by totalitarian ideologies (as shown, among others, by Wilhelm Röpke)<sup>35</sup> – in the post-war United States, where the urgency of finding a third way between unregulated capitalism and omnipresent statism was very much felt by the Catholic hierarchy until the beginnings of the Sixties.

Therefore, if on the one hand, as Susanna De Stradis' essay shows, the idea of a liberal exceptionalism of American Catholicism needs to be reviewed, on the other hand it is still true that the experience of American Catholics on the issue of religious freedom – which was another of the great cornerstones of Maritain's vision – outweighed that which still dominated in many Catholic circles on the Old Continent and in the pontifical magisterium<sup>36</sup>, which with Pius XII was destined to stop at the threshold of religious freedom without ever crossing it. This generated contradictory situations within global Catholicism, such as the one described by Rafael Escobedo Romero, whose essay also delves into the perspective adopted by U.S. Catholicism on Spanish national Catholicism during the years of Franco's dictatorship, highlighting particularly the embarrassments caused by the Spanish Church's support for the religiously intolerant Franco's regime in a Catholicism intimately convinced of the positivity of the American model of religious freedom and State-Church separation<sup>37</sup>.

The essay offers a powerful example of the profoundly transnational dimension of Catholic reflection from the post-war period to the Second Vatican Council, whose effects on the Spanish situation – as shown by

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<sup>35</sup> W. RÖPKE, *L'enciclica «Quadragesimo anno» nella odierna discussione*, in «Humanitas», I, 1946, 11, pp. 1120-1127. For an overview of corporatism in Europe in the interwar period see M. PASETTI, *L'Europa corporativa. Una storia transnazionale tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bononia University Press, Bologna 2016.

<sup>36</sup> On this topic see J. MCGREEVY, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2003.

<sup>37</sup> For a long-term comparative view see *Narrativas en conflicto: libertad religiosa y relaciones Iglesia-Estado en los siglos XIX y XX*, ed. by R. García Pérez, Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, Cizur Menor 2020.

Escobedo – would be disruptive. Against the backdrop of this continuous exchange of ideas and experiences between the two sides of the Atlantic, there is also the socio-cultural peculiarity of the Latin American context, which, in spite of the preponderant presence of the Catholic Church, has not always known a capillarity and continuity of Catholic social action comparable to those implemented by European Catholicism since the end of the 19th century<sup>38</sup> (as the Belgian founder of the JOC – *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* Joseph Cardijn would also denounce on his return from a trip to the continent in 1949). Here, where there is no lack of even very articulate reflections on the need to radically reform political, social and economic structures, the paths taken by European Catholics appear even more difficult to follow, also due to the impossibility for the Christian Democrat ruling class in many countries to significantly influence national political balances<sup>39</sup> (unlike what happened in countries such as Italy, France and Germany, whose Christian Democrat leaders also led the first steps of the European integration process)<sup>40</sup>. A first, relevant example in this sense is offered by Lorena García Mourelle's essay, which deals not only with the influence of European ideas overseas, but with the foundation in Latin America – and precisely in Uruguay – of a “branch” of a European Christian movement, precisely the French movement Economy and Humanism founded by Dominican-priest Louis-Joseph Lebret. The experience of the Economy and Humanism movement in Uruguay (started by Juan Pablo Terra in 1947) – as well as the articulated network of social and cultural activities developed by the movement in the Latin American subcontinent – are highlighted by the author, who, among the many

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<sup>38</sup> For an analysis of different forms of Catholic activism carried out in Latin America from *Rerum Novarum* to the years of the Second Vatican Council, see *Local Church, Global Church. Catholic Activism in Latin America from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II*, ed. by S.J.C. Andes-J.G. Young, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2016.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview see *Christian Democracy in Latin America. Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts*, ed. by S. Mainwaring - T.R. Scully, Stanford University Press, Redwood City 2003.

<sup>40</sup> P. CHENAUX, *Un'Europa vaticana? Dal Piano Marshall ai Trattati di Roma*, Studium, Roma 2017.

interesting aspects of Juan Pablo Terra's itinerary, also highlights his later involvement in active politics.

This aspect brings Terra closer to the biographies of other Latin American intellectuals who, starting from an education greatly influenced by the ideas and the experience of European Catholicism, were all engaged in the attempt to give life to a "Christian social revolution" in different geographical and social contexts, like the Salvadoran Carlos Alberto Siri and the Mexican Efraín González Morfín. The personal and cultural itinerary of Siri, marked not only by his readings but also by his activities as a publicist, diplomat and politician, is at the heart of Yves Solís Nicot's reflection. Siri's attempt to open up new paths for democracy in Latin America started from a consideration of the pre-eminence of the personal and community element over the social and state dimension (somewhat evoking the communitarian personalism of Emmanuel Mounier). His trajectory shows how the ideal of a Christian "third way" between individualist capitalism and collectivist socialism (declined here in terms of a «socially integrated democracy») was kept alive even in a historical phase where revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence seemed to close any space for dialogue and reflection.

The same ideal animated for more than a decade the activity of «Latinoamérica», one of the main Jesuit magazines circulated in the Latin American context in the second half of Pius XII's pontificate, and the only one with a consciously continental dimension. As Paolo Valvo's essay highlights, the magazine presents itself as one of the places of reflection in which the need for Catholic social action deployed at all levels reached its apex. Such action was to find a constant source of inspiration in European models, as demonstrated for example by the space frequently reserved in the magazine for the initiatives of Joseph Cardijn's JOC. Alongside the dialogue with the experiences of European social Catholicism, the magazine's analysis also reveals the slow maturing of a more open attitude towards change (even violent change) in the dominant socio-political structures<sup>41</sup>. Significantly, the end of the magazine (which moved to Cuba

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<sup>41</sup> An analysis of the evolution of Jesuit reflection on social problems in Latin America is offered by S. SCATENA, *Dall'azione sociale al cristianesimo della liberazione. Cenni sulla*

at the end of 1958) would come a few months after the victory of the Castro revolution.

In this regard, one cannot help but emphasise the fundamental role played by the Cuban revolution (1959) in “drying up” the reservoir of Catholic consensus around the ideas of political, social and economic reform cultivated in Latin America throughout the 1950s. In a certain sense, the victory of Fidel Castro (who in his fight against Fulgencio Batista’s pro-U.S. dictatorship was able to count on the active support of broad sectors of the Cuban Catholic laity and of apical members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy) also represented the beginning of an increasingly clear break within the dialogue cultivated up to that point between European and Latin American Catholicisms, as it seemed to demonstrate – with the force of facts – that to combat the extremely serious social inequalities of capitalism in Latin America (unsustainable for the conscience of Catholics) the European models of “Christian revolution” no longer worked<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, the Cuban revolution – together with other Latin American experiences that were to become the subject of reflection for European Catholics, thanks above all to the Second Vatican Council – helped to mark in many ways the beginning of an inversion of the trend in relations between the two sides of the Atlantic, which from the second half of the 1960s would see Latin America exert an increasingly significant influence on the social and political orientations of Catholicism on the Old Continent, in particular of its younger members<sup>43</sup>.

This perspective is also shared in the essay by Marta Busani, who reconstructs the pivotal role played by the Brazilian *Juventude Estudantil Católica* (JEC) and the *Juventude Universitária Católica* (JUC) in promoting

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*vicenda dei gesuiti in America Latina nell'epoca di Arrupe*, in *I gesuiti e i papi*, ed. by M. Catto - C. Ferlan, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, pp. 157-189.

<sup>42</sup> The historical evolution of Catholic social models in Europe from Pius XII to Paul VI is reconstructed in detail in the two volumes by G.-R. HORN, *Western European Liberation Theology: The First Wave (1924-1959)*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008 and *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015.

<sup>43</sup> With reference to the Italian case see M. DE GIUSEPPE, *L'altra America: i cattolici italiani e l'America latina. Da Medellín a Francesco*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2017.

forms of social commitment in Catholic youth organisations from the post-war period onwards, highlighting the points of contact between the Brazilian JEC's reflection and that of the French JEC<sup>44</sup>. Although initially sharing the perspectives outlined by Jacques Maritain, the Brazilian JEC and JUC distanced itself from that model and in the 1960s they arrived at a more radical theological vision, close to explicitly revolutionary sociopolitical perspectives<sup>45</sup>. In this trajectory, the publication of the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961, on the 30th anniversary of *Quadragesimo anno* and the 70th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*) by John XXIII marked, on the one hand, the consecration by the universal magisterium of the Church of the method of the Revision of Life (based on the trinomial "See, Judge, Act") introduced by Cardijn, on the other hand, the beginning of a new path that would quickly lead many members of the JEC and the JUC – similar to what was soon to happen in many European countries<sup>46</sup> – to political radicalisation. In this perspective, the coup d'état that in August 1964 put an end to the socialist government of João Goulart, helped create an unbridgeable distance from the projects of a "third way" between capitalism and communism, inspired among others by Maritain, that had hitherto inspired the social action of both organisations.

Another outcome, of a very different sign, of *Mater et Magistra* in the Latin American context is embodied in the itinerary of a relevant exponent of post-war Mexican Catholicism, Efraín González Morfín, leading member of the Partido Acción Nacional (who would run for the presidency

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<sup>44</sup> For an overview of transnational relations between Catholic youth movements in the long Sixties see M. BUSANI, *Reti internazionali studentesche. Itinerari di una contestazione cattolica negli anni Sessanta*, in *Towards 1968. Studenti cattolici nell'Europa occidentale degli anni Sessanta*, ed. by M. Bocci - M. Busani, Studium, Roma 2020, pp. 35-65.

<sup>45</sup> An in-depth look at the Mexican case can be found in the forthcoming volume by J. PENSADO, *Love and Despair. How Catholic Activism Shaped Politics and the Counterculture in Modern Mexico*, University of California Press, Oakland 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Among the most recent acquisitions in the historiography of European Catholic youth see *La rivoluzione del Concilio. La contestazione cattolica negli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, ed. by S. Inaudi - M. Margotti, Studium, Roma 2017 and *Towards 1968. Studenti cattolici nell'Europa occidentale degli anni Sessanta*, cit. For a specific focus on the Italian case see M. BOCCI, *L'«anima cristiana» della contestazione. Gli studenti dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*, Studium, Roma 2020 and A. SANTAGATA, *La contestazione cattolica. Movimenti, cultura e politica dal Vaticano II al '68*, Viella, Roma 2016.



of Mexico in 1970 against the *priista* Luis Echeverría Álvarez). As shown in Laura Alarcón Menchaca's essay, Gonzalez Morfin, after leaving the novitiate in the Society of Jesus in 1959, was to enjoy a meteoric political career in the ranks of the PAN. It was also from the 1961 encyclical that he drew the decisive impulse to make his party adopt a reformist perspective that, while remaining at the centre of the political spectrum, did not shy away from strongly emphasising the need for a democratic reform of the socio-economic and political structures of Mexico at the time. From the essay emerges, in any case, not only the politician but also the "all-round" Christian intellectual Efraín González Morfín, able to participate in the great ecclesial debates of the conciliar season and engaged in a close (but not prejudicially hostile) confrontation with Marxism. His fundamentally dialoguing vision, open to the positive instances of Marxism, would encounter some opposition within his own party, while always remaining within the limits of the strictest adherence to the Magisterium of the Church.

A position that tends instead to go beyond the traditional horizons of Catholic social doctrine is that expressed by the Mexican bishop of Cuernavaca Sergio Méndez Arceo, on whom the final essay by Tania Hernández Vicencio focuses. In the context of the complex socio-political situation of the state of Morelos during his first ten years as bishop, as well as the discussions at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and, later, the political crisis of post-conciliar Mexico and Latin America, the author sheds light on a very particular aspect of Méndez Arceo's teaching, namely his contribution to the birth of an inclusive Christian nationalism, open to contribution not only from other religions (following the ecumenical principle) but also from atheists and Freemasons, which allowed him to become «a forerunner of a globalising vision of social action», no longer restricted within national borders, and a key player in the processes of social and political transformation of the Latin American continent, through its support for the theology of liberation.

At the end of this brief presentation, it is useful to point out how this volume, which gathers together the fruits of the research of ten European

and American scholars, represents in the end only a small drop in the sea of a still ongoing reflection on the transnational horizons of Catholic social action from the post-World War II period to the Council years. What we have wanted to investigate here, starting from a plurality of themes and approaches, are just some of the ways in which Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic have been able to interpret a dialogue “at a distance” on the themes of social justice and democracy: this dialogue was not abstract, but embodied in social, cultural and political experiences that have left their mark on the history and identity of local Catholicisms, helping to show the potential for change inherent in the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Such principles, fixed in encyclicals and documents of the Magisterium, were at the same time handed over to the free initiative of individuals and groups who, at different times and in geographical and political contexts that were also very distant from each other, heard the call to bring about a “Christian revolution” in their own spheres of life.

The hope is that this publication can contribute to outlining new and more ambitious avenues of research, capable of delving even deeper into those ideal links and those webs of relationships that in the post-World War II period made the Atlantic a bit narrower, bringing out the contribution of the Catholic world, in its different souls, to contemporary globalisation processes.

I.

THE «SOLIDARITY-STATE». UNIVERSITÀ  
CATTOLICA, A POST-WORLD WAR II THINK  
TANK ON SOCIAL THOUGHT<sup>1</sup>

MARIA BOCCI

1. *Introduction*

For many years, studies on Italian Catholicism in the mid-twentieth century paid no heed to Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. While there is no lack of reference to the events at a university that was a focal point for the Catholic world, not only in Italy, historiography merely focused on a negative evaluation of the ideological roots of the cultural perspective which prevailed at the university, refusing to acknowledge its ability to influence the reconstruction of the country after twenty years of fascist dictatorship and the divisions of the Second World War. This opinion is explained by a conviction first expressed by some protagonists and then acknowledged in historiography. In fact, a clear divide was created in Italian Catholicism, separating those who were to foster significant social reform projects – also thanks to cultural stimuli from abroad – and those who, on the other hand, would go on to adopt conservative positions, shunning innovative influences, and who were irremovable in claiming the Christian «reconquering» of society, as if it were possible to re-establish that regime of «Christendom» beyond which history had evidently gone<sup>2</sup>. Università Cattolica was, indeed, confined to this second group. The cultural project on which the university was based and which had conditioned the long decades of Father Agostino Gemelli's rectorship, from the university's foundation in 1921 to the end of the 1950s, was to be limited to reviving the hegemonic aspirations of a counter-revolutionary matrix, which were profoundly anti-modern. This was to

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<sup>1</sup> When not otherwise specified, translations of the original Italian texts are by the author.

<sup>2</sup> For the opposite point of view, at the very least see R. MORO, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, il Mulino, Bologna 1979. For the myth of Christianity see G. MICCOLI, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione. Studi sul rapporto chiesa-società nell'età contemporanea*, Marietti, Casale Monferrato 1985. See also D. MENOZZI, *Sacro Cuore. Un culto tra devozione interiore e restaurazione cristiana della società*, Viella, Roma 2001.

result in opting for an authoritarian solution to the Italian crisis of 1943-1945, also due to the anti-communist obsession that would have blocked any move to change. This consideration has discouraged studies and led to the sources being underestimated, because it is difficult to discover something new in a history that is predetermined without analysis. It was therefore alleged that Università Cattolica demonstrated a lack of interest in social issues and distanced itself from institutions as well as changes therein, and therefore also from problems related to rebuilding Italy and reforming its society. Even some who had spent long periods studying or teaching at Università Cattolica felt the need to distance themselves from it. The different «generations» of which the mid-twentieth century Catholic world was composed were pitted against each other in order to underline the distinctiveness of the younger group's role, which seemed to be safeguarded against a legacy that was difficult to explain because, to a certain extent, it could be linked to Italy in its 20-year-long fascist period<sup>3</sup>.

The reconstruction of the history of the university of Italian Catholics was therefore postponed for many years. Yet, Università Cattolica was a veritable hotbed of ideas, but also of men and women who left their mark on national events. Indeed, the university was one of the most remarkable breeding grounds for the ideas of the ruling class in the postwar period and the social trends cultivated above all by the left-wing currents of the Christian Democrats and by some of its best-known exponents. Cases in point were Amintore Fanfani, professor of Economic History and Giuseppe Dossetti, then assistant professor of Canon Law<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, less famous professors also played a decisive role in various areas of Italian reconstruction. To name just a few: Marcello Boldrini, full professor of Statistics and dean of the Political Science and Economics Faculties, at the same time chairman of

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<sup>3</sup> See P. POMBENI, *Il gruppo dossettiano e la fondazione della democrazia italiana (1938-1948)*, il Mulino, Bologna 1979, pp. 56 ff., and R. MORO, *Il contributo culturale e politico dei cattolici nella fase costituente*, in M.C. GIUNTELLA-R. MORO, *Dalla FUCI degli anni '30 verso la nuova democrazia*, AVE, Roma 1991, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> G. CAMPANINI, *Fede e politica. 1943-1951. La vicenda ideologica della sinistra d.c.*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1976. See also E. GALAVOTTI, *Il giovane Dossetti. Gli anni della formazione 1913-1939*, il Mulino, Bologna 2006. For Fanfani see at least *Amintore Fanfani. Formazione culturale, identità e responsabilità politica*, ed. by A. Cova e C. Besana, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2014.

Agip and the mastermind of Enrico Mattei's Eni; also, Mario Romani, full professor of Economic History, dean of the Faculty of Economics and pro-rector. However, the university was also a point of contact for the trade union experiences of Catholics, following the foundation of CISL (Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions)<sup>5</sup>.

Today, historiography has at least partially filled the gap<sup>6</sup>, although the following scholars focused above all on the biographies of individual professors or former students as well as on the institutional history of the university as a whole<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, cultural reflection continued to remain somewhat

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<sup>5</sup> On Romani see S. ZANINELLI-V. SABA, *La cultura al servizio del «sindacato nuovo»*, Rusconi, Milano 1995, and V. SABA, *Quella specie di laburismo cristiano. Dossetti, Pastore, Romani e l'alternativa a De Gasperi. 1946-1952*, Lavoro, Roma 1996. On Boldrini see M. ROMANO, *Cultura e petrolio. Marcello Boldrini dall'Università Cattolica ai vertici dell'Eni*, il Mulino, Bologna 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Historiography on Università Cattolica was started above all by N. Raponi and G. Rumi. Raponi analysed the idea of a Catholic University between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and some figures related to the history of the university in essays published in edited volumes, periodicals and dictionaries, recently collected together in a single volume (N. RAPONI, *Per una storia dell'Università Cattolica. Origini, momenti, figure*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2017). While the latter scholar began more meticulous studies on the cultural project, leading to the foundation of the university and to its role in Italy. In his works (published in volumes entitled *Milano cattolica nell'Italia unita*, NED, Milan 1983, and *Lombardia guelfa 1780-1980*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1988) he offered some of the clearest considerations on the significance of Università Cattolica in its first decades of life.

<sup>7</sup> On the cultural schools of thought developed in the university see the edited volume *L'Università Cattolica a 75 anni dalla fondazione. Riflessioni sul passato e prospettive per il futuro*. Atti del 65° Corso di aggiornamento culturale dell'Università Cattolica, Milano 30 gennaio-1° febbraio 1997, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1998 (for the issue examined in this abstract see F. DUCHINI, *L'economia*, pp. 237-277, and L. ORNAGHI, *Le scienze socio-politiche*, pp. 279-294). See also L. GERONICO, *L'eredità di Giuseppe Toniolo. La Facoltà di Scienze sociali dell'Università Cattolica (1921-1924)*, in «Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia», XXIX, 1994, 3, pp. 286-328. Taking a more institutional approach, there is *Storia dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*, whose volumes were published between 2007 and 2021, together with Vita e Pensiero: I. *I discorsi di inizio anno da Agostino Gemelli a Adriano Bausola 1921/22-1997/98*, ed. by A. Cova; II. M. BOCCI, *L'Università Cattolica nelle carte degli archivi*, a book that provides a directory of studies and printed sources *Repertorio degli studi e delle fonti a stampa* ed. by N. Martinelli and S. Riboldi; III. *Il Magistero della Chiesa per l'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*, a two-volume book, the first on *L'insegnamento dei Pontefici* and the second on *Le Giornate Universitarie*, both ed. by C. Giulio-

in the background, as if it had not influenced postwar political and social Catholicism and the history of democratic Italy. However, there are many signs that contradict this assumption. We should consider the decisive role of the «*professorini*» (young professors teaching at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan) in the Constituent Assembly, especially in the first and third subcommittees, charged with defining the fundamental principles of the Republic of Italy and establishing the economic and social relations that were to characterise it<sup>8</sup>. We should consider the mobilisation for the victory of the Christian Democrats on 18 April 1948, which at Università Cattolica did not prevent academics from grasping a fundamental ambiguity in the outcome of the election, which was perceived as proof of an overly opportunistic adherence to the anti-communist front and a moderate tendency from which they dissociated themselves<sup>9</sup>. Then there is the path that, in the early 1960s, led to the creation of centre-left governments, to which Università Cattolica contributed ten years in advance. We can start precisely from this last point to address the question of the possible existence, in the thinking which evolved at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, of development models that have left a mark on Italian history, flanked by those drawn from other cultural backgrounds, from the former Popular Party headed by Alcide De Gasperi and the ex-Guelph antifascists Piero Malvestiti and Gi-

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dori; IV. *Per una comunità educante. La formazione e la didattica*, ed. by A. Carera; V. *I patri-moni dell'Università Cattolica*, edited by M. Bocci and L. Ornaghi; VI. *Agostino Gemelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by M. Bocci; VII. D. BARDELLI, «*Vita e Pensiero*» 1914-1921. *Una rivista cattolica d'avanguardia alle origini dell'Università Cattolica*. Reference can also be made to Giuseppe Toniolo. *L'uomo come fine. Con saggi sulla storia dell'Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo di studi superiori*, ed. by A. Carera, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2014. See also D. PALANO, *Un ideale da molti anni coltivato. Materiali per la storia della Facoltà di Scienze politiche e sociali dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2020.

<sup>8</sup> See G. CAMPANINI, *Fede e politica*, cit., pp. 102 ff.; P. POMBENI, *Il gruppo dossettiano*, in *Cultura politica e partiti nell'età della Costituente*, I. *L'area liberal-democratica. Il mondo cattolico e la Democrazia Cristiana*, ed. by R. Ruffilli, il Mulino, Bologna 1979, pp. 425-292; E. GALAVOTTI, *Il professorino. Giuseppe Dossetti between the crisis of fascism and the construction of democracy 1940-1948*, il Mulino, Bologna 2013, pp. 471-592.

<sup>9</sup> M. BOCCI, *La mobilitazione della cultura: il caso dell'Università Cattolica*, in *18 aprile 1948. L'«anomalia» italiana*, ed. by M. Invernizzi, Ares, Milano 2007, pp. 263-309.

oacchino Malavasi, to Fuci (*Federation of Italian Catholic University Students*), traversing the experience of the Code of Camaldoli and the intellectuals who contributed to writing it.

In 1953, Università Cattolica's most well-known journal, «Vita e Pensiero», published articles by a professor at the Milan Faculty of Theology, Carlo Colombo, who favoured opening up to the left. Carlo Colombo was by no means an unfamiliar figure at the university founded by Father Gemelli<sup>10</sup>. The rector used to turn to him when he had to tackle controversial issues from a cultural and theological point of view and to disseminate the interpretation of the Papal Magisterium, which he wanted to corroborate. His intervention in favour of a government alliance between Christian Democrats and Socialists was a clear sign of the adherence to this option by the university's leading members. Following an election result that forced the Christian Democrats to open up to other parties, Colombo rejected making agreements with right-leaning parties, hoping that a parliamentary majority consisting of parties interested in a courageous social programme would be formed. A programmed consensus with the socialists would have made a «political policy with a strong social orientation» possible. The latter, in fact, was necessary in order to instil a «real Christian inspiration» into the life of the country, through social reforms that would implement the «fundamental evangelical commandment: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, offer work and home to those who have not»<sup>11</sup>. The director of the journal, Father Gemelli, had to face the suspicion – authoritatively endorsed by Giovanni Battista Montini – that Colombo was in favour of Marxism<sup>12</sup>. Father Gemelli fully agreed with the path indicated by the theologian. In his opinion, it was legitimate to doubt the Christian spirit of those who opposed reforms that were indispensable to fulfil the «just aspirations of a large number of the

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<sup>10</sup> See Mons. Carlo Colombo e l'Università Cattolica, ed. by L. Vaccaro, Morcelliana, Brescia 2008.

<sup>11</sup> C. COLOMBO, *Giudizi teologico-politici sui risultati delle elezioni*, in «Vita e Pensiero», September 1953, and ID., *A proposito di «Giudizi teologico-politici sui risultati delle elezioni»*, in «Vita e Pensiero», November 1953.

<sup>12</sup> For this case, reference is made to the correspondence analysed in M. BOCCI, *Oltre lo Stato liberale. Ipotesi su politica e società nel dibattito cattolico tra fascismo e democrazia*, Bulzoni, Roma 1999, pp. 439-442. This was also addressed by E. VERSACE, *Montini e l'apertura a sinistra. Il falso mito del «vescovo progressista»*, Guerini, Milano 2007, pp. 49-56.

people towards greater social justice». Replying to Montini, the rector affirmed that opening up to the left could ensure the achievement of the social objectives which were very important to Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore<sup>13</sup>. We could add that these objectives had brought Università Cattolica closer to those who, like Giorgio La Pira, were working to meet the «expectations of the poor», with the support of Father Gemelli and his collaborators<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. *The starting point: anti-liberalism*

The social orientations of many Christian Democrat party members with leftist tendencies – such as the Dossetti-led group whose academic background was often linked to Università Cattolica – were very much shaped by the reflections arising from the university, starting from the 1930s up to the establishment of the constitution, a period marked by economic crisis: the organicistic social guidelines of different political contexts and the start of the Second World War, interpreted as a real crisis affecting civilisation, against which it was necessary to overhaul the legal system and social relations. Beginning in the 1930s, Università Cattolica was at the heart of debates that had brought together several generations of scholars, who produced various kinds of publications for field experts but also for the wider public, such as articles published in journals of *Vita e Pensiero*, the university's publishing house.

The starting point for those who shared these ideas was anti-liberalism: the rule of law was criticised, not only for its agnostic genesis, but also and above all for the bourgeois anthropology which had inspired it. According to this view, the easing of social constraints produced by liberalism had developed in two directions: anarchist and statolatric, both, in fact, aimed at

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<sup>13</sup> Archivio generale dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, *Corrispondenza*, b. 245, f. 418, sf. 3091, letter dated 15 October 1953 written by Gemelli to Montini.

<sup>14</sup> Reference is made to the article written by La Pira in «Cronache sociali» on 15 April 1950 and to the defence adopted by Università Cattolica journals. See M. BOCCI, *Oltre lo Stato liberale*, cit., pp. 423-428.



consolidating not the rights of individuals, but the survival of the fittest, which in economic terms meant unrestrained capitalism. The social ethics inferred from this were decidedly anti-capitalist. Consequently, fostered by the economic crisis and developments in social doctrine – in addition to the endorsement of the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* – the utopia of a «Catholic State» was cultivated. The scholars who referred to the neo-scholastic philosophy – of which Università Cattolica was the official interpreter under Vatican mandate<sup>15</sup> – focused precisely on ethical-political issues, articulating complex ideas on the Italian State, its laws, society and individuals, starting from a rather contemporary reinterpretation of the Thomistic philosophy that provided the fundamental interpretative categories<sup>16</sup>. The aim was to rebuild the political structure on very different foundations from those which had led to the crisis of the Italian liberal State and, apparently, the decline of capitalism.

At the core of these elaborations was an authentic archetype of civil co-existence, a «third way», an alternative to individualism and collectivism, whose Catholicity would be proved not by a superficial confessional patina, but by consolidating economic structures and social relations modelled on evangelical justice. It was hoped that a radical transformation would replace the liberal structure with an entirely Catholic State, in essence, Italy's regulatory system and socio-economic relations. The main way of implementing the evangelical principles and boosting the confidence of Italians seemed to be to make them live in Christianised socio-economic structures, in compliance with social integration laws inferred from evangelical solidarity.

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<sup>15</sup> After all, Pope Pius XI asked the group of neo-scholasticism scholars of Università Cattolica to intervene at the national congress on philosophy in 1929, to counter the idealist positions.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, F. OLGATI, *La riduzione del concetto filosofico di diritto al concetto di giustizia*, Giuffrè, Milano 1932, pp. 33 ff. For more detailed considerations see M. BOCCI, *Oltre lo Stato liberale*, cit., pp. 177-197, in which reference is made to the volumes published by the publishing house Vita e Pensiero and articles that appeared in Università Cattolica journals, whose main authors were Gemelli, Olgati, Mariano Cordovani and Emilio Chiocchetti.

Therefore, an abrupt shift towards the State<sup>17</sup> occurred in this intellectual circle, favoured by «the erosion of the Catholic social background» imposed by the fascist dictatorship<sup>18</sup> and endorsed by a rather doctrinal knowledge of the generation which had not been exposed to the social and pre-political citizenship of the nineteenth-century Catholic movement, nor to the first Christian Democratic party or the Popular Party. The studies, publications and occasions for debate, which continually increased at Università Cattolica, even in the 1940s, supported a sort of «State-oriented» attitude of the Catholic culture, clearly evident in the political and intellectual biographies of a part of the postwar ruling class who had studied at that university or had significant contacts with cultural and spiritual circles connected to it. The inclinations that emerged between the 1930s and the Second World War did not suggest isolating oneself in a purely spiritual and study-focused commitment. At the Milan seat of Università Cattolica the intelligentsia addressed political and social issues that opened the way to re-discovering the value of the State, with the proviso that this would have nothing to do with liberal contractualism.

Giovanni Gentile's debate on idealism was a fundamental step along this path. If the immanentism and statuality of law were harshly opposed<sup>19</sup>, in the «ethical State» there was, however, a guarantee of social discipline, which seemed necessary to prevent individual freedom from becoming an antisocial licence. The State that guaranteed the ethicalness of individuals and society represented a focal point for neo-scholastic thinking that was gaining popularity at Università Cattolica. The problem of the origin of ethics remained an open question because it was emphasised that the State does not constitute ethicalness, but it must become ethical by recognising a pre-existent moral law to which it is subordinated. It was therefore necessary to

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<sup>17</sup> A. FERRARI, *La preparazione di una classe dirigente nella crisi economica e politica (1922-1945)*, in «Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia», XXX, 1995, 2, pp. 116-117.

<sup>18</sup> A. GIOVAGNOLI, *La cultura democristiana. Tra Chiesa cattolica e identità italiana. 1918-1948*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1991, pp. 81-87.

<sup>19</sup> Some important articles appeared between 1930 and 1931 in the university's journals, ranging from «Vita e Pensiero», to «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali» and «Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica». See M. BOCCI, *Oltre lo Stato liberale*, cit., pp. 139-160.

follow Gentile when he asserted that the State has a philosophical conscience. Anti-idealistic criticism started when this conscience was identified, a conscience that was not produced by the State, but reconstructed in a moral order assumed by Catholicism and which the Lateran Pacts – as it was claimed – had ratified<sup>20</sup>. The result was a limit to the State's omnipotence. At the same time, however, the ethical State became stronger, by adopting a sort of moral bond that legitimised it.

Thus, while openings were possible on the left, suspicion towards liberalism remained. The point of reference for these debates was not freedom, but «liberation from» (from need, but also from obstacles placed in the way of achieving individual and social perfection). Freedom – it was argued – is abstract, because there can be no freedom to do evil and because no man is isolated from the social context. To remodel contemporary society as Christian, that is organicist and supportive: this was the task that Università Cattolica had set itself. The myth of the «Christian civilisation», of medieval origin<sup>21</sup>, was not a limit to political-social planning, but an alternative model to a kind of modernity that seemed to have failed and, consequently, a kind of ideological compass for conquering the future. The distinction between Catholic and political action, imposed by fascism, was an opportunity to develop this project, postponing its implementation not because of the satisfaction expressed in relation to the political events<sup>22</sup> but to prepare a ruling class that was ready to achieve the social utopia that was being developed.

### 3. *The «Solidarity-State»*

Neo-scholastic scholars linked to Università Cattolica believed, therefore, that the creation of an «ethical State», modelled on Catholic social

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<sup>20</sup> Reference can also be made to contributions by several authors, amongst which there were those of M. CORDOVANI *Cattolicesimo e idealismo*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1928, and A. GEMELLI, *Il mio contributo alla filosofia neoscolastica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1926, with special reference to pages 79-81. See also the speeches of the Milanese Neo-scholasticism Movement at the Congress of Philosophy in 1929 in the «Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica», May-August 1929, *Il VII congresso nazionale di filosofia. Rome-May 1929*, by G. Bontadini.

<sup>21</sup> A. GEMELLI, *Medioevalismo*, in «Vita e Pensiero», 1 December 1914.

<sup>22</sup> See M. BOCCI, *Agostino Gemelli rettore e francescano. Chiesa, regime, democrazia*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2003.

teaching and a reinterpretation of St. Thomas' school of thought, could protect the common good. Their convictions were influenced by French personalist doctrine, including that of Maritain, the author of *Humanisme intégral*, to which they attributed a political-state value that was greater than it should have been<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless, in this vision the common good did not consist of the sum of individual assets: in fact, it seemed to have a higher degree of perfection because it overcame the shortcomings of individuals, tearing them away from antisocial egoism. Being a good citizen meant being on the right track for achieving a benefit that was personal if it was social, that is, anchored to overcoming individualistic temptations<sup>24</sup>.

This led to a socio-economic model that emphasised the need for broad-based planning, the main subject of which was, inevitably, the State itself. The typical trends of the 1930s and 1940s favoured this reappraisal: the State had to get to the heart of the economic issues in order to reorganise them based on a solidarity-focused project that would change the characteristics of liberal society, regimenting the social forces and national economy. In the model elaborated at Università Cattolica, only the State, endowed with instruments that were unattainable to private solidarity, could pursue social justice, especially in cases where the political class chose to unshackle economic mechanisms from private selfishness.

Of course, this perspective was influenced by the corporatist trend of the period. Corporatism, however, was interpreted by Università Cattolica economists as an opportunity to achieve goals that did not coincide with the

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<sup>23</sup> Articles written by Maritain can be found in the «Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica», in which, during the 1930s, news was given in various publications by the French philosopher inspired by Thomatism. During the 1931/1932 academic year Maritain held a course of lectures at Università Cattolica on «Aspetti del problema critico» (cfr. L. MANGONI, *L'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Una risposta della cultura cattolica alla laicizzazione dell'insegnamento superiore*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 9. La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, ed. by G. Chittolini-G. Miccoli, Einaudi, Torino 1986, pp. 992-993).

<sup>24</sup> These considerations refer to publications by Olgiati, Gemelli, Fanfani, Giorgio La Pira, Pio Bondioli, Luigi Bellini, Andrea Oddone, Francesco Vito and Guido Gonella. See, for example, A. GEMELLI, *La carità nell'ora presente*, in *La carità*. Settimane Sociali d'Italia, XVII Sessione, Roma, 1933, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1934, pp. 37 and ff., and A. ODDONE, *La costituzione sociale della Chiesa e le sue relazioni con lo Stato*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1932, pp. 51 and ff.

imperialist goals of fascism. The attempt was to direct it towards social justice. Economic activity – it was argued – is moral, in the sense that it can lead man closer to, or further away from, personal and social salvation<sup>25</sup>. Francesco Vito, a young economist, who had started working at Università Cattolica, closely examined the flaws of an economic system based on the separation of ethics and economics, although he did not want to envisage a complete supersession of capitalism, but rather, he focused on the need to reform it<sup>26</sup>, as required by contemporary economic dynamics. Vito did not want to belittle the economy as a science of means, but he believed it could neither produce nor ignore the social aims, which were established in the non-economic context. Even the journal «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali», directed by Fanfani from 1933, devoted much space to criticising the *homo oeconomicus* to demonstrate that, as a matter of fact, this model diverged from the actual economic phenomenon. In essence, the economic system needed a guiding principle, to avoid the mistakes of the type of capitalism that had proved incapable of addressing the considerable social costs it had produced. Therefore, corporatism was seen as a possible means for directing society towards non-individualistic ends and for aligning economic choices with ethical and political objectives<sup>27</sup>, in support of the Catholic ethical State.

Along with Italian corporatism and the corporatist guidelines of other European countries, Università Cattolica studied the Keynesian doctrine<sup>28</sup>,

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<sup>25</sup> A. FANFANI, *Storia delle dottrine economiche. Il volontarismo*, Cavalleri, Como 1939, p. 54, and ID., *Il significato del corporativismo*, Cavalleri, Como 1937, pp. 208-209.

<sup>26</sup> To illustrate this see F. VITO, *Economia ed etica*, in «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali», May 1936, and ID., *Il concetto di economia alla luce della dottrina cattolica*, in «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali», July-September 1938. However, many contributions made by Vito to this journal during the 1930s could be mentioned.

<sup>27</sup> F. VITO, *Sui fini dell'economia capitalistica*, Leonardo da Vinci, Città di Castello 1935, pp. 5-6, and A. FANFANI, *Il significato del corporativismo*, cit., p. 155.

<sup>28</sup> F. VITO, *Il problema degli alti salari ed una proposta di J.M. Keynes*, in «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali», March 1931. In fact, there were numerous references in the journal to Keynesian theories. See D. PARISI, «La Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali» e la prima accoglienza di Keynes in Italia, in *Keynes in Italia. Atti del Convegno organizzato dalla Facoltà di Economia e commercio dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze* (4-5 giugno 1983), IPSOA, Milano 1984, pp. 267-277.

the American «Welfare State» and the measures whereby Roosevelt was trying to cope with the economic crisis of the 1930s. Vito, a keen-witted expert on international economic dynamics, shared the objective of entrusting public authorities with the task of setting limits within which the individual initiative should take place, so as to protect the weakest people. Despite some doubts about the economic viability of massive state intervention to boost mass-buying capacity with the aim of revitalising a stagnant market, the US experiment seemed remarkable because it made the State the guarantor of social justice<sup>29</sup>. Besides the assessment of the economic effectiveness of the Roosevelt plan, it was emphasised that this was part of a process on an international scale, whereby the modern State became accustomed to linking together the signs that – it was argued – came from social doctrine and above all from the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.

And yet, Università Cattolica economists believed that the American effort did not aim high enough for spiritual purposes, as it settled for pursuing generalised prosperity. On the other hand, the New Deal should have learned from the Italian model that a regulated economy risked failing to achieve justice if it was not guided by higher principles<sup>30</sup>. The policy plan state control, called for by Università Cattolica, in line with the tendencies that were widespread also in democratic contexts, did not aim to achieve a «Stato del benessere»<sup>31</sup>, the original sin of the Roosevelt experiment, but rather a «Solidarity-State», capable of channelling individual initiative towards the achievement of social objectives. From this point of view, corporatism seemed closer to social doctrine. Moreover, corporatism did not do away with individual initiative, although it entrusted the State with the task of intervening when the latter was inadequate or in conflict with the general interest. This spared Italy the dreaded Soviet collectivism, whose practical results, in terms of economic development, were assessed very negatively. University journals used to describe the upheaval of the Soviet economy: forced industrialisation had further impoverished the masses. Therefore, the

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<sup>29</sup> F. VITO, *L'America sulle orme del fascismo*, in «Vita e Pensiero», October 1933.

<sup>30</sup> F. VITO, *I nuovi indirizzi della politica economica negli S.U.A.*, in «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali», May 1934, article in which the intellectual referred also to Beveridge, besides in other contributions.

<sup>31</sup> The expression means a State based on the pursuit of individual material well-being.

corporatist order could avoid not only the danger of individualism, but also that of collectivist statolatry<sup>32</sup>, which corresponded to an oligarchic system based on terror<sup>33</sup>.

It can be seen that this reading of fascist corporatism was definitely poles apart from the Italian reality. At the same time, the corporatist inspiration cultivated at Università Cattolica, which greatly emphasised the role of the State, was far removed from traditional Catholic corporatism. What was missing of the old corporatism was the enhancement of free social initiatives, which were far more deeply rooted in the experience of the Catholic movement of the end of the nineteenth century, which had operated in a phase of forced distance from political commitment. Now, on the other hand, it was thought that society lived within the State, in the sense that it achieved its own ends through the State: political interest, due to its collective nature, overcame the self-interest of the social groups. The State sphere thus came to incorporate pre-political areas into its own organic framework, removing them from the free development of social spontaneity. In short, the State, seemed the keystone of an associated way of living, a strong and interventionist State, capable of directing the economy not to enhance the wellbeing of individuals, but to achieve integration that could constitute social development.

However, the Università Cattolica economists needed to give a soul to the corporate State, refining it by introducing Christian principles into the productive structure. It was believed that this could protect the State from the overwhelming turmoil that could be just around the corner. What mattered was the ethical factor: aspirations that were gaining ground amongst some of the younger generations, who had been trained and educated in an environment which disseminated the reflections that emerged in the 1930s. The interventionist tendencies, made known in the second postwar period, were fuelled by the desire to strengthen economic planning which would make the State play a leading role in social reform<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> A. GEMELLI, *Introduzione*, in *Problemi fondamentali dello Stato corporativo*. Corso di lezioni promosso dalla Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore col concorso dell'Unione cattolica per le scienze sociali, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1935, p. IX.

<sup>33</sup> G. BETTIOL, *In diritto comunista*, in «Vita e Pensiero», January 1937.

<sup>34</sup> In this regard, see also A. FERRARI, *La cultura riformatrice. Uomini, tecniche, filosofie di fronte allo sviluppo (1945-1968)*, Studium, Roma 1995.

#### 4. *The «social code» of the war years*

Starting in 1940, the reflections elaborated at Università Cattolica had an interesting operational outcome, ahead of time compared to similar initiatives organised in the Catholic environment only after the fall of fascism. In fact, well before 1943, academics at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore were convinced that it was necessary to collaborate in order to find a solution to the crisis in Italy that would definitively allow the country to move away from dictatorship. From the beginning of the conflict, a group of professors and assistant professors participated in meetings organised by Father Gemelli, which were held more frequently after the radio address of Pius XII in 1942, focusing on the question, which he reiterated, of how to «save the human person»<sup>35</sup>. The aim was to create a «social code» that would inspire the creation of a socio-political «new order», to be used as a blueprint for establishing the democratic state of Italy. The Italian crisis, in fact, brought this group closer to the representative regime and the rule of law, which was however adopted within a framework that remained organicist.

The documents filed in the Università Cattolica Archives demonstrate the importance of this initiative, which developed following meetings held in autumn 1940 and continued until 1944, when the wartime events and the participation of some professors in the partisan struggle made it impossible to meet<sup>36</sup>. Until then, the rector had called meetings on a regular basis for men who worked at the University and at the Seminary to analyse the fundamental criteria they had to oversee in order to build a new order and expand on the guidelines of the Pontifical Magisterium, drawing useful directives from the latter for rebuilding the country. The initiative promoted by Gemelli is well documented and involved Dossetti, Lazzati, Fanfani, Amorth and La Pira who, on these occasions, proved to be trustworthy men on whom the rector relied to formulate the project of the future Italian State<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> The radio address of 1942 was one of the most significant ideological places of the Christian Democrat left. See G. CAMPANINI, *Fede e politica*, cit., pp. 38-41.

<sup>36</sup> This initiative remained unknown for a long time, except for recollections by Carlo Colombo (C. COLOMBO, *Nel ventennio di un messaggio natalizio*, in «Vita e Pensiero», February 1963), reconstructed in M. BOCCI, *Oltre lo Stato liberale*, cit., pp. 258-264 and 287-326.

<sup>37</sup> Among the other speakers were Olgiati, Vito, Boldrini, Ezio Franceschini, Giorgio Balladore Pallieri, Orio Giacchi, Carlo Figini and Mario Bendiscioli, together with some names



Among the participants there was also Pasquale Saraceno, one of the authors of the Code of Camaldoli, thanks to whom the two initiatives could be compared.

The discussions were influenced by the radio address broadcast in 1942 and, in addition to the crisis of civilisation caused by the war, also focused on the economic issues linked to employment and the «conception of the State according to the Christian spirit». The participants agreed to condemn the Omnipotent State and thought that «respect for the human person», recommended by the radio address, involved the creation of a democratic system. However, the question was how to reconcile the battle against totalitarianism with the increasing functions attributed to the State in the realm of social justice. One of the first results of this work was a series of articles published in the «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali» and in «Vita e Pensiero» between 1943 and 1944. Moreover, Father Gemelli, with the consent of Pius XII, charged Carlo Colombo, who participated in the meetings, with collating the ideas that emerged in the debate in a volume comprising comments in the radio address, for the benefit of a wider audience<sup>38</sup>. The volume, published in 1943, addressed socio-economic issues with the aim of gaining insight into a reformist form of socialism that was untainted by Marxism and collectivism. Colombo, in fact, called for the equitable distribution of goods, the end of dangerous economic hegemony and socialisation of resources that are essential to the common good: a programme that could be a prelude to convergence with a party such as the Labour Party.

In 1944, some teachers were instructed by Father Gemelli to address in a more systematic manner several different issues that were crucial for the Italian recovery: ways of representing people and the relationship between citizens and rulers, relations between the Church and the State in a non-fascist political framework, the role of the State in economic matters and the tasks of intermediate social groups. The professors involved were, in addition to Vito, Boldrini and Dossetti, Francesco Olgiati, co-founder of Univer-

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of the Milan business community and other members of the Catholic world who were sensitive to socio-political issues.

<sup>38</sup> C. COLOMBO, *Il messaggio sociale di S.S. Pio XII. Commento al messaggio natalizio 1942*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1943. Two editions of the volume were sold out in three months.

sità Cattolica and professor of Philosophy, Giorgio Balladore Pallieri, professor of International Law, Orio Giacchi, professor of Canon Law, and Albino Uggè, who taught Statistics. Their reports are filed in the university Archives<sup>39</sup>; of particular interest turns out to be that of Amorth, who reevaluated the contemporary State as a more «Christian» version of the modern State because of its social depth that made it a refuge from individual weakness. Indeed, the State was responsible for «saving the individual from today's oppressive and materialistic collectivised civilisation [...] by assuring him/her life as a person *within* the State». According to Amorth, the State had to be the «supreme guarantor of the good, equally dispensed, of its members»<sup>40</sup>. Balladore, for his part, asserted that the democratic regime provided the «best guarantees that the State would remain consistent with its aims»<sup>41</sup>. Vito envisaged a series of employment-focused reforms and a wide-ranging social insurance plan. The entire economic system had to undergo standardised regulation by adopting a policy focused on combating unemployment, redistributing wealth/property and nationalising some sectors, without stifling the initiative of individuals and social aggregations. To a certain extent, this emphasis distanced Vito from the other Università Cattolica professors, due to financial reasons and his intention to prevent the State from setting itself up as a controller of the moral conduct of individuals<sup>42</sup>. Instead, Dossetti dealt with the family, deepening the process to bourgeois «economism» and «hedonism», which seemed to him to characterize the European and American family structure. The family, on the contrary, was to be a place of moral elevation and social asceticism, transcending itself into the political community<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Archivio generale per la storia dell'Università Cattolica, *Miscellanea*, b. 59, f. 1, sf. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Archivio generale per la storia dell'Università Cattolica, *Miscellanea*, b. 59, f. 1, sf. 6, an anonymous typewritten text entitled «Governanti e governati», which is attributed to Amorth due to the many sections that are the same as parts of the essay he published in the volume, *L'ordine interno degli Stati nel radiomessaggio di Sua Santità Pio XII del Natale 1942* (Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1945).

<sup>41</sup> Archivio generale per la storia dell'Università Cattolica, *Miscellanea*, b. 59, f. 1, sf. 6, a typewritten text entitled «Governanti e governati», by G. Balladore Pallieri.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, a typewritten text entitled «Lo Stato e la vita economica».

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, a typewritten text entitled «La famiglia».

An ideological assumption of these considerations can be found in the works addressing the concept of lawfulness, published by Olgiati during the war<sup>44</sup>. Olgiati upheld the organic unity of individuals and the State, as well as freedom and authority, individual initiative and social needs. The State could not trample on individuals because it would have denied their cause, but people were «inclined» towards the State, «a system of moral relations endowed with autonomy, will and aspirations»<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, individual rights could only be saved in their organic nexus oriented towards the common good. Protecting the person coincided with the creation of a State in which rights and duties would oblige individuals to be involved therein, triggering the supreme measure of the entire associated compound, namely, social justice.

Already during the war years, Università Cattolica hoped to have a democratic State, to which functions previously attributed to the corporatist system would be assigned. Democracy, nevertheless, had to acquire truly Christian characteristics: this meant hypothesising a State body that would implement a freedom understood as being not the mere absence of constraints, but as a possibility of performing the tasks of the human person; a freedom that had to be appreciable in the country's socio-economic structure.

##### 5. *Conclusive remarks: the Corpus Mysticum as a project*

Therefore, also from a democratic perspective, the State appeared to be the indispensable link between individuals and the architect of Christianisation of the structures, which were supposed to create an evangelical utopia. The «new Christianity» of which Maritain spoke, very much present in the reflections expressed by Università Cattolica intellectuals, engendered the need to orient the 'earthly' *polis* towards the eternal one, although distinguishing its plans and responsibilities. Maritain's works contained an admonition to become actively engaged in political life in order to bestow it

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<sup>44</sup> F. OLGATI, *Il concetto di giuridicità nella scienza moderna del diritto*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1943; IDEM, *Il concetto di giuridicità e San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1943; ID., *Indagini e discussioni intorno al concetto di giuridicità*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1944.

<sup>45</sup> F. OLGATI, *the concept of juridical and St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., pp. 18 ff.

with truly Christian values. The doctrine of *Corpus Mysticum Christi*, which had become a point of reference for those who ventured into the field of political planning, also contributed to this crusade. It was believed, in fact, that by drawing inspiration from the *Corpus Mysticum* it was possible to resolve the problem of the alternative between individualism and collectivism: social relations would be commensurate with the law of organic solidarity that Christ had instituted amongst the elements of his Body and which, similarly, would inspire the relationship between individuals and the community. The doctrine of the *Corpus Mysticum*, in short, was a kind of metaphysical lymph, which was to feed social reformism<sup>46</sup>.

Especially the jurists and those who were working to refound the Italian State had the task of building an 'earthly' city modelled on the celestial one<sup>47</sup>. Precisely for this reason, a constitution could have been a precious moment: a constitution that linked rights and duties, which would grasp citizens in their social vocation, could have introduced them to embracing the concept of the *Corpus Mysticum*, albeit in formal secularism. This perspective influenced the contribution of the «*professorini*» on the work of the Constituent Assembly. In fact, the group headed by Dossetti viewed the Constitution as an opportunity to create a harmonious whole, structurally divided into a series of communities, where citizens were to be included so that it could develop in an orderly manner<sup>48</sup>. It was necessary to overcome the individualistic structure of the charters of the past by grafting social values onto them in order to spread Christianity as a way of life, starting from the social relations in which individuals reach their integral development as human beings, but also in terms of their economic standing. Intermediate groups that existed between citizens and the State, which were useful for implementing the State

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<sup>46</sup> For the influence that the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* had on postwar social Christianisation projects see A. ACERBI, *La Chiesa nel tempo. Sguardi sui progetti di relazione tra Chiesa e società civile negli ultimi cento anni*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1979, pp. 139-140. A. DEL NOCE, *Il problema ideologico nella politica dei cattolici italiani*, Bottega d'Erasmus, Torino 1964, pp. 75-75, underlines the link that was established between the sociality of a person and the *Corpus Mysticum* and that led to seizing a moment of truth inherent in socialism rather than liberalism.

<sup>47</sup> G. La PIRA, *Cristianesimo e Stato moderno*, in *I problemi dello Stato*, Cinque Lune, Roma 1977, pp. 180-183.

<sup>48</sup> G. La PIRA, *Il valore della Costituzione Italiana*, in «Cronache sociali», 31 January 1948.

reforms at local level, were required to engage individuals in the social groups and were crucial for avoiding liberal individualism<sup>49</sup>.

From this point of view, it can be said that a new version of confession-ism was emerging, which, paradoxically, favoured the followers of Dossetti in reaching an understanding with the leftist PCI (Italian Communist Party) led by Togliatti. The two sides appeared to have a similar notion on the focal point of the freedom they wished to attain and they were concerned about anti-liberalism. Also, their organicism and determination to link citizens to work were similar. After all, the Dossetti-led group referred not only to the Weimar model, but also to the 1936 Soviet Constitution. That is why during meetings in the Constituent Assembly a climate of collaboration was created that allowed the Dossetti group to find significant connections with the leftist parties, especially during the debate on the prospect of individual freedom in terms of social responsibility in order to avoid the errors of liberalism and to define the constitutional profile of what had to be a «fair» State<sup>50</sup>. According to Fanfani, the Constitution would have facilitated the «establishment of a perfect community», capable of solving social problems and building a society that was so human that it could be called intrinsically Christian<sup>51</sup>.

In summary, the democratic State would have been Christian if it had tackled social problems with determination, resolving intolerable inequalities and giving citizens the indispensable «economic consistency»<sup>52</sup>. In this regard, a planning of interventions was necessary, to reorganise the country's economic life in order to achieve an equitable distribution of wealth. To distinguish themselves from communist collectivism, the Anglo-Saxon plans

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<sup>49</sup> G. DOSSETTI, *Funzioni e ordinamento dello Stato moderno*, in *I problemi dello Stato*, cit., pp. 35-39.

<sup>50</sup> See P. POMBENI, *Il gruppo dossettiano*, in *Cultura politica e partiti*, cit., pp. 444-456.

<sup>51</sup> A. FANFANI, *Il problema sociale contemporaneo e le Costituzioni*, in *Costituzione e Costituente. Atti della XIX Settimana Sociale dei Cattolici d'Italia*, Firenze (22-28 Ottobre 1945), Edizioni Settimane Sociali, Roma 1960, pp. 103-105.

<sup>52</sup> G. LA PIRA, *Per una architettura cristiana dello Stato*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 1954, p. 159.

for social security were used. In fact, it was thought that they reconciled defending the authority of the State by developing free enterprise<sup>53</sup>. In fact, English Labourism was indeed the example of «a much more human, and therefore more Christian socialism» than that adopted in Eastern European countries. If Italian socialism had moved in this direction, the Christian Democratic Party could have considered a government alliance<sup>54</sup>.

Apart from a few important exceptions – this is the case of Francesco Vito – more than on the question of means and the economic problem as such, at that time the focus was on the characteristics that a society that aimed to achieve justice had to have, and on the tasks that the State must carry out therein. Father Gemelli asked the Christian Democrats to implement a «bold social policy» aimed at achieving full employment<sup>55</sup>. Fanfani, who was about to be appointed Minister of Labour and Social Security, called for a comprehensive reform of private property and various economic sectors, ranging from monetary and credit to land and industry<sup>56</sup>. In fact, the

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<sup>53</sup> Numerous articles – by Vito and Gemelli, but not only theirs – which appeared in «Vita e Pensiero» and in the «Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali» on these issues from 1945 onwards, and in particular on Keynes' doctrine and on the Beveridge Model. See also P. ROGGI, *Il dibattito sulla «costituzione economica» attraverso alcune riviste del tempo*, in *Democrazia Cristiana e Costituente. Bilancio storiografico e prospettive di ricerca. Atti del Convegno di Studio tenuto a Milano il 26-28 gennaio 1979*, ed. by G. Rossini, Cinque Lune, Roma 1980, pp. 885-888, and F. DUCHINI, *I problemi del lavoro e del sindacato nella cultura economica del periodo 1943-1955*, in *Il sindacato nuovo, Politica e organizzazione del movimento sindacale in Italia negli anni 1943-1955*, ed. by S. Zaninelli, Angeli, Milano 1981 pp. 149-150. Of course, these are issues that are also found in «Cronache Sociali», the journal founded by Dossetti in 1947. See P. BARUCCI, *Il progetto economico del movimento cattolico dopo la guerra*, in *L'idea di un progetto storico. Dagli anni '30 agli anni '80*, ed. by R. Pietrobelli, Studium, Roma 1982, pp. 56-72.

<sup>54</sup> G. BALLADORE PALLIERI, *Lineamenti programmatici della Democrazia Cristiana*, Giuffrè, Milano 1945, pp. 17 ff.

<sup>55</sup> A. GEMELLI, *La esemplare organizzazione dell'assistenza sociale in Inghilterra*, in «Vita e Pensiero», September 1948.

<sup>56</sup> A. FANFANI, *La politica sociale del Partito*, in «Democrazia», 10 March 1946. «Democrazia» was the Christian Democrat Lombard weekly.

democratically designated political authority was to direct the national economy<sup>57</sup>. Dossetti, agreed on this approach, accepting the Marxist critique of bourgeois institutions and believing, along with others, that interventionism was now outdated and that a comprehensive plan, extended over time, was indispensable for reforming the social body<sup>58</sup>.

Vito's thinking was complex; it focused on the technical analysis of economic mechanisms and specific features of the Italian economy<sup>59</sup>. While he was convinced that a regulated economy was inevitable, Vito highlighted some of the weaknesses of social security plans and stressed the need for efficiency and productivity, on which the success of planning depended. Vito opposed the «integral» plan that sacrificed personal initiative; he preferred a «partial» plan that coordinated free initiative to move it forward, a condition that seemed crucial for achieving social justice itself<sup>60</sup>. The issue, however, had to be approached in scientific terms, and for this very reason the ethical factor also had to be considered, because evaluating the harms and benefits of economic choices meant using a judgment criterion, employing it to guide the economic phenomenon in the direction of the social goals pursued. The objective of justice, however, could not conflict with the formation of income and economic progress. Basically, Vito rejected an excessive abstractionism and doctrinarism detached from the tangible economic situation. In his view, it was not sufficient to accuse an economic system of injustice – it was necessary to be able to indicate the steps to be taken to remedy the problem<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> On these issues also see A. GIOVAGNOLI, *Le premesse della ricostruzione. Tradizione e modernità nella classe dirigente cattolica del dopoguerra*, Nuovo Istituto Editoriale Italiano, Milano 1982, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>58</sup> G. DOSSETTI, *Funzioni e ordinamento dello Stato moderno*, cit., pp. 12 ff.

<sup>59</sup> See A. CALOIA, *Francesco Vito. L'economia politica di un cristiano economista*, Rusconi, Milano 1998, e *Francesco Vito. Attualità di un economista politico*, ed. by D. Parisi e C. Rotondi, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2003.

<sup>60</sup> F. VITO, *L'economia a servizio dell'uomo. I nuovi orientamenti della politica economica e sociale*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1961, pp. 163-173.

<sup>61</sup> Vito's teachings were close to the thinking of Mario Romani, who in turn was convinced of the uselessness of discussing «an abstract concept of a plan» («su una nozione astratta di piano») and of the need, instead, to examine «concrete plans designed to achieve certain

And yet, for most of the intellectuals who had collaborated with Università Cattolica, either as professors or as scholars involved in the initiatives organised between the 1940s and the postwar period, the most important thing was the idea that the Gospel had introduced a first social «revolution» and that this revolution should continue through the creation of an «earthly city» that would gradually assume the characteristics of the *Corpus Mysticum*, continually perfecting itself. The secular nature of politics, which was central to Dossetti's approach, was reconcilable with this vision: with no need for mandates from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, politics was in itself placed in the ideal order. This model, elaborated with the help of several generations of Catholics, entrusted the State with the task of reshaping social relations to make the path to God safer, freeing people from the individualistic constraints that keep them from adhering to the supernatural plan. The democratic state, redeemed by the Gospel values injected into the Constitution, the prevalence of the Catholic party, and the orientation toward planning, would implement personal freedom, preventing it from turning into a «license» that had heavy anti-social costs and thus slowed down the Gospel «revolution». In summary, the political body acquired its intrinsic ethical nature, making it pivotal for spreading what Maritain had called an unadorned Christianity. The reflections of the previous decades influenced these convictions, although now the utopia of the Catholic State was translated into the desire to create a targeted, globally planned democracy, which focused on politics and its party instruments.

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positive, historical goals of domestic or international politics» («concreti piani destinati a raggiungere determinati positivi, storici fini di politica interna o internazionale»): M. ROMANI, *I piani economici*, in *I problemi dello Stato*, cit., pp. 80-119).



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## II.

# CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTION IN POST-WAR GERMANY: PIUS XII AND THE CREATION OF CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, 1948-1959 SIMON UNGER-ALVI

### 1. *Introduction*

«The Church, created by Christ, endowed with His authority and consecrated to a holy purpose, brings the royal rights of Jesus Christ into public life and legislation. And out of sincere Christian conviction, it finds the support of the representatives of the people», so preached Bishop Johann Neuhäusler at the tenth anniversary of the Bavarian Christian-Social Union (CSU) in 1955<sup>1</sup>. This speech was not only preserved by the Holy See among its documents in the Apostolic Archive, it also summarizes the spirit of the Vatican's activity, which aimed at combining religion and politics. Based on new sources that have become available after the opening of the Vatican Archives in 2020, this article analyzes Catholic politics in post-war Germany with a focus on social action. Both the Church and the Christian sister-parties CDU and CSU aimed to prevent the spread of Marxism among the working classes, yet also had the ambition to present a social program that was of equal attraction.

After the war, the Church did not conceive its position in terms of a historical caesura or a new democratic beginning, but saw its role in terms of a "longue durée". From the unification of the Reich under Bismarck, German history was interpreted as a succession of different regimes that all seemed to have been united by their suppression of Catholicism in civil society. In this sense, even the anti-Catholic policies of the Nazi regime were mainly evaluated in terms of continuity with the Kaiserreich. On the contrary, after the war, with Konrad Adenauer at the head of the West-German government, there now was a Catholic politician who not only

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<sup>1</sup> Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (AAV), *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, Indice 1196A, b. 154, fasc. 35, «Zur Arbeit nach Christi Geboten verpflichtet. Predigt zum zehnjährigen Jubiläum der CSU am 23.10.1955 von Weihbischof Johann Neuhäusler, 4.11.1955».

wanted to preserve the Concordat of 1933, but also shared a greater vision of a Christian “occident” in which the newly formed Federal Republic was to be incorporated.

In recent years, several historians have pointed out that the churches in Germany reached a greater proximity to politics in the 1950s, while the process of secularization would again start to accelerate in the 1960s<sup>2</sup>. Despite the closeness of the Church to Adenauer’s CDU, Thomas Großbölting, for example, diagnosed a narrowing of the political claim of Christianity, which in the post-war period would soon exhaust itself in questions of family, social and educational policy<sup>3</sup>. Other works have characterized public debates on the alleged “clericalization” of society as typical of a historical phase in which ecclesiastical influence would gradually decline<sup>4</sup>. This article does not aim to refute these arguments, but it shows that the Church tried to influence German politics very actively throughout the 1950s. After 1945, it had the opportunity to exercise its influence and temporarily regained some of the power it had lost after 1870. Matters of social action were no marginal field in this context: Instead, they were a key battleground on which the Church reformulated

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<sup>2</sup> W. DAMBERG (ed.), *Soziale Strukturen und Semantiken des Religiösen im Wandel. Transformationen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1989*, De Gruyter, Essen 2011; N. HANNIG, *Die Religion der Öffentlichkeit. Kirche, Religion und Medien in der Bundesrepublik 1945–1980*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2010; K. GROßE KRACHT, *Die Stunde der Laien? Katholische Aktion in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext 1920–1960*, Schöningh, Paderborn 2016; F. POETKE, *Vom politischen Anreiz zur liberalen Überzeugung. Die Kooperation von Staat und Kirchen in der Bildungs- und der Verteidigungspolitik der frühen Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, Göttingen 2020.

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Papal Diplomacy and Social Teaching in World Affairs*, ed. by M. Barbato et al., Routledge, London 2019; T. GROßBÖLTING, *Der verlorene Himmel. Glaube in Deutschland seit 1945*, Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, Göttingen 2013; ID., „Christliche Dienstgemeinschaft“ – Transformationen des religiösen Feldes und Profildebatten von Caritas und Diakonie im Nachkriegsdeutschland, in «Soziale Passagen», VIII, 2016, pp. 49–64. Thomas Großbölting, however, diagnosed a great Christian influence on the emergence of the so-called *soziale Marktwirtschaft* (social market economy) in Germany. See: T. GROßBÖLTING, „Soziale Marktwirtschaft“ als christliche Verpflichtung? Konfessionelle Wirtschaftskonzepte und religiöse Akteure in der frühen Bundesrepublik, in *Wirtschaft und Gemeinschaft. Konfessionelle und neuere religiöse Gemeinsinnsmodelle im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. S. Steinberg-W. Möller, Transcript, Bielefeld 2014, pp. 319–336.

<sup>4</sup> K. BUCHNA, *Ein klerikales Jahrzehnt? Kirche, Konfession und Politik in der Bundesrepublik während der 1950er Jahre*, Nomos, Baden-Baden 2014.

its own ideological claims against the dominant patterns of thought in both communism and capitalism<sup>5</sup>.

To represent the Vatican's interests as Eugenio Pacelli's emissary in Germany was Aloysius Muench. The son of two German emigrants in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Muench was named Nuncio in 1950 and would serve in Bonn until 1959<sup>6</sup>. Muench made his Nunciature a cornerstone for political exchanges between Germany and the Vatican, transforming his office into a hub of cold war diplomacy. Primarily, he found himself defending the concordat that had been designed and negotiated by his predecessor Eugenio Pacelli, who had been nuncio in Germany from 1917 to 1929<sup>7</sup>. In postwar exchanges of letters between the Nunciature and the Holy See, Muench's partner of dialogue was Domenico Tardini, who had already worked within the Secretariat of State since 1935 and was appointed Pro-Secretary for Extraordinary Affairs in 1952.

The Vatican regularly collected German newspaper articles, documents, political reports, as well as biographical information that formed part of an exchange of letters between Muench and Tardini. From these documents, we gain the picture of a "*Bekehrung im Wiederaufbau*"

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<sup>5</sup> On Vatican policies against communism, see: P. CHENAUX, *La diplomatie vaticane à l'époque contemporaine. Bilan des travaux et perspectives de recherches*, in «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome», 130/1, 2018, pp. 135–145; ID., *Une Europe vaticane? Entre le Plan Marshall et les Traités de Rome*, Ciaco, Bruxelles 1990; ID., *L'ultima eresia. La chiesa cattolica e il comunismo in Europa da Lenin a Giovanni Paolo II*, Carocci, Roma 2011.

<sup>6</sup> A. MUENCH, *Bilanz einer Nuntiatur 1946–1959. Schlußbericht des ersten Nuntius in der Nachkriegszeit*, übersetzt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Ludwig Volk, in «Stimmen der Zeit», 195, 1977, pp. 147–158; S. BROWN-FLEMING, *Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: The Cardinal Aloysius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1994. About the office of the Apostolic Nuncio, see A. FLIERL, *Diplomatenrecht als Soft Power des Heiligen Stuhls. Rolle und Einfluss der Apostolischen Nuntien als Doyens*, Nomos, Baden-Baden 2018.

<sup>7</sup> About the role of Pacelli in Germany and about his allegedly "Philo-Germanic" policies, see: S. SAMERSKI, *Deutschland und der Heilige Stuhl. Diplomatische Beziehungen 1920–1945*, Aschendorff, Münster 2019; P. CHENAUX, *La nonciature d'Eugenio Pacelli à Munich (1917–1925). Entre l'ordre et la révolution*, in «Revue d'Allemagne», 38, 2006, pp. 339–350; E. FATTORINI, *Germania e Santa Sede. Le nunziature di Pacelli fra la Grande guerra e la Repubblica di Weimar*, il Mulino, Bologna 1992; *Eugenio Pacelli als Nuntius in Deutschland. Forschungsperspektiven und Ansätze zu einem internationalen Vergleich*, hrsg. H. Wolf, Schöningh, Paderborn 2012. And more generally about Vatican foreign policy and Germany: J. ERNESTI, *Friedensmacht. Die vatikanische Außenpolitik seit 1870*, Herder, Freiburg 2022.

(Conversion during Reconstruction) which the Church aimed to implement in West Germany through its social policy. The term borrows and overturns the concept of a “*Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau*” which has been used in 1993 by Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek to summarize sociological, cultural and biographical changes in post-war Germany<sup>8</sup>. While the West German government, however, lay the foundation of the modern German welfare state, the Church sought to intervene in these processes with its own goals of “reconversion”. Questions of social policy – as this article will point out – gained a particular importance in this context. They were the foundation by which the Church sought to establish itself as a protagonist of inner-German politics.

## 2. *The Reichskonkordat and the Question of Social Policy*

After 1945, the Vatican had ambitious plans to promote a re-Christianization of German society through social policy. Yet, the Church was forced to pursue a double strategy, which entailed a major paradox: on the one hand, the explicit goal was to preserve the *Reichskonkordat* of 1933, which had granted extensive privileges to the Catholic Church. On the other hand, however, the Holy See simultaneously aimed to extend clerical rights in German society beyond the scope of the original concordat. This paradox was particularly evident in matters of social policy, for which the *Reichskonkordat* offered relatively few legal provisions<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre*, hrsg. A. Schildt, A. Sywottek, Dietz, Bonn 1993. In 2017, Sebastian Liebold and Frank Schale have questioned the widespread assumption that the 1950s were marked by traditionalism and restoration: S. LIEBOLD - F. SCHALE, *Neugründung auf alten Werten? Konservative Intellektuelle und Politik in der Bundesrepublik*, Nomos, Baden Baden 2017.

<sup>9</sup> On the prewar and postwar history of the *Reichskonkordat*, see: L. FERRACCI, *Il Reichskonkordat e il cattolicesimo in Germania*, in *Diplomazia senza eserciti. Le relazioni internazionali della Chiesa di Pio XI*, ed. by E. Fattorini, Carocci, Roma 2013; G. MAY, *Die Konkordatspolitik des Heiligen Stuhls von 1918–1974*, in *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte, Bd. 7: Die Weltkirche im 20. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. H. Jedin, WBG, Freiburg 1979, pp. 179–229. Key sources on the postwar history of the Concordat can be found in M. FELDKAMPF, *Die Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zum Heiligen Stuhl 1949–1966. Aus den Vatikanakten des Auswärtigen Amts. Eine Dokumentation*, Böhlau, Köln 2000.

In the important question of Christian trade unions and syndicates, the hands of the Church seemed tied, because the Concordat offered no concrete legal basis for clerical wishes and ambitions. As Christian trade unions had already been dissolved by the Nazi regime in spring 1933 before the *Reichskonkordat* was signed, they did not fall under the concordat. While it seemed logical for the Church to re-establish those organizations that had been destroyed by the Nazis, it was difficult to find a legal justification for this for as long as the *Reichskonkordat* remained in place.

After the end of the war, the Church effectively demanded new concessions from the German state whilst simultaneously hoping to maintain the old privileges it had gained in 1933. In matters of trade unions, Catholic bishops hoped for a return to the 1920s, when Christian syndicates had existed throughout the country and especially in the Catholic Rhineland. In other social and political matters, however, the Vatican tried defend the *Reichskonkordat* against an inner-German opposition that came from Social Democrats, liberals, but also Protestant intellectuals.

Before the Nazi era, there had existed a plethora of Christian trade unions in Germany, both Catholic and inter-confessional. Founded towards the end of the nineteenth century, they had been formed as a reaction against existing unions with socialist orientations after attempts to establish ideologically neutral syndicates had failed. The Christian workers' unions were mainly anchored in Catholic regions of the industrial West, such as the Rhineland, Westphalia, the Palatinate, the Saarland, and Upper Silesia<sup>10</sup>. Most of these unions merged in 1901 and formed the *Gesamtverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (GCG)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> As Bavaria was not a very industrialized province at the time, Bavarian trade unions were comparatively weak.

<sup>11</sup> About the history of German trade unions, see: H. GOTTWALD, *Gesamtverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (GCD) 1901–1933, in *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte. Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland 1789–1945. Bd. 3*, hrsg. D. Fricke et al., Bibliographisches Institut, Leipzig 1984, pp. 729–768; I. LÖPPENBERG, *Zwischen Burgfrieden und „Neuorientierung“: Politische Positionen und soziale Aktionen der Christlichen Gewerkschaften im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in «Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung», 3 (2014), pp. 107–131; M. SCHNEIDER, *Die christlichen Gewerkschaften 1894–1933*, Dietz, Bonn 1982; *Geschichte der*

From 1919 to 1933, Christian unions were then organized in the so-called *Dachverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften* that was dominated by Catholic organizations and would be dissolved by the Nazi regime in 1933<sup>12</sup>. Until then, however, Christian syndicates had been able to make significant contributions to questions of social legislation. Ultimately, the Church therefore hoped for a re-emergence these trade unions under a Catholic or inter-confessional Christian umbrella structure.

In 1948 and 1949, the attention of the Vatican turned to the question of a new German constitution and to its implications for the Concordat<sup>13</sup>. Although the so-called *Grundgesetz* was to be of merely provisional and transitory character in view of a future re-unification of Germany, it would regulate church-state relations for an indeterminate period<sup>14</sup>. The *Reichskonkordat*, unlike comparable treaties with Protestant churches, had been concluded according to the code of international law between sovereign states. Consequently, it had international value and legitimacy<sup>15</sup>. The Vatican feared, however, that the new *Grundgesetz* would limit the Church's scope of action particularly in those areas of social policy that had only been vaguely defined though the Concordat.

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*deutschen Gewerkschaften von den Anfängen bis 1945*, hrsg. U. Borsdorf, Bund-Verlag, Köln 1987.

<sup>12</sup> About the history of trade unions under National Socialism and the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, see: H. SCHUMANN, *Nationalsozialismus und Gewerkschaftsbewegung. Die Vernichtung der deutschen Gewerkschaften und der Aufbau der „Deutschen Arbeitsfront“*, Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt, Hannover/Frankfurt 1958; R. HACHTMANN, *Das Wirtschaftsimperium der Deutschen Arbeitsfront 1933–1945*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2012; K. ROTH, *Facetten des Terrors. Der Geheimdienst der „Deutschen Arbeitsfront“ und die Zerstörung der Arbeiterbewegung 1933–1938*, Edition Temmen, Bremen 2000; ID., *Intelligenz und Sozialpolitik im „Dritten Reich“. Eine methodisch-historische Studie am Beispiel des Arbeitswissenschaftlichen Instituts der Deutschen Arbeitsfront*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1993.

<sup>13</sup> J. LISTL, *Konkordat und Kirchenvertrag. Die vertragsrechtlichen Grundlagen des deutschen Staates*, in «Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift», 39, 1988, pp. 63–78, p. 74. About the Concordat: H. WOLF, *Papst und Teufel. Die Archive des Vatikan und das Dritte Reich*, Beck, München 2009; T. BRECHENMACHER, *Das Reichskonkordat 1933. Forschungsstand, Kontroversen, Dokumente*, Schöningh, Paderborn 2007; *Staatliche Akten über die Reichskonkordatsverhandlungen 1933*, hrsg. A. Kupper. Grünewald, Mainz 1969.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, the *Grundgesetz* remains the German constitution today and was never replaced after the re-unification was actually achieved. See for more background: C. MÖLLERS, *Das Grundgesetz. Geschichte und Inhalt*, Beck, Munich 2009.

<sup>15</sup> LISTL, *Konkordat*, cit., p. 69.

The Holy See saw the Concordat as the fruit of negotiations that had already taken place in the years of the Weimar Republic and under Pacelli's Nunciature. Hence, this was a matter of personal ambition and value for Pius XII<sup>16</sup>. Concordats with individual members states of the German Reich had been concluded in Bavaria in 1924, Prussia in 1929, and Baden in 1932<sup>17</sup>. In addition, the Church regularly drew attention to the fact that the Bavarian Concordat had been established despite the opposition of the *Völkischer Block* and other predecessors of the Nazi movement<sup>18</sup>. The Concordat, therefore, was not seen as a National Socialist project, but as a treaty that had been merely accepted by the regime in order to establish a propagandistic image of continuity and diplomatic legitimacy on the international stage. After the war, however, it became increasingly difficult for the German public to distinguish between the original background of the Concordat and the policies of the Nazi regime<sup>19</sup>.

The Vatican knew that the validity of the Concordat, i.e. the Church's most important opportunity to exercise some form of influence, was being increasingly questioned in the German political sphere after 1945. For example, the position of the liberal Hermann Höpker-Aschoff, the first president of the constitutional court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) was clear: he rejected the Concordat not only because it was signed by Hitler, but also argued that a democratic state would have never granted such far-reaching privileges to the Catholic Church. For him the Concordat was the propagandistic product of a dictator, who, on the other hand, had never intended to actually respect it. Two essential elements of a legally binding

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<sup>16</sup> Negotiations of *Reichskonkordat* had started with the Catholic chancellor Franz von Papen before the Nazis came to power. As Hitler's Vice Chancellor, Papen then had continued to negotiate with the Vatican partly against the internal opposition of the Nazi Party. See: «Relazione del Ministero degli Esteri del 3.5.1944», «Telegramma a Papen n. 25, 2.7.1933», «Lettera di Papen a Hitler, 2.7.1933» and «Memo sulla conversazione del vescovo Berning con Hitler alla conferenza dei rappresentanti diocesani il 26.4.1933». AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 159, fasc. 43. These documents refer to the arrests of German priests and confiscations of church property during the last months of negotiation in 1933. Allegedly, Hitler had already signed an arrest warrant for Cardinal Faulhaber.

<sup>17</sup> LISTL, *Konkordat*, cit., p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> See in particular: M. RUFF, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945–1980*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017.

treaty therefore seemed to be missing: «on the one hand the will of the people (the parliament was not given the opportunity to freely decide), on the other the *voluntas contrahendi* (i.e. the will to apply the legislation by the Head of State)»<sup>20</sup>. Given this historical background of the *Reichskonkordat*, politicians such as Höpker-Aschoff now saw it as anachronism for a democratic state in the postwar period.

In the face of such criticism, the German Catholic Church found itself in the nearly impossible position to ask for the preservation of the Concordat whilst simultaneously demanding even more privileges in the realms of social action, syndicalism, and social policy. The fact that the Vatican was able to uphold these claims can only be explained through its close alliance with Konrad Adenauer and his Christian-Democratic government. As a Catholic, who dreamed of a united “Christian occident” against the threat of communism, Adenauer supported the fundamental theological and legal positions of the Vatican<sup>21</sup>. More importantly, he shared its concerns against Marxism and hoped to support Catholic organization in order to contain the spread of socialist ideas among West German workers.

For the Church, the Concordat was justified by natural law, so much so that Wilhelm Johannes Böhler, the Domkapitular of Cologne Cathedral, explained in an article from 1948: «A constitution can neither confer nor withdraw fundamental rights. Natural rights, God-given rights, cannot be granted. They can only be expressed, recognized and protected». This was an almost explicit warning against German legislators. For Böhler, «the people who are Christians» would know how to react «to a constitution in which they are denied the recognition of essential and most genuine human rights». Böhler continued fiercely and openly delineated the Church’s field of influence: «The state cannot assume the right to independently resolve matters that also belong to the realm of the Church»<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 159, fasc. 43, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 23 December 1948, Report N. 1379/48.

<sup>21</sup> „Geistige Gefahr“ und „Immunisierung der Gesellschaft“. *Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, hrsg. S. Creutzberger - D. Hoffman, De Gruyter, München 2014.

<sup>22</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 159, Kirchlicher Nachrichtendienst, 9 December 1948.



While Adenauer himself sympathized with the political claims of the Catholic Church, he faced substantial opposition from Social Democrats and liberals. In particular, the years of his government were characterized by intense debates on what was perceived as a “clericalization” of German society by different political forces. The Church was not only attacked by the Social-Democratic SPD, but also by the liberal FDP, which stood in opposition against any clerical involvement in matters of social policy. In 1951, at the national FDP congress, the minister of justice Thomas Dehler had argued polemically that the Vatican had aimed to build a “clerical-fascist” state with the Reichskonkordat. For Dehler, this clerical fascism was still present and Adenauer’s public affirmation of the Concordat in 1951 seemed particularly scandalous to him, because it took place under the liberal president Theodor Heuss<sup>23</sup>. In 1954, other members of the FDP used even more aggressive terms against the Vatican: they described clergymen as «brutal inquisitors» (*randalierende Inquisitoren*) and the Federal Republic as nothing but «a feudal state ruled by Catholics» (*katholisch regierter Lehenstaat*)<sup>24</sup>.

During the parliamentary elections of 1953, the bishop of Osnabrück Wilhelm Berning responded to such criticism. For Berning, the church was still in the same position as it had been in the *Kulturkampf* of the nineteenth century [i.e. when Catholics had been discriminated under Bismarck] or in the political clashes of the 1920s and under the National Socialist dictatorship<sup>25</sup>. From all sides, the bishop saw anti-Catholic sentiments. Thus, the Church still seemed to face the same secular obstacles to the ‘Christianization’ of social life:

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<sup>23</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 157, fasc. 35, «La Controversia di Thomas Dehler con l’Azione Cattolica». Also see: N.N., *Bekenntnis zur Toleranz. Frankfurter Katholiken weisen Angriffe Dr. Dehlers entschieden zurück*, in «Frankfurter Neue Presse», 125 (2 June 1953).

<sup>24</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 154, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 14 May 1954.

<sup>25</sup> About the *Kulturkampf* and its legacy, see: *Germany and the Confessional Divide. Religious Tensions and Political Culture, 1871-1989*, ed. by M. Ruff - T. Großbölting, Berghahn, Oxford 2021; *Kulturkampf in Europa im 19. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. C. Clark - W. Kayser, Leipzig 2003; O. BLASCHKE, *Konfessionen im Konflikt. Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970: ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2002; M. BORUTTA, *Antikatholizismus. Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2010.

As in the time of the tragic *Kulturkampf*, as in the political-cultural conflicts of the twenties, as in the time of the National Socialist regime, today we must fear those who try to prevent the Christianization of social and public life, and those who want to build a secularized world and push the church back into a purely pastoral space<sup>26</sup>.

This article echoed Böhler's words by evoking a society in need of reconversion and by comparing various moments of German history that were seemingly united by modern secularism and the rejection of a religious future<sup>27</sup>. More importantly, however, such words illustrated the Church's understanding of its political action in terms of a *longue durée*. In 1953 a letter from the nuncio Aloysius Muench to Domenico Tardini warned against «attacks on the *Reichskonkordat* which constituted [...] an act of ingratitude towards the Holy Father, who has proven in recent years to be a true and precious friend of Germany»<sup>28</sup>. As the validity of the *Reichskonkordat* was contested in the postwar Republic and as various parties turned against any political involvement of the Catholic Church, it seemed necessary to take independent action.

### 3. *Debates on Christian Trade Unions*

Directly after the defeat of Germany in 1945, trade unions were re-established in the Soviet zone of occupation. Only in the following years did the British, American, and French occupation zones follow suit<sup>29</sup>. Already in 1948, however, Germany again had 8,832,000 workers organized in trade unions. Yet, the Western occupation powers interdicted

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<sup>26</sup> W. BERNING, *Hirtenwort zur Bundestagswahl am 6. September 1953*, in «Kirchliches Amtsblatt für die Diözese Osnabrück», 69/15, 20 August 1953, p. 222.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 154, fasc. 18, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 25 August 1953.

<sup>29</sup> For more information on the history of the Catholic Church in different occupation zones, see *Akten deutscher Bischöfe seit 1945. Westliche Besatzungszonen 1945-1947*, hrsg. U. Helbach, Schöningh, Paderborn 2012.

the creation of “political unions”, which meant that both socialist and Christian workers should be organized in the same syndicates.

A compromise in West-German trade union conflicts seemed to have been initially reached through the creation of the German Trade Union Confederation, the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB, also called “*Einheitsgewerkschaft*” or “unity syndicate”)<sup>30</sup>. Soon after the war, the *Bundesländerdienst* published an assesment describing the Vatican’s openness about a participation of Catholics in the DGB:

The reestablishment of trade unions in Germany has received a great deal of attention in the Vatican. As reported from well-informed Vatican circles, Pope Pius XII was personally informed in detail about the trade union question in the Federal Republic. [...] The Pope basically maintains the same position as his predecessors Leo XIII, Pius X and Pius XI: For countries with a purely Catholic population, [he prefers] the idea of a Catholic union and for countries with a mixed-denominational population, [he prefers] the idea of an inter-denominational and mixed union<sup>31</sup>.

Pius XII was himself familiar with the idea of a central and politically neutral “unity syndicate”, which also existed in postwar Italy. Here, the post-war unity syndicate arguably stood in some continuity to the fascist Trade Union Corporation (*Confederazione nazionale delle corporazioni sindacali*). In Italy, however, Pius XII clearly accepted the existence of a secular “unity syndicate”, which he pronounced in a speech on 11 March 1945:

In contrast to the previous system, a unity syndicate has recently been formed in Italy. We can only expect and wish that the abandonment of our own Catholic trade union movement will not harm the Catholic cause, but will bear fruits for the whole working class<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> See for more background: R. LORENZ, *Gewerkschaftsdämmerung. Geschichte und Perspektiven deutscher Gewerkschaften*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2013; W. MÜLLER-JENTSCH, *Gewerkschaften und Soziale Marktwirtschaft seit 1945*, Reclam, Stuttgart 2011; W. SCHROEDER - B. WEßELS, *Die Gewerkschaften in Politik und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ein Handbuch*, Springer, Wiesbaden 2003.

<sup>31</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, «Bundesländerdienst Nr. 46».

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, the Church soon began to face the problem that the DGB seemed to be drifting more and more to the left, which meant that Catholic positions were less and less represented. Above all, the Catholic Church had no possibility of exerting any direct influence on trade union policy, but rather feared that workers could come under Marxist influence.

Already in November 1945, Pius XII thus issued a statement on the new inter-confessional “unity syndicates” in Europe, in which he began to express clear criticism: «We advise that the form and nature of such an amalgamation [i.e. the unity syndicates] may be permitted only temporarily so long as the current extraordinary circumstances continue». Simultaneously, Pius demanded that «those who are Catholic do not stray from the precepts of the social doctrine drawn from the gospel and natural law»<sup>33</sup>. In June 1948, these statements were followed by a public speech in front of Catholic workers in Italy, in which Pius XII explicitly called for Catholic social action and for the abandonment of the Italian “unity syndicate”-model: «Do not be diverted from your goal of a Christian renewal of all social life, which is more important than any temporary form of union organization!»<sup>34</sup>.

While the personal statements of Pius XII were mainly intended for an Italian audience, readers of Catholic newspapers could follow them in Germany as well. In the Federal Republic, however, the political situation was even more complicated. Paradoxically, also socialist groups rejected the DGB. Social Democrats criticized that a governmentally sanctioned *Einheitsgewerkschaft* smacked too much of Germany’s Nazi past, in which a plethora of proletarian syndicates had been pressed into just a single centrally controlled union (i.e. the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* that had been controlled by the Nazi Party). Catholic trade unionists, by contrast, soon bemoaned that the *Einheitsgewerkschaft* was dominated by left-wing and socialist groups and therefore feared that Christian themes could be sidelined by a Marxist majority. Paradoxically, in the end, Christian and socialist groups soon found themselves making the same political demand: abolishing the *Einheitsgewerkschaft* in favor of “political trade unions” or

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

so-called *Richtungsgewerkschaften* for Christian and socialist workers in separate organizations.

From 1949 onwards, the Vatican actively sought to intervene in this struggle. Domenico Tardini, the Pro-Secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs wrote several letters to the Apostolic Nuncio Aloysius Muench in Bonn in order to press for more political action. The pope himself, Tardini explained, was preoccupied by the «predominance of Marxism in the organization of trade unions in Germany». In the formal language typical for diplomatic communication, Tardini asked Muench to pursue the Vatican's interest in matters of social action with greater vigor:

Your Excellency [Muench], with the zeal that so distinguishes you, you will not want to neglect a good opportunity to insist with the [German] Episcopate and with Catholic leaders, so that the exemplary spirit of social action that in the past did so much honor to the Catholics of Germany, is able to arouse, in the face of the dangers of the present hour, the forces necessary to save the workers' movement from fatal errors and tendencies that are harmful to society<sup>35</sup>.

In clearer terms, this meant that the Vatican called for the re-establishment of Christian trade unions in Germany. In particular, Tardini also called for religious schooling of workers through Catholic organizations. Similarly, Muench agreed that «the unity syndicates [*sindacati unici* / *Einheitsgewerkschaften*] constitute a danger for the Christian members». Instead, he informed the Vatican that he prepared the Nunciature «for the day in which the Church might be forced to invite all Catholics to leave the unity syndicate»<sup>36</sup>.

Similarly, the Catholic Press Agency in Germany, the *Katholischer Nachrichtendienst*, sought promote the Vatican's criticism in public from 1950 onwards. Under the title «Abuse of trade union neutrality», the Press Agency published a furious article which explained how left-wing groups allegedly took over the supposedly neutral DGB. Instead of allowing for true political neutrality in the unity syndicate, the DGB now seemed

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<sup>35</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Letter from Tardini to Muench, 15 December 1949, Report N. 2618/49.

<sup>36</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 24 January 1951, Report N. 4860/51.

dominated by «a purely Marxist prejudice» which amounted to an «undermining of the democratic order». Most of the DGB's official press organs, such as the *Merkblätter für Jugendarbeit* seemed to «mock any kind of Christian sentiment in a way that can otherwise only be found in bolshevist publications»<sup>37</sup>.

In 1950, the so-called *Arbeitsgemeinschaft katholischer Verbände* (Working Group of Christian Associations), which had been forcibly dissolved by the Nazis 1933, was re-established in reaction against the left-leaning course of the DGB. This working group included the *Katholische Arbeiterbewegung* (Catholic Workers' Movement), the *Kolpingwerk* (Kolping Social Action League), the *Verband der Katholiken in Wirtschaft und Verwaltung* (League of Catholics in the Economy and Administration), the *Bund katholischer Unternehmer* (League of Catholic Entrepreneurs), the *Verband katholischer Akademiker* (League of Catholic Academics), the *Katholische Deutsche Frauenbund* (Catholic German Women's League), the *Verein katholischer deutscher Lehrerinnen* (Association of Female Catholic Teachers), the *Katholische Kaufmännische Frauenvereinigung St. Lydia* (St. Lydia Union of Catholic Businesswomen), and the *Berufsverband katholischer Fürsogerinnen* (League of Catholic Nurses)<sup>38</sup>. Although this “working group” was of rather informal nature, it succeeded in rallying a number of splintered Catholic organizations. More importantly, it represented the first initiative to create union-like structures outside of the *Einheitsgewerkschaft* DGB.

The conflict between Catholic interest groups and the unity syndicate DGB points to a larger problem of Christian social action in Germany. While the Catholic Church clearly aimed to support trade unions and to promote social care for workers, it also wanted to distance itself from parallel Marxist approaches. While opposing Marxism, however, it was in constant danger of being portrayed by left-wing journalists and Social Democratic politicians as an auxiliary to high finance, the *Großkapital*. What was needed therefore, was a distinctly Christian form of social action

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<sup>37</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, «Katholischer Nachrichtendienst Nr. 286», 15 December 1950, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

as a “third way” that was distinguishable from both Marxism and liberalism.

The Catholic newspaper *Rheinischer Merkur* therefore issued the slogan «Miteigentum statt Sozialisierung» (co-proprietty instead of collectivization) and proposed that future Christian trade unions should not demand to fully abolish the capitalist system, but instead think about new forms of co-ownership and cooperation between workers and entrepreneurs<sup>39</sup>. Thereby, Catholics mostly supported Konrad Adenauer's and Ludwig Erhard's new formula of a *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (social market economy) and the campaign slogan «Wohlstand für alle!» («wealth for everyone!»). The new social market economy, however, should go beyond a mere imitation of Western capitalism with a Christian-Democratic façade. «Capitalism is not nearly as popular in Germany as in America», wrote the *Rheinischer Merkur*. «There, any criticism against the existing economic system is taboo not only for the government, but also for entrepreneurs and trade unions»<sup>40</sup>. Instead, many Catholic activists called for a deep reform of capitalism following Christian principles of neighborly love. Some groups of the splintered Catholic Workers' Movement, which had been destroyed by the Nazis and only partially re-established after 1945, supported the idea of a divided shareholding of corporations between workers and private investors. «The worker wants to be included in a more direct way in the distribution of our national wealth and the substance of his company»<sup>41</sup>. A mixed shareholding of investors and workers thus appeared as compromise between capitalism and collectivism.

To be clear, neither the Vatican nor the German Bishops ever openly backed such a demand for deep economic reform. However, in the correspondence between the Holy See and the German Nunciature, we can find evidence for substantial clerical efforts to re-establish a system of Christian trade unions. In particular, Aloysius Muench elaborated a 5-

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<sup>39</sup> A.M., *Miteigentum statt Sozialisierung*, in «*Rheinischer Merkur*», 3/2 (9 January 1953).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

point-memorandum for the Vatican, in which he outlined the priorities of the Catholic Church in Germany<sup>42</sup>:

1) The spiritual values of the Christian-social movement must not be lost.

2) If a change does not occur as soon as possible in the line followed by the DGB, it will be the DGB that will have betrayed the idea of the Unity Syndicate, since political neutrality and ideological tolerance belong to the very essence of the Unity Syndicate.

3) Against the idea of a general collectivisation, Christian workers promote the thought of a true social partnership (*Partnerschaft*). Against the idea of a socialisation of property, they highlight the need to develop private property by favoring the co-ownership of workers in their companies.

4) Against collectivisation, they promote the idea of strengthening the family and of increasing family benefits [in particular, Muench meant the idea of family insurances].

5) Instead of social experiments, they ask of a reorganization of social action leagues [i.e. trade unions].

In December 1953, the CDU-politician and former resistance fighter Jakob Kaiser backed the position of the Catholic Church in a speech given at the DGB. As a minister in Adenauer's government, his opposition against the left-wing evolution of the *Einheitsgewerkschaft* clearly carried significant weight<sup>43</sup>. Openly, Kaiser announced in front of the DGB

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<sup>42</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 17 March 1953, Report N. 6195/53, p.6.

<sup>43</sup> On Kaiser see: *Jakob Kaiser: Gewerkschafter und Patriot. Eine Werkauswahl*, hrsg. T. Mayer, Bund-Verlag, Köln 1988; E. KOSTHORST, *Jakob Kaiser. Der Arbeiterführer*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1967.



leadership that Christian workers no longer felt at home in the unity syndicate:

The development of the trade union movement does not correspond to the goals and ideas that we had in mind. After examining their entire organizational and spiritual attitude, I must say that the Christian workforce is not at home in the DGB.

In the same speech, the Christian-Democrat Kaiser bemoaned that the Christian trade union movement had been more developed before 1933 as it was now in 1953. Pointing at the leadership board of the DGB, Kaiser rhetorically asked: «I see here 70 colleagues sitting in front of me. I ask you: how many of you are on our [i.e. the Catholic] side? Can you call this democracy?»<sup>44</sup>.

While politicians like Kaiser and clerics like Muench called for the creation of new Catholic trade unions that should be independent from the DGB, there were, however, also voices that warned against any such endeavor. Werner Kempf, the bishop of Limburg, for example, sent a detailed report to Muench in which he analyzed the political situation in July 1953. In particular, he feared that the remaining members of the DGB could further “radicalize” in a Marxist or Social-Democrat direction if Catholic members were to leave:

An exodus of Christian employees from the DGB could enhance the political ties between the DGB and the SPD, which would open the door for communist infiltration<sup>45</sup>.

In addition, Bishop Kempf highlighted that any concrete political involvement of the Catholic Church in the matter of trade unions could revive confessional conflicts between Catholics and Protestants:

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<sup>44</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, speech by Jakob Kaiser in front of the DGB leadership board, 11 December 1953.

<sup>45</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Report «Zur Gewerkschaftsfrage», Letter from Kempf to Muench, 5 July 1953, p. 4.

The majority of Protestant workers would probably not take part in the re-establishment [of Christian trade unions]. Leading Protestant forces are opposing today the idea of Christian trade unions. Hence, this could lead to an alienation between Catholic and Protestant workers<sup>46</sup>.

More importantly, however, Kempf also stressed that many Catholic workers were in fact so left-wing that the Church could not necessarily count on their cooperation in any future Christian trade union. Thus, the establishment of a purely Catholic syndicate could lead to a division of the Catholic workforce. Pessimistically, Kempf warned the DGB would maintain the upper hand in a power struggle with Catholic organizations:

The overwhelming majority, including hundreds of thousands of good-natured Catholics, would remain in the DGB and, in the further development, would naturally come into conflict with the Church<sup>47</sup>.

While bishops such as Kempf warned against a regression of West Germany into a state of confessional division, such voices were ultimately ignored by Muench and other Catholic decision makers and politicians. Instead, the conflict with the DGB would escalate in 1955: after several appeals for reform, Catholic trade unionist finally announced the establishment of the CGD, the *Christliche Gewerkschaftsbewegung Deutschlands* (Christian Syndicate Movement of Germany), which invited all Catholic DGB-members to join.

This solution never proved to be satisfactory for Catholic workers. While it was favored by the Church, the Nuncio Aloysius Muench and German bishops, only a disappointingly low number of Catholic workers were willing to leave the DGB. Even politicians from Adenauer's CDU openly opposed the creation of a new Catholic *Richtungsgewerkschaft*. For instance, the minister president of the province North Rhine-Westphalia, a close ally of Konrad Adenauer, considered the ideas of the *Christliche Gewerkschaftsbewegung* to be unrealistic: «Our heart says yes, but our mind says no». In particular, CDU-politicians feared that Protestant

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

workers could be sidelined<sup>48</sup>. In the end, even Muench was forced to report back to the Vatican that «the favorable voices are rather few»<sup>49</sup>.

Given the lack of success of the *Christliche Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, a new Christian trade union was formed in June 1959 in Mainz under the name of *Christlicher Gewerkschaftsbund Deutschlands* (CGB, Christian Trade Union Confederation of Germany). This organization deliberately chose a name that dated back to the nineteenth century in order to signalize continuity to the pre-war period. This continuity, however, only existed in name. Although this organization continues to exist until today, it could never attain the sort of influence that its predecessors had had in the nineteenth or the early twentieth century.

#### 4. Conclusion

After 1945, the Catholic Church in Germany followed a two-fold and partly contradictory strategy in matters of social action. On the one hand, it sought to re-acquire the privileges it had gained through the *Reichskonkordat* of 1933, the continued validity of which remained contested in the young Federal Republic. On the other hand, however, the Church also sought to extend its influence beyond the spheres guaranteed by the Concordat. Most importantly, the *Reichskonkordat* had specified no legislation about Catholic trade unions, all of which had been banned or brutally destroyed by the Nazis in 1933. While Pius XII, his nuncio Aloysius Muench and the West German bishops hoped to simply re-establish these unions after 1945, they were met with surprisingly strong resistance from different sides.

In particular, the Christian-democratic government of Konrad Adenauer feared that new left-wing trade unions could spread Marxist and socialist ideology among West German workers. In order to contain such organizations, Christian groups initially agreed to the establishment of a so-

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<sup>48</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 10 November 1955, Report N. 9387/II-A.c.5.

<sup>49</sup> AAV, *Arch. Nunz. Berlino*, b. 158, fasc. 40, Letter from Muench to Tardini, 19 November 1955, Report N. 9495/II-A.

called “unity syndicate” in the form of the DGB, the German Trade Union Confederation, which should represent workers and employees of all political colors and confessions. Thus, Christian and socialist workers should be joined in the same syndicate, by which the spread of Marxism should be contained. Yet, it soon became clear that this plan was doomed to fail and that Christian trade unionists would be increasingly marginalized within the DGB, which took an increasingly left-leaning direction from 1949 onwards.

Frustrated by their lack of influence within the DGB, Catholic organizations and the Vatican pushed for alternatives throughout the 1950s. In particular, Aloysius Muench lobbied for the creation of Catholic trade unions, which resulted in the creation of the *Christliche Gewerkschaftsbewegung Deutschlands* (Christian Syndicate Movement of Germany) in 1955 and the *Christlicher Gewerkschaftsbund Deutschlands* (CGB, Christian Trade Union Confederation of Germany) in 1959.

The foundation of these new syndicates should be seen not only against the background of postwar anti-communism, but also in the context of the Church’s ambition to establish alternative socio-economic visions for Christian societies. In particular, the creation of the Christian Syndicate Movement corresponded to ideas of Catholic Corporatism, by which Catholic decision makers hoped not only to contain the spread of Marxism, but also to offer viable options of reform within Western capitalism. These measures stood in close intellectual connection to contemporary ideas about a Christian “third way” between capitalism and communism. When Konrad Adenauer visited the Vatican on 5 July 1956, Pius XII explicitly warned the West German delegation against the danger of «capitalist corruption» and the «Überwucherung» of German-Christian culture through modern materialism<sup>50</sup>. Adenauer, in turn, had himself long campaigned with the slogan «CDU overcomes Capitalism and saves you from Communism!». Given the political climate of these years, the creation of Christian trade unions seemed perfectly in line with the CDU’s idea of “social market economy” (*Soziale Marktwirtschaft*) that should balance elements of liberalism and social justice through the state.

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<sup>50</sup> N.N., *Il Sommo Pontefice riceve in solenne Udienza S.E. il Cancelliere della Repubblica Federale di Germania*, in «L’Osservatore Romano», 6 July 1956.

In sum, the joint efforts by the Catholic Church and the Christian-Democratic parties to pursue a specifically Christian form of social action in Germany should be interpreted as attempts to offer a counter-model against Marxism and against socialist-style trade unionism. Clearly, the Vatican stood in a frontline position against communism, but on the other hand, it also hoped to show political alternatives to socialism in Germany. The re-establishment of Christian trade unions thus marked the cornerstone of an idealized “third way” between Eastern collectivism and Western materialism.

Yet, these policies and intellectual considerations also reveal the extent to which Catholic decision makers had removed themselves from the real-life concerns of German workers. The newly established CGB was never able to become a true competitor to the secular DGB, which continued to dominate the German trade union landscape throughout the postwar period. The new Christian Trade Union Confederation of Germany was never able to build on the importance that Christian trade unions had had in the nineteenth century and in the Weimar Republic. Hence, we are dealing here with a history of failure in Catholic social policy. While the Church was active on the diplomatic stage, it could not win the support of the working class. Ideological ambition and social reality increasingly diverged.

The Christian Trade Union Confederation of Germany (CGB) not only failed to attract many Catholic workers who chose to stay in the DGB, but it was also criticized by parts of the Christian-Democratic Party and by Protestant trade unionists in particular. Ultimately, the debates surrounding the re-establishment of Christian trade unions in post-war Germany thus mark the inability of the Catholic Church to offer a new and meaningful framework of syndicalism against the competition of left-wing and Social-Democratic organizations. Catholic syndicalism in West Germany, in other words, remained stuck in ideological debates and profoundly misjudged the mentality and the actual needs of German workers and employees.

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### III.

## THE CATHOLIC CORPORATIVE PROJECT IN COLD WAR AMERICA. THE DEBATE ON THE INDUSTRY COUNCIL PLAN (1940-1960) SUSANNA DE STRADIS

#### 1. *Introduction*

On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1951, addressing the *Sozialtagung katholischer Männer* gathered in Essen, Germany, Jesuit Father Gustav Gundlach (1892-1963), chief advisor to Pope Pius XII on social teaching, voiced his skepticism that the papal guidelines for restructuring the social order along corporative lines could ever be implemented in a country like the United States, which Gundlach deemed too steeped in a liberal, free-market mindset<sup>1</sup>. The Reverend George G. Higgins (1916-2002), assistant director of the Social Action Department (SAD) of the National Catholic Welfare Conference – the central bureaucracy of the US hierarchy – took note of the gibe and replied, a few weeks later, from the columns of the «American Catholic Sociological Review». He contended that US Catholics, clergy and lay, were in fact devoting much time and energy to studying the corporative project and figuring ways to implement it in the US, all while persuading their fellow Americans to abandon all naïve faith in the self-sufficiency of the free market<sup>2</sup>.

This essay aims to reconstruct this much neglected<sup>3</sup> aspect of American Catholic social thought and deeds in the postwar US. I will argue that, though it was not the first time that such a markedly European project found an American audience, the aftermath of World War II saw US

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. SCHWARTE, *Gustav Gundlach S.J. (1892-1963). Maßgeblicher Repräsentant der katholischen Soziallehre während der Pontifikate Pius' XI. und Pius' XII*, Schöningh, München-Paderborn-Wien 1975, pp. 153-156.

<sup>2</sup> G.G. HIGGINS, *American Contributions to the Implementation of the Industry Council Plan*, in «American Catholic Sociological Review», XIII, 1952, n. 1, pp. 10-24.

<sup>3</sup> Historians have preferentially paid attention to US Catholic social activism in either its 1930s or 1960s celebrated “peaks”, from Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker to post-Vatican II radicalism. Cf. C.R. PRENTISS, *Debating God’s Economy. Social Justice in America on the Eve of Vatican II*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park (PA) 2008, p. 2.

Catholic interest in the corporative project peak. While this reflected Pope Pius XII's persistent call for a Catholic third way between liberal capitalism and communism, the US Church was not just slavishly echoing Roman directives. Rather, distinctive postwar challenges such as the reconversion from a wartime to a peacetime economy and the Cold War fight against totalitarianism made American Catholics especially alert to the ways corporativism could help them reimagine and refashion American economy, society, and politics.

## 2. *The «Guild» in American Catholic Culture Before World War II*

A brief recap of the fortunes of the Catholic corporative ideal in the United States up to the 1940s seems in order before analyzing the Cold War-era debates. The idea's first «Atlantic crossing»<sup>4</sup> is likely traceable to the mid-XIX century massive migration of German Catholics to the US. The *Deutsche Römisch-Katholische Central-Verein*, founded to federate the sparse mutual aid societies set up by German immigrants, vigorously committed itself to reforming America along corporative lines<sup>5</sup>. Significantly, the *Verein* advocated for corporativism as a comprehensive alternative to liberalism, precisely as it had originally been envisioned by European Catholic thinkers, from Adam Müller to René de La Tour du Pin and Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio.

This group of intellectuals had looked to the pre-modern guilds for answers to the massive social upheaval caused by the liberalization of the markets (particularly the labor market) and by the leveling of all social estates to achieve formal equality of all citizens before the law, as per the Le Chapelier Law of 1791 France. As an institution that grouped together masters and workers in the name of the common *function* contributed to society, the guild would – in its proponents' view – protect workers from

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<sup>4</sup> I borrow the phrase from D.T. RODGERS, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, Belknap Press, Cambridge (MA) 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. P. GLEASON, *The Conservative Reformers. German-American Catholics and the Social Order*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame (IN), 1968.

the abuses of a deregulated market, while discouraging social stratification and tension according to *class*. Moreover, as an intermediate body with jurisdiction over the inner workings of a given profession, the guild would reclaim from the modern state some of the prerogatives the latter had seized from now-delegitimized familial, professional, and parochial communities. In other words, the original corporativists fought *both* the liberal state's insufficient regulation of the economy *and* its claim to a monopoly of power over flatten-out "individuals," unrecognized in their particular social identities. On a theoretical level at least, political and economic liberalism were simultaneously called into question<sup>6</sup>.

While reception of the corporative project in the Roman magisterium was first rather ambiguous<sup>7</sup>, the German American *Central-Verein* explicitly espoused it in its integral version. A 1905 programmatic leaflet stated the *Verein's* task as nothing less than the restoration of the corporative order of society (*Staendeorganisation*) through the replacement of the «modern popular representation» system with one that would take into account citizens' interests deriving from their social position and role (*Standes-Interessen*) and not merely to their character as voters<sup>8</sup>. Only later would *Central-Verein* leaders decide to tone down those aspects of their corporative agenda that called *political* liberalism into question, in order to achieve some degree of effectiveness against *economic* liberalism at least. Indeed, during and after the Progressive Era, the *Central-Verein* joined forces with non-Catholic actors such as the American Federation of Labor and the National Civic Federation in the fight to promote worker association and labor market regulation<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. VALLAURI, *Le radici del corporativismo*, Bulzoni, Roma 1971, pp. 15-20; F.H. MUELLER, *Kirche und Industrialisierung. Sozialer Katholizismus in den Vereinigten Staaten und in Deutschland bis zu Pius XII*, A. Fromm, Osnabrück 1971, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), while generally emphasizing the mutual responsibilities of capital and labor, mentioned guilds only cursorily and did not univocally call for interclass associations: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html) (esp. §49).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. P. GLEASON, *The Conservative Reformers*, cit., pp. 78-80, 84-87.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. K.E. SCHMIESING, *Within the Market Strife. American Catholic Economic Thought from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II*, Lexington Books, Lanham (MD) 2004, pp. 26; 109. As the seriousness of social unrest at the time made institutionalized cooperation between masters and workers a rather implausible goal in the short run, European Catholics, too, prioritized

Even as it did so, however, that quest for a hierarchical articulation of powers and responsibilities within society kept setting the terms of the *Central-Verein's* activism. In 1925, for example, it prevented the *Verein* from cooperating with a rising leader in US Catholic social action, the Reverend John A. Ryan (1869-1945)<sup>10</sup>, who was then campaigning for an amendment to the US Constitution that would proscribe child labor. While favoring restrictions on child labor, *Central-Verein* leaders argued that lesser communities (that is *states* and professional associations) rather than the federal government, should legislate on the matter<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile, Ryan had become increasingly convinced that, in the American context, the federal government was the only actor realistically capable of effecting social change – or at least that there was more to hope than to fear from it<sup>12</sup>.

Nowhere was this difference in approach between Ryan and the *Verein* more evident than in the Catholic debate about Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Amidst the turmoils of the Great Depression, Ryan hailed the New Deal as an apt approximation of the corporative ideal – which Pope Pius XI had more robustly championed in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* – inasmuch as it devised regulations and other institutional platforms for labor-management cooperation<sup>13</sup>. Yet, *Quadragesimo*, which owed much to the work of Gundlach and fellow German Jesuit Oswald von Nell-Breuning (1890-1991), also stressed that mutual relationships between the hierarchically ordered communities (from the family unit to the state) which formed society, ought to be governed by the principle of subsidiarity – whereby no higher community could interfere in the affairs of the lesser

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the unionization of workers and battled for minimal labor legislation. Cf. F.H. MUELLER, *Kirche und Industrialisierung*, cit., pp. 148-150.

<sup>10</sup> A moral theologian with the Catholic University of America, Ryan famously argued that workers were entitled to a «living wage» – that is, a high enough salary to fairly support themselves and their families, even when the law of supply and demand would prescribe otherwise. Cf. K.E. SCHMIESING, *Within the Market Strife*, cit., pp. 37-39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 85-87.



ones unless the latter proved unable to provide for themselves<sup>14</sup>. Hence, the *Verein*, for its part, criticized the New Deal on the grounds that it granted the federal government too much power over the very professional communities it created, opening the way to state-run collectivism rather than to the social organicism envisioned in *Quadragesimo*<sup>15</sup>.

Throughout the 1930s, it was Ryan's "line", rather than the *Verein*'s, that prevailed among US Catholic leaders, though criticism of Roosevelt's policies would grow consistently over the decade<sup>16</sup>. Among the Catholics who, like Ryan, wanted to build on the New Deal and further pursue the road of centralized economic planning was Philip Murray, the president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Anticipating America's transition to a wartime economy in the early 1940s, Murray drafted a plan for Roosevelt – named Industry Council Plan (ICP) – to set up industry-wide councils where labor and management would collaborate to ensure a smooth running of the production<sup>17</sup>. While Roosevelt eventually resorted to a similarly centralized yet different plan for the war economy, the ICP would provide a starting point in later debates about the postwar social and economic order.

### 3. *The Postwar Debate: Bipolarism and the Pursuit of a Third Way*

While the war was still raging, Catholics at various levels looked at the postwar reconstruction as a golden opportunity to refashion national and international political and social order according to Church teachings. Pope Pius XII himself, as early as 1942, had expressed such hopes, particularly reaffirming the necessity to finally achieve the implementation

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<sup>14</sup> [https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragesimo-anno.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html) (esp. §§ 78-80).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. GLEASON, *The Conservative Reformers*, cit., p. 207. On *Quadragesimo*'s indebtedness, via Gundlach and Nell-Breuning, to the organicist reflections of Heinrich Pesch, SJ (1854-1926) and his *Koenigswinterer Kreis*, cf. F.H. MUELLER, *Kirche und Industrialisierung*, cit., pp. 172-173.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. K.E. SCHMIESING, *Within the Market Strife*, cit., pp. 87, 102-104.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C.R. PRENTISS, *Debating God's Economy*, cit., pp. 211-212.

of *Quadragesimo Anno*<sup>18</sup>. Similar intentions were voiced in 1943 by US Catholic sociologist Alphonse H. Clemens (1905-1977), who claimed for himself and his colleagues a special right, and a corresponding duty, to play a key role in the reconstruction effort:

The most impelling reason for the Catholic sociologist to assume a role of constructive leadership is found in the simple truth that in no other group is a complete cure for social chaos to be found. For none of the hundred and odd agencies for postwar reconstruction in any least sense approaches a solution even remotely similar to the “vocational group” concept. [...] This concept of an “organic” versus an “atomic” or “mechanistic” society, is the unique contribution of Catholic social thought to the American social panorama<sup>19</sup>.

Catholic sociologists’ secular competitors often proposed a substantial retaining of the government boards and regulations that had characterized the war economy<sup>20</sup>. Catholic criticism of these solutions, however, did not stem from a sudden sympathy for *laissez-faire* liberalism, but rather from an updated assessment of broad socioeconomic trends.

The social problem no longer consists in conformity or opposition to liberalism; the crisis today no longer seems to be a fight for or against capitalism. Rather it is speedily resolving itself into a contrast between an all-powerful state which dictates or a society of free associations, vocational groups, which alone can spell true liberty<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII*, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, vol. VII, pp. 349-350; vol. IX, pp. 589-592; vol. XI, pp. 205-208; vol. XIII, p. 34; vol. XIV, pp. 545-550 *et alibi*.

<sup>19</sup> A.H. CLEMENS, *The Catholic Sociologist Faces a New Social Order*, in «American Catholic Sociological Review», IV, 1943, n. 3, p. 159.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. N. LICHTENSTEIN, *From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era*, in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. by S. Fraser and G. Gerstle, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 1989, pp. 122-152.

<sup>21</sup> A.H. CLEMENS, *The Catholic Sociologist*, cit., p. 161.

State expansion was now perceived as more likely to threaten than to facilitate the flourishing of civil society. Yet, a network of «vocational» free associations, as opposed to deregulated markets, would embody the real «freedom alternative» to statism, since, per *Quadragesimo Anno*, economic deregulation actually stood, via the social disruption it generated, as the ultimate root cause of state expansion. Moreover, statism was no longer a distant phantasm, but appeared to have become a concrete option for the postwar US as it had for Britain<sup>22</sup>. Which was why, Clemens concluded, Catholic sociologists should swiftly embark on the «gigantic task» of educating Americans to corporativism and envisioning an implementation especially suited to their social conditions.

After 1945, the journals of both the American Catholic Sociological Society and the Catholic Economic Association voiced impatience with the rapid sclerotization of public discourse around a binary alternative in light of the dawning Cold War.

We have been told that we are confronted with a basic, fundamental and inevitable choice which must be made - either free markets or government regulation. [...] Competition and state regulation are both useful secondary principles of economic government. Both are indispensable, both together are inadequate<sup>23</sup>.

Such impatience was wholeheartedly shared by Franz Mueller, a German Catholic émigré who had worked with Gundlach: «the opinion seems to prevail today that there are no other alternatives than a planned economy or a system of free enterprise; [...] security or opportunity; laissez-faire or dictatorship, etc. Underlying these antitheses there stand the fictitious concepts either of an absolute individual or of an absolute society»<sup>24</sup>, he lamented, and called for the spreading and further studying of an organic third way instead.

Meanwhile, the outgoing president of the American Catholic Sociological Society, Gerald J. Schnepf, SM, speaking at the Society's

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>23</sup> B.W. DEMPSEY, S.J., *Ability to Pay*, «Review of Social Economy», IV, 1946, n. 1, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> F.H. MUELLER, *The Principle of Solidarity in the Teaching of Father Heinrich Pesch, S.J.*, «Review of Social Economy», IV, 1946, n. 1, p. 32.

annual convention, attempted an appraisal of *Quadragesimo Anno's* American fortunes since it was first issued fifteen years earlier. Though he conceded that the social order it envisioned was somehow inherently difficult to grasp for an American audience, he stressed that its application was not only feasible, but also highly desirable in the US, which was then experiencing a strike wave<sup>25</sup>. Particularly referring to the so-called «Cab Cavalcade» of protesting taxi owners from Chicago to Washington<sup>26</sup>, Schnepf commented: «If Pope Pius XI had had his way, all the taxi owners and operators in Chicago would be organized in one vocational group. As such, they would have been in a cooperative situation which would have made impossible the development of their troubles»<sup>27</sup>. Instead, Americans, according to Schnepf, had fallen into the bad habit of pleading with the government for a solution to their problems. Such an attitude, though, contravened the principle of subsidiarity and thus paved the way to a totalitarian outcome: the real alternative was the vocational organization of society<sup>28</sup>. Since «vocational groups» would serve the crucial purpose of preventing totalitarianism, the American Catholic Sociological Society urged Schnepf to gather a specific study committee<sup>29</sup>. After much preliminary controversy, the committee chose «Industry Council Plan» as synthetic definition of the object of their study, despite the risk of an identification with Philip Murray's failed proposal<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. M. DUBOFSKY-F.R. DULLES, *Labor in America. A History*, Harlan Davidson, Wheeling (IL) 2010, pp. 317-321.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Cab Cavalcade in Washington and Tenting Out*, in «Chicago Tribune», February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> G.J. SCHNEPP, S.M., *Social Progress, 1931-1946: An Estimate of a Papal Document*, «American Catholic Sociological Review», VII, 1946, n. 1, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> «To defend a system which violates this principle is to defend, in the final analysis, the totalitarian state. Vocational groups are these "subsidiary bodies" [...]. The vocational group system is, then, a reversal of the American "there-ought-to-be-a-law" complex which increasingly relies on the state to control more and more activities of more and more of its citizens.», *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. G.J. SCHNEPP, S.M., *Ten Years of the Industry Council Committee*, «American Catholic Sociological Review», XVII, 1956, n. 1, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. AA. VV., *Report of the Industry Council Plan Committee*, «American Catholic Sociological Review», VIII, 1947, n. 4, pp. 285-286.

In November 1948, the American hierarchy officially acknowledged the Sociological Society's efforts in a paragraph of its statement «The Christian in Action», which echoed the call for a middle ground between «eighteenth century individualism» and «twentieth century statism» through «the free organization of capital and labor in permanent agencies of cooperation»<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, at their 1949 annual meeting, the bishops authorized the creation of a parallel «Industry Council Plan committee» under the auspices of the SAD, and whose goal was also to clarify the corporative project of *Quadragesimo Anno*, as well as its possible applications to America<sup>32</sup>. The committee featured – alongside the SAD director, Raymond A. McGowan, and his assistants, George G. Higgins and John F. Cronin, SS<sup>33</sup> – two other priests: Harold Trehey, who had worked on corporativism for his doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University in Washington<sup>34</sup>; and Benjamin Masse, SJ, associate editor of the Jesuit journal «America». It also included Dr. Alphonse Clemens himself and two German-born economists who had immigrated to the US in the early 1930s: Friedrich Baerwald, a onetime member of the *Zentrumspartei* and Weimar's Ministry of Labor official, who then taught at Fordham University; and Goetz A. Briefs, Gundlach's former acquaintance and then a professor at Georgetown University. Six other clergymen were involved remotely: two Jesuits based at the Institute of Social Order<sup>35</sup> in St. Louis, Missouri, Leo Brown and Cornelius Eller; Schnepf from the American Catholic Sociological Society; Raymond Miller, a Redemptorist priest from Wisconsin; Jesuit economist Richard Mulcahy, of the University of San

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<sup>31</sup> *The Christian in Action*. Statement of the Bishops of the United States, 1948, p. 2/4, folder 26, box 13, series 9: Special Topic Files, 1925-53, collection 10: United States Conference of Bishops Social Action Dept., Archives of the Catholic University of America (hereafter cited as ACUA 10-9-13).

<sup>32</sup> P.A. O'Boyle to J.F. O'Hara, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, folder 1, box 1: Industrial Council Committee (Minutes, Reports, Correspondence) 1950-1951, Edward A. Keller Manuscripts Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives (hereafter cited as CKEL 1/01-06).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J.T. DONOVAN, *Crusader in the Cold War: A Biography of Fr. John F. Cronin, S.S. (1908-1994)*, Peter Lang, New York 2005.

<sup>34</sup> H.F. TREHEY, *Foundations of a Modern Guild System*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1940.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. P. McDONOUGH, *Men Astutely Trained. A History of the Jesuits in the American Century*, The Free Press, New York 1992.

Francisco; and Holy Cross Father Edward A. Keller, who directed the Bureau of Economic Research at the University of Notre Dame. Five meetings were held between April 1950 and January 1951, with Cronin acting as secretary.

Throughout its short life, however, the SAD committee was laden with controversy over several critical issues. First, there was no agreement on which fundamental problem the industry councils were supposed to address: did *Quadragesimo* oppose economic liberalism *tout court*, or only some of its worst features such as wealth concentration? Did it condemn ethically wrong attitudes of individuals and groups, or whole power structures? And which one more radically than others? Different answers to these questions implied, among other things, a different assessment of American conditions. Some committee members had no trouble subscribing to the fundamentally anti-liberal premises of the corporative project and attributed contemporary social problems to the modern renunciation of the «integral philosophy of man and society»<sup>36</sup>. Other committee members side-stepped the broader historico-philosophical framework to suggest that the real threat came from powerful unions and the spreading of nationalizations<sup>37</sup> – either failing to take on the latter’s ultimate origin in a destructively individualistic economy, or starkly contrasting the old «days of rugged individualism» and «Manchesterian Liberals» with modern times, when «competition with limits» had produced an amazing growth, overall, fairly distributed<sup>38</sup>.

The question of the proper limits on competition was indeed another thorny one. Committee members disagreed about the sufficiency of existing legislation in setting these limits: Keller maintained that US

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. G.A. BRIEFS, *Untitled typewritten contribution* (9 pages), folder 22, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>37</sup> «The popes condemn the concentration of economic power. Is it really a threat to the common good of the United States? Isn’t it really on the defensive today all over the world? Isn’t the threat of excessive nationalization greater? [...] Isn’t the concentrated economic power which unions now have a greater threat than the concentration of productive property?», C.A. ELLER, SJ, *Untitled typewritten contribution*, p. 3/6, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. E. KELLER, CSC, *Untitled typewritten contribution* (15 pages), folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

antitrust laws already provided enough regulation<sup>39</sup>; while Miller pointed rather at the Fair Labor Standards Act and the more recent Employment Act as significant steps in the right direction and urged the committee to examine whether the industry councils should play a distinctive role, alongside the state, in curbing competition<sup>40</sup>. As the majority answered in the affirmative, the question became how they would perform it. «It seems difficult», Clemens observed, «to escape the conviction that price regulation of a direct nature is to some extent required – perhaps nothing more than ceiling and minimum pricing levels between which competition should operate rather freely». The sociologist even predicted the approval of US businessmen, finally relieved from the struggle for survival that forced them to resort to unethical tactics<sup>41</sup>. But there came, in sharp contrast, Eller's reply: «To my mind, the people of the United States would never permit that sort of thing at the present time or in the foreseeable [*sic*] future, because they have a habit of opposition to it that is deeply rooted in our history»<sup>42</sup>.

Defining the tasks of the industry councils most crucially meant determining the extent to which they could and should interfere with the rights of business owners and managers. The Pope himself had recently addressed the issue, as it had been raised also in the context of the German debate on *Mitbestimmung* – that is, employee participation in the governance of their companies on an equal footing with employers. When German Catholics invoked codetermination as a natural right<sup>43</sup>, Pius XII intervened to clarify the Roman position on the subject. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949, addressing the Congress of the *Union Internationale des Associations Patronales Catholiques*, the Pope had stated that, indeed, labor's claim to share in the responsibilities of production were legitimate, since they were grounded in the sharing with management of an interest in production; but

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. KELLER, CSC, *Untitled*, p. 11/15, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. R.J. MILLER, CSSR, *Agenda for Conference on Industry Council Program*, p. 2/4, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. A.H. CLEMENS, *Replies to Questions Relative to Social-Economic Groups*, p. 2/3, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>42</sup> C.A. ELLER, SJ, *Untitled*, p. 2/6, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. E.A. KURTH, *Codetermination in West Germany*, «Review of Social Economy», XI, 1953, n. 1, pp. 54-69.

such joint involvement should never jeopardize the owner's ultimate control of economic decisions within the firm<sup>44</sup>. Codetermination should not be regarded as a right – much less a *natural* right – but rather as a device that, though possibly adequate under particular circumstances, in no way translated the true essence of a Catholic social order: the community within a profession, not a single firm, lay at the heart of the vocational-group system<sup>45</sup>. The SAD committee proved to be aware of European debates and most of its members excluded that industry councils *had to* ensure that workers participated in management<sup>46</sup>. Some form of labor-management partnership had to be sought, yet «not as a right but as a highly desirable feature»<sup>47</sup>. The problem was envisioning a concrete implementation.

But was the committee really asked to offer a blueprint at all? «Institutions cannot be artificially imposed», wrote Eller, arguing that the committee's chief task should be educational in character, focused on

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<sup>44</sup> «Le propriétaire des moyens de production, quel qu'il soit – propriétaire particulier, associations d'ouvriers ou fondation – doit toujours dans les limites du droit publique de l'économie, rester maître de ses décisions économiques», [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1949/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19490507\\_associations-patronales.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1949/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19490507_associations-patronales.html).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. SCHWARTE, *Gustav Gundlach S.J. (1892-1963)*, cit., pp. 158-159. Again in 1952, speaking to the national council of the Unione Cristiana Imprenditori Dirigenti, Pius XII stated: «Né potevamo ignorare le alterazioni, cui si svisavano le parole di alta saggezza del Nostro glorioso Predecessore Pio XI, dando il peso e l'importanza di un programma sociale della Chiesa, nel nostro tempo, ad una osservazione del tutto accessoria intorno alle eventuali modificazioni giuridiche nei rapporti fra i lavoratori soggetti del contratto di lavoro e l'altra parte contraente; e passando invece più o meno sotto silenzio la parte principale della Enciclica "Quadragesimo anno", che contiene in realtà quel programma, vale a dire la linea dell'ordine corporativo professionale della intera economia.», [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1952/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19520131\\_imprenditori-cattolici.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1952/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19520131_imprenditori-cattolici.html).

<sup>46</sup> «If all significant business decisions are to be made by the group [...], very little decision-making remains for the individual enterpriser and private property no longer fulfills its function of serving the development of human personality [...]» C.A. ELLER, SJ, *Comments on Points 3 and 4 of the Agenda Prepared for the July 1 – 2 Meeting*, p. 3/5, folder 22, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>47</sup> J.F. CRONIN, SS, *A Social Order Based on Justice and Charity. Interim Report. Industry-Council Committee*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950, p. 6/23, folder 23, ACUA 10-9-13.



spreading Catholic social principles and recommending self-help through association<sup>48</sup>. Other members urged prudence in calling into question the existing social and economic system<sup>49</sup>, while others were explicitly pessimist: «I am somewhat doubtful», Baerwald confessed, «whether the Papal suggestions with regard to occupational and professional groupings could be, as it were, grafted on existing economic and social institutions in this country»<sup>50</sup>. Meanwhile, Keller called for greater emphasis on the need to keep business ethics consistent with Christian morality. Disregard for this element revealed a dangerously proximity to «the Marxian heresy of “perfectibility of human nature” – that merely by changing social institutions, human nature will become so perfect that everyone will lose selfish motivation and live only for his fellow man»<sup>51</sup>.

The aforementioned controversies are exemplary of how, despite Cronin's best efforts, the committee proved unable to reach substantial agreement on the Industry Council Plan. Even the final report, drafted after a last meeting held on January 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 1951, left «too large a latitude in personal interpretation of how these principles are to be applied in this country»<sup>52</sup>. The same report had likewise been submitted for review to a special episcopal committee featuring archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington, DC, Karl J. Alter of Cincinnati, and John F. O'Hara of Buffalo. The committee issued another report, which basically acknowledged divisions among Catholic scholars and hence recommended that no public pronouncement be made on the subject by the US hierarchy<sup>53</sup>.

The Sociological Society's own «Industry Council committee» ended up meeting a similar fate. Taking stock of ten years of work in 1956, Schnepp noted that several questions remained unanswered, such as «what

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. C.A. ELLER, SJ, *Untitled*, p. 1/6, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>49</sup> R.E. MULCAHY, SJ, Re: Agenda for the April 11-12 meeting of the Industry-Council Committee, p. 2/5, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>50</sup> F. BAERWALD, *Observations on Deficiencies in Modern Economic Society and on Proposed Papal Programs*, p. 4/5, folder 22, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>51</sup> E.A. KELLER, CSC, *Untitled*, p. 15/15, folder 24, ACUA 10-9-13.

<sup>52</sup> Keller to Cronin, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1951, folder 1, CKEL 1/01-06.

<sup>53</sup> *Observations of the Episcopal Committee on the Report of Social Order Committee*, p. 9/9, folder 1, CKEL 1/01-06.

is the role of government? Can we use European experience at all in arriving at answers for America? What legal steps, if any, can be recommended for the near future?»<sup>54</sup>. But even as hopes of an actual implementation waned, corporativism would not cease to be debated in Catholic learned societies and their journals.

#### 4. *Corporatism in the Fifties: Ideal and Reality of Democracy and Pluralism*

A 1951 issue of the «Review of Social Economy» featured the translation of an article by Jesuit Father Nell-Breuning, published a few months earlier in the German journal «Ordo». In it, Nell-Breuning argued that *Quadragesimo Anno* specifically targeted *monopolistic* capitalism. The Church was neutral toward capitalism as an economic system in which the worker did not own the means of production, but it vocally rejected capitalist class society, centered on «a labor market under bilateral monopoly», instead of around «social function as the decisive criterion of organization». The aim of vocational groups would indeed be the de-commercialization and de-monopolization of the so-called labor market, *within* the capitalist economic system, thus engaging the latter's most significant flaw – that is, a lack of consideration for economic activities as *social*, and therefore inherently political, processes<sup>55</sup>. This led Nell-Breuning to discuss the relationship between vocational groups and the state, which should follow the principle of subsidiarity, to relieve the «superior political body» of tasks that would properly pertain to lesser bodies<sup>56</sup>. In other words, just restraint to state intervention should come

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<sup>54</sup> G.J. SCHNEPP, SM, *Ten Years*, cit., p. 36. Cf. J.P. FITZPATRICK, SJ, *The Industry Council Plan as a Form of Social Organization*, in «American Catholic Sociological Review», XIV, 1953, n. 3, pp. 146-155; J.B. SCHUYLER, *The Industry Council Idea: Is It Adaptable to the United States?*, in «American Catholic Sociological Review», XVIII, 1957, n. 4, pp. 290-300.

<sup>55</sup> O. v. NELL-BREUNING, SJ, *Vocational Groups and Monopoly*, «Review of Social Economy», IX, 1951, n. 2, p. 96.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

from a reclaiming by vocational groups of their «original authority» in matters concerning their own affairs, even challenging what appeared to be the most unrighteous monopoly, «the arrogated monopoly of law of the modern state». While acknowledging the state as the supreme guarantor of law («[a]s its guarantor, not as its source!»), Nell-Breuning argued that Catholic social thought was «incomparably closer to the kind of legal thinking embodied in the Anglo-American common law» than in Roman law. In such thinking,

Man is older than the state, his human rights are inviolable; the family is older and more dignified than the state; the rights of the family [...] are inviolable; the town, the profession, etc., do not derive their right from the grace of the state, but are in the true sense of the word, in their own right “autonomous”. [...] The right of the smaller intrastate communities to set legal norms is therefore as original as is that of the state. [...] This is also true of the vocations as components of the functional order of the social body<sup>57</sup>.

The «Review»'s willingness to translate and publish this densely anti-liberal piece by Nell-Breuning reveals how, through the 1950s, American discussions of corporativism transcended a focus on the economy to intersect other hot-button issues that Catholics were engaging from the same anti-liberal premises: for example, the battle against legal positivism<sup>58</sup>. In 1953, Fordham professor Robert L. Koerner authored an article that lamented the spread of legal positivism in America, arguing that it meant a turning away from «the “self-evident truths” philosophy of the American founders» – that is, from a supposed acknowledgment of God's laws as chronologically (but also, in a way, ontologically) prior to state legislation. Moreover, Koerner, too, posited a profound kinship between Catholic and Anglo-American legal thought inasmuch as «Roman law had identified sovereignty with unlimited will. English feudalism had thought

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. E.A. PURCELL, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value*, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington (KY) 1973, pp. 159-178.

of it in co-existence with territorial extension»<sup>59</sup> – thus being more friendly to a vertical as well as horizontal plurality of sovereigns.

Other Catholic scholars also explained their persistent interest in corporativism arguing that it pointed to an ideal way of envisioning the relationship between the state and civil society; or, to put it differently, that it addressed a fundamental political problem more than an increasingly less urgent economic one. Writing in 1952, after having witnessed the failure of the SAD Industry Council committee he had presided over, Cronin still affirmed the importance of seeking «social institutions which favor the practices of justice and charity», inasmuch as they promised to correct the faults that both socioeconomic models vying in the Cold War ultimately shared:

The battles between these systems should be fought, not merely in terms of economic productivity, but also in terms of human values. Any social structure which herds men into great masses of power groupings, whatever its economic effectiveness, is destructive of freedom and individual achievement. We seek built-in structural defenses for the dignity and the creative power of the individual. This is the fundamental reason we seek an organic rather than a mass society.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the committee's practical failure, Cronin had evidently not given up his quest for a corporative-type amendment of liberal mass society.

Meanwhile, another article by Nell-Breuning appeared in the «Review of Social Economy», which more directly linked the judicial monopoly of the modern state to totalitarianism. Although Nell-Breuning's intervention was occasioned by European developments – namely, the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – the «Review»'s editorial board evidently deemed it worthy of disclosure to the American public. After deploring the modern liberal state's rejection of any «vertical

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<sup>59</sup> R.L. KOERNER, *The Challenge of Legal Supremacy*, «Review of Social Economy», XI, 1953, n. 2, p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> J.F. CRONIN, SS, *Economic Research and the Social Encyclicals: Progress and Poverty*, «Review of Social Economy», X, 1952, n. 1, p. 20.

stratification of authority», the German Jesuit labeled as even more significant «the consequences which the concentration of the “right of the last word” in the state has in its horizontal dimensions. For here it implies by necessity the all-competency of the state, its claim to “totality”.». Such a claim was therefore described as inherent within the modern state, whether democratic or monocratic. In fact, Nell-Breuning’s choice for an example tellingly fell upon the *Kulturkampf* opposing Catholics and liberal nationalists in XIX-century Prussia<sup>61</sup>. But the article also offered a constructive argument:

In brief, instead of government totalism and unitarism there should be a *functional pluralism* of the social groups differentiated on the basis of their form of activity, administering their respective tasks within the framework of the whole. Each such group, and within it every regional sub-group, has the right of the last word in matters pertaining to its own group only<sup>62</sup>.

The two elements – critique of «totalism» and promotion of «pluralism» – clearly went hand in hand, as the latter found its deepest worth as a bulwark against the first.

Moreover, this championing of *functional* pluralism once again opposed Catholic scholars to contemporary non-Catholic sociologists who did not tie pluralism to organicism. Jesuit Émile Bouvier, president of the Catholic Economic Association since 1955, stated it clearly<sup>63</sup>. Cronin himself, writing in 1956, contrasted «true» pluralism to the monism of the

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. O. v. NELL-BREUNING, SJ, *The Social Structural Order and European Economic Unity*, «Review of Social Economy», X, 1952, n. 2, p. 110.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>63</sup> «Hence we do not define pluralism (as do Laski, Studenski, Figgis or Dahl) as a political or a social pluralism. Neither do we accept Galbraith’s pluralism of countervailing power [...]. These definitions exclude the notion of finality or common goal which is the core of the idea of integration which proves essential in our concept of pluralism. The term “pluralistic economy” applies to [...] the economic and social organization of society, in which the natural groups called the “*ordines*” are according to the principle of subsidiarity the functional, democratic, and legally recognized coordinating joint forces which would be responsible for micro and macro-economic decisions [...].», É. BOUVIER, SJ, *Economic Experiences with the Pluralistic Economy*, «Review of Social Economy», XIV, 1956, n. 1, p. 3.

totalitarian state; to the dualism of «laissez-faire capitalism», entrenched in the supply-demand scheme; but also to an «imperfect» pluralism, made up of pressure groups that could not find ordinate representation within a liberal state which limited itself to generic growth policies:

By contrast with all these models, a true pluralistic society starts from qualitative and ethical premises. [...] The ultimate test of both economic and political organization is its impact upon the family and family related groups. This must be primary, not a mere by-product of an otherwise oriented system. [...] A truly pluralistic society achieves unity without sacrificing diversity. Such a society has often been described as organic, with emphasis upon harmonious co-ordination of groups performing diverse functions<sup>64</sup>.

Yet, actual developments in social and economic life suggested that the incorrect understanding of «pluralism» was prevailing. Still in 1960, another former member of the SAD Industry Council committee, Goetz Briefs, denounced this trend through the category of «unbalanced» pluralism. He maintained that Catholics should have been «the first to realize the tremendous danger implied in the drift of modern society towards collectivism via an unbalanced pluralism», as the principle of subsidiarity seemed to have been forgotten. While acknowledging that such drift had «gone farthest in communistic nations», Briefs cautioned that even «[o]ld and well-grounded democracies such as ours»<sup>65</sup> may soon follow.

## 5. *Conclusions*

While Gundlach's conviction that corporativism would never be implemented in the United States proved correct, Higgins was right, too,

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<sup>64</sup> J.F. CRONIN, SS, *Government in a Pluralistic Economy*, «Review of Social Economy», XIV, 1956, n. 1, pp. 47-48.

<sup>65</sup> G.A. BRIEFS, *Compulsory Unionism*, «Review of Social Economy», XVIII, 1960, n. 1, pp. 68-69.

in pointing out that practical failure did not come from a lack of interest or scholarly reflection. Despite its roots in a pre-liberal European past the US had never really experienced, the Catholic corporative project had been a part of American Catholic social thought and action since the XIX century. Alternate emphasis on either the *interclass* or the *intermediate*-body nature of the “guild” reflected the problem of translating a fundamentally antiliberal project – in which the two “natures” of the guild coexisted seamlessly – into a modern liberal context. That US Catholics even attempted such a translation should prompt historians to qualify the longlived trope of US Catholicism’s “liberal exceptionalism”<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, their consistent engagement with the corporative ideal in the postwar years should nuance conventional understandings of US Catholics’ role in the Cold War. Rather than letting their staunch anti-communism lead them toward an uncritical, yet “patriotic”<sup>67</sup>, embrace of US liberal capitalism, American Catholics remained quite uncomfortable with the rigid binaries of the Cold War and willing to call into question, at least to some extent, their country’s social and economic system. Discussion of corporativism as a radical critique of both economic and political liberalism indeed complicated the alliance, on the right, between Catholicism and other forms of anti-statism (most notably, Hayek’s neo-liberal school<sup>68</sup>), and, on the left, between Catholic and liberal anti-totalitarianism, as the former hinged on intermediate communities and a plural sovereignty rather than on a commitment to individual rights.

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<sup>66</sup> For a more articulate critique of such “exceptionalist” historiography and a first attempt at moving past it, cf. P.R. D’AGOSTINO, *Rome in America. Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC) 2004, pp. 5-6.

<sup>67</sup> Much historiography contends that Catholics prioritized anti-communist social activism as a way of earning full inclusion in the national political community during the Cold War: e.g., R.W. SCHATZ, *American Labor and the Catholic Church, 1919-1950*, in «U.S. Catholic Historian», III, 1983, n. 3, pp. 178-183; J. TURRINI, *Catholic Social Action at Work: A Brief History of the Labor Collections at The Catholic University of America*, in «The American Archivist», LXVIII, 2005, n.1, pp. 130-151.

<sup>68</sup> On the burgeoning convergence between Catholic and neo-liberal anti-statists in the American neoconservative movement, cf. P. ALLITT, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY) 1993.

Conversely, US Catholics' ultimate failure to chart a viable "third way" between liberalism and communism arguably mirrored the struggle of the global Catholic Church to stand as a third-party to the Cold War, even as the yet-to-be-completed Catholic reckoning with modern liberalism prevented the Church from finding too comfortable a place in the Western camp.

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#### IV.

### AMERICAN CATHOLICS AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN FRANCO'S SPAIN RAFAEL ESCOBEDO ROMERO

#### 1. *Introduction*

Roman Catholics in Francoist Spain and in the United States share a common faith, but the history of Catholicism in these two countries followed very different paths. Before key transformations that the Second Vatican Council ushered in, Catholic attitudes towards religious freedom in these two countries were sharply divergent. Each nation's political system, with its own historical circumstances, was also very different. The United States, for its part, was a democracy in which religious freedom had become a substantial part of its own political tradition. Francisco Franco's Spain was instead a military dictatorship that some critics mocked as a "National-Catholic" state<sup>1</sup>, if not a "clerical-fascist" regime, as the famous American anti-Catholic author Paul Blanshard once put it<sup>2</sup>. As a result, Catholics in Spain and the United States approached the matter of religious freedom, as well as the closely related issue of the separation between church and state, very differently. However, Vatican II crucial changes radically transformed Spanish Catholics' attitudes, which eventually resembled American ones.

The Second Vatican Council put an end to centuries-long Roman Catholic reluctance toward, if not harsh condemnation of, the idea of religious freedom as a human and civil right<sup>3</sup>. The profound impact of totalitarianism and of World War II on the Western mind entailed a renewed concern for human rights as the very core of all human society. The intrinsic and inviolable dignity of the individual, regardless of any

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<sup>1</sup> A. BOTTI, *Cielo y dinero: El nacionalcatolicismo en España, 1881-1975*, Alianza, Madrid 2008<sup>2</sup>, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> P. BLANSHARD, *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal: An American Interpretation*, Beacon, Boston 1962, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> II VATICAN COUNCIL, *Dignitatis humanae*, 7 December 1965, § 2.

other considerations, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights solemnly proclaimed in 1948, was enshrined as an inalienable principle<sup>4</sup>. The conciliar fathers clearly expressed a concern for excessive state power, which was part of the common experience of the postwar generations. This basic stance completely changed how human rights were understood as they concern individuals' religious beliefs and practices. Thus, although until just a few short centuries ago, most Westerners saw religious pluralism as, at best, an evil to be "tolerated" and esteemed religious unity of the social body as a foremost common good, religious freedom as a fundamental human right quickly became an ethical imperative that left little room for the restrictions and coercions that Christian nations up to then considered natural.

During those years, between the end of the war and the beginning of the Council, Catholic theologians, bishops and priests, as well as lay leaders, increasingly persuaded themselves of the Church's urgent need to openly endorse this human right<sup>5</sup>. Even Pope Pius XII's teachings expressed a growing benevolence towards the idea of religious freedom<sup>6</sup>. However, for most churchmen, sharp anathemas fulminated against religious freedom during the previous century hindered their immediate assimilation of the idea. *Dignitatis humanae* succeeded in making a fine distinction between the moral duty of all men to seek truth and to make their lives conform to it, on the one hand, and the right to not be coerced by any human power, particularly the state, in matters of religion and conscience, on the other. However, previous papal statements, such as Gregory XVI's *Mirari vos* or Pius IX's *Syllabus*, seemed to condemn both altogether. Reaching the concept and its appropriate wording were not easy tasks, although not any easier than convincing the reluctant. Few Catholics in the world were more concerned than those who lived in the United States about the troublesome relationship between civil liberties and their

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<sup>4</sup> See P.G. LAUREN, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2011<sup>3</sup>, pp. 137-226.

<sup>5</sup> S. SCATENA, *La fatica della libertà. L'elaborazione della dichiarazione Dignitatis humanae sulla libertà religiosa del Vaticano II*, il Mulino, Bologna 2003, pp. 7-16.

<sup>6</sup> His address to Italian Catholic jurists on December 6, 1953 is especially remarkable (*Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII*, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Roma 1954, vol. XV, pp. 477-492).

Church's teachings, precisely because their historical experience with liberty contradicted the bad omens that they learned from the official Church's teachings. It is not an accident that the most influential theologian in the *Dignitatis humanae*'s drafting process was John Courtney Murray, an American clergyman<sup>7</sup>.

## *2. American Catholics and religious freedom: a troublesome relationship*

American Catholic history is the history of a big success. Catholics were just a tiny minority when the constitutional declaration of religious freedom and church-state separation was enacted, but during the following century and a half, millions of Irish, German, Italian and Polish Catholic immigrants made their way to the United States and completely transformed its human landscape. They distinctively shaped the great American cities on the East Coast and the Midwest, and their thriving communities were a shining example of the American dream<sup>8</sup>. However, in spite of this auspicious legal framework, American Catholics still faced important challenges from the time of independence all the way up to John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign. The growth of the Catholic population awoke strong feelings among the Protestant majority of the land. Therefore, during the nineteenth century, movements such as nativism or the Know Nothings blended traditional Protestant antipopery discourse with the social, political and cultural unease that provoked the deep and rapid transformations of American industrial cities, where

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<sup>7</sup> See D. GONNET, *La liberté religieuse à Vatican II: La contribution de John Courtney Murray*, Cerf, Paris 1994, or P.A. FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Iglesia católica y libertad religiosa: El papel de John Courtney Murray en la Declaración Dignitatis humanae del Concilio Vaticano II*, Edicep, Valencia 2014.

<sup>8</sup> See, among many others: J.P. DOLAN, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1992, pp. 101-417; C. GILLIS, *Roman Catholicism in America*, Columbia University Press, New York 1999, pp. 48-94; J.M. O'TOOLE, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008, pp. 1-198.

Catholic immigrants played a decisive role<sup>9</sup>. Ultimately, the biggest indictment against American Catholics was that they were not good Americans because their religion was fundamentally incompatible with the great principles at the core of the American Constitution<sup>10</sup>. Protestants – and later also secularists – were wary of the Church's reluctance to allow Catholics to intermingle with their fellow Americans in a variety of settings, especially with the hierarchy's emphasis on obliging Catholic parents to exclusively send their children to Catholic schools. Beyond this and other specific reproaches, they especially highlighted the fundamental incompatibility between the First Amendment and the Church's teachings on religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

The harsh words of the nineteenth century Catholic hierarchy in Rome and in many other countries – including, of course, Spain – strongly contrasted with the vehement statement made in 1948 by archbishop John McNicholas, president of the American bishops conference, to «The New York Times»: «We deny absolutely and without any qualification that the Catholic bishops of the United States are seeking a union of church and state by any endeavors whatsoever, either proximate or remote»<sup>11</sup>. Certainly, he said so in the midst of the late-1940s wave of anti-Catholicism, as we will see later. But what is more interesting about such a declaration is that its wording was actually very similar to many previous stances by American prelates since the times of John Carroll, the first bishop of the primatial see of Baltimore and brother of one of the signatories of the

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<sup>9</sup> See M.S. MASSA, *The Last Acceptable Prejudice: Anti-Catholicism in America*, Crossroads, New York 2003, pp. 18-39.

<sup>10</sup> P. BLANSHARD, in *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Beacon, Boston 1949), conspicuously portrayed this view. See also J.P. DOLAN, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*, Oxford University Press, New York 2002, and J.T. MCGREEVY, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, W. W. Norton, New York 2003, pp. 91-126 and 166-215.

<sup>11</sup> THE NEW YORK TIMES, *Denies Catholics Oppose Separation*, in «The New York Times», 26 January 1948.



American independence<sup>12</sup>. Religious freedom and church-state separation was repeatedly endorsed by the Catholic Church in the United States<sup>13</sup>.

Why did the American Catholic hierarchy display such a different approach to these matters since so old times? One answer points to a disparity of historical experience. In spite of the abovementioned difficulties, the experience of American Catholics with freedom and separation was very different from that of the Church in Europe or in Latin America, where liberal governments struggled with Church hierarchy in overwhelmingly Catholic countries like France, the Italian states, Mexico or Spain. The American experience had been different and, in some ways, unique in the world. There, freedom of worship and church disestablishment was not born of a secularist inclination against a dominant religion, but rather flowed from a wise solution to deal with religious pluralism and individual freedoms. In the United States, both religious freedom and church-state separation were never understood as a weapon against any particular denomination. The First Amendment meant therefore for the Catholic Church the best deal for its growth and flourishing. Although, ultimately, Pope Leo XIII acknowledged this, at the same time he also specifically warned American Catholics that they could not claim their way as a universal solution<sup>14</sup>. In other words, it was a good hypothesis for the United States' specific situation, but not the ideal situation, which was, in the end, the Catholic state.

This corresponds to a conspicuously casuistic distinction between the thesis and the hypothesis. As an Italian Jesuit exposed just a year before Pius IX's famous *Syllabus*, pontifical condemnations of religious freedom and church-state separation should be interpreted as «universal principles regarding human nature in itself and to the divine order», i.e., as a thesis, «but considered as hypothesis, i.e. as provisions appropriate to the special conditions of this or that people, they can be legitimate; and Catholics can

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<sup>12</sup> C. O'DONNELL, *John Carroll and the Origins of an American Catholic Church, 1783–1815*, in «William and Mary Quarterly», LXVIII:I, 2011, p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> J.T. ELLIS, *Church and state. An American Catholic tradition*, in «Harper's», November 1953.

<sup>14</sup> LEO XIII, *Longinqua oceani* (1895) and *Testem benevolentiae* (1899). See J. HENNESEY, *American Catholics: A history of the Roman Catholic community in the United States*, Oxford University Press, New York 1981, pp. 196-203.

love and defend them, doing beautiful and useful work, when they use them, as effectively as they can, in the service of religion and of justice»<sup>15</sup>. Charles de Montalembert, a French Catholic liberal writer, mocked this kind of reasoning by summarizing it as follows: «when I am weaker, I demand liberty because it is your principle; but when I am stronger, I take it away because it is not my principle»<sup>16</sup>. According to that perhaps pretty unscrupulous logic, non-Catholic Americans were right to question what might happen if Catholics one day became the majority in the United States. Considering demographic trends, the likelihood of a Catholic majority in America was a very reasonable supposition during the postwar years, as was the concern that such a majority could «use freedom to overthrow freedom»<sup>17</sup>.

This charge became commonplace in American anti-Catholic discourse and, of course, it turned into an almost daily slogan when, as periodically happened, the so-called Catholic question made the headlines. Late 1940s and early 1950s was one of these moments when Catholicism in America became a prominent matter of public discussion, as happened in 1947 with the landmark decision of the Supreme Court that declared that some public financing programs that benefitted parochial schools do not violate the First Amendment<sup>18</sup>. The controversy became truly heated and the debate went further, digging up old and new polemics surrounding the Catholic Church and the role it played in American society<sup>19</sup>. Shortly thereafter, backlash to the parochial school controversy propelled the creation of the influential advocacy group Protestants and Other Americans United for

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<sup>15</sup> C.M. CURCI, *Il Congresso Cattolico di Malines e le libertà moderne*, in «La Civiltà Cattolica», V/VIII, 1863, pp. 129-149, as translated in M. RHONHEIMER, *The Common Good of Constitutional Democracy*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2013, p. 387.

<sup>16</sup> C. DE MONTALEMBERT, *De l'appel comme d'abus et des articles organiques du Concordat*, in «Le Correspondant», April 1857, pp. 652-653. Unless otherwise noted, translations of quotes are mine.

<sup>17</sup> THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, *Exceptionable Intolerance*, in «The Christian Century», 12 August 1953.

<sup>18</sup> D.L. DRAKEMAN, *Everson v. Board of Education and the Quest for the Historical Establishment Clause*, in «American Journal of Legal History», IL: CXIX, 2007, pp. 127-135.

<sup>19</sup> J. HENNESEY, *American Catholics*, cit., pp. 294-300.

Separation of Church and State<sup>20</sup> and made Paul Blanshard's *American Freedom and Catholic Power* a real bestseller, which, according to a Catholic journalist, is one of the most influential anti-Catholics books ever written<sup>21</sup>. The tide seemed to ebb during the mid-1950s, but it vigorously resurged when John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a Catholic Senator, started his race towards the White House. Before that, the only Catholic to run for the presidency was Democratic New Yorker Al Smith. The Republican candidate Herbert Hoover defeated him and, admittedly, being Catholic was one of Smith's major handicaps<sup>22</sup>. The presidential campaign of 1928 became a bitter national debate not just about the fitness of a Catholic president, but also about Catholic citizens' loyalty to the Constitution, democracy and all in all to the American people. Three decades later, things were very different on the American political scene. Of course, the debate was milder and, in the end, his Catholicism did not impede the young Kennedy's victory<sup>23</sup>. While the controversy was indeed milder, it was still in the air. The Church's teachings on religious freedom and church-state separation, although increasingly nuanced, were still in force, and thus Protestant uneasiness toward Catholicism's progress remained.

### 3. *Franco's Spain, the Catholic dictatorship*

As if all this were not enough, another contentious issue came to complicate matters for American Catholics during those turbulent times.

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<sup>20</sup> That organization's advocacy – nowadays just known as Americans United for Separation of Church and State – eventually involved issues concerning many denominations, often setting them against Evangelical Protestantism and conservative politicians. However, their first steps were absolutely determined by the confrontation between Protestants and secularists against Catholics (see the available online description of the organization's records at Princeton University Library Department of Rare Books and Special Collections website: <https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/MC185#description>). All internet links are retrieved on 2023, March 2.

<sup>21</sup> R.P. LOCKWOOD, *The Five Most Influential Anti-Catholic Books*, in «This Rock», May 2007.

<sup>22</sup> J. HENNESEY, *American Catholics*, cit., p. 246. See also R.A. SLAYTON, *The Rise and Redemption of Al Smith*, The Free Press, New York 2001, pp. 259-328.

<sup>23</sup> See T.J. CARTY, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2004.

«[I]f Roman Catholicism continues to grow», claimed a Presbyterian theologian in 1949, «the situation of Protestants everywhere will be as it is in Spain»<sup>24</sup>. This certainty was widely shared among American non-Catholics, especially when the public's concern for the so-called Catholic menace escalated. Spain's situation showed that the thesis of a Catholic state, which then suppressed religious rights, could be real and could exist in the twentieth century. In the English-speaking world, Spain represented the archetype of Catholic intolerance, a portrayal that was intermingled with the Black Legend<sup>25</sup>.

The United States' relationship with Francoist Spain was additionally troublesome<sup>26</sup>. Franco's regime was a nasty military dictatorship that ominously collaborated with Hitler and Mussolini during World War II. After the war, the Allies considered overthrowing Franco, but fear of a Communist takeover dissuaded them. The regime remained a pariah, diplomatically isolated and condemned by the United Nations, but its luck began to change as the Cold War worsened. The Pentagon asked with increasing insistence for a rapprochement with Spain due to its geostrategic value. Relations with the Spanish regime steadily improved until the two countries signed a defense agreement in 1953. The United States thus became the main foreign ally of Francoism. The *Caudillo's* gloomy recent past was the bitterest pill to swallow, as was the regime's roughly undemocratic features. But lack of religious freedom awoke strong feelings too. However, this lack of religious freedom was not just part of a general suppression of civil rights, as could happen in other dictatorships, but rather was the distinctive feature of a genuine Catholic dictatorship. Protestants and secularists found this aspect of the friendly dictatorship to which the United States was pouring millions of dollars most outrageous, while American Catholics found it most troublesome and embarrassing.

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<sup>24</sup> M. CLARK, *Reformed Church Hears Franco Hit*, in «The New York Times», 17 February 1949.

<sup>25</sup> See P.W. POWELL, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque 2008<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> For a comprehensive bibliography of Spanish-American relations during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) see L. DELGADO-D. CORRALES, *Relaciones entre España y los Estados Unidos en el siglo XX: Bibliografía orientativa*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Alicante 2016, pp. 14-29.

Paradoxically, the Spanish regime felt more indifference than hostility towards religious minorities. Of course, they were not seen with sympathy, but they were not considered a danger either, and therefore the repression they suffered cannot be compared with what the real enemies of the regime went through. In Spain a big religious question certainly loomed, but as happened in many other Latin countries, it amounted to a conflict between Catholics and secularists, not among different religions. Spaniards who practiced non-Catholic faiths constituted just a few thousand people and they were politically peaceful with no intention of challenging the regime. Estimations of their numbers vary. There were about 30,000 Protestants of different denominations<sup>27</sup> – most of them descendants of people who converted during a brief period of religious freedom from 1868-1874<sup>28</sup>, in addition to alien residents – plus an even smaller numbers of Jews and Muslims<sup>29</sup>. Although persecution against Spanish Protestants was not seriously oppressive, they certainly were aware that the only way to avoid further problems was to extensively disseminate the abuses they could suffer in order to mobilize foreign protest<sup>30</sup>. In this way, the United States and other Western countries widely knew of Spanish Protestants' plight<sup>31</sup>.

While Protestants and other religious minorities were not criminally persecuted as, for example, Communists were, they still did not enjoy full

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<sup>27</sup> That was the figure estimated by a memorandum from the Spanish Diplomatic Information Office, April 6, 1960 (Universidad de Navarra General Archive, Marcelino Oreja Aguirre Papers, box 36, doc. 9). Most newspapers, both at home and abroad, echoed this figure during the 1960s (press kit for the Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, January 2, 1965, *ibid.*, box 35, doc. 1).

<sup>28</sup> See J.B. VILAR, *Intolerancia y libertad en la España contemporánea: Los orígenes del protestantismo español actual*, Istmo, Madrid 1994.

<sup>29</sup> S.F. WEXLER, *Rights for Spanish Protestants?*, in «The Christian Century», 7 July 1965; T. SZULC, *Jews Return to a Synagogue in Spain*, in «The New York Times», 17 October 1966; E.K. CULHANE, *Religious Freedom in Spain*, in «America», 13 January 1968.

<sup>30</sup> M. LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ, *La España protestante*, Sedmay, Madrid 1976, pp. 38-42 and 62-65.

<sup>31</sup> As an example, «The New York Times» mentioned the lack of religious freedom in Spain up to 84 times from 1945 to 1965. The abovementioned 1965 press kit (Universidad de Navarra General Archive, Marcelino Oreja Aguirre Papers, box 35, doc. 1) gathered an impressive amount of press stories from European, North American and Latin American newspapers about the situation in Spain when the government announced a draft for a new religious tolerance law.

religious freedom. What, then, was their exact legal status in Franco's Spain? What could they do and not do? In July 1945, a few weeks after the end of the war in Europe, Franco passed a bill called *Fuero de los Españoles*, literally Charter of the Spaniards, a kind of bill of rights aimed to wither the authoritarian face of the regime<sup>32</sup>. Article 6 thereof declared that, «no one shall be disturbed for his religious beliefs or the private exercise of his worship. No ceremonies or external manifestations shall be permitted except for those that pertain to the Catholic Religion»<sup>33</sup>. As detailed below, this wording is almost identical to that of article 11 in the 1876 Constitution, when, after the revolutionary period of 1868-1874, religious toleration was seen as a good middle ground between the complete religious freedom of the previous years and the absolute intolerance once practiced. Theoretically, non-Catholics in Francoist Spain could therefore worship privately inside their temples, though they could not appearing as such from outside; they could contract civil marriage, bury their dead in civil cemeteries and manage their own schools. In turn, they could not publicly display their faith or acts of worship and they were strictly prohibited from proselytizing.

Things were not so clear, however, in everyday life and the Protestant experience very much depended on the personal whims of officials and on the local clergy's anti-Protestant zeal. In 1950, several Spanish Protestant leaders wrote to Franco asking for a clarification of their rights and duties, according to the framework of *Fuero's* article 6. They pled for specific provisions on many issues: reopening and inaugurating places of worship and schools, printing Bibles, hymnbooks and other religious literature for their use only in churches, respect for the conscience of children and students at both public and private educational institutions, lifting hindrances to civil marriages when one or the two parties were baptized as Catholics, right to claim public social assistance without the imposition of conditions which it would be impossible or grievous to the Protestant

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<sup>32</sup> E. ÁLVAREZ CORA, *La constitución postiza: el nacimiento del Fuero de los Españoles*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid 2010, pp. 23-28.

<sup>33</sup> *Fuero de los Españoles*, 17 July 1945, published in the Spanish official gazette «Boletín Oficial del Estado», 18 July 1945, pp. 358-360. The drafting process is analyzed in E. ÁLVAREZ CORA, *La constitución postiza*, cit., pp. 185-209.

conscience to accept, exemption from Catholic practices for those subjected to military or penal jurisdiction, as well as extension of the right to receive spiritual assistance from their pastors. They also petitioned for guarantees not to be disrupted while in services and for appropriate burials where civil cemeteries did not exist<sup>34</sup>. Ultimately, they besought a generous interpretation of the abovementioned article that in many instances – perhaps most of them, but not always and consistently – was what local authorities actually applied. It was not just a matter of little legal certainty. The limited tolerance that existed in Franco's Spain was the result of an uneasy and unstable balance between the fundamental principles that shaped the regime's identity, the "National-Catholic" zeal of some of their social supporters, and the need to appease Western powers. Without the latter element, religious suppression would have been harsher and more thorough, and tolerance, if it existed, would have been more narrowly applied.

By doing all this, Franco was simply fulfilling what the Church required of Catholic rulers of Catholic countries. Although certainly just a few countries still fulfilled these requirements, Spain was, according to the traditional Catholic view, an example of the "thesis", the ideal situation for a Catholic country. Of course, this was the most worrying part of the problem both for Catholics and non-Catholics in the United States. However, in order to thoroughly understand the complexity of the question, it is important to note that restricting religious freedom was not just the result of strict obedience to the Church's teachings on the Catholic state, but also corresponded to a comprehensive interpretation of the very essence of Spain as a nation. According to a consolidated narrative, Spain was a Catholic nation and its Catholicism – its Catholic unity – shaped its nationality and defined the most intimate nucleus of its historical

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<sup>34</sup> Besides newspapers pieces, the list of disabilities can be found in several books published for the American reader, such as: R. PATTEE, *The Religious Question in Spain*, National Council of Catholic Men, Washington D.C. 1950, pp. 40-46; J.D. HUGHEY JR., *Religious Freedom in Spain: Its Ebb and Flow*, Broadman Press, Nashville 1955, pp. 140-143 and 155-161; J. DELPECH, *The Oppression of Protestants in Spain*, Beacon, Boston 1955, pp. 58-91; C. IRIZARRY, *The Thirty Thousand: Modern Spain and Protestantism*, Harcourt, Brace, and World, New York 1966, pp. 92-204.

existence<sup>35</sup>. The regime that the Civil War gave birth to represented itself as a phoenix-like resurrection of the eternal Spain. There was of course a great deal of disagreement among the Civil War's victors and they fiercely competed for shares of power under the undisputed leadership of Generalissimo Franco. Their approaches to the Catholic identity of the state and the nation were not always identical, but all of them certainly agreed upon the ongoing revival of a Catholic Spain that went beyond a mere emendation of the anticlerical Second Republic. Rather, all the nineteenth century should be rectified. The Civil War was read as the grand failure of a misguided modernity and Spain needed to recover her genuine soul, that which made her great during the Habsburgs times. In this larger discussion over what Spain was and what she ought to be, the matter of what to do with tiny religious minorities was just a collateral aspect. For Liberals, and of course for all further left, without religious freedom, Spaniards could not really be free and Spain remained a stranger to modern and progressive nations. For Catholics, recognizing religious freedom meant giving up Catholic unity and thus depriving Spain of its very identity, as Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo famously averred late in the nineteenth century, «Spain, evangelizer of half of the world. Spain, hammer of heretics, light of Trent, sword of the Pope, cradle of Saint Ignatius. That is our greatness and our glory: we have no other»<sup>36</sup>. Given these views, Spaniards frequently and bitterly quarreled over this issue for more than a century. Actual implications, that is, the specific situation of religious minorities, barely mattered beside the titanic struggle for the Spanish identity, for the national soul<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> A. BOTTI, *Cielo y dinero*, cit., pp. 69-80; M. SUÁREZ CORTINA, *Entre cirios y garrotes: política y religión en la España contemporánea, 1808-1936*, Universidad de Cantabria-Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santander 2014, pp. 73-121; J. LOUZAO, *Nación y catolicismo en la España contemporánea. Revisitando una interrelación histórica*, in «Ayer», XC, 2013, pp. 65-89; J. ÁLVAREZ JUNCO, *Mater Dolorosa: La idea de España en el siglo XIX*, Taurus, Madrid 2015<sup>13</sup>, pp. 396-464.

<sup>36</sup> M. MENÉNDEZ PELAYO, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Linkgua, Barcelona 2017 [1882], book 8, p. 238.

<sup>37</sup> M. SUÁREZ CORTINA, *Entre cirios y garrotes*, cit., 33-71 and R. ESCOBEDO, *Las dos Españas y la libertad religiosa (1812-1978): breve balance historiográfico*, in «Historia Actual Online», XXXV/III, 2014, pp. 67-75.



Religious freedom was openly and widely discussed for the first time during the constitutional assembly of 1854-56. Catholic unity had not been seriously challenged up until then, even during revolutionary periods in the first half of the nineteenth century, although the case for religious freedom had been steadily gaining ground among far-left liberals. Whereas conservatives staunchly opposed any breach in Catholic unity – as did the Church hierarchy, wider Catholic opinion and, of course, absolutist traditionalists of the Carlist party – center-left liberals instead proposed a halfway solution: religious tolerance. Here, linguistic distinction is relevant. According to it, freedom can only recognize the good; it can never be assigned to an evil, which can only and at most be tolerated, as was the case, for example, with prostitution. For the very few non-Catholics that could exist in Spain at the time, private worship barely modified their clandestine religious life. Nevertheless, discussions were extremely heated. Although eventually such a constitution was never enacted, a few years later, in 1868, a new revolution ousted queen Isabella II and a new constitutional assembly was summoned. Again, the most controversial issue was religious freedom. Liberals across the board – from center-left to radical far-left – fully resolved to enact religious freedom and many of them advocated indeed for church-state separation. The Church triggered an unprecedented and massive nationwide Catholic mobilization. The question of religious freedom became indeed more controversial than discussions surrounding establishing a monarchy or a republic. Finally, the 1869 Constitution recognized the right to religious freedom for the first time in Spanish history.

The 1868 revolution inaugurated six years of political turmoil that eventually paved the way for the return of the Bourbon dynasty with the enthronement of Isabella's son Alfonso XII in 1874. The restored parliamentary monarchy relied on bipartisan politicians that learned valuable lessons from both those revolutionary six years and the authoritarian drift of Isabella's last years. The 1876 Constitution succeeded in gathering wide national consensus and solidified a long period of stability and progress – indeed, the longest up to now in our modern history. Yet, as happened before in 1854-1856 and in 1869, dispute grew around religious freedom. More left-wing Liberals struggled to keep the so

recently conquered freedom, while Catholic masses rallied again for the nation's religious unity. The government's proposal, as seen above, thus became such a good deal – halfway between both maximalist positions – that even Franco's regime opted for it. No liberty, no persecution, just tolerance for strictly private worship. For the third consecutive time, a constitutional assembly had devoted a disproportionate share of discussions to this very issue, but it had been perhaps the most pragmatic solution for the real country. Although certainly most Spaniards were probably not ready enough for very visible displays of "foreign" religions, that same social majority was not likely to bear an Inquisition-like persecution of dissidents, especially considering the increasing numbers of secularized and even non-believing locals. Conservative politicians succeeded in convincing an important part of those who doggedly battled religious tolerance. An unfaltering faction held out and called themselves *integristas*, that is, those who followed the "*doctrina católica íntegra*" or the whole Catholic doctrine. Their intransigence meant they only recognized Carlist party supporters as true Catholics, that is, the ultra-right wing Absolutist party twice defeated on the battleground. Fearing a kind of schism among Spanish Catholics, Leo XIII forced them to reconcile and *integrismo* eventually faded away<sup>38</sup>.

At the same time, little by little, the Spanish left detached from religion. Little by little too, they began to see religious freedom not just as a human right, but also as the first step in emancipating mankind from an essentially alienating and oppressive reality. Left-leaning Republicans viewed the Catholic religion as the main stumbling block toward progress in Spain<sup>39</sup>, and Socialists and Anarchists of course saw all religions as a tool of class dominators, as did their fellow comrades around the world. Religion became an increasingly dividing matter for a more and more polarized society. Eventually, the Restoration system failed to evolve into a modern

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<sup>38</sup> V. CÁRCEL, *Historia de la Iglesia en la España contemporánea*, Palabra, Madrid 2002, pp. 113-116.

<sup>39</sup> J. DE LA CUEVA, *Movilización política e identidad anticlerical, 1898-1910*, in «Ayer», XLI, 2001, pp. 101-125; M.P. SALOMÓN, *El discurso anticlerical en la construcción de una identidad nacional española republicana (1898-1936)*, in «Hispania Sacra», LIV, 2002, pp. 485-497; M. SUÁREZ CORTINA, *Entre cirios y garrotes*, cit., pp. 125-184, 215-222 and 231-240.

democracy without being surpassed either by a military dictatorship or by a new revolutionary turmoil. Therefore, Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship failed to avoid the advent of a left-wing Republic and the Republic failed to avoid the Civil War and the ultimate collapse of parliamentary government. The 1923-1930 military dictatorship did not emphasize religious features and followed the line of the Restoration system<sup>40</sup>. On the contrary, the religious question became a real cornerstone for the Republic. Not only religious freedom was recognized and church and state were separated, but also a complete array of anticlerical legislation was passed during the new regime's first months. At the same time, government anticlericalism was accompanied by an increasingly popular and street anticlericalism<sup>41</sup>. The political and social atmosphere worsened going forward and, when the 1936 military coup ended in wholesale civil war, left-leaning militias let loose a genocide-like persecution of clergymen, while lay Catholics and right-wing rebels rechristened the war as a Crusade<sup>42</sup>. The stakes could not have been higher between total suppression of Catholicism and a theocratic-like system. As we know, the latter prevailed.

As mentioned before, Franco eventually chose the 1876 Constitution's milder formula. Some Catholics in 1945 – though certainly not as many as in 1876 – resented the *Fuero's* tolerance. Among them, Pedro Cardinal Segura most loudly voiced his disappointment<sup>43</sup>. The archbishop of Seville invoked the blood that soldiers and martyrs spilled during the “Crusade”

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<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding the minor brushes studied in A. QUIROGA, *La trampa católica. La Iglesia y la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1929)*, in *Católicos y patriotas: Religión y nación en la Europa de entreguerras*, ed. por A. Botti, F. Montero y A. Quiroga, Sílex, Madrid 2013, pp. 161-192.

<sup>41</sup> See M. ÁLVAREZ TARDÍO, *Anticlericalismo y libertad de conciencia: política y religión en la Segunda República Española (1931-1936)*, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, Madrid 2002, and J. DE LA CUEVA, *El laicismo republicano: tolerancia e intolerancia religiosa en la Segunda República española*, in «Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez», XLIV-I, 2014, pp. 89-109.

<sup>42</sup> See G. REDONDO, *Historia de la Iglesia en España, 1931-1939*, Rialp, Madrid 1993, vol. 2.

<sup>43</sup> S. MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Los papeles perdidos del cardenal Segura*, Eunsia, Pamplona 2004, pp. 644-646.

to restore the nation's Catholic unity<sup>44</sup>. Surely, many more Catholics than those who aired their disagreement did not like *Fuero's* article 6. However, they surely preferred being silent or just moderately complaining partly because they weighed how the religious situation had improved with the new regime as well as because, of course, protests are not welcome in dictatorships. Certainly enough, Segura's positions and the way he uttered them far exceeded the mainstream traditionalist stance, even for Spanish standards<sup>45</sup>. As remarked before, a balance was needed: a balance between the prevailing mood on the international scene after the world war and diehard intolerants at home. The *Fuero de los Españoles* worked as a reasonable status quo although it certainly did not satisfy more intransigent stances or international public opinion. In any case, only full American-style religious freedom would work for American Catholics in order to shake off the heavy burden of Spanish intolerance that accompanied them everywhere.

However, this situation did not last forever. Surprisingly, it did not even last until the end of the dictatorship. In 1967, *Fuero de los Españoles'* article 6 was modified and a law ensuring religious liberty was passed<sup>46</sup>. What had happened? The answer is easy: *Dignitatis humanae*. This may sound too much simplistic, as Church documents rarely have such an effect so quickly, and the times certainly were already ripe in Spain for religious freedom, but the Vatican declaration made the change simply inescapable. As a Catholic state, Spain had no choice but to change its legislation to conform to the Church's teachings. The Fundamental Principles of the National Movement, a kind of basic law of Franco's regime, compelled Spanish nation to «[observe] the Law of God according to the Holy Catholic Church's doctrine»<sup>47</sup>. And Church teachings then commanded

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<sup>44</sup> F. GIL DELGADO, *Pedro Segura: un cardenal de fronteras*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 2001, p. 607.

<sup>45</sup> S. MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Los papeles perdidos*, cit., p. 812.

<sup>46</sup> Ley orgánica 1/1967, del Estado, de 10 de enero, published in «Boletín Oficial del Estado», 11 January 1967, pp. 466-477, and Ley 44/1967, de 28 de junio, regulando el ejercicio del derecho civil a la libertad en materia religiosa, published *ibid.*, 1 July 1967, pp. 9191-9194.

<sup>47</sup> Ley fundamental de 17 de mayo de 1958, por la que se promulgan los principios del Movimiento Nacional, published *ibid.*, n. 119, 19 May 1958, pp. 4511-4512.

recognition and protection of religious freedom. Moreover, after the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic confessional state ceased to be a desirable model even for the Church itself. The Council and especially its declaration on religious freedom entailed a thorough anthropological, theological and ecclesiological delegitimization of National Catholicism<sup>48</sup>. The regime would endure until the dictator's death in 1975, but it dramatically lost one of its main legitimating features. Few could ignore this, thence the stern resistance of some Francoist politicians, whose (literally) more-Catholic-than-the-pope stance was not as much religious as it was political. However, this is also one of the reasons why a certain kind of democracy seemed the only possible evolution for the regime, especially for the youngest among its ruling class<sup>49</sup>.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

After the Second Vatican Council, Protestants and secularists were no longer able to accuse Catholics of yearning for a kind of undemocratic regime like the Spanish one. But, in the meantime, between 1945 and 1965, Spain became a heavy burden, a worrisome source of embarrassing news that complicated their cultural battles. Secular and Protestant press seldom failed to recall the discrimination suffered by the Protestants each time Spain was mentioned, regardless of the specific topic in question. Therefore, Catholic periodicals were often compelled to reply to indictments and to nuance reports on the situation of non-Catholics in Spain, as well as to point out mirror instances of the ways Catholics were hindered in certain European Protestant countries. Yet, beyond its constricted religious tolerance, the fact that the Spanish Catholic state was a ruthless military dictatorship nearly unanimously displeased American audiences.

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<sup>48</sup> A. ÁLVAREZ BOLADO, *Los ecos de la Dignitatis Humanae en la Iglesia y la sociedad españolas*, in "*Dignitatis Humanae*". *La libertà religiosa in Paolo VI*, a cura di R. Papetti e R. Rossi, Istituto Paolo VI, Brescia 2007, p. 157.

<sup>49</sup> M. BLANCO FERNÁNDEZ, *La primera ley española de libertad religiosa: Génesis de la ley de 1967*, Euns, Pamplona 1999.

Hence, the Catholic press strove to polish what it deemed as a more accurate narrative. Accordingly, it claimed that, although Franco was a dictator, he was not the worst dictator ever and it was inexact to call him a Fascist, actual liberties in Spain were broader than those found behind the Iron Curtain, stories of oppression were grossly exaggerated, and so on. Conversely, Catholic periodicals paid much attention to the positive sides of life in Spain, highlighting the achievements – real or alleged – of Franco's social policies. In any case, criticism also found its way onto the pages of the Catholic press, not only in «The Commonwealth», a magazine that since the times of the Civil War departed from the mainstream pro-rebel and pro-Franco stances found in the Catholic press, but also among editors that were otherwise benevolent toward the Spanish dictatorship.

Reporting on Spain followed the pace of both Spanish and American course of events. Scrutiny of Spain intensified during United Nations debates on its reintegration into the international community or when American-Spanish cooperation agreements were discussed in Washington. Of course, individual events of mob violence or outrages against Protestants were inevitably followed by renewed commentary on the Spanish question. In addition, any domestic controversy related to Catholicism, such as the school bus issue, included the not-so-friendly reminder of the existence of a National-Catholic dictatorship in Spain. Interestingly enough, Spain's frequent appearance in the papers stimulated deeper concern for Spanish – and Hispanic – culture. An effort to understand Spanish intolerance in the framework of its historical peculiarities emerged, as did a genuine interest in the very valuable contributions of a civilization that, as previously discussed, owes an outsized share of its identity to the Catholic religion<sup>50</sup>.

Though very important and relevant, there was also an awareness that, at the end of the day, Spain was not the heart of the matter, which could rather be found in the fact that Catholicism needed a better understanding of the relationship between religious truth and human liberty, as well as of

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<sup>50</sup> R. ESCOBEDO, *Una narrativa católica sobre la España franquista para Estados Unidos: la revista America*, in *Narrativas en conflicto: libertad religiosa y relaciones Iglesia-Estado en los siglos XIX y XX*, coord. por R.D. García Pérez, Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, Cizur Menor 2020, pp. 341-361, plus other research from the same author, both in press and in progress.

the real nature of modern political communities. In short, an increasing number of voices clamored for a new Catholic approach to the issues of religious freedom and church-state relations. American bishops, priests, and theologians searched for answers a little more anxiously than in other countries, and Catholic journalists, op-ed columnists and lay leaders conjectured about a fair solution and did their best to refute the insidious charges of un-Americanism. But, as said above, the most mortifying aspect of these indictments was that American Catholics sincerely esteemed American liberties and strongly sensed that they were right in advocating for religious freedom and church-state separation not just for the United States, with its specific institutional history, but for all of mankind, Catholic Spain included.

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<sup>51</sup> All documents retrievable at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), except Pius XII's address, which was published in *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII*, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Roma 1954, vol. XV, pp. 477-492.

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1. *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

In the mid-1940s, the French movement Economy and Humanism sought to spread and expand its ideas and actions in Latin America, promoting the creation of local groups. In 1947, the Dominican friar Louis-Joseph Lebret, founder of the movement, made his first visit to South America. In this context, the Common Good Teams, headed by Juan Pablo Terra, were created in Montevideo, capital city of Uruguay. This paper seeks to identify and analyze the Latin American networks built and developed by the Economy and Humanism movement through the trajectory of Juan Pablo Terra from 1947 to 1957, the year the Latin American Center for Human Economy was founded in Montevideo. Terra was one of the key actors in the dissemination and circulation of Lebret's ideas and actions in Latin America. Hence the importance of resorting to the study of his trajectory –together with other actors and experiences – to better understand and analyze the networks of the Economy and Humanism movement in this region of the world. In this way, it is intended to explain the impact of Christian humanist thought in sectors of Uruguayan Catholic youth activism, as well as to study the role of these actors as disseminators and translators of the Economy and Humanism movement at the regional level.

There is valuable research that analyzes the impact of Lebret's thought and the Economy and Humanism movement in Latin America, but most

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<sup>1</sup> This work is part of a wider research associated with my current doctoral project which focuses on Juan Pablo Terra and Catholic youth in Uruguay during the Cold War between 1947 and 1973, financed by the Postgraduate Academic Commission (CAP) of the University of the Republic.

of it is focused on the case of Brazil and on aspects related to the Human Economy method and its contributions to urbanism<sup>2</sup>. The networks built in Uruguay through Juan Pablo Terra and other young Catholics of the period have scarcely been studied. Some relevant data are provided by Denis Pelletier in his influential doctoral thesis published in 1996<sup>3</sup>. Recently, Virginia Pontual's work on Lebrete's Latin American trajectory and the constitution of a network of social and religious relations in Latin America stands out<sup>4</sup>. Also several studies by Susana Monreal on the incidence of the French Dominicans of the province of Toulouse in Montevideo in the Economy and Humanism movement in Uruguay and the region<sup>5</sup>.

An important part of the documentary corpus used in this paper comes from the private collection of Juan Pablo Terra, kept at the Christian Humanist Institute in Montevideo named after him. It comprises uncatalogued sources related to Catholic Action, Christian syndicalism, cooperativism, the Economy and Humanism movement and Christian democracy. It consists mainly of materials donated by his widow, María del Carmen Ortiz. They contain correspondence, travel journals, surveys, brochures, minutes, press clippings, etc. These documents are very useful for the study of the numerous regional and global networks built by Juan Pablo Terra and several actors of the Economy and Humanism movement

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<sup>2</sup> Without claiming to be exhaustive, some of these recent contributions: M. ANGELO, *Les Développeurs: Louis-Joseph Lebrete e a SAGMACS na formação de um grupo de ação para o planejamento urbano no Brasil*, PhD Thesis, Escola de Engenharia de São Carlos, Universidade de São Paulo, São Carlos 2010; L. CESTARO, *A atuação de Lebrete e da SAGMACS no Brasil (1947-1964): ideias, planos e contribuições*, PhD Thesis, Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade de São Paulo, São Carlos 2015; among others.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. D. PELLETIER, *Economie et Humanisme. De l'utopie communautaire au combat pour le tiers-monde. 1941-1966*, Cerf, Paris 1996. I am grateful to Ph.D. Susana Monreal for providing me with this material.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebrete na América Latina: um exitoso laboratório de experiências em planejamento humanista*, Letra Capital-Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro-Recife 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. S. MONREAL, *Dominicos de Toulouse en Montevideo: una comunidad controvertida en un período bisagra (1953-1970)*, in «Cuadernos del CLAEH», CIX, 2019-1, pp. 63-84 and *La apuesta desarrollista de los dominicos franceses en el Cono Sur: Paul Ramlot, OP y el IEPAL*, in «Itinerantes: Revista de Historia y Religión», XII, 2020, pp. 59-82.



and Christian democracy. In order to avoid representation biases, the information gathered was supplemented and compared with other sources and the current literature on the subject.

## 2. *Juan Pablo Terra and the Economy and Humanism Movement*

Juan Pablo Terra Gallinal was born in Montevideo in 1924 and died in that city in 1991<sup>6</sup>. He was the son of Horacio Terra Arocena and Margarita Gallinal Carbajal. In 1949 he completed his degree in architecture at the University of the Republic. In 1951 he married María del Carmen Ortiz, a history teacher, and they had eight children. During his youth, he actively participated in the Catholic student movement and was a member of the Civic Union, a traditional Uruguayan Catholic party. He was an activist in the University Federation of Catholic Students, a branch of the Uruguayan Federation of Catholic Students. Until April 1945 he was the president of the Circle of Catholic Students of Architecture and then resigned to assume the presidency of the National Council of Catholic Students, where he served until October 1946.

During this period, he participated in various regional events such as the Second Inter-American Assembly of Catholic University Students of *Pax Romana* in Lima, Peru, March 10-19, 1946. Among the organizers was Fernando Stiglich Gazzin, with whom Terra maintained a friendship and running correspondence, as well as with other Catholic laymen and clergymen from Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, etc. Stiglich was an activist of the Catholic Action in Lima. In 1941 he organized the Catholic Student Youth, which in 1943 formed the National Union of Catholic Students (UNEC). Later, in 1947, he was co-founder of the Christian Democratic Group, precursor of the Christian Democratic Party in Peru that emerged between 1955 and 1956. He was also director of the Catholic center Fides<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Cfr. L. GARCÍA MOURELLE, *Juan Pablo Terra (Montevideo, 1924-Montevideo, 1991)*, in «Historias Universitarias», 2020. <https://historiasuniversitarias.edu.uy/biografia/terra-juan-pablo/>.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. J. ARA GOÑI, *La Iglesia militante y la Acción Católica en Perú (1920-1936)*, PhD Thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2015, p. 234. <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/handle/2445/102339>.

In addition to his relevant role as a politician and student activist, he was later one of the key actors in the network built by Lebreton and the Economy and Humanism movement in Latin America. It is necessary to highlight that from his participation in these student and political spaces Terra established close contacts with leaders of Catholic Action and Latin American Christian Democracy. Therefore, prior to Lebreton's arrival in 1947, there were links that served as fertile ground for the subsequent development of networks with the French movement.

The Economy and Humanism movement was based on the doctrine of Human Economy, which sought to overcome the visions that restricted development to economic factors, proposing a holistic understanding seen as a total process of transformation of a society and its environments with the human being at the center. These proposals were part of a broader process of dissemination and promotion of social Catholicism in Latin America. This trend, which emerged in Europe in the mid-19th century, sought to establish a Christian social order by means of a third way as an alternative to capitalism and socialism, based on the so-called Social Doctrine of the Church<sup>8</sup>.

Since its foundation in 1941, the movement led by Lebreton set out to establish study centers and training schools outside its national borders. Due to the difficult European war context, this initial objective of expanding and multiplying the movement outside France became a reality after the end of World War II. Between April and September 1947 Lebreton visited South America for the first time. He visited cities in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile, thus beginning his Latin American trajectory.

Since his arrival, he held numerous meetings and contacts with political, economic, and religious leaders with the intention of forming a network of Economy and Humanism in Latin America. Brazil was the country where Lebreton first contributed and, to a large extent, served him as an experience for his planning practices applied in other countries<sup>9</sup>. In Rio de Janeiro he came into contact with Alceu Amoroso Lima, a prominent Brazilian Catholic intellectual and politician, who played a key

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<sup>8</sup> Cfr. R. DE ROUX, *La romanización de la Iglesia Católica en América Latina: una estrategia de larga duración*, in «Pro-Posições», LXXIII, 2014, pp. 31-54.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebreton na América Latina*, cit., p. 22.

role in the introduction and circulation of the ideas of Economy and Humanism in Latin America.

Parallel to the promotion of Economy and Humanism, since his arrival in Brazil Lebrete also promoted the foundation of a movement of Christian democrats in the Latin American region. For this purpose, he gave Amoroso Lima a letter addressed to all the participants of a meeting to be held in Montevideo by Christian Democrat politicians and intellectuals from Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. As a result of this event, the so-called Declaration of Montevideo was drafted, which established the foundations of the movement and later received the support of intellectuals from Bolivia and Peru. In July 1949 it was constituted as the Christian Democratic Organization of America (ODCA), influenced by the philosophy of Jacques Maritain and Lebreteian human economy<sup>10</sup>.

According to Pontual, some participants of the April 1947 meeting in Montevideo served as political support for Lebrete's arrival in Uruguay and also for the actions of the Economy and Humanism movement<sup>11</sup>. In particular, Amoroso Lima, Manuel Antonio Garretón Walker of the Chilean Falange Nacional and the Uruguayans Dardo Regules and Horacio Terra Arocena. The latter, as mentioned before, was Juan Pablo Terra's father, besides being an architect and a prominent political leader and parliamentarian for the Civic Union.

When Lebrete arrived in Montevideo in June 1947, Montevideo was experiencing a scenario of economic and social prosperity as a result of the international situation after World War II. The country benefited from the demand for agricultural products and the growth of foreign trade, as well as from the development based on the import substitution industrialization (ISI)<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, this certain economic boom was accompanied by a process of social integration and political stability. It is worth adding that the current Uruguayan territory was occupied late by Europeans and the institutional weakness that characterized the colonial implantation also

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the creation of ODCA and the impact of Lebrete's and Maritain's thought, see O. COMPAGNON, *Jacques Maritain et l'Amérique du Sud: Le modèle malgré lui*, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebrete na América Latina*, cit., p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. A. FREGA-M. MARONNA-Y. TROCHÓN, *Baldomir y la restauración democrática (1933-1946)*, Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, Montevideo 1987, p. 148.

affected Catholicism, being considered the most secular country in Latin America<sup>13</sup>.

In order to get closer to Lebre's first contacts during his trip to Uruguay, we have above all, valuable documents that make up the private collection of Juan Pablo Terra. For example, there is a handwritten notebook containing some notes made by Terra about Lebre's diary or Journal, a manuscript in which the French priest recorded events, impressions, and reflections, especially during his travels outside France<sup>14</sup>. According to this source, we know that in his first visit to Montevideo in June 1947 Lebre met with some members of the Uruguayan ecclesiastical hierarchy, getting a positive impression of the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Alberto Levame and the Archbishop of Montevideo Antonio María Barbieri. Lebre also gave three lectures in Montevideo, one at the Catholic Club on *Spiritualité de l'Engagement*, one at the French Lycée and another at the Association of Catholic Students and Professionals on communism. The audience at the Catholic Club included Juan Pablo Terra and his friend Carlos Tosar, both architecture students. In addition, Lebre made contacts with prominent Catholic intellectuals and politicians, such as Regules and Terra Arocena.

According to the aforementioned sources, Terra Arocena had reached an agreement in principle with Lebre for an Uruguayan SAGMA<sup>15</sup>. He was referring to the decision to create a local section of Economy and Humanism, following the French model of the *Société pour l'application du graphisme et de la mécanographie à l'analyse*, created in January 1946 in Saint-Étienne. Moreover, on that first trip Lebre established an agreement in principle with Barreiro publishing house located in Montevideo «to bring works and import by EH all kinds of French economics and sociology books»<sup>16</sup>. It was a constant concern of the Economy and

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<sup>13</sup> See for example: G. CAETANO, *Laicidad, ciudadanía y política en el Uruguay contemporáneo: matrices y revisiones de una cultura laicista*, in «Revista Cultura y Religión», VII, 2013, pp. 116-139.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebre na América Latina*, cit., p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. J. TERRA, *Notas sobre el diario del P. Lebre en su visita a América (confidencial)*, in J. Terra Collection, Instituto Humanista Cristiano Juan Pablo Terra, Montevideo (hereafter: J. Terra Collection).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Translation of this and all primary sources in this article are done by the author.

Humanism movement to promote the diffusion and dissemination of its bibliographical productions at the regional level.

Although Lebrete's first visit to Uruguay left a very positive balance, comments recorded by Terra reveal some tensions. Above all, he was also critical and reticent about the actions of the leader of Economy and Humanism in Brazil:

Amazing reception in Brazil. Perhaps partially explained by the great preparation by the Dominican Fathers. But it seems somewhat fictitious: How can they be immediately ready to embark on such an action and to set up a Sagma, when we little kids demand to study the thing for a year before getting involved? To move Dad from his place it is necessary to push him with a locomotive! People capable of building don't fuss like that among us<sup>17</sup>.

He was referring to the foundation of SAGMACS (*Sociedade para Análises Gráficas e Mecanográficas Aplicada aos Complexos Sociais*) in São Paulo in July 1947, barely three months after Lebrete's arrival in Brazil. According to Terra, implementing such an institution under Uruguayan conditions demanded more effort and time. These slower rhythms were explained, on the one hand, by the need for a more detailed study of the proposals received, but also by generational issues. In particular, the possible barriers that could arise from the elderly members who led the Catholic movements of the time, as was the case of his father Terra Arocena. Juan Pablo Terra saw this with caution, in part, due to these generational tensions that slowed down or delayed changes in the Uruguayan Catholic environment.

### 3. *The Common Good Teams in the national and regional context*

Although indeed the first contacts established by Lebrete during his first visit to Uruguay in 1947 were mainly with adult leaders of the Civic Union and Catholic Action, such as Regules and Terra Arocena, those who organized and strongly promoted the creation of the first local group of

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<sup>17</sup> J. TERRA, *Notas*, cit.

Economy and Humanism in Montevideo were a group of young university students, led by Juan Pablo Terra and Carlos Tosar. They were students and recent professional graduates from the University Federation of Catholic Students, one of the youth branches of the Uruguayan Catholic Action.

Inspired and encouraged by the visit of the French priest, they formed a group called the Common Good Teams (EBC by its initials in Spanish). According to an article written by Terra in 1988, it should not be understood as a creation of Lebret, «but as an Uruguayan process, arising from our own currents of thought and our own anxieties, fertilized, of course, by Lebret's ideas»<sup>18</sup>. In addition to the impulse of the Dominican friar, there were preexisting national conditions linked to socio-political and religious processes, which generated fertile ground for the implantation of Lebret's ideas and of the Economy and Humanism movement in Uruguay.

The foundational core of the EBC was formed, in addition to Terra and Tosar, by the lawyers Dionisio Jorge Garmendia and Nelly Beatriz Tabares, as well as by the engineer Alberto Pígola<sup>19</sup>. The average age was in the early twenties. Several were involved in teaching highschool and university levels, as well as in Christian trade unionism and party politics, especially in the Civic Union and later in the Uruguayan Christian Democratic Party, founded in 1962<sup>20</sup>. It should also be noted that there were many married couples within the EBC members, such as Juan Pablo Terra and María del Carmen Ortiz, Dionisio Garmendia and Beatriz Tabares, Esperanza Martínez and Miguel Ángel García, among others.

From the beginning, the EBC were characterized by a significant organizational level and a concern for extending the movement to other countries in the region. In addition, they focused intensely on training for the group through the systematic study of economics, sociology, and theology. They requested and received from the headquarters of the

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<sup>18</sup> J. TERRA, *El nacimiento del CLAEH y su prehistoria*, in «Notas del CLAEH», LIV, 1988, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. R. PÉREZ ANTÓN, *Los cristianos y la política en el Uruguay*, Ediciones del Nuevo Mundo, Montevideo 1987.

movement in France survey materials on family and neighborhood living standards, which followed the analytical method of Economy and Humanism. They also received from them some copies of the «Revue Économie et Humanisme», works by Lebreton and studies produced by SAGMA and SAGMACS<sup>21</sup>. The EBC applied and adapted the method of Economy and Humanism to national conditions, conducting novel studies. In 1949 they constituted themselves as a Center for Studies and Social Action, carrying out religious and technical studies. These works were the product of activist efforts and with scarce technical, human and financial resources. It was not until almost a decade later that they received more economic and institutional support, as will be seen later in this text.

Between 1949 and 1950 *Economie et Humanisme* went through an intense internal crisis associated to the changes in the French political situation and in the Catholic movement during the post Second World War period. This context led to a revision of the concept of commitment to community life and the adoption, as a priority, of a scientific and technical production project. It was in this climate that Juan Pablo Terra and Carlos Tosar, leaders of the EBC, visited Europe in 1950. This experience was key in their trajectories and in their links with the Economy and Humanism networks.

Among other places, in their long European tour, they spent almost two months in La Tourette, France, working under the direction of Lebreton. On that occasion they also coincided with another member of the EBC, Beatriz Tosar, who had been working with the French team for over a year<sup>22</sup>. Among other activities, Terra and Carlos Tosar participated in the International Session on Human Economy held in La Tourette between September 2 and 11, 1950.

Encouraged by the accumulated travel experiences and the guiding principles transmitted by Lebreton and the Economy and Humanism movement, the EBC group carried out successive social investigations on

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<sup>21</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebreton na América Latina*, cit., p. 170. For example, among other materials, in early 1951 they received from the Brazilian SAGMACS four copies of Henri Desroches, *Signification du marxisme* (Éditions ouvrières, Paris 1949). Cfr. SAGMACS, *Nota de entrega*, San Pablo February 26, 1951, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Carlos Gandolfo Corbacho*, Montevideo May 2, 1949, in J. Terra Collection.

the Uruguayan reality in different urban and rural areas of the country based on empirical research methods by sampling and surveys. At the same time, Terra made several efforts to try to get Lebreton to visit Montevideo again, but with little success. In 1952, Lebreton visited Latin America for the second time. He had been invited by Lucas Nogueira Garcez, then governor of São Paulo, to coordinate research prepared by SAGMACS on the development possibilities of the State of São Paulo. This was five years after his first visit in 1947, when he was accused by conservative Brazilian Catholic sectors of being a “communist sympathizer”, preventing his quick return to Brazil.

In 1953 the French friar was again invited by Nogueira Garcez to carry out research on the socio-economic conditions of the State of São Paulo. Lebreton invited Terra to participate in this work, although there is no record in the documents consulted that he traveled to Brazil on that occasion. Finally, the following year Terra and Lebreton met again, not in Uruguay but in Brazil, in the context of the First International Conference of Human Economy, held in São Paulo from August 19 to 25, 1954, coinciding with the IV Centenary of the foundation of that city. Lebreton had invited Terra and other members of the EBC to participate in this event because he considered that it could be a good opportunity to bring together doctrinally related groups and thus strengthen the articulation of the different Latin American actors of the Economy and Humanism network<sup>23</sup>. Juan Pablo Terra and Carlos Tosar attended from Uruguay.

At the end of the conference, Lebreton announced to Terra that Georges Célestin, a member of the Economy and Humanism French team, was going to visit several Latin American countries. «I would be glad if you would think of organizing his stay in Uruguay for a few days, to provide him with interesting contacts», he wrote to Terra in November 1953<sup>24</sup>. Célestin's journey included, besides Uruguay, two weeks in Chile (Santiago de Chile, Concepción and its region, Valparaíso and Viña del Mar) and two days in the city of La Paz, Bolivia. He then visited the city of Lima, Peru, for a week, where he gave about a dozen lectures and attended several

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<sup>23</sup> Cfr. J. LEBRET, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, La Tourette November 1-10, 1953, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>24</sup> J. LEBRET, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, November 1953, in J. Terra Collection.



meetings for the constitution of a local group of the Economy and Humanism movement<sup>25</sup>.

After the conference in São Paulo and Célestin's trip, the Uruguayan team was visited by other members of the movement, who toured different Latin American cities seeking to strengthen the links with Economy and Humanism and to promote new groups and local centers in the region. Since 1953, a small community of French friars from the province of Toulouse were in Montevideo. Among them was Paul Ramlot, who arrived in that city in 1954 and played a fundamental role in the subsequent creation of CLAEH in 1957. In March 1955, the EBC received the visit of Father Romeu Dale from Brazil, who stayed in Montevideo for a week<sup>26</sup>. Both Dominicans were key players in the social and religious networks built by Economy and Humanism in Latin America.

#### 4. *Gestation of CLAEH and «Cuadernos Latinoamericanos de Economía Humana»*

One of the main projects promoted by Lebret was the adaptation of the French journal of the Economy and Humanism movement («Revue Économie et Humanisme») for the Hispanic countries of Latin America<sup>27</sup>. It was planned to be in Spanish with some articles in Portuguese. During his stay in Colombia in 1955, where he carried out a mission on development, he maintained correspondence with different local groups of Economy and Humanism in the region. For example, with Augusto Dammert León, secretary of the Peruvian team, founded in October 1954 after Célestin's visit mentioned above<sup>28</sup>. Lebret had in turn contacted them with the Uruguayan team regarding a consultation on «the convenience of publishing a journal in Spanish with the most important articles for the people of our America, both those published by La Tourette's journal and

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<sup>25</sup> G. CÉLESTIN, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, October 1, 1954, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>26</sup> Cfr. J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Romeu Dale*, March 30, 1955, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>27</sup> L. LEBRET, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, La Tourette June 14, 1955, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. A. DAMMERT, *Letter addressed to the Common Good Teams*, Perú October 14, 1954, in J. Terra Collection.

those that the groups in São Paulo, Montevideo, Santiago, Bogota, or Lima deemed necessary to disseminate»<sup>29</sup>.

The French priest advised Dammert León to contact Terra and the EBC «so that they could centralize this aspect or suggest the most convenient thing about it»<sup>30</sup>. According to the Uruguayan leader, until then they had made arrangements to start the editions, especially the translations from French of books on Economy and Humanism with the help of contacts with Argentina. Terra considered that editing a journal demanded gathering a certain proportion of South American material and that meant an excessive responsibility for the EBC. «For all these reasons, the plan of the journal was in the air and what seemed concrete was the translation of books»<sup>31</sup>.

In his reply, Terra also told him that at that time with the EBC they were engaged in the largest of the works tackled by the team to date, which consisted of a survey on the situation of the family in Montevideo in the context of the VIII Social Week in Montevideo, to be held in 1956 on the theme “Economic and Social Problems of the Family in Montevideo”. «It is the first time that we have found people willing to commission and finance a large-scale study. Happily it is going very well, but it has demanded and still demands a lot of work from us», he assured<sup>32</sup>. According to the Uruguayan Catholic leader, this work represented a new stage in the life of EBC. They had been hired by the National Catholic Union of Social Action (UNCAS). In Uruguay there was no statistical data available, except for the number of homes. The last population census dated back to 1908.

These studies were the first social studies in Uruguay based on empirical research methods using sampling and surveys. They were carried out in the private Catholic sphere before the University of the Republic institutionalized this type of sociological practice. In this way, parallel to the construction of exchange networks among actors and groups of

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<sup>29</sup> ID., *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, Perú September 8, 1955, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>30</sup> ID., *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, cit.

<sup>31</sup> J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Augusto Dammert León*, October 24, 1955, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Economy and Humanism movement in Latin America, Juan Pablo Terra and the EBC consolidated and professionalized their trajectory both in the Catholic field and in the university academic field, reaching its highest and most outstanding moment in the studies carried out at the request of the UNCAS.

For this Uruguayan leader, it was the right time for a new visit of Lebreton to Montevideo for several reasons. On the one hand, from July 22 to 29, 1956, the Social Week was being held in Montevideo, which was going to focus on an investigation of the EBC. In this way, the Uruguayan team was able to consolidate itself locally, achieving a certain prestige as a training and social research center. On the other hand, Professor Dr. Isaac Ganón, in charge of the chair of Sociology at the School of Law and Social Sciences, wished to officially invite Lebreton to give a lecture. It was unusual for a priest to give a lecture at the University of the Republic, a secular, public, free and the only university in the country.

In June 1956, the Uruguayan team received the visit of Dominican friar Alain Birou in Montevideo, sociologist and member of the Economy and Humanism French team. During his stay Terra took the opportunity to invite Lebreton again to return to Uruguay and participate as a guest in the initial session of the Social Week<sup>33</sup>. For Lebreton the time had come to launch the journal of Economy and Humanism for South America. «This is the main thing we will have to talk about; it seems to me to be urgent and relatively easy»<sup>34</sup>.

However, due to the intense activities that required him to stay in Rio de Janeiro, Lebreton delayed his arrival in Montevideo until August 25, 1956, not being able to attend the Social Week. He was accompanied by Friar Benevenuto de Santa Cruz, who since 1949 had been in charge of SAGMACS in São Paulo<sup>35</sup>. In addition to setting aside one day to work with the EBC, Lebreton gave three lectures at the University of the Republic, two of them at the School of Law and Social Sciences and one at the School

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<sup>33</sup> Cfr. J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Louis-Joseph Lebreton*, Montevideo June 26, 1956, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>34</sup> L. LEBRET, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, La Tourette June 12, 1956, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Cfr. B. DE SANTA CRUZ, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, Río de Janeiro August 18, 1956 in J. Terra Collection.

of Architecture, which were published in two successive editions in 1957 and 1958<sup>36</sup>.

As explained above, Lebreton and Benevenuto's priority during their visit to Uruguay was to discuss the journal of Economy and Humanism for Latin America<sup>37</sup>. Before moving forward with this publishing venture, they had to wait for the resolution of the superior of the Dominicans «as to whether or not they were going to appear visibly in support of the initiative»<sup>38</sup>. There was some reluctance on the part of the Dominican authorities in Rome whether to officially support this proposal<sup>39</sup>. Once they had obtained their support at the end of 1956, the local team in Montevideo sent a circular letter to different actors in the region, explaining the plan drawn up for the Latin American journal of Economy and Humanism. The Dominican friars assigned Ramlot to promote and manage the new publication. For this reason, the French priest left for Chile, where he met with the Christian Democrat leader Eduardo Frei Montalva, who agreed to collaborate with the dissemination of the journal in that country through the publishing house «Editorial del Pacífico».

The project of creating a Latin American journal of Economy and Humanism had to wait a little longer to come to light. In June 1957 Carlos Tosar visited France again and contacted the French center. That same month the Uruguayan team published the first issue of «Boletín de Enlace», which included, among other information, the invitation to the Inter-American Session on Human Economy. This event was held in September 1957 in Montevideo and included a five-day training course given by Lebreton.

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<sup>36</sup> Cfr. L. LEBRET, *Desarrollo y acondicionamiento de los territorios: análisis de los hechos sociales*, Universidad de la República, Facultad de Arquitectura, Instituto de Teoría de la Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Montevideo 1958.

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. B. DE SANTA CRUZ, *Letter addressed to Juan Pablo Terra*, cit.

<sup>38</sup> J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Emilio Lenhardson*, Montevideo September 25, 1956, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>39</sup> The sources consulted show that there was some delay on the part of the Superior of the Dominicans in accepting the request to accompany the Latin American review of the Economy and Humanism movement. Cfr. J. TERRA, *Letter addressed to Augusto Dammert León*, Montevideo January 9, 1957, in J. Terra Collection. See also D. PELLETIER, *Economie et humanisme*, cit., p. 326.

As a result of this inter-American event, the Centro Latinoamericano de Economía Humana (CLAEH) was created in Montevideo. It arose at the request of Lebrete, who wanted to promote a Latin American articulation center for the Economy and Humanism movement in the region. The Board of Directors of CLAEH was composed of Juan Pablo Terra (President), Héctor Salgado (Vice President), Nelly Beatriz Tabares (Secretary), Paul Ramlot (Secretary of External Relations) and Juan Enrique Camou (Treasurer). According to a Report of Activities prepared by the CLAEH for the period 1957-1960, the first objective of the Center was the diffusion of the movement and its ideas<sup>40</sup>. To this end, they made use of various means, including the creation of the journal «Cuadernos Latinoamericanos de Economía Humana», which was published from 1958 to 1967. In this way, a long-standing desire of Lebrete and the French team, as previously mentioned, was realized.

The CLAEH and the «Cuadernos Latinoamericanos de Economía Humana» were inseparable, a channel of irradiation of the doctrine, of articulation of local groups, of dissemination and improvement of the method<sup>41</sup>. Among other functions, the CLAEH developed a publishing and dissemination work of literature in French and Spanish; it articulated a network of bookstores in Latin America and established direct contacts through exchanges, training and dissemination with different actors and institutions in the region. From its foundation until 1960, CLAEH promoted and created new groups and local centers of Economy and Humanism with a permanent nucleus in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, and Bolivia. However, some of them had no visible continuation, as in the cases of Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Valparaíso and Santiago (Chile) and Cochabamba (Bolivia)<sup>42</sup>. As the CLAEH authorities pointed out, all these activities were carried out without hired personnel and with great financial difficulties. The Center «could not have, at any time, a budget to finance the trips, which has made the task of dissemination extremely difficult,

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<sup>40</sup> Cfr. CLAEH, *Informe de actividades del Centro Latinoamericano de E.H. período de actividades 1957-1960*, Montevideo 1960, in J. Terra Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebrete na América Latina*, cit., p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. CLAEH, *Informe de actividades*, cit.

making it depend on occasional and necessarily limited opportunities or resources»<sup>43</sup>.

### 5. *Final words*

Juan Pablo Terra's trajectory can be an entry point to show and analyze the multiple networks of ideas, actors and institutions built from Uruguay with the Economy and Humanism movement, led by the Dominican Louis-Joseph Lebreu. Terra and other members of the Common Good Teams served as liaisons with different Catholic actors and groups in the region linked to the French movement. They made contacts with intellectuals, professionals, students, and politicians in different countries such as Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile, among others, in order to create new local groups of Economy and Humanism and thus spread and expand the analytical method of the movement in the rest of Latin America.

Along with the promotion and dissemination actions, Terra, the EBC, and later the CLAEH developed training and research activities that were innovative in the local field of social sciences. It is worth mentioning that they carried out studies based on empirical research methods by sampling and surveys, years before they were developed in the academic environment of the University of the Republic, the only university in the country.

During the ten years of operation, between 1947 and 1957, the EBC strengthened their structure and organization. They counted on the enthusiasm and capacity of young Catholics, who, motivated by Lebreu's thought and proposals, carried out substantial actions and renewal processes. This previous accumulation of knowledge, training and experiences in the socio-political, academic and religious fields partly explains the choice of Montevideo as the headquarters of CLAEH in 1957, which arose at Lebreu's request to articulate the Latin American actors and institutions of the Economy and Humanism movement.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

From their beginnings, the EBC and later the CLAEH and the «Cuadernos Latinoamericanos de Economía Humana», together with the SAGMACS in Brazil, were the strong nodes of the networks of the French movement in Latin America. They were part of a complex international organization based in Europe, which coordinated – not without difficulties – the multiple connections and flows that had arisen since the 1940s<sup>44</sup>.

But although in the years following the creation of CLAEH, the Uruguayan team was strengthened and its actions extended beyond national borders, as the 1960s progressed «cooperation between groups from different countries declined, and this trend was accentuated after Lebrete's death in 1966»<sup>45</sup>. As happened in other Latin American countries, many members of Economy and Humanism, such as the Uruguayan Juan Pablo Terra and other members of the EBC and CLAEH, became involved in party political activity in the Christian democracy, assumed relevant positions in public organizations, as well as developed university teaching.

The thought and action of Lebrete and the Economy and Humanism movement contributed to the intellectual and political training of many Latin American Catholic leaders, among them Terra. In 1958 he began his teaching career in Sociology and Research Methodology courses at the School of Architecture until 1987. In 1973, after the civil-military *coup d'état* and the subsequent intervention at the University of the Republic, he resigned from his position. He held leadership positions within the Uruguayan Catholic Action, being president of the National Board of Catholic Action between 1959 and 1962. At the same time, he played a leading role in the planning tasks promoted by the Investment and Economic Development Commission (CIDE). He was director of the Housing sector from 1961 to 1965. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Civic Union from 1957 to 1961, when he left the institution due to internal conflicts. In 1964 he returned once the Civic Union had been transformed into the Christian Democratic Party and was president of that institution from 1967 to 1984. He was a national legislator between 1967 and 1973, with an outstanding performance in housing policies, being a promoter of the housing cooperative movement in Uruguay. He was the

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<sup>44</sup> Cfr. V. PONTUAL, *Louis-Joseph Lebrete na América Latina*, cit., pp. 179-180.

<sup>45</sup> J. TERRA, *El nacimiento del CLAEH*, cit., p. 6.

main promoter and drafter of the National Housing Plan Law, enacted in 1968. In 1971 he was founder of the leftist coalition *Frente Amplio* and in 1990 he was co-founder of the School of Social Sciences of the University of the Republic.

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## VI.

# BETWEEN CIVITAS AND POLIS: CARLOS ALBERTO SIRI'S NEO-THOMIST APPROACH FOR DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA YVES BERNARDO ROGER SOLÍS NICOT

*Everybody is more at ease in using [the concepts] not knowing exactly what they mean. But as soon as one tries to define them and separate them from one another, hosts of problems and difficulties arise.*

*Jacques Maritain*

### 1. *Introduction*

The chapter<sup>1</sup> seeks to discuss the social and civic contribution of Carlos Alberto Siri, a neo-Thomist philosopher from San Salvador. His reflections are based on his knowledge of social issues in Central and Latin America and his political Catholicism, a political perspective inspired by Catholic teachings. Siri defines his thinking as a third way between two major ideologies, Capitalism and Socialism, but also between two opposite ways in which Catholicism expressed itself, progressive and conservative.

The basis of Siri's thinking are principally Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* and *On Kingship*. For Siri, the Church is fundamental for men to be "truly" human. The mystical body of Christ is here to announce the City of God in which the responsibility for the common good does not reside within society but in the individual and the community, the first natural organization of individuals. One of Siri's main concerns is the secularization process that progresses during the Twentieth Century, which could lead to an authoritarian path instead of the social democratic one. For him, the renewal of individuals as truly human is fundamental because social action has to be exercised first in the community and then in society.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thanks Troy Swanstrom for his help in proofreading this chapter.

The main discussion Siri sustains in his work *The Predominance of the Civitas and the Insufficiency of the Polis* opens the possibility of a third way or a new path between capitalism and communism in relation to power and citizenship for Latin-American democratic processes. He promotes indeed a change in the concepts of power and citizenship, going so far as to condemn the political regimes based on individualism (Capitalism) and atheism (Communism and Socialism), while favoring a democratic system socially integrated, built on Christian values.

The first section of the present essay includes a quick overview of Carlos Alberto Siri and his publications. The second part presents the source of Siri's thinking. The third part discusses the main topic of communitarian thinking and its importance in promoting democracy in Latin America and struggling against the totalitarian, or "vicious" regime, as Siri called it.

## 2. *Carlos Alberto Siri: Thinker of Social and Political Catholicism in Latin America*

Carlos Alberto Siri was born from an Italian family in 1905 in Jucuapa, Department of Usulután in El Salvador<sup>2</sup>. He began his studies in his homeland. When he was nine, in 1914, his parents decided to send him to Europe to visit his relatives there. As a consequence of this trip, he was trapped in Europe during the First World War. Due to the danger of maritime transport from 1916 to 1918, his parents preferred to wait for the end of the European conflict to have him back home. Therefore, Siri was formed in Italy during his adolescence and high school's years<sup>3</sup>. In 1919, once he returned to El Salvador, his parents decided to send him to the United States to study at the university<sup>4</sup>. All these academic experiences

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<sup>2</sup> C. LARS, *Colaboran en ese número*, in «Cultura, Revista del Ministerio de Educación de El Salvador», LV, 1970, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> C.A. SIRI, *Así fue mi vida, recuerdos de la adolescencia*, Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, San Salvador 1972. The subject of the book is his formation and experience in Europe.

<sup>4</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La patología de la sociedad: diagnóstico y terapéutica*, Edición del autor, México 1978.

enabled him to speak both English and Italian perfectly, which would eventually allow him to use his knowledge in those languages for diplomatic purposes.

His fear for the growth of Socialism in Latin America began in the early 1930s, when Siri realized a tour to Europe. When he arrived back to El Salvador he was elected President of the Catholic Association of Propagandists, the equivalent to the Catholic Youth Association, one of the branches of Catholic Action<sup>5</sup>. At that time, he was close to Alfonso Castiello and Rafael Ramírez, two Mexican Jesuits who were refugees in El Salvador during the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero War of 1926-29, and Alberto Levame, first Apostolic Nuncio to El Salvador<sup>6</sup>. In fact, it was Levame who first asked Carlos Alberto Siri to travel to Mexico and later encouraged him to go to Rome to meet mons. Giuseppe Pizzardo (then secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs and ecclesiastical assistant of the Central Committee of the Italian Catholic Action), in order to present to the Holy See the challenges of Catholic lay initiative in Central America and Mexico. In Rome, Siri would express the need to consolidate Catholic strength against growing Socialism.

One of the battles between socialism and Catholicism was about information, and propaganda played a crucial role to inform or misinform. That is why between 1930 and 1945 Siri worked as a journalist and became

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<sup>5</sup> «Pious associations of different kinds have always worked in the country [El Salvador], which carried out magnificent works as an apostolate. The first Catholic Action movement itself emerged in 1932 with the founding of the Catholic Association of Propagandists by R. P. Alfonso Castiello S. J., the current Counselor of the Mexican Catholic Youth Association, “admirable forger of souls”. The first President of the Catholic Association of Propagandists was Carlos Alberto Siri, a man who, in the words of the Ecclesiastical Yearbook of 1941, delivered to that association, his heart, his comfort, his future and his whole life». R. PATTEE, *El catolicismo contemporáneo en Hispanoamérica*, Editorial Fides, Buenos Aires 1951, pp. 238-239.

<sup>6</sup> Alberto Levame (1881-1958) was a Catholic priest originally from the principality of Monaco. Ordained a Priest in 1905, he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Guatemala in 1933 and to Honduras and El Salvador in 1934. He was appointed Archbishop and received the titular see of Chersonesus in Zechia and was consecrated by Eugenio Pacelli, Giuseppe Pizzardo and Giovanni Maria Zonghi. In 1939 he was assigned Apostolic Nuncio in Uruguay. In 1949 he became Internuncio to the Arab Republic of Egypt. In 1954 he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Ireland.

one of the leading animators of the Catholic newspaper «The Salvadoran Catholic World». In 1932 he also began publishing a Christian newspaper called «Criterio» to defend Catholic beliefs against the liberalism of some sectors of the Salvadorian public life and also the progressivism and secularization of the Salvadorian society. At the international level, he managed to direct the Ibero-American press service (1937-1939), which he founded in Rome. In 1940, he also founded the Ibero-American Catholic News Service, based in Washington, D.C., and provided wire service for Catholic Latin American newspapers under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, and eventually became associated with the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) News Service. In all of these initiatives, his stance was clear: to inform and to arouse. In Europe, the U.S., Central America and Latin America, Catholics must be prepared to fight against socialism and capitalism.

Between 1945 and 1970 Siri worked as a diplomat in Washington D.C., being a member of the Salvadorian embassy to the U.S. and an alternate representative at the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations (UN). As a member of the Salvadorian delegation, with the similar rank of the Ambassador, he participated in various conferences and inter-American meetings. From 1960 to 1964, he was also Assistant Director of the Bureau for Latin America of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. From 1967 to 1968 he served as *chargé d'affaires* of El Salvador to the Holy See, and as technical advisor to the executive secretariat of the Department of Education, Science and Culture of the OAS.

After his retirement from the foreign service, he dedicated himself to writing. Of the two main corpus of Siri's books, the first (mostly unpublished) concerns his personal life, whereas the second has to do with civic-social doctrines. In 1972, the Ministry of Education of El Salvador published the first volume of his autobiography *Así fue mi vida, recuerdos de la adolescencia* [This was my life, memories from adolescence]. It is one of his most intimate and autobiographical books. In this volume, Siri shares the stories of his childhood and adolescence in El Salvador and in Italy. His

life as a journalist and a diplomat occupies volumes II, III and IV, which have not seen the light and are still sheltered in private archives.<sup>7</sup>

Most of his published works is about his civic-social and political thinking. His main study *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis* [The Preeminence of the Civitas and the Insufficiency of the Polis] was published in 1967 in San Salvador by the Directorate of Publications of the Direction of Culture of the Ministry of Education. In this book Siri offers a reflection on civic action and a critique of contemporary social organization. It is an invitation to Christian democracy and a call to the social and political transformation of Catholicism. In 1969, the Ministry of Education of El Salvador also published *Hitos en el camino: la dinámica del devenir* [Milestones on the road: the dynamics of becoming]. In this book, the philosopher presents man as a spiritual creature who has his subsistence based on his being created in the image of God, as well as the collective process of human becoming in community and society and socio-political praxis. In 1973 the Salvadorian government published his *Creo en el hombre* [I believe in man]. *La vocación cívica-social* [The civic-social vocation] was also a product of Siri during this time but was never published.

In 1978, in Mexico, Siri edited and published *La patología de la sociedad* [The pathology of the Society]. In this work he criticizes the media, which he knows very well from his experiences in the field in San Salvador, the Vatican and Washington D.C., offering at the same time a reflection on the notions of society, community, family and Church as well as on civic praxis and community<sup>8</sup>.

The work of Carlos Alberto Siri is part of the Latin American Catholic thought of the Twentieth Century<sup>9</sup>. Harold E. Davis includes Siri as part

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<sup>7</sup> I have not had the opportunity to consult the unpublished works of Siri. With the support of José Jorge Siman, I was able to contact the family of Carlos Alberto Siri, in particular his son Gabriel Siri and his grandson Gabriel Siman Siri, to have access to the material of Siri's personal files and manuscripts but I had no response.

<sup>8</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La patología de la sociedad*, cit., p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> A previous review of Siri's work was the base of an article written in Spanish: Y.B.R. SOLIS NICOT, *Redes ocultas, El Salvador y México: Carlos Alberto Siri, Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores y Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra*, in *Cruce de Fronteras: La Influencia de los Estados Unidos y*

of the neo-Thomist philosophical renovation, the neo-Christian trend which appeared in the 1960s in Latin America with such thinkers as Eduardo Frei Montalva in Chile, Hernán Preciado and Agustín Basave Fernández del Valle in Mexico<sup>10</sup>. For Davis, Siri is a Latin American Maritain<sup>11</sup>. He analyzes Siri's neo-Thomist thinking as it emerges in the study *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*. Davis recognizes, above all, the anti-communist character of Siri, and is impressed by his call to each individual to transform and develop the State from within. Siri wants Christians to be proud of their belief and to seek for Latin America the kingdom of God and the earthly *Civitas Maxima*<sup>12</sup>.

The tension between Civitas and Polis, community and society, is fundamental for Siri. It is the core argument of the Salvadorian philosopher.

The preeminence of the Civitas and the insufficiency of the Polis refers to the Greek and the Christian traditions and contains a message for today, and calls to stimulate the rethinking of problems such as development and under-development, integration and dispersion, humanities and technology, man and economic instruments. The category of community and society serve, attached to a philosophy of Man, as an instrument for the analysis of contemporary life, and hence the judgment of some polarizations in which we are locked up: person-state, individual-family, social justice-economy, state activity-activity of social groups<sup>13</sup>.

Siri defines his thinking as a third option between the progressive and pessimistic trend of the Catholic thought of the twentieth century. For him,

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*América Latina en los proyectos de Nación Católicos en México, Siglo XX*, ed. by Y.B.R. Solís Nicot - C. Foulard - M. Butler, UAM-Azcapotzalco-Conacyt, México 2020.

<sup>10</sup> C. VALDERRAMA ANDRADE, *Reseña a «Harold Eugene Davis. Latin American thought: a historical introduction»*, in «Thesaurus», XXIX, 1974, n. 2, p. 366.

<sup>11</sup> H. E. DAVIS, *Latin American Thought: A Historical Introduction*, The Free Press, New York 1974, p. 228.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>13</sup> R. GALINDO POHL, *Presentación*, in C.A. SIRI, *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, Ministerio de Educación, Dirección General de Publicaciones, San Salvador 1967, p. 10.



progressive thinking is embodied for example by Ignacio Ellacuría<sup>14</sup>, Spanish Jesuit, theologian and a member of the rectory team of the José Simeón Cañas Central American University (la UCA). The pessimistic views would be led by Jean Daniélou (French Jesuit), one of the most important theologians of the Second Vatican Council<sup>15</sup>, and the Belgian theologian Gustave Thills<sup>16</sup>. Siri thinks that

The Church is the ferment that transforms history, but [history is not] the ferment that transforms the Church. The Church has different names like tillage, vine, graft, house of God, temple, the holy city, community, City of God, and the mystical body of Christ, but never subservient to the messianic policies that swarm in the world in which we live, [subject] to the taste of the secularizing irenicism<sup>17</sup> of our century<sup>18</sup>.

For Siri the “relativist” posture of some members of the Catholic Church regarding socialism and political emancipation in Cold War Latin America is a fundamental issue; following his perspective, Christian progressivism could have fatal political consequences, and therefore it has to be clearly and explicitly opposed. His stance against progressivism is quite clear:

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<sup>14</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría (1930-1989), a Jesuit Priest of Spanish origin, was nationalized Salvadoran. He was a famous philosopher, writer, and theologian in El Salvador. He studied Philosophy in Quito, Ecuador. He trained seminarians in the Seminary of San José de la Montaña founded by Mexican Jesuits, among them Father Rafael Ramírez (mentioned in this article) stands out. He studied Theology in Innsbruck and then returned to Spain. He completed his doctorate at the Complutense of Madrid. In 1967 he returned to El Salvador and joined the Universidad Centro Americana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) as a Professor of Philosophy. His participation in the Medellín conference led him to rethink his reflection and allowed him to orient his theological production towards liberation. Among his favorite subjects are the figure of God and historical reality, topics that Siri further engaged in his intellectual discussion with Ellacuría.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Daniélou (1905-1974), a Jesuit priest, theologian, and historian, was disciple of Henri de Lubac. He actively participated in the Second Vatican Council.

<sup>16</sup> Gustave Thills (1909-2000), was a Catholic priest, and Doctor of Theology. In 1947 he held the Chair of Moral Theology at the University of Leuven.

<sup>17</sup> Irenicism in Carlos Alberto Siri refers to the intention to avoid conflict and unite different trends of Christian theology. In his view, it is a negative concept.

<sup>18</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La patología de la sociedad*, cit., p. 8.

It is impossible to deny that the so-called Christian progressivism is causing the Catholic Church serious problems that provoke confusion between the means and the end. This error lies in the absoluteness of the immediate next phase of historical becoming – as if it were the last, supreme and definitive –; the degradation of other stages in the past – as if they constituted the sole cause of the evils of the present.

It is fair to recognize that progressivism implies, for many, a selfless motivation that stems from piety for the oppressed masses and a legitimate desire to contribute to liberating them. However, progressivism moves negatively with an irrational and simplistic mentality since it limits itself to attributing all the evils that afflict peoples only to the ecclesiastical, sociological, political, and economic structures that have prevailed until today in the world. [...] Faced with the progressive argument that Communism entails the only historical possibility for the liberation of the masses, we hold, conversely, that Communism represents the most significant threat that looms over the world<sup>19</sup>.

Siri's way of thinking is interesting not only for his philosophical views but also for his theological ideas and his role as a "contemporary apostle"<sup>20</sup>. As Caterina Capasso states,

Undertaking the speech about Carlos Alberto Siri is not an easy thing. In addition to the fact that his writings involve an intense and never finished spiritual and intellectual inquisition, they reveal a mind completely dedicated to the purpose of converting one's thinking into a praxis<sup>21</sup>.

In this sense, Siri is not a speculative philosopher. He does not seek the philosophical exercise intrinsically but as a possibility to transform society.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> M. ROMERO, *Historia de la filosofía en El Salvador*, Editorial Delgado, San Salvador 2006, p. 433.

<sup>21</sup> C. CAPASSO, *La filosofía cívico-social de Carlos Alberto Siri*, in «Cultura, Revista del Ministerio de Educación de El Salvador», LXVI-LXVII, 1979, p. 155.

Siri's purpose is to contribute with his writings to the solution of the problems that most afflict Latin American populations. His activities as a journalist, sociologist, and diplomat enriched his thinking. He promoted a concrete use of history and stands out from the general picture of Latin American philosophy<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. *The Sources of Siri's Social-civic Philosophy*

The main concepts of Siri's ideas are based on Thomas Aquinas (with particular reference to the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *On Kingship*) and Aristotle's philosophy. Starting from such premises, he develops a communitarian idea and discusses the relationship between community and society.

By community, we understand the entirety of human interaction that emerges from the universal love that each man has for his own perfection and that of his fellow men— and vice versa. A collective being made up of people that are essentially identical, who recognize their equality – of being, power, dignity, and fate – spontaneously united with a relationship of fellowship that is greater and that comes before any other social order.

By society, we understand that having to do with collective cooperation, of instrumental and temporal nature, which accidentally is born of the existential indigence of individuals and their natural need for a social contract, so they can be organized to safeguard, for the benefit of all, essential goods commonly possessed. The goal is to achieve to the degree possible, the perfection of the individual that composes the organization. [...] A collective partnership that finally came from the innate love that individuals universally have towards integral human perfection, as a property belonging to all and in which everyone participates<sup>23</sup>.

For Siri, the idea of community comes from the Gospel where Jesus explains that men are one in love: as underlined by Matías Romero<sup>24</sup>, the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, Ministerio de Educación, Dirección General de Publicaciones, San Salvador 1967, pp. 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> I would like to thank José Jorge Siman for the kind loan of the book *History of Philosophy in El Salvador* by Matías Romero, who, along with Dr. Caterina Capasso, author of *La*

Christian belief of Siri defines his philosophical views. His faith and his deep commitment to the message of Christ mark all his thought. In line with these premises, his social-civic philosophy is, first and foremost, communitarian<sup>25</sup>. The basis of social regeneration is the individual, followed by the family: «The third step in the foundation process is the affirmation that, after the family, the first form of association and complementation that man finds is the community; that is, the solidarity with those who are closest to him, more related, dearer and more useful»<sup>26</sup>. The State is a subsequent instrument that does not have to injure the rights enshrined in the community. In this sense, Siri distinguishes community and society. Romero insists that this last point did not convince other Catholic thinkers and Bishops and could be a possible explanation for the skepticism shown by the National Catholic Welfare Conference towards the ideas of Carlos Alberto Siri<sup>27</sup>. For Romero, Siri's thinking becomes difficult to understand because of its complexity and the fact that it calls for a transformation both in the public and private spheres of any Christian:

In Siri's way of thinking, a whole system exists with ontological roots and creates a social philosophy. He promoted a regenerative praxis of humanity. This system is philosophical, theological, sociological, economic, and legal. Christian citizens have a holistic responsibility that covers all the organs of life and touches the theology of the Catholic Church<sup>28</sup>.

To summarize Siri's philosophical stance, Romero indicates that it is «a structure that [...] is a philosophical-theological synthesis that begins with the creative act of God and the Trinitarian conception of man to end in the beatific vision with which man will possess God in eternity»<sup>29</sup>.

Carlos Alberto Siri obtains his main inspiration from the observation of the tragic socio-political reality of El Salvador, Mexico, and Brazil. But

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*filosofía cívico-social de Carlos Alberto Siri*, has been the one who studied the most the philosophical-ethical-civic thought of Siri.

<sup>25</sup> M. ROMERO, *Historia de la filosofía en El Salvador*, cit., p. 434.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 437.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 442.

intellectually, he appears as an European thinker, whose most significant intellectual inspiration derives from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, completed by Augustine of Hippo's works, especially *The City of God*.

Following the German theologian Franz Anton Staudenmaier, Siri argues that «the love of the perfect man begins with the human will as a seminal reason. Man has a natural appetite for the perfect ending, in which the good for oneself coincides with the good for every human. At the same time, it is also a particular and common good»<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, it is interesting how the same idea of a particular good and the common good bring about a justification of inequality within the reflection of Siri.

Therefore, St. Thomas does not hesitate to declare that, just as divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things with a view to the perfection of the universe, it is also unequal because the universe would not be perfect if there were only one degree of goodness in things<sup>31</sup>.

If, on the one hand, the Aquinas is dominant in the first, theoretical part of *La preeminencia de la civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, on the other hand, other three European authors are at the very basis of the second part of the book, i.e.: the Italian Jesuit Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, the German philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies and the Austrian theologian Johannes Messner. Siri use Taparelli thinking to distinguish between the civic and the politic. This distinction allows him to think through another binomial, the community and society. For Siri «the community, insofar as it entails, based on the essential equality common to all men, involves an operation of voluntary intercommunication of assets already owned (unit of human solidarity) to directly promote the good of the parties as an indispensable requirement of the good of everything», whereas «the society, insofar as it entails, based on the existential inequality that particularizes individuals, is a cooperation company aimed at obtaining or realizing, good that have not yet owned (unit of order), for these goods as

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<sup>30</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, cit., p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

a prerequisite for the good of the parties are essential and must be preserved for social health»<sup>32</sup>.

The reasons for the existence of society are explained by Johannes Messner as follows:

A survey of the existential human ends makes it clear, I think, that our definition of morality is in harmony with universal and established human experience. We may sum up these ends as follows: self-preservation, including bodily integrity and social respect (personal honor); self-perfection physically and spiritually, including the development of one's faculties for the improvement of the conditions of one's life and provision for one's economic welfare by securing the necessary property or income; the enlargement of experience and knowledge; marriage and the rearing of children; interest in the spiritual and material welfare of one's fellowmen as human persons equal in value; social fellowship, to promote the public utility, which consists in the maintenance of peace and order and in opportunity for all members of society to attain the complete human existence by sharing proportionately in the welfare of society; the knowledge and worship of God and the ultimate fulfillment of man's destiny through union with him<sup>33</sup>.

From Messner's study *Social Ethics, Natural Law in the Modern World* Siri takes also the idea of the regenerative forces of the community. According to Siri, Latin America needs that regeneration, that new conversion. A key concept is that society is different from the State: «The Society, as distinctive from the State, is the venture aimed at realizing possible assets, preserving those already owned and to promoting collectively by individuals according to their particular existential purposes and the natural rights that are common to all»<sup>34</sup>. Social pluralism consists then in the multiplication and diversity of groups or minor communities, independent but at the same time interdependent. They create the structure of a social body.

The Salvadoran author then decides to rely on the German thinker Ferdinand Tönnies and his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> J. MESSNER, *Social ethics: natural law in the Western World*, B. Herder Book Co, St. Louis 1965, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, cit., p. 93.

(Community and Society) to explore the differences between community and society:

Since the community is similar to a symbiosis of human relationships, it is good by nature. Society detracts and denatures it and thus entails evil. So evil can only be defeated if the community is built again following the imperatives of all men. Men need to be part of a common goal that seeks the greater good. As Rousseau would say, this means that man would return to the spontaneity of his nature<sup>35</sup>.

For Siri «the evil of the *Civitas* – the preponderances of social inequalities, which emanate from exorbitant individualist greed – degenerates into the evil of the *Polis* itself, namely the abuse of power, tyranny, the enslaving exploitation of the weakest». The «absence of civic love, respect for community and equality of all men produces injustice, the mother of political disorder and social hatred»<sup>36</sup>.

#### 4. *Between Civitas and Polis: Siri's Understanding regarding Catholic Political Participation*

The third part of Siri's volume *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, is made by five complementary essays, that together represent a proposal for Latin America. The first one is a short summary of what already stated in the theoretical part of the book. The second discusses the common good and social justice. The third reflects on the concepts of generation and regeneration, that lead Siri to those of civic composition and social-civic integration. It is in the fifth essay that Siri speaks, in a clearer way, of his support for social democracy or, in his own words: democracy socially integrated, also known as Christian democracy as opposed to other kinds of democracies influenced by different ideologies such as Liberalism, Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Masses are helpless, malnourished, atomized, physically and spiritually isolated from the contemporary benefits of civilization and technique, they do not have a clear awareness of their rights and their spiritual destinies; they live in a condition without health, their own land, a dignified dwelling, sufficient water, schools, priests, leaders, specific organizations, working equitably remunerated, the possibility of establishing normal families, community life, a sense of social cooperation, a notion of the common good, none of them; and, too often, they live a life without faith, hope, or love<sup>37</sup>.

For Siri the process of Spanish colonization in Latin America led to formal democracy, but also provoked the absence of socio-integrated democracy. «The Polis could not engender without the involvement of the civic operation of intermediate groups of society promoted by citizens themselves, insofar as they are the only substantial efficient cause of every common good»<sup>38</sup>. The roots of this problem are to be found not only in the historical process of religious and political conquest of Latin America led by the Spaniard Catholic kings but also in the pre-colonial organizations, even more centralized and paternalistic, as the Inca, or Aztec empire.

Moreover, Siri's main preoccupation is that people in Latin America started a political debate in which they had to choose between opposing alternatives. Based on their own choices, the fate of Latin America was directed towards the progress of liberty, peace, and justice or towards the path of the totalitarian regime, which could take control of Latin America for centuries and put a stop to its human ideals and democratic aspirations. Although Siri does not quote Eric Voegelin<sup>39</sup> or Jacques Maritain<sup>40</sup> he shares with his contemporary Catholic fellowmen a common view of democratization and the political responsibility of Catholic believers. It is striking that in Jacques Maritain's *The Man and the State*, one of the first proposals is to discuss the two concepts of community and society. For

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Voegelin is considered one of the most important German Catholic thinkers of the second part of the Twentieth Century. He is known as a fierce opponent of the gnostic perspectives of both Nazism and the Communist regime.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Maritain is considered the best exponent of the neo-Thomist renovation of the second part of the Twentieth Century.



Maritain, as well as for Siri, «the community is more of a work of nature, [...] a society is more of a work of reason»<sup>41</sup>. In terms of Siri's philosophical view, the discussion about community-society is at the core of the problem, while for Maritain political life is more important<sup>42</sup>.

As a good observer of economic and developmental issues (due to his intensive work with diverse international organizations) Siri points out that «in the sumptuous cities of Latin America, which contrast the destitution of the masses»<sup>43</sup> the spectator can see the horror of the systematic inequalities of misery villages, the slums, and the alleys. He offers us a long list of derivation of those concepts depending upon the Latin American country you are in: *favelas* (Brasil), *callampas* (Chile), *champas* (Centroamérica), *ciudades perdidas* (México), etc<sup>44</sup>.

To be more practical Siri proposes the adoption of a political regime that encourages the growth of its members in harmony and synergy, protecting the independence of the different elements of community and society. Everything needs to be achieved for the benefice of all, without impairment or prejudice to anyone. On the other part, «the vicious system would be the one which dominates unilaterally to the detriment of the other part»<sup>45</sup>. These vicious regimes are individualism<sup>46</sup>, communism, and socialism<sup>47</sup>.

Social democracy is a system that can only function if the community is the backbone of society and civic values. The social-civic component of such a regime must regulate its economic development. Socioeconomic interests cannot oppress the community. It is the responsibility of the civic part of the community to upscale the regulatory principle of social justice; individual freedom must be subordinated to the common interest so that society can reach the maximum optimal productivity.

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<sup>41</sup> J. MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, University of Chicago, Chicago 1951, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> A further comparative study could analyze more deeply the consensus and dissensus within these particular two Catholic postures.

<sup>43</sup> C.A. SIRI, *La preeminencia de la Civitas y la insuficiencia de la Polis*, cit., p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

### 5. *Conclusion: Toward a Pathological Society and the Strengthen of Hope*

As seen here, Siri offers a Latin American neo-Thomist approach based on communitarian political, social, and civic ideas during the Cold War era. He establishes the basis of civic practice in the community and affirms that family and community can play a fundamental role and transform society. It is interesting to see how strongly his way of thinking relies on natural law and natural organization. He argues that social democracy could effectively contribute to emancipating men from ideological tensions which cause social anxiety. For him, it is the only way to fight the cause and effect of the social pathology that affects Latin America. Siri hopes, in a theological perspective, that this virtue, hope, can guide Christians to achieve the earthly Jerusalem and to bring the social kingdom of Christ to the world.

For Siri, the solution for Latin American social problems resides in individuals more than in societies. He wants to promote the reeducation of individuals through the construction of communities. His purpose is to achieve a re-moralization of human beings, where men and women could achieve a transformation of society based on the decision to convert and transforms their lives. He believes that, as Christians, people have the responsibility to God and their brethren made as them in the image of their creator. Siri's optimistic view of man and community explains why his project to transform Latin America will prove to be utopian. It is a project, in fact, that requires a long-term conversion, whereas today's world seems to prioritize the easiest and fastest ways of doing things. Siri calls people to be more adult and mature, but the still persisting seduction of authoritarian and populist regimes in Latin America shows that instead of seeking a higher purpose, many prefer to wait for paternalistic governments to give them solutions to solve problems. The inactivity and concupiscence seem more attractive than the righteous way to restore a state of holiness and justice.

Carlos Alberto Siri's teachings have made him a relevant voice in his era, and still today, when democracies in Latin America are challenged

once again by authoritarian or populist regimes and the difficulties experimented by American democracies to diminish violence seem to be a proof of the inefficacy of democracy itself. Even if democracy could be seen as a utopian ideal, Siri's survey and diagnosis represent a possibility of renovation for Latin America and the Western World. Some of Siri's thoughts, could be used in the twenty-first century, on the brink of a political breakdown and facing the emergence of populist and authoritarian regimes. The core of politics should always be to protect human dignity: that is the primary message of Siri's thinking, allowing the man to be truly human.

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## VII.

# JESUIT INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL RENEWAL IN LATIN AMERICA: ABOUT A MAGAZINE, 1949-1959 PAOLO VALVO

### 1. *Introduction*

The present essay is the first outcome of a research project in progress, which aims to reconstruct the history of the monthly Jesuit periodical «Latinoamérica». Founded by Mexican Jesuit José Antonio Romero (who would remain editor in chief until the end of 1958)<sup>1</sup> and published in Mexico by the Buena Prensa publishing house from January 1949 to December 1958, the magazine was then transferred to Cuba, where it was published by the Jesuit Colegio de Belén in Havana from January 1959 until it was discontinued the following April. The change of location, decided on in July 1958<sup>2</sup>, was also accompanied by a change in the subtitle – which changed from «Revista mensual de cultura y orientación» to «Revista mensual de información y orientación»<sup>3</sup> – and the decision to eliminate the Spanish-Portuguese bilingualism that had characterized the first ten years of the periodical's life, in favour of an instrument intended only for Spanish-speaking readers and with a reduced number of pages.

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<sup>1</sup> Romero was later joined as editor-in-chief by Juan Álvarez Mejía (from April 1952 to February 1955) and David Mayagoitia (from July 1955 to December 1958), who held the position of editor.

<sup>2</sup> See on this subject the correspondence between the Provost of the Cuban Jesuit “viceprovincia Antillensis” Daniel Baldor de la Vega and the Jesuit General Curia in Rome. Cfr. Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1301 (1950-1959) and ARSI, Registri, V. Prov. Antillensis, II (1958-1963), pp. 63-64.

<sup>3</sup> One can see in this small but significant change a reflection of the considerations that emerged in the Jesuit General Curia throughout the Fifties on the need to place more emphasis on current events in the magazine. See f.e. Del Valle to Janssens, 25 October 1954, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Epistolae 1019 (1953-1956), VII, 9 and Mantilla to Travi, 24 July 1957, ARSI, Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1302 (1950-1959).

Already the title «Latinoamérica» and these first essential bibliographical data tell us something of the continental vocation that the periodical consciously assumed from the beginning, and to which it would try to remain faithful until its cessation. A termination that came suddenly, a few months after the victory of the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro, for reasons – as far as we know<sup>4</sup> – essentially internal to the magazine itself<sup>5</sup>, i.e. independent of the political upheavals on the island to which the editorial staff had just moved, although it is easy to imagine that the difficult political transition in Cuba led to more general economic hardships that might also have adversely affected the magazine.

In spite of its ambition to represent a “round table” capable of animating the cultural debate of the entire Latin American continent<sup>6</sup>, however, «Latinoamérica» was a magazine that, since its inception, had to deal with significant financial difficulties (which, in the long run, would undermine its survival)<sup>7</sup>, a difficult and costly distribution throughout the continent – which prompted the General Curia and the Mexican Province from the mid-1950s onwards to look for a new location for the editorial

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<sup>4</sup> In this regard, it should be noted that the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), on whose sources this study is partly based, is now open for scholars to consult only until 9 October 1958, the date of Pius XII's death.

<sup>5</sup> The will to make room for the project of a Catholic news agency, coordinated by the periodical's last director (Cuban Jesuit Gustavo Amigó Jansen) may have played a role in the termination of the magazine.

<sup>6</sup> These are the terms in which the magazine presents itself to its readers from the very first issue: «It is not just another magazine. It is the magazine that is needed. Numerous distinguished intellectuals from all the countries of Latin America take part in its editorial staff. [...] It deals with all the problems of general interest relating to Latin America. It has correspondents in Europe and America, and agents in the main cities of the continent. “LATINOAMERICA” is the round table of all Latin Americans of good will and their bond of union». This and subsequent translations are by the author.

<sup>7</sup> The theme returns frequently in the correspondence of the Jesuit General Curia with the Latin American provinces – particularly the Mexican one – in the second half of the 1950s. See for example del Valle to Janssens, 25 October 1954, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Epistolae 1019 (1953-56), VII, 9; del Valle to Janssens, 12 October 1955, *ibid.*, XIII, 11; Status Generalis Residentiae Mexicopolitanae IV (Annual Report of the Visitor of Residence IV, Mexico City), 1956, *ibid.*, XVIII, 12; del Valle to Travi, 17 August 1955, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Schedae Vicariae 1301 (1950-1959).

office, initially identified in cities like Bogotá<sup>8</sup>, El Paso<sup>9</sup>, Washington<sup>10</sup>, Caracas<sup>11</sup>, Buenos Aires<sup>12</sup> and also New York<sup>13</sup> – and, above all, an almost structural lack of dedicated staff<sup>14</sup>, in addition to the not always easy coexistence among the Jesuits in charge of the magazine's work<sup>15</sup> and between them and the Jesuits of the Universidad Iberoamericana<sup>16</sup>. These shortages were only partially compensated for by the logistic and economic support offered since the beginnings by Buena Prensa (also led by José Antonio Romero) and by the wide network of collaborators that the periodical managed to gather in the American continent and in Europe. In

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<sup>8</sup> Del Valle to Janssens, 21 May 1955, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Epistolae 1019 (1953-56), XIV, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Del Valle to Travi, 10 March 1956, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Schedae Vicariae 1301 (1950-1959).

<sup>10</sup> Janssens to Pérez Alonso, 4 March 1957, ARSI, Registri, Provincia Mexicana Meridionalis VII (1955-1959), pp. 230-231.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> This was the suggestion made in 1957 by the Spanish Jesuit Sebastian Mantilla, prospective collaborator of «Latinoamérica» and then operator at the Jesuit Centro de Investigación y Acción Social (CIAS) in Cuba. See ARSI, Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1302 (1950-1959), *passim*. Among the reasons for moving the periodical's headquarters to New York, Mantilla highlighted the possibility of receiving on-site support from the editorial staff of the Jesuit periodical «America» and the greater speed and effectiveness with which news normally reached the city. See Mantilla to Travi, 24 July 1957, ARSI, Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1302 (1950-1959).

<sup>14</sup> The problem was highlighted as early as 1950 in the correspondence between the Provincial Provost of Mexico and the General Curia. See for example: Martínez Aguirre to Janssens, 25 January 1950, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Epistolae 1019 (1950-52), II, 1, f. 5r; Guerra to Janssens, 29 November 1951, *ibid.*, VII, 63; Janssens to Guerra, 3 November 1951, ARSI, Registri, Provincia Mexicana V (1949-1954), pp. 287-288. Even on the eve of the start of the periodical's publication on Cuban soil, the General Curia was still pointing out the need for Jesuit provinces on the subcontinent to provide collaborators for the magazine. See ARSI, Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1302 (1950-1959).

<sup>15</sup> See in this regard Pérez Becerra to Janssens, 25 January 1956, ARSI, Provincia Mexicana, Epistolae 1019 (1953-56), XX, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Who lived until 1956 in the same residence (Residencia Mexicopolitana IV "B.M.V. de Guadalupe", Enrico Martínez 7, Mexico City). For an overview of the origins and inspiration of "La Ibero" see D. ESPINOSA, *Jesuit Student Groups, the Universidad Iberoamericana, & Political Resistance in Mexico 1913-1979*, The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque 2014, 75-112.

any case, the number of copies circulated each month was decidedly underestimated in view of the efforts made by the magazine's editors. Although «The American Catholic Sociological Review» stated – in 1954 – that the periodical enjoyed «an extensive circulation in all parts of Latin America»<sup>17</sup>, on the eve of the transfer of its headquarters from Mexico City to Havana – as we learn from the papers preserved at the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI)<sup>18</sup> – the magazine's circulation only amounted to 1750 copies per month: a significantly underestimated quantity for an instrument that aimed to create a unitary cultural consciousness throughout the Latin American continent<sup>19</sup>.

Then, why study it? There are at least four reasons that can justify the choice of dedicating oneself to a journal like «Latinoamérica», which suddenly disappeared from the radar after an existence that was troubled to say the least, and which today is very difficult to find in a complete edition, except in places like the Hans Peter Kolvenbach private library of the Jesuit General Curia (Rome), one of the few in the world to possess all its issues<sup>20</sup>. First of all, within the vast range of publications promoted by the Jesuits in Latin America, «Latinoamérica» was the first magazine of a continental nature<sup>21</sup>, as repeatedly clarified by the editors<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> R.M. BLOW, *The Sociology of Religion in Latin America*, «The American Catholic Sociological Review», vol. XV, n. 2, June 1954, p. 164n.

<sup>18</sup> I take this opportunity to thank all the ARSI staff – in particular Mauro Brunello, Francesco Stacca and Dario Scarinci – for their support during my research stay in July 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Significantly, in a memorandum drafted for internal use by the General Curia of the Society of Jesus in the autumn of 1957, reference is made to the opportunity for the magazine to reach the 500,000 Spanish-speaking university students of the entire continent. See ARSI, Provincia Antillensis, Schedae Vicariae 1301 (1950-1959).

<sup>20</sup> I would also like to thank the whole staff of the Kolvenbach Library – in particular Nicoletta Basilotta – for their support during my research stay in July 2021.

<sup>21</sup> G. LA BELLA, *Roma e l'America Latina. Il Risorgimento cattolico sudamericano*, Guerini, Milano 2012, p. 286.

<sup>22</sup> An editorial published in issue 12 stated in this regard that «Latinoamérica is published in Mexico, as it could be published in any other of our Republics: [...] We do not speak from Mexico thinking in Mexico: most of the articles, commentaries and notes and all the chronicles come from outside, as it has to be, so that the whole magazine is a faithful echo of reality». *Un solo frente*, «Latinoamérica. Revista mensual de cultura y orientación» (henceforth: LA), 12 (1949), p. 553. Significantly, one of the last issues published would



Secondly, the magazine had been seen since its inception (in 1947-48) as a cultural work of primary importance for the Society of Jesus as a whole in Latin America, as confirmed by the dense correspondence concerning the magazine currently held at ARSI, which shows the constant concern of the Jesuit General Curia – starting with the Father General, the Belgian Jean-Baptiste Janssens, and the Assistant for Latin America, Tomás Juan Travi – for the magazine's fate.

Thirdly, in the little more than ten years of its history, the journal succeeded in gathering some of the most authoritative voices on the Jesuit international cultural scene – such as the Spanish-Argentinian philosopher and pedagogist Ismael Quiles, the Brazilian sociologist Pedro Calderan Beltrão, the French political scientist Robert Bosc, the Chilean editor of the review «Mensaje» Jorge Fernández Pradel, the Italian editor of «La Civiltà Cattolica» Antonio Messineo and the Mexican Alfredo Méndez Medina, one of the main protagonists of the Catholic social movement in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century – and in bringing them together with correspondents and contributors from both the Americas and Europe. Among them were José Vasconcelos, leading protagonist of the revolutionary season and former Secretary of Public Education in Mexico – who was entrusted with the editorial of the magazine's first issue and who would continue to collaborate occasionally until 1958 –, Richard Pattee, an US-Canadian Hispanist from Laval University, Odette Philippon, a renowned French expert on female slavery, the Argentinian novelist Hugo Wast – pseudonym of Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviría – and Francesco Vito, professor of Economic History and future successor of Fr. Agostino Gemelli as rector of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

Finally, the magazine was published in a period (the 1950s, coinciding with the second half of the pontificate of Pius XII) still very little covered by studies of the History of the Church in Latin America<sup>23</sup>, and in which it

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have voiced regret at not having seen a real continental consciousness mature in the periodical's ten years of activity. See Kubitschek, LA, 119 (1959), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Among the exceptions, see COMISIÓN PARA EL ESTUDIO DE LA HISTORIA DE LA IGLESIA EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE (CEHILA), *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina*, t. I-XI, Sígueme, Paulinas, Salamanca 1981-1985; J. MEYER, *Historia de los cristianos en América Latina, Siglos XIX y XX*, Jus, México 1999 (I ed. Vuelta, México 1989); J. MEIER-V. STRÄßNER (hrsg.), *Kirche und Katholizismus seit 1945. Band 6: Lateinamerika und*

seems permissible to seek at least some of the roots of the social and political radicalization that would affect a substantial part of Latin American Catholicism starting from the success of the Cuban revolution (January 1959), which – as we have already pointed out – coincided substantially with the end of the periodical. To what extent did «Latinoamérica» succeed in promoting, interpreting, or at least intercepting, the anxieties for social renewal that spread within the pre-conciliar Church (in America as in Europe) and that affected all levels of Catholic presence in society, from the religious to the cultural, with particular emphasis on the socio-economic context (often dramatic) in which religious and lay people found themselves working on a daily basis? I will try to offer some answers – albeit partial – to this question in this essay.

## 2. «Latinoamérica» and the social question

It can be said that the social question was the dominant theme in almost every issue of «Latinoamérica», which dealt with the subject from a dual perspective. On the one hand, it privileged a theoretical-doctrinal approach, and on the other hand, it also offered its readers concrete experiences which – in the intentions of the periodical – should serve as models to follow in order to recover the ground lost by the Latin American continent in terms of the implementation of the Church's social magisterium. From the first point of view, it was the Social Doctrine of the Church – and in particular the teachings of Leo XIII and Pius XII – that constituted the core of the reflection of «Latinoamérica», which consistently pursued throughout its existence the ideal of a “Christian way” to social and economic development<sup>24</sup>, an alternative to capitalism (whose

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Karibik, Schöningh, Paderborn 2009; *Local Church, Global Church. Catholic Activism in Latin America from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II*, ed. by S.J.C. Andes-J.G. Young, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2016.

<sup>24</sup> See the editorial *El Criterio Social Cristiano*, LA, 99 (1957), pp. 195-197.

errors and degeneration were harshly denounced)<sup>25</sup> as well as to communism<sup>26</sup>. In this regard, from the very first issues there was a strong emphasis on the responsibilities (and failures) of Catholics in all areas of the Latin American social question, from labor issues<sup>27</sup> to the living conditions of indigenous peoples<sup>28</sup>.

On an operational level, this path should take concrete form in the agricultural sphere (still dominant in the Latin American context) in experiences of cooperation that could nourish and sustain over time – through adequate access to credit – a small peasant property, capable of ensuring a dignified life for each family and at the same time guaranteeing adequate productivity of the land<sup>29</sup>. An almost obligatory reference in this regard was represented by Giuseppe Toniolo and the Italian Catholic social movement, at the centre, for example, of the analysis of Alfredo Méndez

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<sup>25</sup> See f. e. J. FERNÁNDEZ PRADEL, *Catolicismo Social y Capitalismo Histórico*, LA, 20 (1950), pp. 339-341 and ID., *Juicio Oficial de la Iglesia Sobre el Capitalismo Histórico*, LA, 22 (1950), pp. 439-441.

<sup>26</sup> J. VÉRTIZ, *Misión providencial de los patrones*, LA, 89 (1956), pp. 200-202; A. ARESTI LIGUORI, *La intervención del Estado*, LA, 118 (1958), pp. 531-533.

<sup>27</sup> The first issue of the magazine already gave space to a lecture given in Buenos Aires by the Belgian founder of the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (JOC) Joseph Cardijn, in which the speaker stated: «If communism were to triumph, it would not be because it represents a superior social doctrine, but because the great mass of the workers have not been instructed in the social doctrine of the Church, and because that doctrine has not been spread with the energy demanded by the Encyclicals... Neither laws nor violence will subdue communism: only the action of Catholic workers will be able to achieve it». *El fundador de la JOC vuelve de su gira intercontinental*, LA, 1 (1949), p. 36. Similar concepts were expressed in an editorial published in issue 7, which echoed some of Pius XII's recent speeches, emphasizing that «in the face of the magnitude of the cataclysm which threatens the whole world, the responsibility of Catholics is immense and cannot be evaded. By their abulia, by their inertia, by their selfishness, by their lack of true love for their neighbour, by their obstinacy in not heeding in time the wise exhortations of Leo XIII and his successors, many of them, the indifferent or apathetic Catholics, together with the sector of the atheists and the sceptics, have been preparing or giving rise to the catastrophe». *Es la hora de obrar*, LA, 7 (1949), p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> I. QUILLES, *Problema cultural indigenista en nuestro continente*, LA, 83 (1955), pp. 492-496.

<sup>29</sup> A. MÉNDEZ MEDINA, *Reforma agraria. Condiciones para que pueda implantarse ventajosamente la pequeña propiedad*, LA, 9 (1949), pp. 388-390; H. MUÑOZ, *Reforma agraria en Bolivia*, LA, 51 (1953), pp. 121-123.

Medina – former director of the Mexican Social Secretariat – in the 1949 issues. The agrarian reform envisaged by the Jesuit, that found in early 20th century Sicily an important point of comparison for Latin America<sup>30</sup>, was a long and gradual process<sup>31</sup>, in which a decisive role should be played (in the start-up phase) by “enlightened” large landowners.

In the industrial and workers’ sphere, apart from some openness towards the corporative model<sup>32</sup>, the direction in which the journal’s reflections were directed was more that of a solidarism<sup>33</sup> that fed on the reflections developed in the German sphere by Heinrich Pesch and Oswald von Nell-Breuning<sup>34</sup>, and which identified as a possible practical solution to the conflicts between capital and labour the co-management of the enterprise, which however – coherently with Pope Pacelli’s teaching – was never affirmed as a natural right<sup>35</sup>. Alongside the reasoned re-proposition of the main cornerstones of the Social Doctrine of the Church, the review also offered contributions that looked at new perspectives, such as those published by Francesco Vito between 1951 and 1952 on the ethical renewal of contemporary economic thought<sup>36</sup>.

As far as concrete experiences were concerned, the chronicles of «Latinoamérica» photographed the social situation of the different countries of the continent, describing successful experiments in the field of cooperation between workers<sup>37</sup> and in that of social work for the most

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<sup>30</sup> A. MÉNDEZ MEDINA, *El problema de la tierra en América Latina. Coexistencia armónica de la grande, la media y la pequeña propiedad*, LA, 2 (1949), pp. 5-6; ID., *Reforma agraria. Etapas de transición*, LA, 4-5 (1949), pp. 168-170.

<sup>31</sup> ID., *Problemas sociales Latino-Americanos. Reforma agraria*, LA, 3 (1949), pp. 111-112.

<sup>32</sup> J.R. BONAMINO, *Actualidad de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia*, 45 (1952), pp. 408-410.

<sup>33</sup> P. CALDERAN BELTRÃO, *Evolui a Estrutura Econômico-Social das Empresas. Superação do Capitalismo e do Salariado*, LA, 13 (1950), pp. 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> ID., *O Solidarismo de H. Pesch Marcha para a Frente*, LA, 27 (1951), pp. 113-114.

<sup>35</sup> P. CALDERAN BELTRÃO, *Co-Gestão na Empresa para Democratização da Economia*, LA, 26 (1951), pp. 49-51; F. BASTOS DE AVILA, *¿Engranajes humanos?*, LA, 62 (1954), pp. 60-62.

<sup>36</sup> F. VITO, *Fermentos y Síntomas de Renovación en el Pensamiento Económico Contemporáneo*, LA, 34 (1951), pp. 436-437; ID., *La ciencia económica del presente*, LA, 35 (1951), pp. 483-485; ID., *Los valores éticos como elemento decisivo en la solución de los grandes problemas contemporáneos*, LA, 37 (1952), pp. 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> P. DUTRA, *Círculos Operários do Brasil*, LA, 21 (1950), pp. 397-399.

disadvantaged people<sup>38</sup> (especially in rural areas), not neglecting – at the same time – to document innovative experiences on the level of entrepreneurship<sup>39</sup> as well as of charity and social apostolate<sup>40</sup>, with a particular emphasis on youth and workers' apostolate. A continuous attention was also devoted to various experiences of the Catholic social movement in Europe, particularly in France – where the magazine focused on the work of Abbé Pierre<sup>41</sup> and the Pax Christi movement<sup>42</sup> – and Belgium<sup>43</sup>. In this latter regard, the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (JOC) of Belgian Joseph Cardijn was often the focus of the periodical's reports<sup>44</sup>. «Latinoamérica», on the other hand, also paid special attention to the Italian Catholic world, describing its religious and socio-political ferments: one can mention, in this regard, the space dedicated to the Crusade of Goodness and the Movement for a Better World promoted by the Jesuit Riccardo Lombardi<sup>45</sup>, to apostolic works such as Pro-Civitate Christiana, to the achievements of Catholic trade union movements (such as the Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani – ACLI)<sup>46</sup>, and to the social policies implemented by the Democrazia Cristiana party, from the “Fanfani plan” for social housing<sup>47</sup> to the initiatives for the development of the Italian South<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> See f.e. J.A. ERRÁZURIZ H., *El Hogar de Cristo*, LA, 14 (1950), pp. 68-71

<sup>39</sup> See f.e. *Casas habitación para los obreros*, LA, 59 (1953), pp. 504-505.

<sup>40</sup> R. REYNA SALAS, *Las clases altas van al pueblo. El apostolado de cruzada social en Colombia*, LA, 91 (1956), pp. 327-328.

<sup>41</sup> E. MARINI, *Hambre a quien tiene pan. La obra portentosa del abate Pierre*, LA, 69 (1954), pp. 403-405.

<sup>42</sup> F. RAMÍREZ, *¿Qué es Pax Christi?*, LA, 118 (1958), pp. 543-545.

<sup>43</sup> C. VAN GESTEL, *Humanismo económico*, LA, 42 (1952), p. 258.

<sup>44</sup> See f.e. F. BASTOS DE AVILA, *Congreso Internacional da J.O.C. A semana sacerdotal - Setembro, 1950*, LA, 23 (1950) pp. 491-493; A. PARADA, *¿Antes el burgués que el obrero?*, LA, 52 (1953), pp. 150-152; G. SCHMIEDER, *A “JOC”... Despertador da juventude*, LA, 83 (1955), pp. 517-519.

<sup>45</sup> R. LOMBARDI, *El “Mensaje” de la Cruzada de la Bondad*, LA, 15 (1950), pp. 97-99.

<sup>46</sup> P. CALDERAN BELTRÃO, *Grande Movimento Operário Cristão na Itália para a Superação do Capitalismo*, LA, 22 (1950), pp. 446-447

<sup>47</sup> The plan was mentioned by ID., *Superpopulação, Desocupação, Transmigração*, LA, 18 (1950), pp. 243-247.

<sup>48</sup> E. SCHMITZ, *Despejando incógnitas en el Sur de Italia. Política social de la Democracia Cristiana*, LA, 97ter (1957), pp. 124-128.

The participatory look at the achievements of social Catholicism in Europe went hand in hand with an awareness to which «Latinoamérica» did not fail to give voice, namely the substantial delay of Latin America in implementing the Social Doctrine of the Church<sup>49</sup>. This was a macroscopic fact, which “clashed” with the observation that the continent was still predominantly Catholic. In this regard, it is interesting to note the exchange of opinions that took place in the pages of the magazine between the end of 1949 and the early months of 1950, regarding the declarations of the founder of the JOC Cardijn on the almost non-existent social and educational incidence of Catholicism in Latin America. If at first the magazine was very clear in distancing itself from Cardijn’s statements, exalting the rootedness of the Christian faith at a popular level in the continent<sup>50</sup>, a subsequent article by the magazine’s correspondent from Montevideo pointed out that it was not possible to respond to criticism of this magnitude by merely publishing photos of religious processions<sup>51</sup>. The contradiction existed and remained unresolved throughout the 1950s<sup>52</sup>: how was it possible that in the world’s most Catholic continent the Social Doctrine of the Church was so little known and put into practice? One of the most interesting answers came from Cuba, where in 1958 the Jesuit José Lasaga spoke of a 19th or even 18th century «liberal mentality» in which almost all the large Catholic owners/entrepreneurs were still immersed<sup>53</sup>.

In order to counter the inertia of Latin American Catholicism in the social sphere<sup>54</sup>, which had been denounced many times (even courageously) by the magazine – and which emerged also from within the

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<sup>49</sup> See in this regard the editorial of issue 69 (September 1954): *Europa y América. ¿Anticomunismo o justicia social?*, LA, 69 (1954), pp. 389-391; I. QUILES, *Solidaridad cultural entre América y Europa*, *ibid.*, pp. 397-399; G. SCHMIEDER, *¿Riqueza a cargo de quien...? Modelo europeo para solucionar el mayor problema latinoamericano*, LA, 97bis (1957), pp. 72-74.

<sup>50</sup> *Un nuevo descubrimiento de América (A propósito de un reportaje de Mons. Cardijn)*, LA, 11 (1949), pp. 504-505.

<sup>51</sup> F. CHIAPPINI, *No Tendrá Razón Cardijn?*, LA, 15 (1950), p. 145.

<sup>52</sup> H. DE SOTOMAYOR, *Los Cuatro Peligros de América Latina*, LA, 109 (1958), pp. 107-110.

<sup>53</sup> J.I. LASAGA, *Responsabilidades de los Laicos en América Latina*, LA, 110 (1958), pp. 160-162.

<sup>54</sup> *Mesa redonda en torno al catolicismo latinoamericano*, LA, 27 (1951), pp. 121-124. G. LA BELLA, *Roma e l'America Latina*, *cit.*, pp. 414-415.

Society of Jesus itself<sup>55</sup> – «Latinoamérica» seemed to be oriented towards enhancing the work of the specialised laity<sup>56</sup>, a laity which – always remaining united by the hierarchical bond to ecclesiastical authority – knew how to enliven the Catholic world through the introduction of that social “technique” which Latin America had always lacked, and which mostly took the form of cooperativism applied to certain preferential areas, such as savings, production, consumption and housing<sup>57</sup>. From that perspective, rather than mass movements Latin America needed “sociologists”<sup>58</sup>, and an apostolate more attentive to “quality” than to “quantity”<sup>59</sup>, dedicated primarily to the world of work (hence the focus on the JOC). It was an approach that, while on the one hand emphasizing the need to “go to the people”, on the other hand still remained elitist and in a certain sense “top-down”, focusing mainly on the training of a Catholic leadership from school age onwards<sup>60</sup> as well as on promoting initiatives to disseminate the Church’s social doctrine<sup>61</sup>. It should be stressed, however, that the social question for «Latinoamérica» coincided with the “question of the human”<sup>62</sup>, and that from this tentatively unitary look at reality there emerged in more than one article the awareness that all Christians were called to take charge – each in his own sphere – of the social question, that

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<sup>55</sup> The lack of commitment to the social question was often highlighted by visitors to the various Jesuit residences in Mexico in their letters to the General Curia.

<sup>56</sup> *Refuerzos necesarios*, LA, 79 (1955), pp. 293-295.

<sup>57</sup> *Es realizable el social-cristianismo*, LA, 8 (1949), pp. 360-361. See in this regard also J.I. LASAGA, *Problemas, realizaciones y esperanzas. Responsabilidades de los laicos en América Latina* (2<sup>o</sup> parte), LA, 111 (1958), pp. 221-224.

<sup>58</sup> *La Iglesia y la cuestión social. El gran problema de América Latina*, LA, 37 (1952), pp. 1-3.

<sup>59</sup> *Una solución fundamental. Luces y sombras del catolicismo en América Latina*, LA, 50 (1955), pp. 51-52.

<sup>60</sup> *Es la hora de obrar*, LA, 7 (1949), p. 313; *Nuestro catolicismo. ¿Estamos a la altura del tiempo?*, LA, 67 (1954), pp. 293-295; M. AZEVEDO, *Pela formação social e cívica de nossos jovens. Uma experiência*, LA, 68 (1954), pp. 343-345; *Europa y América. ¿Anticomunismo o justicia social?*, cit.

<sup>61</sup> M. BARRENECHEA, *Educación social a patronos y obreros. Labor de los institutos anexos a universidades católicas en Estados Unidos*, LA, 92 (1956), pp. 365-368.

<sup>62</sup> *El sentido de lo social*, LA, 106 (1957), pp. 531-533.

is, of the realisation of a world truly on a human scale and in conformity with the dictates of the Gospel<sup>63</sup>.

### 3. *Towards the socio-political revolution?*

But could this be a prelude – in certain circumstances – to the participation of Christians in revolutionary movements of any ideological nature aimed at changing or destroying the socio-political order in force? In other words, how did the magazine outline the relationship between Christianity and socio-political revolution, which from the 1960s onwards would become an almost inseparable pair (in Latin America and elsewhere)?<sup>64</sup> It is difficult to offer an unequivocal answer to this question. Generally speaking, there were at least two factors that apparently played against the explicit adoption of a revolutionary perspective by «Latinoamérica»: the first had to do with the evident desire to promote relations as harmonious as possible between the State and the Church. Striking in this respect was the choice made on some issues in 1951 and 1959 to dedicate the magazine's cover to Latin American statesmen (such as the Mexican president Miguel Alemán<sup>65</sup> and the Colombian General

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<sup>63</sup> *La incontenible conquista*, LA, 83 (1955), pp. 485-487; *El gran desafío*, LA, 96 (1956), pp. 531-533.

<sup>64</sup> In this regard, please refer to the still relevant considerations of J. MEYER, *Cincuenta años de radicalismo: La Iglesia católica, la derecha y la izquierda en América Latina*, Instituto Mexicano de Doctrina Social Cristiana, México 1990<sup>2</sup>. An interesting insight into the orientations of another relevant Latin American Jesuit magazine between the Sixties and the Seventies is offered by A. SCHNOOR, *Umkämpfte Gewalt. Jesuitische Perspektiven auf die soziale Ordnung, Chile 1968-1973*, in *Die Katholische Kirche und Gewalt. Europa und Lateinamerika im 20. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. S. Hensel-H. Wolf, Böhlau, Köln Weimar Wien 2013, pp. 255-275. Also noteworthy for their interest in this regard, within the same volume, are the contributions by Leo O'Donovan SJ, Vicente Durán Casas SJ, Silke Hensel, Daniel H. Levine and Johannes Meier. For an overview of the radicalisation of European Catholic youth in the long Sixties see M. BOCCI-M. BUSANI (eds.), *Towards 1968. Studenti cattolici nell'Europa occidentale degli anni Sessanta*, Studium, Roma 2020. The European roots of late Liberation Theology have been analyzed by G.R. HORN, *Western European Liberation Theology. The First Wave (1924-1959)*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

<sup>65</sup> See LA, 28 (1951).



Secretary of the Organization of American States Alberto Lleras Camargo<sup>66</sup> in 1951, or the Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek<sup>67</sup>, the Cuban provisional president Manuel Urrutía Lleó<sup>68</sup> and the Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt<sup>69</sup> in 1959) considered – rightly or wrongly – as representative of those ideals of peace, development and continental integration that were an integral part of the ideological heritage of «Latinoamérica» from the beginnings to its end. A choice, that of dedicating the magazine's cover to a politician, which perhaps also betrayed the belief that politics held the keys to solving the subcontinent's major economic and social problems.

The second factor had to do to some extent with the nationality of the periodical's editors: the predominant role played until 1958 by the Mexican Jesuit province, deeply marked by the *cristero* religious conflict (1926-1929) and the subsequent pacification of the country (still hanging by the thread of a benevolent non-application of anti-clerical laws by the Mexican government), certainly did not offer a favourable terrain for violent contestation of the dominant assets. From this point of view, the change at the management of the magazine, which took place at the end of 1958, might have facilitated the expression of more pro-revolutionary views such as those concerning the Cuban case in 1959, as we will see in the next paragraph.

On the other hand, one cannot help but notice how the periodical, especially from 1953 onwards, took up positions on the subject, both in the form of chronicles and more structured interventions on the doctrinal level. From the first point of view, it is interesting to read the examination of the revolution that overthrew the Peronist regime in Argentina in 1955, proposed in the issues 97-98-99 (March-April-May 1957) by I. Goicoechea, who defended the reasons that led many Catholics to take part in the anti-

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<sup>66</sup> LA, 34 (1951).

<sup>67</sup> LA, 119 (1959).

<sup>68</sup> LA, 120 (1959). The president was here photographed along with the revolutionary leader Fidel Castro.

<sup>69</sup> LA, 121 (1959).

Peronist movement<sup>70</sup>, but complained about the submissive attitude that allowed Masonic and anticlerical circles to prevail after the final fall of Perón<sup>71</sup>.

On a theoretical level, among the articles that dealt with the theme of revolution, a special mention should be made of two: the first was the editorial of issue 86 (February 1956) dedicated to the welfare of peoples, in which the author, after noting that «one can hardly believe that there can be anything worse for a peace-loving people than the revolutionary hurricane with the furies it unleashes», asked himself: «Is it possible to conceive of other times when people suffer greater misfortunes?». It would seem to be a rhetorical question, given the premises, but the answer was surprising:

Yes, it is. Of course, revolutionary times are more resounding and their effects more impressive because they enter through everyone's eyes, producing a kind of collective fever that is the neighbour of despair. This is a collectively maddening disease. But let us note that all illness comes from internal, hidden causes, which have affected and disturbed the organism in its inner structure; and if after the acute attack, in the delicate period of convalescence, the wrong procedures are followed, the apparent recovery will only prepare, in the short or long run, more disastrous relapses, and the latent illness, deepening its roots, will undermine the patient who walks to death by flattering paths. Revolutions are often salutary reliefs from these hidden evils.

Peoples have their vital organs that can be reached by the decisive cancer. This happens when in the delights of false peace, when in the lying euphoria of external well-being, when in the illusion of a fictitious material prosperity, spiritual values, the soul of all individual or social human life, are undermined. Then religious principles are undermined; moral ideas are misguided; higher energies are enervated by voluptuous pleasures; vice is glorified by paganising spectacles; pride, selfishness, flattery, baseness are nourished; all kinds of injustice are sown in a

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<sup>70</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the editors of «Latinoamérica» accompanied the last of the three articles with a note attributing any responsibility for the writing to the author alone.

<sup>71</sup> I. GOICOECHEA, *Por que se hizo la revolución*, LA, 97 (1957), pp. 107-111; ID., *Las vísperas revolucionarias*, LA, 98 (1957), pp. 173-177; ID., *¡Nos han robado la revolución!*, LA, 99 (1957), pp. 206-209.

thousand fields... Then revolution, a passing evil, becomes a chronic, almost incurable evil<sup>72</sup>.

The article was careful not to legitimize the revolution as such, considering it a chronic disease of Latin American societies. What was striking, however, was the representation of the revolution as an outward expression of an inner and deep malaise, to the cure of which – the editorial continued – the commitment of every Christian must be primarily directed. Without this commitment (this seemed the implicit conclusion of the article) the denunciation of the intrinsic evils of revolutions would lose its legitimacy.

The second noteworthy contribution was a series of three articles published in 1953 by Jesuit philosopher and pedagogist Ismael Quiles, one of the most lively figures of European and Latin American Catholic intellectuals of the 20th century and a collaborator of the first hour of «Latinoamérica», of which he was also for some years “consejero nacional”. Quiles, whose thought would also have a certain influence on the intellectual biography of future pontiff Jorge Mario Bergoglio (of whom Quiles would be a professor at the Colegio Máximo de San José in Buenos Aires during the Sixties), approached the revolutionary theme “head-on”, describing, in the first of his three articles, the necessity and at the same time the possibilities of a «Christian social revolution».

A transformation in a Catholic sense of the Western world of our days (Europe which represented the Christian culture in the Middle Ages and America which was united to this culture since its discovery) would imply in many fields a real revolution. Not only in the religious aspect, but in most of the collective manifestations of Western culture, politics, economy, universities, science, art, literature, etc. the panorama is far from being Catholic. In the so-called economic-social aspect, it is easy to see that the present distribution of wealth and its sources is not in accordance with the principles of social-Catholic morality. In this way, the problem of secularisation, begun in the fourteenth century and accentuated in the Renaissance, has made ever greater progress, and although it is undeniable that Western society still possesses not a few characteristics due to the influence of

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<sup>72</sup> *El bienestar de los pueblos*, LA, 86 (1956), pp. 53-54.

Christianity, it must be recognised that officially the life of the great majority of European and American states and people has a markedly secular character<sup>73</sup>.

Given the Church's commitment to tackling the social question, especially since the 19th century, it was inevitable, however, to ask why a Christian social revolution such as that envisaged by the Church and its teachings had not yet taken place. And it was at this point that Quiles' considerations became sharper. According to the Jesuit, what was holding Catholics back in the implementation of this project were the following evils: a) inertia, which opposed any radical change for fear of challenging rents of position and acquired rights (albeit unjustly); b) the conservative spirit, which opposed any change (even a healthy one) with the observation that "it has always been done this way" and an idealisation of tradition regardless; c) the fear of losing freedom and incurring reprisals against the church; d) the idealisation of poverty as a virtue, from which it was mistaken to think that one could do without concern for the situation of the lower classes; e) the objection that the Church couldn't meddle in political matters; f) the accusation against the "capitalist" clergy, about which Quiles stated that if the faithful could be freed from compulsory cash benefits, the social image of the clergy would improve; g) the Church's claim that everyone must conform to its teaching even in matters not strictly dogmatic<sup>74</sup>.

After this merciless examination of the structural deficiencies of Latin American social Catholicism, the author concluded his considerations by formulating a wish that in a certain sense represented a "leitmotif" for the whole magazine:

We trust that the communist danger will at last open our eyes and stir our Catholic conscience to proclaim in all its integrity the social principles of the Church. And this not in general but in concrete terms, by pointing out to every country, city and individual or capitalist organisation the indispensable and urgent improvements that must be granted for the sake of social justice. Only when Catholics themselves take the lead in demanding the most advanced social

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<sup>73</sup> I. QUILES, *Revolución social cristiana: posibilidades*, LA, 57 (1953), pp. 402-404.

<sup>74</sup> ID., *Revolución social cristiana. ¿Inercia, Conservadurismo, Miedo?*, LA, 58 (1953), pp. 441-444.

improvements and overcome the obstacles which unduly hinder the Christian social revolution, can it triumph for the good of the earthly community and as a preparation for the eternal Kingdom of God<sup>75</sup>.

#### 4. *Facing the Cuban revolution*

Based on these cultural premises, how reacted the magazine – in the few issues that remained before closing its doors for good – to the victory of the Cuban revolutionary movement led by Fidel Castro? This curiosity seems justified, if one takes into account that «Latinoamérica» moved its editorial office to Havana only a few weeks before Castro and his “barbudos” put an end to the pro-United States dictatorship (increasingly bloody) of Fulgencio Batista. After years spent reflecting – in the rooms of Borgo Santo Spirito in Rome – on the need to renew the magazine, moving its editorial staff from Mexico City to other locations and giving more space to current affairs, the magazine – under the guidance of its new director, Gustavo Amigó Jansen (a long-standing collaborator of «Latinoamérica») – now had the possibility of recording “live” one of the watershed events in the history of America (and not only) of the 20th century.

The theme was mainly dealt with in the correspondence, where the editor and his collaborators found themselves responding to requests from American and European readers of «Latinoamérica» for information on what was happening on the island, with particular emphasis on the alleged pro-communist orientation of the revolutionary movement and the frequent episodes of summary justice.

Although the editors of «Latinoamérica» here and there displayed a desire not to get too involved in the political prospects of the revolution, the magazine’s sympathetic attitude towards the Castro revolutionary movement – and the reasons behind it – was evident. The most noteworthy intervention in this sense appeared in issue 120 (February 1959), with a long editorial note that offered an overview of recent Cuban history, from the establishment of Batista’s dictatorship (1952) to the triumph of the “26 de julio” movement. The judgement on the dictatorship was anything but

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<sup>75</sup> ID., *Revolución Social Cristiana. Meditación Latinoamericana*, LA, 59 (1953), pp. 503-504.

tender, as could be seen from the very beginning, whereas the figure of the revolutionary leader Fidel Castro appeared in a very different light instead:

The undisputed leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro, full of just ideals, of faith in his cause, of incredible courage and audacity, knew how to rally around himself, first in the steep mountains of the heroic Oriente and then throughout the homeland, that national yearning for the struggle for freedom, which has led to Cuba's victory. His speeches, before and after 1 January, clearly show his noble convictions and his generous plans. That is why a complete regeneration of Cuba in all its many and varied aspects is expected from him, from his worthy collaborators and from the entire citizenry<sup>76</sup>.

In the face of such a demanding judgement, it was not surprising to see the emphasis placed on the contribution made by Catholics to the success of the revolution<sup>77</sup>, starting with the youth organisations and ending with the military chaplains of the rebel forces (authorised by their superiors to exercise their ministry on this occasion), who played an important role in mediating between the Castro forces and the government, saving further bloodshed<sup>78</sup>. With regard to the episcopate, which on the whole maintained a prudent attitude, mention was made of the pastorals of the Archbishop of Santiago, Monsignor Pérez Serantes, which condemned the excesses of government repression (and were censured for this)<sup>79</sup>. Also striking was the serenity with which the magazine treated the delicate issue of summary justice in the aftermath of Castro's victory. Emblematic in this sense was the photo report on page 3 of issue 120, where the religious comforts given by a Franciscan priest to a government soldier sentenced to death were accompanied by this caption: «Over the inevitable harshness of human justice, divine grace brings, through the work of the Catholic priest, the gentleness and consolation that transforms man»<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> *Del acontecer contemporáneo. Siete años de historia de Cuba: del 10 de marzo de 1952 al 1 de enero de 1959*, LA, 120 (1959), p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> In this regard, please refer to J. MEYER, *Historia de los cristianos*, cit., pp. 243-252 and to I. URÍA RODRÍGUEZ, *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba. Enrique Pérez Serantes (1883-1968), el obispo que salvó a Fidel Castro*, Encuentro, Madrid 2011.

<sup>78</sup> *Del acontecer contemporáneo*, cit., p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> LA, 120 (1959), p. 3.

On this specific point, it is also worth considering the reply given by editor Amigó Jansen to a request for “a good orientation” from a Venezuelan reader in the following issue of March 1959: «Human blood always causes difficulties, even if it is shed justly. In the case of Cuba, we sincerely believe that, although the traditional legal form has been broken, essential justice has nevertheless been maintained»<sup>81</sup>. In the continuation of his reply, the director of «Latinoamérica» further clarified his views on Cuban events and the political and social prospects of the island:

The essential truth is that the revolutionaries (I speak in superior and general terms, as is natural) are very well-intentioned, are deeply just and patriotic people, want to succeed in giving Cuba the best orientation and have the overwhelming support of the people. That many are young, impetuous, inexperienced in government, more prepared for the struggle and the destruction of evil than for the positive and peaceful task that wears out, overwhelms and exhausts? That there are dangerous communist, materialist, secularist, excessively nationalist infiltrations? All this and more is true; but it does not destroy the legitimacy and the healthy hope that Cubans place in the great movement led by Fidel Castro. With God's favour, this new sap will be purified, channelled and strengthened, to pour new life into the tree of the homeland. And isn't it true that every tree that grows always points and climbs towards the sky?<sup>82</sup>

## 5. *Conclusions*

Given this not-so-implicit “blessing” of the revolution on the part of «Latinoamérica», one wonders to what extent these judgments changed in the following months, when the dangers of communist, secularist and nationalist infiltration became so concrete that the Cuban regime took on a persecutory face towards the Catholic Church that it had not originally shown. Since the magazine ceased publication in April 1959, the question is destined to remain at least largely unanswered. However, another question arises, no less interesting, namely: was the magazine's support for the Cuban revolution solely the result of the sensitivity of the periodical's

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<sup>81</sup> *Escriben nuestros lectores*, LA, 121 (1959), p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

new Cuban editors, or was it to some extent anticipated/prepared for by the reflection on the social question that «Latinoamérica» had conducted for over a decade? It is not easy to answer this question, which carries “in its belly” others even more decisive ones, that is, to what extent the seeds of socio-political radicalization of Latin American Catholicism were cultivated during the Fifties and through which cultural tools and intellectual networks<sup>83</sup>.

Postponing more detailed considerations on the magazine to the publication of a future volume, however, it is certainly possible to state that «Latinoamérica», regardless of its real ability to influence the orientation of Latin American Catholicism, sought to favor the emergence of a renewed sensitivity to social issues, that would bear fruit in the complex conciliar and post-conciliar season. That is why the magazine appears today to be an interesting mirror of the reflections that went through the Latin American Catholic world in an important phase of transition, on which it is to be hoped that the studies currently underway – also on the Vatican archives on Pius XII – will shed light. With this in mind, it might also be interesting to extend the research to other Catholic publications and journals spread throughout Latin America<sup>84</sup>, in order to document the evolution of Catholic social thought in a decisive period of its history.

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<sup>83</sup> J. MEYER, *Cincuenta años de radicalismo*, cit.

<sup>84</sup> See again A. SCHNOOR, *Umkämpfte Gewalt. Jesuitische Perspektiven auf die soziale Ordnung*, cit., and the reflections offered by Lorena García Mourelle in the present book.



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## VIII.

### FROM MARITAIN TO THE «BRAZILIAN REVOLUTION»: THE SOCIAL THOUGHT OF THE *JUVENTUDE ESTUDANTIL CATÓLICA* (JEC) AND *JUVENTUDE UNIVERSITÁRIA CATÓLICA* (JUC)

MARTA BUSANI

#### 1. *Introduction*

Starting with Ana María Bidegain's well-known article in 1985<sup>1</sup>, historians have begun to reflect on the connection between the vicissitudes of the Catholic youth in Latin America and the birth of Liberation Theology on the continent. In fact, research on the history of Catholic Action in Latin American countries has brought and is bringing to light a process of change within the laity that was very evident in youth groups and that in part had its point of arrival in Liberation Theology, in part in the choice for the poor made by the South American Church first in Medellín, and then in Puebla. In some cases, historians have identified the driving forces behind this transformation in the youth sectors of Brazilian Catholic Action. The same theologian considered to be the father of Liberation Theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, pointed to the Brazilian youth movement as the place where that way of conceiving Christianity that later fed his reflections was born and experienced<sup>2</sup>. Gutiérrez referred in particular to the JUC (*Juventude Universitária Católica*) in the early 1960s and the foundation, by some of its leaders, of a political movement, the *Ação Popular* (AP). As is well known, the AP would become a rallying point for university students and workers who opposed the military dictatorship established in Brazil in 1964, and from 1968 it would declare itself a Marxist-Leninist party. In his research work, Mackin argued for a direct

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<sup>1</sup> A.M. BIDEGAIN, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology. The Historical Process of the Laity in Latin America in the Twentieth Century*, The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies (University of Notre Dame), «Working paper», 48, November 1985.

<sup>2</sup> G. GUTIÉRREZ, *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*, Ediciones Sígueme, 1974. For an in-depth study of Gutiérrez's thought see L. CECI, *La teologia della liberazione in America Latina. L'opera di Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Franco Angeli, Roma 1999.

link between the Brazilian JUC and Liberation Theology by highlighting the fact that many of the latter's leaders came from both the Catholic university movement and the JEC (*Juventude Estudantil Católica*), a movement of Brazilian Catholic Action that gathered high school students<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, according to Bidegain there was a direct relationship between the spread of the Revision of Life method founded by the Belgian priest Joseph Cardijn in Latin America and the spread of Liberation Theology<sup>4</sup>. According to Mackin, even, Liberation Theology was the natural evolution of the social catholicism born with the JOC (*Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*) founded by Joseph Cardijn, whose method had also been adopted by the Base Education Movement (MEB) in Brazil<sup>5</sup>. Other scholars, on the other hand, have identified, as the first and decisive moment of transformation of the JUC, not so much the ideas that came from the Belgian method of Cardijn's Revision of Life, as the thought of Jacques Maritain brought into the movement by the assistant Almeyda Bezzera through the elaboration of the so-called *Ideal histórico* in 1959<sup>6</sup>. In general, much has been written about the history of the AP and also about the role played by the party and its militants in the struggle against the military regime established after the 1964 coup d'état<sup>7</sup>, while there is still

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<sup>3</sup> R.S. MACKIN, *Liberation Theology: The Radicalization of Social Catholic Movements*, in «Politics, Religion & Ideology», September 2012, pp. 333-351.

<sup>4</sup> A.M. BIDEGAIN, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology*, cit. For an in-depth study of the life and reflection of the Belgian priest Joseph Cardijn, see G.-R. HORN, *Western European Liberation Theology 1924-1959. The First Wave*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, pp. 5-25.

<sup>5</sup> R.S. MACKIN, *Liberation Theology*, cit. For the history of the Base Education Movement and its links to Liberation Theology see K. LUDKIEWICZ ALVES, *From popular culture to social transformation: student youth, peasants and the Base Education Movements (MEB) in the 1960s*, in «HECL», XIV, 2 (2019), pp. 75-96.

<sup>6</sup> Snider traces the anti-capitalist ideas promoted by the JUC leaders back to the reflection on the «Ideal histórico»: C.M. SNIDER, *Catholic Campuses, Secularizing Struggles. Student Activism and Catholic Universities in Brazil, 1950-1968*, in *Local Church, Global Church. Catholic Activism in Latin America from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II*, ed. by S.J.C. Andes-J.G. Young, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2016, pp. 185-204.

<sup>7</sup> The first stories of the JUC and the AP were written by some of their protagonists and published in Brazil only after the fall of the military regime: H. LIMA-A. ARANTES, *História da Ação Popular da JUC ai PcoB*, Editoria Alfa-omega, São Paulo 1984; L.A. GÓMEZ DE

much to reflect on the preceding years, which marked the real change of the students of Brazilian Catholic Action. It is not enough, in fact, to recognise the “migration” of many militants from the JUC and JEC to the AP and Liberation Theology to verify the hypothesis launched by Bidegain in the 1980s. In addition, while the path of a part of the JUC students has been reconstructed<sup>8</sup>, a history of the JEC in its fundamental stages is still missing. The movement of high school students in the mid-1950s was just as numerous and participatory as that of the university students and, as some scholars have noted, many of the JUC leaders who made a breakthrough in the university movement at the end of the 1950s had trained in the ranks of the JEC in Belo Horizonte<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, as will be seen later, the JUC, and even more so the JEC in Brazil had had, since the mid-1950s, an “international vocation” that is not to be found in all youth movements of the time. From the documentation contained in the archives of the two organisations, it is evident a continuous effort of dialogue and comparison, albeit at a distance, with other Catholic Action youth groups in Latin America and Europe<sup>10</sup>. Did these transnational networks influence and in what way in the process of change of young militants of Brazilian Catholic Action?

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<sup>8</sup> A history of the JUC, based on a large number of interviews with its former leaders can be found in J. HOLBROOK, *Catholic student movements in Latin America: Cuba and Brasil, 1920s to 1960s*, Unpublished dissertation, Florida International University, Miami 2013. Among other things, the author brings to light the strong ties that existed between the JUC, the AP and the progressive magazine «Brasil Urgente».

<sup>9</sup> J.O. BEOZZO, *Cristãos na universidade e na política*, cit.; S.D. MATA, *Juc e MMC: polaridade político-religiosa em Belo Horizonte*, in «Revista de História Regional», 1, 2012, pp. 65-87.

<sup>10</sup> The papers of the Brazilian JEC and JUC are kept at the Centro de Documentação e Informação Científica (henceforth CEDIC) of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP) in two separate fonds, respectively dedicated to the two movements.

This essay retraces some of the stages that marked the evolution of the thinking of the students of the Brazilian JEC and JUC (henceforth JECB and JUCB) in the period preceding the military coup of 1964, attempting to bring together the different and composite factors that influenced this transformation. The aim is to bring to light the ideological horizon that nourished the radical and, in some ways, sudden change in the perspectives of the two Brazilian youth movements, and which mostly concerned the relationship between the Church and “the world”.

## 2. *The JEC and the JUC in Brazil*

The Brazilian Catholic Action (ACB) was born in 1935, at the behest of the episcopate, on the model of the Italian one, and provided for a male and a female branch in the youth sector. The JECF (*Juventude Estudantil Católica Feminina*) was active since 1937 and functioned as a kind of religious association. In the 1940s, however, two factors began to transform the youth sectors of Catholic Action: on the one hand, the involvement of priests who had been trained in France in previous years, such as, for example, Rosário Joffly and the Dominican Romeu Dale who worked in the JECF from 1945 and then, from 1949, became national assistant of the university sector<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, the involvement of the youth students of the ACB with the international Catholic Action movements that were emerging at that time. In particular, two Brazilian leaders, Vera Jaccoud and Jeannette Pucheu, participated in the international meeting promoted by the CIDI (*Centre International de Documentation et d'Information*) in Chicago in 1948<sup>12</sup>. The CIDI had been founded in

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<sup>11</sup> J.O. BEOZZO, *Cristãos na universidade e na política*, cit.

<sup>12</sup> CEDIC, JECB, rolo 34, «Acts of the First Inter-American Week of the JEC and JUC», Rio de Janeiro, 1950. In the report of the conference, the Brazilian students wrote that, by attending the international CIDI meeting, they had become aware of the severe isolation in which Catholic Action found itself throughout Latin America. After the week in Chicago, a French CIDI leader, Claude Salas, had travelled to Rio de Janeiro for a few months with the intention of supporting the work of the national JEC leaders in Brazil. From that point on, the Brazilian JEC and JUC had been tasked with setting up an inter-American section of CIDI, whose first meeting was in Rio de Janeiro in 1950.

Freiburg in 1946 with the intention of bringing together, in an international organisation, all the Catholic Action movements inspired by the French-speaking model. In the traditional model of Catholic Action, the Italian one, young people were divided by age, except for a specific group for university students, and the work of the association took place in parishes. In contrast, the French-speaking model, founded by Joseph Cardijn, was called “specialised” Catholic Action because young people were divided between workers, students and agricultural workers. Moreover, these Catholic Action groups called themselves movements and not associations and worked within factories, schools and universities. In 1954, CIDI would later change its name to JECI (*Jeunesse Étudiante Catholique Internationale*).

From that moment on, international contacts acquired a significant place in the commitment of Brazilian students and changed the very approach of Catholic Action youth groups. At the end of the 1940s, a reform of the ACB statute was initiated and from 1950, specialised youth groups were recognised on the model of Francophone Catholic Action<sup>13</sup>. This is when the experiment of the JUC started, which gathered university students and became a national movement<sup>14</sup>. Initially, the JUC was actually conceived as an association on the model of the FUCI (*Federazione Universitari Cattolici Italiani - Italian Catholic University Federation*) and, in fact, it participated in the world federation of Pax Romana which gathered, as opposed to the JECI (*Jeunesse Étudiante Catholique Internationale*), the groups of university Catholic Action that were inspired by the traditional Italian model. As will be seen, however, the Brazilian JUC, while remaining officially affiliated to Pax Romana, from 1956 and even more so from 1958, began to participate fully in the JECI<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> 1960 saw the birth of the «Cadernos da ACI», booklets that were normally printed once a year as a doctrinal and pastoral aid for the militants of Brazilian Catholic Action. The first of these booklets was dedicated to explaining why the ACB had chosen the specialised AC model.

<sup>14</sup> J.O. BEOZZO, *Cristãos na universidade e na política*, cit., pp. 17-34.

<sup>15</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 76, rolo 50, cyclostyled signed JUC, 1959. A cyclostyled document, signed JUC and dated 1959, states that formally the JUCB was part of Pax Romana but that in fact its leaders participated in the life of the JECI.

Starting from the work in the JECI, in which the female JEC students of Brazil participated, some students began to organise men's groups on the model of the French JEC (*Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne*) at a local level, which included, in addition to religious training, study seminars and discussions on the problems of the school, the Church and society. After some years of discussion, in 1957, the Brazilian bishops recognised the male JEC, which in fact merged with the female JEC in the following years. In fact, the national *équipe* – a term acquired from the French JEC that indicated the group of national leaders of the movement – had already been officially established in 1956 and the new movement had become an official member of the JECI. The hierarchy, however, retained some misgivings that were only overcome by the insistence of Don Fernando Helder and Don Claudio Kolling the following year. The 1956 was not a random date because, in that very year, the JECI had decided to hold its international meeting in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, and this had certainly given a strong impetus to the birth of the men's branch, if only because there had immediately been a demand for students who could organise the world session<sup>16</sup>.

The next meeting of the JECI took place in Dakar, Senegal, in 1958, and this time a number of representatives from both the JUCB and JECB participated. On that occasion, all the participants in the international movement wrote and approved the *Charte de Dakar*, i.e., a new statute of the JECI that proposed a true "method" of action and Christian formation for all movements of Catholic Action youth groups<sup>17</sup>. The *Charte de Dakar* was certainly intended to respond to the entry of many new national groups from developing countries into the international organisation, but at the same time it sanctioned certain changes in the movement's ideological horizon such as, for example, a diminished interest in the fight against communism and instead a new focus on commitment to the development of social justice especially in Third World countries<sup>18</sup>. The Dakar meeting

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<sup>16</sup> *Noticiário Internacional*, in «Boletim JUC», march 1955. The international session of the JECI took place in Rio de Janeiro from 14 to 28 July 1956.

<sup>17</sup> *Raport de la session mondiale d'étude Dakar*, in «Bulletin internationale JECI», november 1958.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



was an important turning point for all the youth movements of Catholic Action that were inspired by the Francophone model, but for the Brazilians it had an even greater significance because, on that occasion, Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza, leader of the JUCB, was elected as the new secretary of the JECI<sup>19</sup>.

Beginning in 1956, the Brazilian JEC and JUC, which until then had grown up as separate realities, began a common path precisely in the name of the shared work in the JECI. To this was added, however, an important element because, as has already been pointed out, at the end of the 1950s, many students arrived in the ranks of the JUC who had grown up in the JEC; they were, therefore, influenced by the horizon of the Revision of Life that came from the model of Catholic Action of Cardijn and by an approach that tended to unite or coincide the moment of action in reality with that of the Christian formation of the young person. These new leaders, as well as the involvement in the JECI, profoundly influenced the path of the JUC which, until that moment, had settled on a sensibility more linked to a religious formation marked by pilgrimages and moments of prayer. On the other hand, of course, the transformations of the JUC since the 1960s profoundly influenced the students of the JEC to the extent that, in some cities, the two movements came to merge with each other.

### 3. *The JEC and the «Engajamento»*

Since 1956, the year the national *équipe* of the men's branch was born, the JEC in Brazil had adopted the method of the Revision of Life that came from the French-speaking world. The novelty consisted in a modern model of Christian education: the formation of young people was to take place through "action", that is, a direct engagement in the social reality of the students, and not through a theoretical preparation on Catholic doctrine;

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<sup>19</sup> After the international meeting in Dakar, some JUC and JEC male and female leaders printed a booklet entitled *Dakar 58* in which they recounted the proceedings of the JECI week and reproduced some documents of the Dakar assembly translated into Portuguese: CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 41, *Dakar 58*, «Publicação oficial dos Secretariados Nacionais de JEC, JECF e JUC», Rio de Janeiro 1959.

on the contrary, the truth of the Gospel message would be discovered by the young people starting from their engagement in reality. In 1961, John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* recognised the method of the Revision of Life as valid for all forms of apostolate and thus, in fact, endorsed the path taken by the Brazilian JEC, summarised by the term *engajamento*, i.e. a commitment of the students in the school reality but, more generally, in the social reality of Brazil.

In 1961, what in previous years had been a call for engagement with the scholastic and social reality of Brazil became a full-fledged action programme that aimed to transform the JEC from an elite movement into a mass movement. The third national congress of the JECB had as its theme «Engajamento nas bases»<sup>20</sup>. It was held in Belo Horizonte in August 1961 with the aim of setting up the work for the following year and turning the movement around. This turning point consisted first of all in the redefinition of the aims of the JEC, which were summarised in the commitment to a «politicisation of the student environment»: «Vemos então que a nossa função è politizar o meio estudantil através do nosso engajamento nas bases»<sup>21</sup>. The way was for the JEC youth to become more and more involved in the relationship with their classmates and within the activities of the schools. JEC militants were also to strive to build student political organizations that were to be unique and represented all students and their class interests within the city and state democratic bodies. The deepening of personal faith, which until then had been an important element of the JEC, could only develop from this kind of “political” work: a Christian student would only feel the need for the sacraments and spiritual formation if he began to take responsibility for his fellow students and student life<sup>22</sup>. The perspective was no longer the “Christianisation” of schools but the engagement and involvement of JEC militants with the reality of students and the social problems of Brazil<sup>23</sup>. The conclusions of the national congress in Belo Horizonte were undoubtedly very ambitious, even if the means by which the JEC leaders set out to «politicise the student

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<sup>20</sup> *Engajamento nas bases*, in «Caderno JEC», August 1961.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

world» were in fact reduced to the organisation of seminars on student and social problems and the construction of student representative organizations<sup>24</sup>.

The following year, the JEC printed a new programme for the student movement entitled *Justicia social*<sup>25</sup>. The food for thought was taken from the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which spoke of the need for a social education of Christians through action in reality. The programme attempted to approach the problems of social justice in Brazil from the three phases of the Revision of Life method, namely “seeing”, “judging” and “acting”. “Seeing”, considered the moment when Christians became aware of the reality around them, was identified with the awareness of the problems of underdevelopment Brazil was facing, namely hunger, lack of medical care, illiteracy and extreme poverty. The moment of “judging”, which in the method of the Revision of Life was a moment of confrontation between reality and the suggestions coming from the reading of the Gospel, was interpreted, in fact, as a treatment of the causes of the country’s underdevelopment, namely the lack of industrial growth due to the imperialist policy of the United States and the unjust distribution of wealth among the population<sup>26</sup>. The third phase, that of “acting”, took the form of setting up a national centre for social studies, planning conferences on the theme of social justice in schools and, eventually, organising visits to the *favelas* of Brazil to make contact with that reality<sup>27</sup>.

In other passages of the booklet, an attempt was also made to outline the specificity of the Church’s social doctrine, which, we read, refused to embrace Marxist doctrine on the one hand, and capitalist doctrine on the other, because it was neither against equality nor freedom, but in favour of a universal brotherhood of men; furthermore, unlike both communist and capitalist thought, work was not conceived as a purely material aspect of man’s life, but the means to contribute to the «spiritualisation of matter»; finally, structures were to be transformed, but not without first

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> CEDIC, JECB, R. 37, *Justiça social para a construção do mundo. Programa da Juventude Estudantil Católica Brasileira* 1961, 1962.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

transforming man in order to free him from his innate selfishness. The reference texts were *Manifesto por uma Civilização Solidária* and *Princípio para a Ação* by Louis Joseph Lebret, *Itinerario da Marx a Cristo* by Ignácio Leppe, *O drama da Habitação* by Abbé Pierre and *Construir o Homen e o Mundo* by Michel Quoist<sup>28</sup>.

It was precisely during these years that problems began with the Brazilian episcopate, which denounced the risk for the JEC of dismissing the dimension of education in the faith in order to embrace a discourse and a proposal to change economic and social structures. A not insignificant aspect was also that many JEC students were fascinated by and supported the new reformist government of João Goulart. Most bishops, on the contrary, feared the new socialist president and the possibility of a dictatorship on the Cuban model being established in Brazil.

Admittedly, there were profound differences between the groups at the local level because, for example, the JEC in Belo Horizonte had taken very advanced positions with respect to the theory of *engajamento*, while the São Paulo group still organised many activities more closely connected to the traditional religious dimension such as pilgrimages and moments of common prayer. Tensions emerged in 1963 on the occasion of a national meeting from 12 to 14 November at which the topic of student politics was discussed. On that occasion, a compromise was reached with the Hierarchy and between the sensitivities of the different regional groups, as documented in the booklet published that year, with ecclesiastical approval, in which the issue of JEC involvement in student politics was addressed<sup>29</sup>. The JEC, it says, could not turn into a political party, nor could it take part in the life of student political bodies, because its purpose was strictly religious and it represented the Church within the school<sup>30</sup>. This, however, and herein lay the compromise, did not prevent students committed to the JEC from taking part, in a personal capacity, in student politics. At that point – it was emphasised – the entire JEC group would support the individual students of the movement who were engaged in student politics, but who would not explicitly declare themselves to be

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> CEDIC, *JECB*, rolo 35, *Ação Jecistas no meio Estudantil*, in «Caderno JEC», 1963.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

members of the JEC, taking personal responsibility for all their actions. The booklet then specified that students who held positions of responsibility in the movement would avoid political engagement. The immediate compromise was agreeable to many, but the prospect of such political engagement, as suggested by the episcopate, was far removed from the horizon traced in the previous two years: the published text, making explicit reference to Maritain's thought, described the involvement of JEC students in student politics as a mission of «moralising» student groups or «Christianising structures» through the conquest of key positions of responsibility in student bodies. This kind of perspective, in the eyes of many JEC militants, was a step backwards compared to the basic social education plan developed since 1961<sup>31</sup>.

#### 4. *The JUC and the «Ideal histórico»*

The JEC was certainly not insensitive to the path taken in parallel by the university movement, which, however, had a more marked trait of cultural reflection than the practical lines developed among the younger students. The international meeting in Dakar and the election of Luiz Gomez de Souza as Secretary General of the JECI profoundly influenced the Brazilian group, as emerges from the directives on the action of the JUCB written after the return of the delegates to Brazil. The new lines of action echoed the watchwords launched by the JECI in Dakar: the aim of the JUCB was not to work «for the comrades» of the university, but «with them» and the way was not to multiply religious moments but to demonstrate through action the ideal of the Gospel<sup>32</sup>. This aspect was

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> «Necessidade de marcar bem o nosso ideal: o Evangelho em tôda a vida, não nos deixando levar pela preocupação de multiplicar no meio universitário os atos diremaente religiosos. Êstes são indispensáveis, valem por si próprios, mas também fazem um apêlo, exigem que a mensagem de Cristo penetre cada um de nossos atos quotidianos e corriqueiros. Necessidade de uma purificação de nossa maneira de trabalhar: não se trata de trabalhar para os colega; muito menos sôbre os colegas. O que é preciso é agir com os outros, em beneficio de todo o meio estudantil»: *Bases comuns de JUC*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1959, p. 4.

hardly theoretical if one takes into account that, precisely in 1959, a series of student strikes had begun in the universities, a sign, according to many JUC leaders, that Brazilian university students were becoming aware of the social and political problems of their country<sup>33</sup>.

Then, in the summer of 1959, the ninth national congress of the JUC was held in Belo Horizonte and on that occasion began to speak of the «Ideal histórico» as the new ideal of the Brazilian movement. The expression made explicit reference to Jacques Maritain's thought and had given the title to the speech by Father Almerly Bezerra, assistant to the JUC in Recife<sup>34</sup>. The problem to which Bezerra's reflection responded was that of a lack of involvement of students in the historical temporal reality in which they were immersed: «O que é que explica um certo emaranço ou desnorreamento dos militantes quando se trata de saber o que significa – não apenas teóricamente [...] – “recristianização do meio”, salvar as estruturas, criar uma ordem social cristã, restaurar tôdas as coisas em Cristo»<sup>35</sup>. The solution, or at least the way forward, according to the assistant was to become aware of Brazil's problems and needs through the study of social science, politics, economics and history, and compare the results with universal Christian principles learned from the study of the ecclesiastical magisterium and Christian philosophers and theologians. From this comparison, «average principles» would emerge that would be an expression of the «Ideal histórico concreto». The speech was somewhat moderate and concluded with the warning not to think that the salvation of people could come from a change in political, social and economic structures, which were also an important aspect of people's lives. This emphasis by the JUC assistant hints at the fact that students were fascinated, even in those years and following the Cuban revolution, by revolutionary perspectives<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> For a history of student politics in Brazilian universities see V. LANGLAND, *Speaking of Flowers*, cit.

<sup>34</sup> A. BEZERRA, *Da necessidade de um Ideal Histórico*, in «Boletim JUC», December 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Bezerra's prudence in avoiding encouraging revolutionary tendencies had already been emphasised in 1970 by E. DE KADT, *Catholic Radicals in Brazil*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1970, pp. 198-199.

The following year, the national meeting was well attended because it was the tenth anniversary of the birth of the JUC in Brazil. On that occasion, numerous reflections referred to the theme of the «Ideal histórico» launched the year before, but left the impression of an instrumental or at least superficial use of Bezzerá's reflection: it was re-proposed as an invitation to commit oneself to the improvement of the social conditions of the Brazilian people, but there was no reflection, as had been proposed the year before, on the meaning of «re-Christianisation of the students» or «Christian social order». The interventions were more a radical criticism of the history of the Catholic laity in Brazil, which had always identified itself, in their opinion, with the reactionary forces in the country. On the contrary, for the young people of the JUC, the time had come to become the «vanguard of history»<sup>37</sup>. In this sense, the theme of «engajamento» was re-proposed – already developed within the JEC and taken up by Louis Lebreton's reflections collected in *De l'efficacité politique du chrétien* – interpreted as the need for the students of the JUC to «assumir concretamente a responsabilidade de uma obra a realizar no futuro» and to fight against the injustice of the economic and social structures of Brazil<sup>38</sup>. Father Luiz Gonzaga Sena, regional assistant of the JUC in the northeast, returned to the «Ideal histórico», forcefully reiterating that the Christian, imitating the earthly existence of Jesus Christ, had to «identify with the historical reality» in which he lived. Sena had then emphasised that the «average principles» of the «Ideal histórico» could not be drawn exclusively from the Magisterium of the Church or the theologians, nor even only from the knowledge that the laity had of historical reality, but from a mediation between them<sup>39</sup>. This underlining probably stemmed from the polemics that arose within some groups of the JUC who criticised the Brazilian bishops because, in their opinion, they tried to interfere in «purely technical matters» that were not their competence, while it was the laity who had to take «the risk of the

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<sup>37</sup> H.J. DE SOUZA, *A Juc de amanhã*, in «Boletim JUC», July 1960: «O jucista hoje sente a necessidade de ser radical, de estar na avant-garde da História, de provar o seu Absoluto pelo seu testemunho histórico total e consequente».

<sup>38</sup> *Aspectos do engajamento pessoal*, in «Boletim JUC», July 1960.

<sup>39</sup> L.G. SENA, *Reflexões sobre o ideal histórico*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1960.

temporal»<sup>40</sup>. The following year, Sena would be removed from the JUC at the behest of the episcopate and, from 1965, called to Paris as the new assistant general of the JECI<sup>41</sup>.

After Sena, one of the leaders of the JUC, Antônio Otávio, spoke with the aim of illustrating some of the «average principles» that constituted the «Ideal histórico» identified by the work begun the previous year: the result was a radical questioning of the capitalist system in favour of a nationalisation of the fundamental productive sectors, a socialisation of land and a massive intervention of the state in the regulation of private property. The point of arrival was to be, Otávio stated, referring to Emmanuel Mounier's communitarian personalism, an «economy organised within the total perspective of the person»<sup>42</sup>. In fact, the result was a purely economic analysis of Brazil's problems and a systematic proposal for a political commitment to the foundation of a planned economic system of socialist inspiration; these ideas largely echoed the thought of Celso Monteiro Furtado, a Brazilian economist who taught at the University of Belo Horizonte, whose reflections had fascinated many members of the JUC<sup>43</sup>; Furtado, in 1962, would become Minister of Planning in the Goulart government. Although, in the assembly that followed this speech, the national *équipe* had stressed the excessive specificity of some of the lines of action proposed by Otávio, it was reiterated that there were at least three «inalienable average principles» in the «Ideal histórico» of the JUC: the

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<sup>40</sup> *Debates na assembléia*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1960.

<sup>41</sup> Luiz Gonzaga Sena was born in 1932 and was ordained a priest in the diocese of Olinda-Recife; there he became a professor at the diocesan seminary and assistant to the JUC. After the military coup of 1964, he was forced to move to France and in 1965 was appointed assistant of the JECI.

<sup>42</sup> A. OTÁVIO, *Algumas diretrizes de um ideal histórico cristão para o povo brasileiro*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1960.

<sup>43</sup> J. HOLBROOK, *Catholic student movements in Latin America*, cit., pp. 173-174: «There were a convergence of intellectual and geo-political factors in 1959 that provided a context for the ideological development and radicalization of the Brazilian JUC. A noted Brazilian economist, Celso Furtado, published a book on the economic history of Brazil that emphasised dependency theory and became popular among Catholic university students as an explanation for the economic disadvantages of Brazil and Latin America compared to the United States».



struggle for the development of Brazil, the overcoming of capitalism and the liturgical renewal<sup>44</sup>.

From 1960, in line with the path that had been mapped out, the JUC students decided to become fully involved in university politics: until then, they wrote in their bulletin, they had first ignored political work in the university, then they had become a force of the Brazilian «nationalist bourgeoisie», and finally, with the advent of the «Ideal histórico», they could become a force for social change<sup>45</sup>. In 1961, one of the JUC militants, a student at the Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro, Aldo Arantes, ran for and won the presidency of the UNE (*União Nacional de Estudantes*) supported by a coalition of left-wing groups. This choice worried many bishops in Brazil and the following year Aldo Arantes was forced by the Cardinal of Rio de Janeiro to leave the JUC. In 1962, as already mentioned, a large group of JUC students founded the political movement called *Ação Popular* (AP).

### 5. Which «Ideal histórico»?

Some scholars have seen a direct thread between the «Ideal histórico» elaborated from 1959 and the political militancy in the AP that prefigured the ideas of Liberation Theology. In reality, however, from at least 1963 onwards there was an explicit overcoming of the Maritainian ideological horizon that, in any case, from the beginning had appeared unconvincing with respect to the more concrete lines of direction of the JUCB. In a certain sense, the JEC had had a more linear path: the students had sought in the Revision of Life and in the contents of the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* a Christian ideal incarnated in everyday life and in social realities that went beyond a theoretical and preceptistic religious education.

In both cases, however, in addition to the elements already identified, it is important to consider other factors that certainly played a role in the transformations of youth Catholic Action in Brazil: the first was certainly the Cuban revolution whose prospects fascinated many Catholics

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<sup>44</sup> *Osservação importantes ao texto*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1960.

<sup>45</sup> *Política Universitária*, in «Boletim JUC», September 1960.

throughout Latin America; furthermore, the students participated in a ferment that ran through schools and universities throughout the country and that was born, most likely, from the development of a still small middle class. It is no coincidence that, in 1961, Goulart's reformist left government was democratically elected, a sign of a widespread desire for change.

In 1963 there was an attempt to relaunch the JUC movement after two years of harsh confrontation with the Hierarchy. Both the return to Brazil of Luiz Gomez de Souza after his experience at the JECI and the appointment of a new JUC national assistant, Cândido Padim<sup>46</sup> contributed to this. In January 1963, the «Boletim JUC» reappeared after two years of silence. The first issue published a long reflection written by the national *équipe* of the movement in which it declared the overcoming of the «Ideal histórico» in favour of the new ideal of the JUC: «a opção pela Revolução Brasileira»<sup>47</sup>. The «choice for the Revolution» had arisen from the decision of many JUC militants to participate in student politics within the AP and then from the work of study and «ideological preparation» that had been done in the preceding years. The conclusion was, they wrote, that the «Ideal histórico» had proved inadequate to the new demands that had arisen among the young people of the JUCB. References to Maritain's thought had completely disappeared, while many protagonists of the Second Vatican Council such as Henri de Lubac, Jean Yves Congar and Hans Urs Von Balthasar, but also Emmanuel Mounier with his Christian personalism were mentioned<sup>48</sup>. They were joined by the reflections of Luis Gonzaga Sena and Henrique de Lima Vaz SJ who, as we shall see, influenced perhaps more than anyone else the ideological horizon of the

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<sup>46</sup> S. SCATENA, *Il Celam di Manuel Larrain: uomini e strumenti dell'«aggiornamento latinoamericano»*, in *L'America Latina fra Pio XII e Paolo VI. Il cardinal Casaroli e le politiche vaticane in una chiesa che cambia*, ed. by A. Melloni-S. Scatena, il Mulino, Bologna 2006, p. 104; C.P. FERREIRA DE CAMARGO-B. MUÑIZ DE SOUZA-A.F. DE OLIVEIRA PIERUCCI-M. JASÍS, *La Iglesia católica en el Brasil: 1945-1970*, in «Revista Mexicana de Sociología», vol. 43, 1981, pp. 1999-2041. Bishop Cândido Padim had been a militant youth Catholic Action in Brazil in the late 1930s when he was studying law at the university.

<sup>47</sup> *Reflexões sobre o sentido do movimento*, in «Boletim JUC», January 1963.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

JUC in the 1960s<sup>49</sup>. As Souza wrote, the JUC's choice for revolution, that is, for «the realisation of the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society» – which was based on «the evangelical teaching that one could not love God without loving one's fellow men» – was not the ultimate goal of the movement in Brazil, but a transitional phase of history that would contribute to the realisation of the «universal common good» recalled by John XXIII: «Nosso país se inscreve na chamada “Revolução dos trópicos” e num quadro de universalização que êste inigualável João XXIII profeticamente mostra com suas indicações das exigências de um bem comum universal»<sup>50</sup>.

#### 6. «Three generations of Catholics in Latin America»

The transformation of the cultural and ideological horizons of the JUC and JEC in Brazil is well exemplified in the discussion that was carried out by Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza in October 1964 in a speech entitled «A Igreja na América Latina». His reflections, carried out orally, were transcribed and gave rise to a cyclostyled text distributed for common reflection in view of a meeting of Brazilian youth Catholic Action<sup>51</sup>. Souza's argument started from the observation that the Catholic Church, in Latin America, had always identified itself with political or economic power<sup>52</sup>; hence the fact that, as the Church had identified itself with the conservative forces, the «Liberation movements» or progressists had arisen as anti-clerical groups<sup>53</sup>. To this was added, we read, the problem of European

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<sup>49</sup> Henrique Cláudio de Lima Vaz SJ (Ouro Preto, 1921 - Belo Horizonte, 2002) was a Brazilian philosopher and university professor. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1938 and was ordained a priest in 1948, completed his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and only returned to Brazil in the 1950s. Lima Vaz is considered one of the “fathers” of the AP.

<sup>50</sup> L.A. GOMEZ DE SOUZA, JUC, *movimento pedagógico*, in «Boletim JUC», January 1963.

<sup>51</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 76, «A Igreja na América Latina», transcript of a speech by Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza, October 1964.

<sup>52</sup> «A Igreja identificou-se com o grupo dominante, o grupo que detinha o poder político e o poder econômico. Na América espanhola era a Igreja uma das grandes proprietárias de terras» (*ibid.*).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

priests, who made up the majority of priests in Latin America, which led many South Americans to identify the Church with a colonialist force. The events in Cuba were read by Souza in these terms: if it was true that there was religious persecution in Cuba, it was because most of the priests on the island were Spanish and had supported Batista's dictatorial regime. Many of them had not been driven out by the revolutionary forces but had left of their own free will. The new generation of Brazilian and Latin American Catholics wanted to free themselves, Souza claimed, from the compromises of the past between Church and political power<sup>54</sup>. Latin America was traversed by three generations of Catholics: the first was an «integrist generation» that identified with conservatism and excessive spiritualism. The second was the generation of the 1930s that had given birth to Catholic Action and prepared for the Second Vatican Council; the latter, called the «Christian-social» generation, drew on Maritain's thinking and attempted to bring the supernatural back into temporal realities, that is, to «re-Christianise» or «baptise» natural realities<sup>55</sup>. This generation – which sought a “third way” between capitalism and socialism – had also given birth to the Christian Democratic parties and Christian trade unions. For Souza, Maritain's was a «“ghetto” generation» that had demonstrated its weakness in the Christian Democratic experiments in Latin America. In his opinion, even the attempt that gave the most guarantees of renewal, namely Eduardo Frei's Christian Democracy party in Chile, contained an unsolvable contradiction. In fact, Frei had founded a sincerely reformist party in which all Chilean Catholics could recognise themselves; the leader had managed to take over the leadership of the country, but had thus compromised the Church in a contingent political choice and, in the event of a victory by forces not allied with Frei, Catholics would certainly suffer the brunt of a new persecution<sup>56</sup>. The Christian Democracy parties, Souza asserted, had reduced Christianity to a political ideology or a series of temporal and social options that inevitably ended up being identified with the message of the Church. In this history had arisen, Souza asserted, a «third generation» represented more by young people who started from

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

the assumption that God was present in all existing spiritual and material realities and therefore any «positive human gesture was a gesture of God's grace» (and here was a clear reference to the thought of Teilhard de Chardin). It followed that these young people, for whom Souza was the spokesman, did not want to be «Christian democrats, Christian socialists, Christian anarchists or monarchists», but only Christians who then chose to embrace one political idea or another according to their personal convictions<sup>57</sup>.

This perspective had already emerged in a speech by Lima Vaz at the JUCB congress the previous year<sup>58</sup>. Vaz's reflections were in those years a constant point of reference for the leaders of the movement, and from him came the thought of Teilhard de Chardin, reposed in the analysis of the Brazilian context<sup>59</sup>. In his speech, Lima Vaz traced the history from the Constantinian period to contemporary times, stating that a substantial part of the Church had identified itself, from time to time, with «the dominant ideology»<sup>60</sup>. This had given rise to a desire on the part of Christians to reaffirm the transcendence of Christianity vis-à-vis any ideology and to recover the Church's message of «world solidarity» in a path of «purification»<sup>61</sup>. The Church was the bearer of a divine message but exposed itself, living in history, to ideologies. The latter, however, were not defined in terms of truth but effectiveness: the solution was for individual Christians to participate in the message of truth brought by the Church and

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 70, rolo 47, «Culture and Ideology - Christianity and Ideology», transcript of Henrique Cláudio de Lima Vaz's talk at the 3<sup>rd</sup> JUCB National Study Seminar, February 1963.

<sup>59</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 13, letter from Father Almerly Bezzerá to Romeu Dale, Recife, 25 September 1961. In the letter, Bezzerá specified that it was Jaime de Barros Câmara, president of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference since 1958, who had pointed out the bishops' strong resistance to Lima Vaz's involvement with the JUCB students.

<sup>60</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 70, rolo 47, «Culture and Ideology - Christianity and Ideology», cit.

<sup>61</sup> The theme of the construction of a «world solidarity» as an alternative system to that of both capitalism and communism is present in many of Lima Vaz's speeches at the JUCB in these years (CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 13, «Cristianismo e consciência histórica», lecture given by H. Lima Vaz to JUC leaders, 1963; CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 63, rolo 44, «Moral e responsabilidade social», lecture given by Lima Vaz to JUC leaders, 1963).

then choose, in their political commitment, the ideology that showed greater effectiveness in contingent temporal action<sup>62</sup>.

### 7. *The end of JEC and JUC in Brazil*

The military coup of 1 April 1964 that deposed President Goulart further deteriorated relations with the Hierarchy, which the students accused of condescending to the new military regime. The military had in fact begun a harsh repression of all student movements, and JEC and JUC militants condemned the Church's silence in the face of the ongoing persecution<sup>63</sup>. After the coup, several assistants or former assistants of the JUC had to leave the country such as Father Sena, Father Almerly Bezzera and the assistant in Belo Horizonte, Father Luiz Viegas<sup>64</sup>. On the other hand, the bishops seemed unable to resolve the contradictions between political commitment and participation in Catholic Action that had matured in those years and exploded after the coup d'état. Beozzo recounts a meeting, held on 30 September 1965 in Rome, between several Brazilian bishops and in the presence of Father Padim, national assistant of the JUCB, during which the problems of Catholic Action youth and the future new statutes were discussed. On that occasion, Father Padim denounced the open, and unresolved, contradiction between the position of the students and that of the episcopate: on the one hand, the Church was asking Catholic Action to carry out a mission of «sacralisation of the

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<sup>62</sup> CEDIC, JUCB, caixa 70, rolo 47, «Culture and Ideology - Christianity and Ideology», cit.

<sup>63</sup> J. HOLBROOK, *Catholic student movements in Latin America*, cit., pp. 199-203; 206-207. After the coup d'état, the newspaper «Brasil Urgente» was closed down, so the UNE headquarters and several JUC and MEB (*Base Education Movement*) militants were arrested and tortured. Among the most notorious is the case of Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo, known as Frei Betto, a former JEC militant and later JUC leader who, after being arrested a first time, became a Dominican priest and was then arrested again, and imprisoned for four years, along with twelve other Dominican priests. Holbrook also brings to light the story of «Correio de manhã» journalist, Marcio Moreira Alves, who converted to the Catholic faith after his many visits to Brazilian Catholic Action students in prison.

<sup>64</sup> J.O. BEOZZO, *Cristãos na universidade e na política*, cit., pp. 49-50. The army also raided the Dominican convent in Belo Horizonte accused of communist conspiracy.

temporal order», while on the other it was preventing its young militants from fulfilling their task as lay people<sup>65</sup>.

In 1966, the episcopate proposed decentralising the two movements by abolishing the national *équipes* and making the local groups autonomous under the direct leadership of the bishops. Father Padim left the JUCB, was appointed bishop of Lorraine and was not replaced by any priest. The JUCB leaders, as is known, abandoned the movement, which was definitively disbanded, and became involved in the AP, which in 1968 became a Marxist-Leninist political party<sup>66</sup>. Less well known is the affair of the JEC: after the bishops' decision, the leaders of the JECB met on 29 November and 4 December 1966 in Juiz da Fora and decided to leave the movement to create a group detached from Catholic Action and the Church with social and political aims, although a few JEC groups survived at a local level<sup>67</sup>.

In 1968, with the AI-5 act, the regime initiated a new and extremely harsh phase of repression that also affected Catholic students and many priests<sup>68</sup> who paid first-hand for the effects of the new wave of repression<sup>69</sup> and even the bishops changed their attitude, multiplying their protests against the actions of the government<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>66</sup> J. HOLBROOK, *Catholic student movements in Latin America*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>67</sup> CEDIC, *JECB*, rolo 37, «Documento de Juiz da Fora», 4 December 1966.

<sup>68</sup> The case that caused the most uproar, also because of the resonance it had in the West, was the assassination of Father Henrique Pereira Neto, former assistant of the JUCB in Recife and young collaborator of Bishop Helder Câmara (V. IORI, *Chiesa, struttura politica e lotte sociali in Brasile*, Jaca Book, Milano 1972).

<sup>69</sup> For a history of the military regime's persecution of Brazilian student movements, see R. PATTO SÁ MOTTA, *As Universidades e o Regime Militar*, cit.

<sup>70</sup> A. PAYÀ RICO-J.L. HERNÁNDEZ HUERTA, *Other social actors involved in Brazil's "Long '68" in the midst of the violence. Public-sphere representations of the Catholic Church's discourse and actions in solidarity with student agitators*, in «HECL», XIV, 2 (2019), pp. 21-54; K.P. SERBIN, *Secret Dialogues. Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil*, University of Pittsburg Press, Pittsburg 2000.

### 8. *Final notes: France-Brazil and back*

The JEC and the JUC in Brazil in the 1950s, as we have already seen, were profoundly influenced by the reflections and models coming from the French-speaking world of specialised Catholic Action. In the 1960s, on the contrary, many of the events experienced by the two Brazilian movements anticipated, in some respects, what would happen in France a few years later. This aspect, which could be considered a coincidence of history, originated, in all probability, from the common participation in the international movement of the JECI, which had its headquarters in Paris and had first a Brazilian secretary and then, as assistant general, from 1965, Father Sena, already assistant to the Brazilian JUC. The latter, as we have already seen, had taken refuge in Europe because he had been persecuted by the military regime and had been appointed assistant general of the JECI.

The points of contact between the path of the specialised Catholic Action student groups in France and Brazil can be easily summarised as follows: in both cases, in the 1960s, an increasing involvement of JEC youth in the organisations of student politics had begun, both in schools and universities, and this had generated tension with the Hierarchy. In Brazil this had been happening since 1961 and had initially resulted in a compromise very similar to the one some French students reached with the episcopate in 1965. At a later stage, however, the involvement of the JECB and JUCB in student politics had led to the exit of all their leaders and many of their militants from Catholic Action<sup>71</sup>. In 1965, when the young people of the French JEC (which included both the university branch and the high school students' branch) came into open dispute with the French episcopate, which accused them of wanting to transform the Christian movement into a party of political activists, some of them left the JEC and created an independent movement/party, linked only to the university branch, on the model of what had happened in Brazil with the *Ação Popular*

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<sup>71</sup> For a more in-depth comparison of the events of the JEC in France and Brazil please refer to M. BUSANI, *Reti internazionali studentesche. Itinerari di una contestazione cattolica negli anni Sessanta*, in *Towards 1968. Studenti cattolici nell'Europa occidentale degli anni Sessanta*, ed. by M. Bocci-M. Busani, Studium, Roma 2020, pp. 57-65.



a few years earlier. Others, in France, arrived at a fragile compromise with the Hierarchy that consisted in the possibility of individual JEC students participating in student politics in a personal capacity, without standing as representatives of the movement<sup>72</sup>.

More generally, many of the reflections of the JEC and the JUC in Brazil anticipated those of the youth movement in France, that is, the need to overcome the so-called phase of the “second or new Christianity” and its ideals, as well as the experiments of Christian Democracy that had arisen from it, in order to give life to a new phase whose fundamental traits had been enucleated by the Spanish theologian José María González Ruiz in his “Theology of Revolution”<sup>73</sup>. After 1965, in fact, both in France and Brazil, many JEC and JUC leaders took the path of political activism, distancing themselves, in some cases, from the Catholic Church. The events of 1968 would then overwhelm the JEC in France, just as, in the same year, the JEC and the JUC in Brazil would be overwhelmed by the extremely harsh repression put in place by the regime with the AI-5 act that led to thousands of arrests throughout the country. In Brazil, from the wake of that experience, the so-called *Pastoral Universitaria* would be born, which would spread to universities from the 1970s onwards.

In Europe too, as Bidegain postulated for Latin America, the Theology of Revolution had a particular hold in those contexts where Joseph

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<sup>72</sup> For an in-depth look at the clash between the JEC and the French episcopate see B. GIROUX, *La Jeunesse étudiante Chrétienne*, Cerf, Paris 2013 and C. PRUDHOMME, *Les jeunesses chrétiennes en crise (1955-1980)*, in *À la gauche du Christ. Les chrétiens de gauche en France de 1945 à nos jours*, dir. D. Pelletier- J.-L. Schlegel, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 2012, pp. 323-340.

<sup>73</sup> José María González Ruiz was born in Seville in 1916 and entered the seminary in the 1930s. Due to his intellectual gifts, he had been sent to Rome to study theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 1954, he began his theological production, immediately acquiring a certain fame beyond national borders. His most important work, *El cristianismo no es un humanismo*, was first published in 1966 (J.M. GONZÁLES RUIZ, *El cristianismo no es un humanismo*, Península, Barcelona 1973). In February 1968, the publication in the «Boletín de la HOAC» of a 1965 lecture given by Ruiz at the Agape Ecumenical Centre entitled «Christians and Revolution» gave the Spanish government the opportunity to denounce the theologian as subversive; the text, in fact, contained a passage in which the theologian legitimised violent acts of rebellion against oppressive regimes (G.-R. HORN, *The Spirit of Vatican II. Western European Progressive Catholicism in the Long Sixties*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 50-59).

Cardijn's method of the Revision of Life was more widespread and, thus, where the perspectives of that social Catholicism envisioned by the Belgian priest were more deeply rooted. The French-speaking model certainly pushed young people not to shy away from "the world" and social problems, but rather to involve themselves with them; this aspect had certainly made them more open to everything that, in terms of social justice, came from other contexts and not exclusively from the Catholic world. In Brazil, for example, a fundamental role was played by the awareness of the country's enormous problems, the general period of ferment that ran through all the Brazilian universities, and the fascination that the Cuban revolution (which seemed a credible response to U.S. imperialism) exerted on young people.

In this sense, the events in Brazil were emblematic of a common ideological horizon of the leaders of "specialised" Catholic Action throughout the world, who, while recognising its merits, made Maritain's thought and, more generally, Christian Democrat-style political Catholicism an inheritance to be overcome, in search of new forms of apostolate and social and political action. Contrary, however, to Cardijn's original intent, this path led the young Brazilians, also following the advent of the military regime, to resolve their search into an almost exclusively political action that saw revolutionary change in social structures as the task of Brazilian Catholic youth.

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EFRAÍN GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN,  
INTELLECTUAL AND PROMOTER OF THE  
SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH  
LAURA ALARCÓN MENCHACA

1. *Introduction*

Efraín González Morfín was a Mexican Catholic intellectual and politician, a great scholar and promoter of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which John Paul II recognized by awarding him the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Cross in 1991. Because of the milieu where he grew up and his thirteen years in Jesuit seminaries, González Morfín's intellectual formation was very solid. This text aims to analyze two fundamental elements in his life, reflected in his knowledge of and interest in promoting Church social doctrine, as both an intellectual and a politician. First is his profound study and critique of Communism, where it can be surmised that he was heavily influenced by several Jesuits, or by his relationships with those studying Marxism, such as Jean-Yves Calvez, Henri Chambre and Pierre Bigó. González Morfín's interest in the study and proactive criticism of Marxism led him to intensely research and promote the Social Doctrine of the Church. His was not an isolated case: given that this was a topic much-discussed in Europe, which suggests that he had either tacit or explicit links to European intellectuals. Second to be analyzed will be his political career, as it reflects his promotion of Church social doctrine. This allowed González Morfín to propose innovative changes to the National Action Party (PAN)'s doctrinal principles, as well as those of such business organizations as the Social Union of Catholic Entrepreneurs (USEM); all in light of Church social doctrine<sup>1</sup>.

Considering Efraín González Morfín as an intellectual first requires clarifying what is meant by this term. There have been various debates over

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<sup>1</sup> Our appreciation to Lucinda Mayo for the translation from Spanish to English, and to Rebeca Viridiana Mercado González for her collaboration.

this issue. Intellectuals are those who dedicate themselves to the cultivation of knowledge, seeking to influence the destiny of those around them. They are part of the era in which they live, engaging in dialogue, discussing, and proposing changes according to that temporal context. In doing so, they alternate between avoiding and approaching power. François Dosse points out that «the intellectual's entry into politics is originally an act of protest. However, this intervention may take another form and apply itself to everything involving community affairs, all social matters, without limiting itself solely to the political dimension»<sup>2</sup>. Dosse quotes Jean Marie Goulemont as stating that the modern intellectual emerged in the XVIII century, «an autonomous producer of political and social models that made his involvement in the city imperative»<sup>3</sup>. Some are born as marginal intellectuals, shut out by the State's intellectuals. This allows them to build alternative models of nationhood, emanating from diverse analyses. An intellectual may be considered to be someone who cultivates science and literature, that is, knowledge. For some authors, intellectuals are those who transmit values; for others, those who engage in civic debate. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that «the intellectual is someone who attends to what concerns him [...] and aims to answer the array of received truths and accepted behavior inspired by them, in the name of a global conception of man and society»<sup>4</sup>. Dosse adds that this would allow the intellectual to maintain a distance and a critical position in the face of power. An intellectual becomes someone who leads society, feeds public opinion and pursues truth and justice. The figure of González Morfín fulfills all these uses of the term.

Efraín González Morfín was a Mexican Catholic, son of prominent Jaliscian Efraín González Luna, who has been considered the main ideologue behind the birth of the National Action Party (PAN) in 1939. Founded during the six-year term of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas,

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<sup>2</sup> F. DOSSE, *La marcha de las ideas. Historia de los intelectuales, historia intelectual*, trad. R.F. Tomás, Universitat de València, Valencia 2007, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> J.P. SARTRE, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels* [1965], Gallimard, Paris 1972, p. 12, cit. in F. DOSSE, *La marcha de las ideas*, cit., p. 30.



the PAN proposed an alternative direction for the nation, based on principles from the Social Doctrine of the Church.

## 2. *His intellectual formation*

González Morfín was born in the city of Guadalajara, capital of Jalisco state, on June 5, 1929<sup>5</sup>: the very month and year in which an agreement between Church and State put an end to the *Cristero* War. His life experience was central to his intellectual formation: the time he spent with the Society of Jesus is no less important than his father's influence. González Morfín entered the Society in August 1945 upon leaving high school, and remained until January 1959, three years short of being ordained as a priest. Those years of intense study made him privy not only to internal Society discussions, but also to those within the Catholic Church as a whole. González Morfín's analysis centered mostly on two central themes, communism and the Social Doctrine of the Church, both within the framework of the Vatican II Council debates.

The debate over communism was nothing new: the subject had been a major concern for the Holy See since the 1930s, as was reflected in Pius XI's *Divini Redemptoris* Encyclical on atheistic communism, promulgated on March 19, 1937. Communism was dangerous «because it threatens everything, infiltrates everywhere, whether openly or cunningly: individual dignity, the sanctity of the family, the order and security of society and above all religion, even to the point of denying God and the Catholic faith»<sup>6</sup>. The Pope further described communism as proposing an apparent redemption and a false ideal of justice, equality and fraternity for workers. He considered that Marxist materialism turned institutions such as marriage and the family into mere civil bonds. The Church insisted that

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<sup>5</sup> L. ALARCÓN MENCHACA, *González Luna, Efraín (1898-1964) in Diccionario de protagonistas del mundo católico en México siglo XX*, AA.VV., UAM Unidad Azcapotzalco-Unidad Xochimilco, Ciudad de México 2021, pp. 292-294.

<sup>6</sup> Y. CHIRON, *Pie XI. (1857-1939)*, Vía Romana, Paris 2013, p. 560; *Address of His Holiness Pius XI on the occasion of the inauguration of the world exhibition of the Catholic press*, May 12, 1936 ([https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/speeches/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_spe\\_19360512\\_siamo-ancora.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/speeches/documents/hf_p-xi_spe_19360512_siamo-ancora.html), consulted on March 6, 2023).

materialism was something perverse; a qualification applied by the Jesuits as well, until the 1940s<sup>7</sup>. At the beginning of the 20th century, in 1904, Pius X had published his *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* Encyclical on modernist doctrines, in which he condemned philosophical currents of modernism such as agnosticism. All this had a bearing on the criticism of modernity, reiterated in Pius XII's 1950 *Humani Generis* encyclical, which declared Marxist communism «intrinsically perverse»<sup>8</sup>. In it he said:

If anyone examines the state of affairs outside the Christian fold, he will easily discover the principal trends that not a few learned men are following. Some imprudently and indiscreetly hold that *evolution*, which has not been fully proved even in the domain of natural sciences, explains the origin of all things, and audaciously support the *monistic* and pantheistic opinion that the world is in continual evolution. Communists gladly subscribe to this opinion so that, when the souls of men have been deprived of every idea of a personal God, they may the more efficaciously defend and propagate their *dialectical materialism*<sup>9</sup>.

Jesuit concerns regarding communism had not played a central role in the first decades of the twentieth century, although *La Civiltà Cattolica*, an international journal published by the Society of Jesus, had dedicated a certain amount of space to communism and the October Revolution. In 1930, the Jesuit Superior General, Włodimir Ledóchowski, created a study group, entrusting it to the Canadian Father Joseph Ledit, an astute witness to his time, to the Father Gaston Fessard who was interested in Marxism via Hegel, and to Father Émile Delaye who was studying the rise of Stalinism<sup>10</sup>. Pius XI had called Communism intrinsically perverse, but by the 1940s «it was calmly contained by Jesuit theologians and strategists: all was in order». Lacouture points out that after the Second World War the

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<sup>7</sup> J. LACOUTURE, *Jesuitas. II. Los continuadores*, trad. C. Gómez, Paidós, Barcelona 1994, p. 472.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

<sup>9</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani Generis*, August 12, 1950 (available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_12081950\\_humani-generis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html), consulted on March 6, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> J. LACOUTURE, *Jesuitas*, cit., p. 472.

Jesuits entrusted the systematic study of Marxism and its particular applications to “their best minds” in France to Jean-Yves Calvez<sup>11</sup>, Pierre Bigó and Henri Chambre, among others.

Jean-Yves Calvez, born in France in 1927, became a connoisseur of Marxism. He joined the Society of Jesus and was a Jesuit Provincial in France from 1967 to 1971, as well as a close-collaborator<sup>12</sup> and official assistant for more than a decade (from 1971 to 1983) to Jesuit Superior General Father Pedro Arrupe. He was also an expert at the Second Vatican Council, where he worked primarily at drafting texts on economics, political philosophy and Church social doctrine. Undoubtedly, he was one of the great Jesuit figures, at once a philosopher, theologian and notable scholar of Catholic social doctrine<sup>13</sup>.

Calvez published several books on theology, Marxism, encyclical analyses and Church social doctrine. *La Pensée de Karl Marx*, one of his first, published in 1956, stands out. This work indicates the importance of viewing Marxism as a philosophy, but also encourages studying it in practice, to see how it tends to create its own culture. Among his other works was *Introduction a la vie politique*, published in 1967. One of his final books was *Le discours social de L'Eglise catholique: de Léon XIII à Benoît XVI*. At the time of his death, he was working on the more social aspects of Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, highly regarded in part because some of the current Pope's propositions recall Pope Montini's *Populorum Progressio*<sup>14</sup>. «The return to Paul VI is no minor detail. He was clearly not quoted during the time of John Paul II; that is, for 25 years», Calvez wrote when it was published<sup>15</sup>. He died in 2010 in Paris, after a very rich intellectual life.

Pierre Bigó, a French Jesuit born in 1906, led a highly active academic and pastoral life. At an early age he entered the Society of Jesus. After studying assiduously for the priesthood, he pursued university studies at

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<sup>11</sup> Calvez was born in 1927 and joined the Society of Jesus in 1943.

<sup>12</sup> J. LACOUTURE, *Jesuitas*, cit., p. 605.

<sup>13</sup> J.G. BEDOYA, *Jean Yvez Calvez, el intelectual Jesuita*, in «El País», January 25, 2010 ([https://elpais.com/diario/2010/01/25/necrologicas/1264374001\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2010/01/25/necrologicas/1264374001_850215.html), consulted on March 6, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

the School of Political Sciences in Paris, where he received a doctorate in Law. From the time he left the University he dedicated himself to social activity and became Director of the Social Center of the Paris *Action Populaire*. From there he went on to direct the Latin American Institute of Doctrine and Social Studies (IADES), based in Santiago de Chile, where he worked extensively and efficiently. He was also a member of the Center for Research and Social Action (CIAS) in Bogotá<sup>16</sup>.

In 1965 he was sent to the Chilean Province of the Society of Jesus where, a year before his death, he was awarded «citizenship by grace», having lived there for thirty years in service to the Chilean community. In addition, he had an active position in the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), and was an advisor to Paul VI in the *Populorum Progressio* Encyclical. Bigó studied the relationship between Marxism and Christianity, as well as the Social Doctrine of the Church, and authored various works, such as *Marxism and Humanism*, published in 1953.

Henri Chambre was another Jesuit seeking to deepen the study of Marxism. Although with many lingering reservations, the former *Maqui*<sup>17</sup> guerrilla Henri Chambre found himself in 1945 entrusted with the mission of exploring Marxism, having first spent three years learning Russian. He became one of the world's leading experts and published a book that became the authoritative *Marxism in the Soviet Union*<sup>18</sup>. «But when he wanted to complete and verify his science in the field, facing risk and danger, he was three times denied authorization for travel to the East [...]. Where is the spirit of discovery of yesteryear?»<sup>19</sup>. In addition, he was a professor at the Social Studies Institute of the Institut Catholique de Paris from 1947-1978, Associate Laboratory Director at the Collège de France, Paris (1968-1973), and author of *De Karl Marx à Lénine et Mao Tsé-Toung*, among other works.

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<sup>16</sup> *Seminario Nacional sobre Reforma Agraria para el Episcopado Colombiano* (National Seminar on Agrarian Reform for the Colombian Episcopate), IICA-CIRA, Bogotá S.D., p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> The term designates Resistance guerrilla groups in France during the II World War.

<sup>18</sup> J. LACOUTURE, *Jesuitas*, cit., p. 472. The author wrote at the bottom of the page: «But let us not forget that abbot Boulrier, one of the ecclesiastics most linked to the French Communist Party, had first been a Jesuit».

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

This setting and these actors are among those approached by González Morfín. In June 1957, Efraín and his father Efraín González Luna were both reading Calvez's work<sup>20</sup>. Luis, his brother, also mentioned Calvez in his letters. The combination of these readings would contribute to González Morfín's interest in Marxism and its relationship with Christianity also in the 1960s and 1970s, marked by his contribution to the elaboration of a cultural and programmatic platform of the PAN – the party for which he would run for the presidency of the republic in 1970. Reflection would also continue in the 1980s and 1990s with a deepening of the Social Doctrine of the Church, seen as fundamental tool for forging a more just, egalitarian and democratic society.

All these developments of reflection evidently found a fundamental point of departure in the Second Vatican Council. Let us recall that the date of its announcement by Pope John XXIII, January 25, 1959, was a symbolic one in González Morfín's life. Having attended schools and seminaries run by the Jesuits, he went to Innsbruck, Austria to continue his studies with the prospect of being ordained as a priest after three years. He arrived in September 1958, but by January 1959 decided to leave the Society of Jesus. According to some accounts<sup>21</sup>, a few months after arriving in Innsbruck, he shared his concerns about leaving the Society with Hugo Rahner, Karl Rahner's older brother, who was in charge of the Seminary there. Receiving the support he was looking for, he spoke with his father, who told him to visit his brothers, Adalberto in Rome and Luis in Spain, before departing for Mexico. He left Austria in January 1959, then travelled to various parts of Europe including Paris over the first two months of the year, and returned to Mexico on March 1st.

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<sup>20</sup> Efraín González Morfín Private Archive (henceforth APEGM) File: 1957 Family correspondence.

<sup>21</sup> L. ALARCÓN MENCHACA, *Efraín González Morfín: un intelectual y político católico después de Vaticano II* in *Intelectuales católicos conservadores y tradicionalistas en México y Latinoamérica (1910-2015)*, L. Alarcón-A. Martínez-J. Mora (coords.), El Colegio de Jalisco, Zapopan 2019, pp. 135-163.

3. *Communism and Christianity: ever-present in González Morfín's thought*

González Morfín's return to Mexico now that he had left the Society of Jesus was a major change in his life. He soon married Monique Marseille Orendáin, entered into law studies (which he had to leave for a time due to work demands), joined the National Action Party (PAN) and above all dedicated himself to studying communism and Mexico's social realities.

Among the prevalent themes in González Morfín's studies during the sixties were communism and Christianity. He translated several works focused upon Marxism, such as one by Oswald von Nell-Breuning entitled *Socialismo*<sup>22</sup>. He became a great scholar as well as a critic of Marxism.

All these years were interwoven with the Vatican II Council, which as we noted was announced at the beginning of 1959, with its four sessions unfolding between 1962 and 1965. Paul VI, successor to John XXIII, brought the Council to a successful conclusion. Among its continuing effects there were ongoing discussions in Europe and Latin America, and despite having left the Society of Jesus, González Morfín played an important part in them.

As we have mentioned, the Catholic Church had firmly opposed communism ever since the 1930s: communism was atheistic and its materialistic principles thus unacceptable. There ensued in-depth studies of communism in Russia, and of Marxist doctrinal documents. The Jesuits' role at this point was significant, as they aimed to intensify their study of Marxism in line with the categorical position of the Holy See.

In the sixties the debate in Europe regarding communism and Christianity intensified. The question which unsettled Church members was why communism should be demonized if the two might or might not relate, or might be complementary. González Morfín was no stranger to this debate. Luis, one of his younger brothers, had entered the Society of Jesus, and had begun philosophy studies at the Colegio de San Francisco

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<sup>22</sup> O. VON NELL-BREUNING, *Socialismo*, trad. Efraín González L. Morfín, Jus, Ciudad de México 1962.

de Borja in Sant Cugat del Vallés in Catalonia<sup>23</sup>, in September 1959<sup>24</sup>. He told Efraín that in March 1960 a “European Week” was held by the philosophy department, a week of studies that «consisted of a very complete exploration of the Pan-European Movement, its practical results and role in formation of the LECE<sup>25</sup>, CEECA<sup>26</sup>, OECE<sup>27</sup> and Common Market»<sup>28</sup>, with the purpose of building greater social, political and economic bonds between European countries.

At that time, communication and debates on various topics between Europe and America were stepped up, in hopes of improving the economic and social climate. The Catholic Church was part of this. Let us remember that in 1955 Pius XII had convened the first General Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), which was held in Rio de Janeiro and marked a before and after for the Vatican. At this time the Catholic Church noted the importance of Latin America to Christians, issuing a call to increase the number of priests and thus strengthen the Church in the subcontinent. They highlighted the limited condition of material resources and the need to distribute them equitably.

These moments coincided with the dawn of the Second Vatican Council, and its substantial changes for the Church, the Jesuits, and society in general. For the Society of Jesus it was a turning point, with Jesuit General Pedro Arrupe announcing a definitive change of course in 1966. Many Jesuits throughout the world were now considering the need for justice, and the existing rupture between the Church and the world of the rich and powerful<sup>29</sup>. The situation in Europe and America challenged the

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<sup>23</sup> A major Theology Institute, erected by the Holy See and entrusted to the Jesuits. Nowadays it is incorporated into the University of Catalonia Theology Department.

<sup>24</sup> In Sant Cugat he convened with 97 philosophers from India, Cuba, Paraguay, Bolivia, Mexico, Belgium and Spain. Letter of Luis González Morfín, S.J. (henceforth LGM) to Efraín González Luna (henceforth EGL), September 30, 1959. Efraín González Luna private archive, (henceforth APEGL). Source: Private, section: correspondence, series: G.

<sup>25</sup> European League for Economic Cooperation (Liga Europea de Cooperación Económica)

<sup>26</sup> European Community for Coal and Steel (Comunidad Europea del Carbón y del Acero).

<sup>27</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico).

<sup>28</sup> Letter from LGM to EGL, March 31, 1960. APEGL. Source: Private, section: correspondence, series: G.

<sup>29</sup> J. LACOUTURE, *Jesuitas*, cit., p. 614.

Church and lay Catholics interested in social thought. On the one hand we found a divided Europe in a bipolar world, with existing tensions between the Soviet bloc and the United States once again manifesting in the Vietnam war. China had managed to bring about its cultural revolution, which generated major changes. On the other hand, Latin America was denouncing social injustices, all creating a tense scenario where youth was opposing conservative values giving rise to the so called counterculture. All this intersected with the fact that on June 14, 1966, through the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith in the Vatican, the Church repealed the ban on a list of books for Catholics that had been prohibited since 1959. This reflected the Church's attempt to adapt to the times.

This was the environment in which González Morfín stepped up his publication of articles and conferences on the subject of communism. In the PAN's publicity organ *La Nación*, Efraín wrote a series of articles on the topic, in which he emphasized the importance of knowing its true nature. He made reference to the misleading way in which Communism was viewed.

Several factors help explain why so many are ignorant of communism's true nature: lack of instruction and education; silence and distorted sensationalism in the media and dissemination of ideas (radio, cinema, press, television); abundant communist propaganda utilizing all media, falsifying facts and perverting criteria; an atmosphere of conformity and naive optimism, which seems to believe serious dangers and disasters will vanish... if one neither takes them seriously nor worries about them. Communists take advantage of the ignorance, naivete and weaknesses of non-communists. Many of communism's spectacular advances are due to a regrettable retreat by non-communists, who neither know about communism, nor take the total danger it represents seriously. There's an urgent need to make known communism's true nature, in order to disarm the support its message of revenge and false redemption has found in the unjust situation of our country<sup>30</sup>.

He insisted that one must understand communism's distinct facets, since it is at once a doctrine, an organization and a way of acting. That is why people cannot be carried away by communist propaganda, as its reality

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<sup>30</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *Ideología, organización y actuación (primera parte)*, in «La Nación», MXIX, 1961, p. 9.



is complicated. He considered that as a doctrine has a «mistaken ‘scientific’ pretension, as great as its errors». If passions were set aside, he wrote, communism was just «an untruthful simplification of problems and solutions to unfairly exploit blind passions and feelings»<sup>31</sup>. Within the debate that was being generated regarding communism as atheist, González Morfín declared its aim to be the construction of a world without God, «fighting all religion to the death».

Communism denies that God is the beginning and end of life and human action, and that love and justice are both basic moral obligations and the indispensable nexus of any authentic society. It proposes to men that their only justification in life and action is a passionate struggle to build the communist society, a new order that thoroughly liberates man and offers him rebirth<sup>32</sup>.

Among other arguments is notable the one of communism’s incompatibility with Christianity. González Morfín did not accept class struggle as a principle, since «It is a struggle between members and organizations of warring classes, without moral or patriotic links between individuals belonging to different classes. It is an irreconcilable battle that will only end with the destruction of exploiters by the exploited»<sup>33</sup>. He considered this principle to be very simplistic, since if there are «no social classes, the State – the exploiters’ instrument for oppressing the exploited – would have to disappear. Moreover, neither Russia nor other countries dominated by communism show the slightest sign of the disappearance or “slow death” of the State, which is increasingly strong and gargantuan»<sup>34</sup>.

One of the debates that took place within the Catholic Church, and in which the Jesuits played a central role, involved questioning the reality of communism in Russia and proposing to investigate how it functioned. González Morfín delineated three main aspects of communism as an organization: «the Communist Party itself, organizations controlled or used

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *Una Ideología vs. la persona humana (segunda parte)*, in «La Nación», MXX, 1961, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

by the party, and the communist empire»<sup>35</sup>. He considered the Communist Party to be

a minority, efficient and dangerous. It is organized with “iron discipline and unconditional obedience”; it seeks to act and influence key positions in the government, in the unions, in the schools, in the mass media; it can secretly manage or influence non-communist sectors and movements and use them for communist ends. An essential part of the Communist party proper is a clandestine sector, “a secret apparatus” that must attract very little attention to avoid losing real efficiency<sup>36</sup>. [...] In addition to the visible communist parties, there is an indefinite number of communist ‘front’ organizations aimed at propaganda, at the confusion of consciences, at the internal weakening of non-communist nations. The names, apparent purpose and duration of these organizations are enormously varied<sup>37</sup>.

During these years González Morfín also gave a series of conferences and wrote reflections on the subject, which appeared in various publications. His brother Luis wrote to him:

Efra, I'm going to hit you up for a favor: when the book of your articles on Christianity and Communism is published, please give me two copies. One for me, and one for the Sant Cugat Philosophy department library [...]. This morning I had the good fortune to hear Fr. Calvez, of L'Action Populaire de Paris. The topic was: the idea of Communism according to Marx. This priest knows his subject well. I am more and more convinced that in order to understand and overcome and refute communism, one must read a lot. With simplistic naivete we are going nowhere. So, Efra, see if you can send me your book<sup>38</sup>.

On the other hand, Efraín was invited to teach courses in the subject. At the end of 1961 he participated «in the intensive course on Communism

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<sup>35</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *Su organización y sus tácticas (última parte)*, in «La Nación», MXXI, 1961, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Letter from LGM to Efraín González Morfín (henceforth EGM) and Monique Marseille, November 30, 1961. APEGM. Private correspondence, box 1, 1946-1962.

at the Institución Católica Renovación al Señor (I.C.R.A.S.)»<sup>39</sup>. In August of 1962 Pablo Latapí Sarre<sup>40</sup> invited him to join a project arising from the Week of Communism Studies held at Ost-Kolleg in Cologne. In a letter to EGM, Latapí mentions having:

[...] an interesting conversation with Fr. Bochenski, O.P.<sup>41</sup>, whom you will all know from his works. He is very concerned about Latin American communism and is willing to help us. From the conversation arose a project. It is to bring 20 Mexicans to the Osteuropa Institut in Fribourg, Switzerland (of which Bochenski is rector), to give them a scientific preparation in Sovietology for six or eight months. The total cost of the project is 120,000 DM, which we hope to be able to obtain from the USA through Bochenski's connections. What a lovely idea, you will say, and so do I; and I would not take it seriously if it were not for the commitment shown by Bochenski and for seeing that he considers it perfectly feasible. Although we have not yet got a penny, I think it advisable to begin organizing what we can on our part, and after a little thought I have decided that you are the man best qualified for Mexico's organization within this plan<sup>42</sup>.

The project consisted of forming a permanent study seminar, during which students would also have to deal with university, press, radio and other contexts. The requirements to be fulfilled were: a university degree in the areas to be dealt with, that is, related to fundamental problems of communism such as philosophy, economics, law, history and politics. Knowledge of French or Russian was necessary, as was a solid Catholic education<sup>43</sup>. Among other criteria, it was established that they must either be unmarried or, if they had a family, be prepared to leave them for the time the seminar would require. They would also need to leave, or take a leave of absence from, their jobs. It was estimated that the project would

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from Miguel Dario Miranda, Archbishop Primate of Mexico, to EGM, October 8, 1961. APEGM. Private correspondence, box 1, 1946-1962. I.C.R.A.S Institución Católica Renovación al Señor. (Catholic Institution for Renewal to the Lord).

<sup>40</sup> Pablo Latapí Sarre was born in 1927. He was a Jesuit but retired from the Society in adulthood. Pioneer in educational research in Mexico.

<sup>41</sup> Józef Maria Bochenski, Polish Dominican friar born in 1902; died in Switzerland in 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Pablo Latapí Sarre to EGM, Hamburg, August 1, 1962. APEGM. Personal correspondence, box 1, 1946-1962, f. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

take place between March and April 1963, but much depended on the fundraising.

Latapí finished with another request, since he considered it imperative that Father Gustav Andreas Wetter<sup>44</sup> come to Mexico for the International Congress of Philosophy: «he would be a good counterweight to the Marxists – native and foreign – who will surely be there», so he asked Efraín to coordinate with several institutions to pay for his trip, and in exchange the Father would offer lecture series (only in German, Italian or Russian) at the participating institutions<sup>45</sup>.

Efraín's own frequent invitations to lecture included one he received from Luis Ochoa Gómez, S.J., through his brother Luis, to speak to students at the "Carlos Pereyra" Preparatory School which was «planning to dedicate a day to the study of communism»<sup>46</sup>. The subject was on the table, and Efraín became a key figure. In August 1963, CEMLA's International Catholic Information<sup>47</sup> asked for his help in translating "*La mano tendida*" (The Outstretched Hand), which according to Efraín would be an extensive, high-level work.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time in Europe, a Christian-Marxist dialogue was taking place, and the German institution *Paulus Gesellschaft*, led by Erich Kellner<sup>49</sup> – «a German parish priest and admirer of [Karl] Rahner who intended to build bridges between theology and modern science by organizing meetings where scientists and theologians would discuss certain

<sup>44</sup> Wetter, together with Leonhard published the book *Ideología Soviética*, which Efraín González Morfín recommended as a high-quality work for understanding Marxism. Cfr. G.A. WETTER-W. LEONHARD, *La Ideología Soviética*, Herder, Spain 1973.

<sup>45</sup> Pablo Latapí Sarre to EGM, cit., f. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from LGM to EGM, November 11, 1962. APEGM. Personal correspondence, box 1, 1946-1962, f. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Centro de Estudios Monetarios Latinoamericanos (Center for Latin American Monetary Studies) founded in 1952 in Mexico City. An organization encompassing the principal central banks in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>48</sup> EGM to his wife Monique Marseille, August 9, 1963. APEGM. Private correspondence, box 2, 1963-1980.

<sup>49</sup> Olegario González de Cardedal considered that Kellner assiduously sought a dialogue between scientists and theologians. O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Cristianismo y marxismo hoy*, in «El Ciervo», XLI, CDXCI, 1992, p. 8.

contemporary themes of possible common interest»<sup>50</sup>—, organized a meeting known as the Salzburg Dialogues, represented in Spain by the theologian Alfonso Álvarez Bolado<sup>51</sup>. In 1964 a meeting of the same Society took place in Cologne, Germany. That meeting had focused on the tension between science, theology and technology, so a proposal for a dialogue between Christians and Marxists for the following year, met with assent.

In the spring of 1965 some three hundred professors, researchers, scientists, politicians and theologians came to the Salzburg meeting. «For the first time in history a dialogue with international representation was taking place between these two worlds, which until then had been at odds and fought each other to the death, each with its own weapons and from its own historical as well as utopian goals»<sup>52</sup>.

During the previous few years, the study of Marxism had deepened, especially among Jesuits and Dominicans. Jean-Yves Calvez' work became a reference for studying the thought of Karl Marx in Spanish universities, where communism was beginning to gain followers. In France the one who had devoted the most energy to interaction with communists was the Dominican Father Dominique Dubarle, who in 1964 published *Pour un dialogue avec les marxistes*. «But in all cases the attempts at dialogue ended with the realization of irreducible differences, and often with the Christians' impression that they had been used in a propaganda operation. I am speaking, of course, of dialogue between clearly differentiated positions, not of attempts like the one represented among us by 'Christians for Socialism', to find a Christian path within Marxism»<sup>53</sup>.

Roger Garaudy, a renowned member of the French Communist Party, participated in the Salzburg talks, along with prominent members of the communist intelligentsia and Calvez and Dubarle, in the new atmosphere brought about by the Second Vatican Council and the publication of the *Mater et Magistra* encyclical promulgated by John XXIII on May 15, 1961, «which had produced a strong impression on the hierarchies of many

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> M. SIGUAN, *Los diálogos cristiano-marxistas en los años 60. Una evocación*, in «El Ciervo», XLI, CDXCI, 1992, pp. 5-7.

<sup>52</sup> O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Cristianismo y marxismo*, cit., p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> M. SIGUAN, *Los diálogos cristiano-marxistas*, cit., p. 5.

communist parties and which was the main argument that had moved Garaudy himself»<sup>54</sup>.

In the Salzburg dialogues, Garaudy's participation was key for the communists. For the Christians it was Karl Rahner, a Jesuit theologian whose decisive influence at Vatican II was borne of his theological proposal for a religion of the absolute future, which

does not include any utopia in this world, that might be a specific and total realization of the earthly city. Which is not to say that he is indifferent to these utopias; he encourages and judges them insofar as they promote human advancement. But he rejects their identification with the "absolute future" because in it Marxism sacrifices the meaning of individual existence – of man today – as a utopian future society. For Christianity God is both the absolute future of humanity and the absolute future of each man in particular<sup>55</sup>.

Along with Rahner the Catholic participants were Gustav Wetter, Dominique Dubarle, Calvez and Marcel Reding<sup>56</sup>. On the Marxist side, in addition to Garaudy, Robert Havemann and Lucio Lombardo Radice participated. At the end of the meeting Garaudy indicated the points on which Christians and Marxists could work together. He stated: «The future of man cannot be built by opposing believers, nor by excluding them. And the future of man cannot be built by opposing communists, nor by excluding them»<sup>57</sup>. Although no conclusions were reached per se, this generated subsequent less-ambitious meetings and above all it led to a debate that for over two decades focused on the relationship between humanism and communism, as well as between communism and Christianity.

González Morfín was never far from this debate. His questioning and arguments regarding the relation between Marxism and Christianity, in fact, were woven throughout his life as an intellectual and politician. As proof that González Morfín was part of these discussions is the publication

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> He published a work entitled *El Ateísmo político*, which primarily referred to the Marxist.

<sup>57</sup> E. KELLNER, *Christentum und Marxismus heute (Gespräche der Paulus-Gesellschaft)*, Europa Verlag, Wien 1966, p. 322, cit. in O. GONZÁLEZ, *Cristianismo y marxismo*, cit.

in 1965 of his *El puño y la mano tendida*<sup>58</sup>, a book wherein he clarified various misunderstandings in how communism was interpreted. Throughout the work he explores points of antagonism between communism and Catholic doctrine. Among these points was the difference between actual communism and communist propaganda, since the propaganda for communism did not correspond to reality. As an example of such deception, he cites Maurice Thorez, a French communist leader who had stated wide-ranging and substantial similarities between communism and Christianity<sup>59</sup>. Communist propaganda shows it to be a pacifist organization, but actual communism is not so: Lenin himself said that «Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions»<sup>60</sup>.

He considered communism to be totalitarian, making reconciliation with Christianity unacceptable since communism considered society to be all, with the individual existing solely for the whole – a view unshared by Catholicism. «Something entirely different happens in the moral community and in every organism of a purely moral character. Here the whole has no unity that subsists in itself, but a simple unity of purpose and action»<sup>61</sup>. González Morfín saw the human individual as having an identity and destiny that extends beyond societies. For this reason, he rejected the redemption offered by communism and insisted that social life must be a reflection of the inner life of the individual.

Another of the fallacies that communism aims to perpetrate, González Morfín writes, is considering itself a humanist philosophy or political system simply because it takes man into account. We may speak of different types of humanism, such as atheistic humanism or a humanism that

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<sup>58</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *El puño y la mano tendida*, Ediciones de Acción Nacional, Ciudad de México 1965.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11 and 12.

<sup>60</sup> LENIN, *¿Por dónde empezar?*, cit. in E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *El puño y la mano tendida*, cit., p. 52.

<sup>61</sup> PIUS XII, *Opening speech to members of the First International Congress in the Histopathology of the Nervous System*, September 14, 1952, (available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1952/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19520914\\_istopatologia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1952/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19520914_istopatologia.html), consulted on March 6, 2023)

recognizes God, but not all types are acceptable. Some of them might be termed “inhuman humanism”: «the insistence on false values and notions through very ‘humanistic’ and respectful words by men, may end up in the oppression and degradation of human beings»<sup>62</sup>. This is another of the differences between actual communism and communist propaganda, which is untenable for Christianity since it «disguises the atheistic and immoral aspects of real communism and presents it as a humanism compatible with the Christian idea of man and even internally enlivened by it»<sup>63</sup>.

González Morfín did not accept the conciliation between communism and Christianity that some communists, as well as some members of the Catholic Church, wanted to support. In some forums, however, he did go so far as to ponder that Marxism had put its finger on the sore subject of social injustice, denouncing it and seeking greater social equality.

#### 4. A “*vertiginous*” political career<sup>64</sup>

We cannot understand the figure of Efraín González Morfín without taking a closer look at his political career. In 1960 he joined the National Action Party: a party founded, as we’ve already mentioned, by Manuel Gómez Morin and his father, Efraín González Luna, who drafted a large part of the party’s doctrinal principles. It was characterized as an opposition party to the hegemonic regime of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had monopolized power in Mexico since 1929, forging a political system that was far from acting according to constitutional precepts, that is, from functioning as a democratic republic. The division of powers was an illusion, and manifested in the weakness of institutions for defending citizens’ interests.

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<sup>62</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *El puño y la mano tendida*, cit., p. 81.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Alonso Lujambio thus characterized Efraín González Morfín’s political career. Cfr. A. LUJAMBIO, Prologue to the book by L. ALARCÓN MENCHACA, *1970 Efraín González Morfín en campaña*, El Colegio de Jalisco, Zapopan 2008, p. 17.



The PAN was born in 1939 in a setting of high tension between the group in power and members of society who wanted power to be wielded democratically. Possibly one of the most confrontational elements leading to formation of this political party was the State's imposition of a socialist educational model that allowed for discussion of class struggle, where the State's monopoly prevented parents' participation in decisions regarding their children's education and above all, whose aim was to sideline any possibility of educating according to Catholic principles. This not only caused tension between the Mexican Catholic Church and the State, but also between the Holy See and the Mexican government, and most offended those Mexican Catholics who wanted to propose policies in accordance with the Social Doctrine of the Church.

While it took care not to be a confessional party, PAN doctrine was based on the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church. The founders' fundamental objective at that time was to generate public opinion capable of deciding the country's destiny. Efraín González Luna was its first presidential candidate, in 1952. Despite an intense campaign, the party's genuine triumphs did not develop into a real presence in the Mexican electorate, let alone one able to defeat the group in power. González Morfín's interest in Mexican politics was particularly focused upon the actions of his father: even while he was in the Society of Jesus and outside politics, he maintained close communication with his father and asked to read party documents. In family correspondence he expressed his great interest in Mexico's destiny.

When González Morfín joined the PAN, he developed an active and intense political career, holding important positions within the party and becoming a federal deputy from 1967 to 1970. His contact with Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola, who was president of the party from 1962 to 1968, allowed him to participate directly in party life. Both were central figures in the drafting of the *Projection of the Principles of Doctrine* (*Proyección de Principios de Doctrina del Partido Acción Nacional*) that were approved by the XVIII PAN National Convention in May 1965, which, as Alonso Lujambio points out, «is perhaps the moment that most clearly seals the beginning of Efraín González Morfín's passionate political life». Lujambio adds, «the Projection meant an ideological shift regarding socio economic

issues, towards the center of the ideological spectrum while at the same time, a political shift towards a clear liberal-democratic definition. Or, again in other words: the Projection gave, ideologically, the coup de grace to all Catholic fundamentalism within the PAN»<sup>65</sup>.

The party had gone through an internal crisis that led, in 1963, to the departure from its ranks of young PAN members who were trying to make the PAN part of Christian Democracy. This was opposed by central figures in the party such as Gómez Morin, González Luna, and of course Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola. The Projection of the Principles meant a boost to the party and above all allowed it to distance itself from the groups that had dominated the party's leadership from 1949 to 1962 and that were linked to Catholic organizations, especially Catholic Action. Even more important was a document written by González Morfín in 1969 titled *Democratic Change of Structures*. In it he clearly indicated the need to renew Mexico's political and socioeconomic structures. He called for a peaceful approach to in-depth reform.

There were several aspects of the conditions in Mexico that propitiated González Morfín's candidacy. The Mexican political system was characterized by the hegemonic power of the PRI, where 'democratic' institutions did not function as such. That is, there was no authentic division of powers: the legislative and judicial powers followed the orders of the executive, and elections were not only simulated but 'validated' by the State itself. The people were kept from acting as actual citizens, and were instead controlled by the party and its clientelist system. In theory the system was multiparty, but in reality the only opposition party was the PAN. The student movement of 1968 reflected the injustices that were being experienced in the country, manifesting the discontent of young Mexicans and unmasking fissures within the political class. An economic model that had been successful was beginning to show inconsistencies, and it was no longer capable of absorbing the needs of a growing population.

In this context, González Morfín was chosen as presidential candidate to run in 1970, despite belonging to the group of PAN members that

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9. This last quote, says Lujambio, was from González Morfín in an interview made June 23, 2007, «while preparing the political biography of Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola».

doubted the relevance of entering candidates in elections: they considered it a way of playing the government's game, by pretending democracy actually existed. Still, González Morfín assumed the candidacy firmly and enthusiastically, working intensely and tirelessly. He traveled throughout the country carrying his message and meeting with different sectors of the population: students, workers, professionals and agricultural laborers. The political campaign was characterized by the spirited participation of young people eager for change. For these elections, the voting age had been lowered from twenty-one to eighteen years old. The vote in favor of the PAN candidate was 1,945,204 out of a total vote of 14,063,143, which total represented a 64.5% turnout of registered voters<sup>66</sup>.

González Morfín's proposals focused upon four core elements: democratic change of structures, solidarism, de-proletarianizing the worker, and freedom of conscience. *The democratic change of structures*, a document he wrote in 1969 and which was one of his central campaign platforms, highlighted the need to promote peaceful revolutionary changes in political, economic and social structures. All of these were revolutionary because they had to be effected from deep within: he did not accept violent structural change. Nor did he believe that the powerful classes could be the main agents of this transformation: the party should be the promoter of movement towards equitable structures. This would mean a cultural change: thinking and acting in favor of justice and the common good, accepting distribution of wealth, respecting human rights and genuinely living democracy.

Solidarism, as a principle of social philosophy, was one of the central elements in González Morfín's thinking. He insisted that the individual should contribute to the common good, and that society should link people while creating conditions that promote its members' wellbeing. He consistently warned against individualistic and collectivist postures, and believed in fostering an equitable and close relationship between the individual and society. An attitude of solidarity was indispensable to achieving a democratic change of structures.

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<sup>66</sup> We may consider that electoral statistics at that time in Mexico were not reliable. Cfr. «Excelsior», Ciudad de México, July 9, 1970, p. 1, cit. in L. ALARCÓN MENCHACA, 1970, cit., p. 135.

When he spoke of de-proletarianizing workers, he considered «proletarian» as referring not only to industrial labor but to all those «whose life is poor, whose income is insufficient, who see their children's futures painted in dark colors...»; those without the resources to be able to develop as people<sup>67</sup>. He considered worker profit-sharing necessary in order to reduce social inequality, and he proposed the co-management of companies, that is, with workers participating in ownership. These were ways of changing economic, and therefore social, structures.

It was no less important to the candidate that freedom of conscience be respected in Mexico, since he thought options for religious or non-religious belief, the right to information and freedom of education, all stemmed from this. For him, it was a central factor that would inspire an educational model encouraging plurality, and the ability to make one's own decisions. Education was the central mechanism for allowing the populace to develop, and educating people in freedom would allow the free choice of a democratic government, González Morfín believed.

His thought reflected the social doctrine of the Church, and the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* was fundamental in this regard. His position in favor of solidarism, his proposal for a democratic change of structures, the search for justice, the struggle for equal opportunities, among other elements, led his opponents within the party to describe him as a Marxist-Jesuit. González Morfín's contribution to the PAN was of great relevance: he gave the party a new outlook from which it clearly sought to achieve social justice and ensure equal opportunities. The following years of his militancy in the party meant a turning point, not only in González Morfín's life, but also in the life of the party.

In March 1975 he became the party's national president, but his position depended upon having overcome one of the most memorable crises in the life of the PAN. Among the strongest conflicts was that with the 'participationist' wing led by José Ángel Conchello who, according to some PAN members, represented the so-called Monterrey group and wanted to take over the party. The confrontation between 'abstentionists' and 'participationists' grew more forceful during the assembly that was

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<sup>67</sup> E. GONZÁLEZ MORFÍN, *Discursos de la campaña presidencial de 1970*. 3ª etapa, Atlitxco, Puebla, March 21, 1970, p. 682, cit. in *ibid.*, p. 105.

held in October of that year in order to select the candidate for the presidency of the republic in the 1976 elections. The abstentionist group fought fiercely to prevent the participationist wing choice, Pablo Emilio Madero, from being chosen, which kept the PAN from presenting any candidate in that national election. In December, González Morfín resigned from the presidency of the party, citing the existence of another, parallel presidency. This eventually caused the hegemonic PRI to find ways of taking leadership of the weak opposition in the country, away from the PAN. In 1977 the new Mexican president, José López Portillo, launched a political reform that permitted the formation and participation of different opposition parties, especially those with left-wing tendencies. This reform ended up substantially transforming Mexico's political climate.

González Morfín resigned from the party in 1978, thus abandoning a fruitful political career. His resignation was a turning point in his personal life, but also in the life of the PAN. He did not, however, cease in his struggle to transform the thinking of Mexicans. His struggle focused on building public opinion in the light of the social doctrine of the Church: he sought to promote and teach it through a group called Solidarismo which he formed a few years later. He also participated in the National Union of Businessmen of Mexico (USEM) which sought to promote this doctrine among Mexican businessmen. In 1991, for these activities among others, John Paul II recognized his contribution to the analysis and dissemination of the social doctrine of the church, awarding him the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Cross.

### 5. *Final considerations*

The present essay is an initial foray into Efraín Gonzalez Morfín's personal archive, that allowed for the first time to cross-reference information from González Morfín's archive with that of his father, Efraín González Luna. That comparative exploration will permit in the future to flesh out some respective life experiences, to see contrasts as well as correspondences from both sides.

González Morfín's development within his father's family and the Jesuit community let him consolidate a very rich and profound intellectual education: this bore fruit in academe and also in the political struggle for a better Mexico. He remained active as a scholar until the last years of his life, but his political career was cut short by high tensions, not only with the Mexican government led by a hegemonic political party, but also at the very heart of the party founded by his father. In 1978 that breach was insurmountable. As a prominent member of the party, but above all as a presidential candidate in 1970, González Morfín vehemently fought for change in the Mexican reality through the Social Doctrine of the Church. This project remained a difficult one to realize.

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X.

BEYOND THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE  
CHURCH. THE CONTRIBUTION OF SERGIO MÉNDEZ  
ARCEO TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL  
TANIA HERNÁNDEZ VICENCIO

1. *Introduction*

During the XX century, between the end of the 60's and 80's, the modernization process in Mexico exerted strong tensions about the notion of nationalism. The wearing out of the accumulation model and the crisis of the political regime engraved a strong pressure on the project, erected upon the ideology and programming of revolutionary nationalism, which had contributed to cementing the State discourse on the elements that constituted the national being. Said crisis coincided with rearrangements within the catholic Church, an institution that was trying to redefine its relationship with the Mexican State. During this phase, catholic nationalism also faced great challenges related to three factors: the role that the Church and religion played in a changing society, the distance separating the elites of catholic bases, and the tension starting to emerge from the rise of minority religions.

In such a context, the VII bishop of Cuernavaca Sergio Méndez Arceo built, with his thought and actions, a different vision on nationalism. Influenced by the complex socio-political situation in the state of Morelos during his first ten years as bishop, as well as by the discussions made at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and, further on, by the political crisis in Mexico and Latin America, Méndez Arceo became a key actor in the the social and political transformation process in the nation and in other countries of the American continent. How did these aspects influence the construction of a different idea of the national being? In which elements was different the notion of nationalism that Méndez Arceo professed, in relation to traditional catholic nationalism?

According to Giulio Girardi, during his career, the bishop of Cuernavaca went through four distinct phases: pre-council, during the

council, liberal, and his time working with popular and indigenous religion<sup>1</sup>. In this paper, I focus on some passages from the conciliar stage and on his interventions during the four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. The objective of this essay is relating his approaches and ideas, with what I have identified as his vision of christian nationalism. Sergio Méndez Arceo addressed, in more than thirty letters from the Council to the weekly publication «Correo del Sur»<sup>2</sup>, a publication from the state of Morelos, his impressions about the event. Moreover, during the ecumenical meeting he had twenty interventions, both oral and written, which were translated from latin to spanish by reverend Carlos Salcedo Palacios<sup>3</sup>, and were compiled by priest Ángel Sánchez Campos<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. *Contributions of the bishop during the first two sessions of the Second Vatican Council*

A lot has been written about bishop Méndez Arceo both in Mexico and in other countries and there are any books in which some of his main homilies as the seventh bishop of Cuernavaca have been published. Especially, to understand the theme of this work, the texts of Raúl Macín,

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<sup>1</sup> G. GIRARDI, *Conflicto entre solidaridad integradora y solidaridad liberadora*, in *Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, Patriarca de la Solidaridad Latinoamericana*, coords. L. Rentería, MMB y G. Girardi (coords.), Ediciones Dabar, México 2000, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> This weekly publication published extensive notes about the works of the Second Vatican Council, detailing the schemes being discussed and the most important positions of the bishops. It also made public the topics of the participations of Cuernavaca's bishop, and made known the letters he addressed to the director of the «Correo del Sur», Heladio Camacho. The most relevant events of the encounter were broadcasted through the local radio, on the station XEWF, via the «Noticiero Especial» about the Second Vatican Council.

<sup>3</sup> Salcedo Palacios also published various extracts these participations in his text *Participación de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en el Concilio Vaticano II*, in *Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, Patriarca de la Solidaridad Latinoamericana*, cit. This work was originally presented as a lecture in the Second General Conference of CEHILA about the History of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, in São Paulo, Brazil, from the 25<sup>th</sup> of July to the 28<sup>th</sup>, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, VII obispo de Cuernavaca*, Fundación Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, Cuernavaca 2013, p. 89.

Gabriela Videla, Carlos Fazio, Leticia Rentería and Giulio Girardi, are an important input, as well as the recent publications of priest Ángel Sánchez where he recovers many writings by Méndez Arceo.

Macín's text, depicts a leader of the catholic Church for which the Gospel was more than just rites and festivities. The author highlights how the ideas and the activism of Méndez Arceo were another example of the myth of the apolitical christians. It points out the desires for renovation of the Church and Cuernavaca's bishop and how their ecumenical vocation nourished the character's philosophy from before he attended the Second Vatican Council. Macín emphasizes the christian way of thinking of Méndez Arceo as a profound rallying spirit to society<sup>5</sup>.

Gabriela Videla shows Bishop Méndez Arceo's influence-rich personal and religious path, which helped shape the bishop's broad and inclusive mindset. Also, through various interviews with him, Videla notes his diverse thematic interests, many of which were in relation with the relationship between the Church and the Mexican State and the process by which in Mexico religion was excluded from political life. Méndez Arceo would tell Videla that the renovation process in his Church required a different attitude towards society, and therefore he would use his influence over many sectors of the population to shape free citizens<sup>6</sup>.

The book by Carlos Fazio presents a broad picture of the trajectory of Sergio Méndez Arceo, also on the basis of the interviews. The author points out the role that the religious were called to play throughout Mexican history during important liberation changes, like the War of Independence. He highlights that they were called to propel a process for the education of society that could lead to better life conditions. According to Fazio, Méndez Arceo perceived himself as a revolutionary committed to "raising social awareness". The bishop called to give up «comfortable Christianity» and adopt «the explosive and revolutionary essence of the Gospel» to transform social relations<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> R. MACÍN, *Méndez Arceo, ¿político cristiano? (una revolución de la Iglesia)*, Editorial Posada, México 1972.

<sup>6</sup> G. VIDELA, *Sergio Méndez Arceo. Un señor obispo*, Nuevomar, Mexico 1984, pp. 56-67.

<sup>7</sup> C. FAZIO, *La cruz y el martillo*, Serie Genio y Figura, Joaquín Mortiz-Planeta, México 1987.

The text coordinated by Leticia Rentería and Giulio Girardi contributes to the topic of this work by revising different facets of the pastoral life of Sergio Méndez Arceo, particularly, through the chapters of the very own Girardi and Carlos Salcedo. The former emphasizes the maturing process the bishop underwent throughout the pre-council, council and post-council stages, and defines him as a key actor in the aforementioned ecumenical assembly, which had already previously experienced an important transformation in his pastoral life. Salcedo's text, on the other hand, highlights the relevancy that Méndez Arceo brought to the liturgy, and stresses three key facets that were key to its conception: the pastoral principles, the adaptations of the liturgy and the missionary function of the religious man<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, the compilations of the priest Ángel Sánchez, of various documents, letters and interventions of Cuernavaca's bishop in different sessions of the Second Vatican Council, have been fundamental to this work. From this source it is possible to identify key elements of his ideology and observe the influence this had in his proposal of christian nationalism, as well as his vision on a christian citizenry in contrast to the traditional catholic nationalism and against the revolutionary nationalism, as hegemonic models<sup>9</sup>.

It is useful to begin noting that, prior to the Second Vatican Council, Sergio Méndez Arceo had a notion on the Church's mission ascribed to the traditional vision. However, the bishop transformed his comprehension of the social reality and modified his own pastoral mission in light of the complex processes in the local and national environment, and of the teachings from other Latinamerican priests, with which he held a strong relation. Méndez Arceo lived in constant change, owing to his openness to

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<sup>8</sup> G. GIRARDI, *Conflicto entre solidaridad integradora y solidaridad liberadora*, cit.; C. SALCEDO PALACIOS, *Participación de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en el Concilio Vaticano II*, cit.

<sup>9</sup> Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit.; ID., *Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, VIII Obispo de Cuernavaca durante las Sesiones Segunda y Tercera*, Serie Cuernavaca en el Concilio, Fundación Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, Cuernavaca 2014; ID., *Cartas e Intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en la Sesión Cuarta del Concilio Vaticano II*, Serie Cuernavaca en el Concilio, Fundación Don Sergio Méndez Arceo, Cuernavaca 2016.

any kind of social relations and his study of diverse writings, but fundamentally due to what he called «the discovering of the people»<sup>10</sup>. Because of his transforming attitude, the bishop of Cuernavaca has even been considered «a precursor to the Council and an architect of ecclesial renovation»<sup>11</sup>.

The essence of christian nationalism, which embraced bishop Méndez Arceo, came to being in the context of the discussions and results of the Second Vatican Council and, relevantly, his conception was frame by the crisis of two alternative conceptions of the national being: Revolutionary nationalism and catholic nationalism.

In general, Mexican nationalism had its pillars in Creole patriotismo. From the beginning, the links between the political imagination, religious beliefs and the struggle for the definition of a national project were powerful traits of the construction process of the Mexican society since the War of Independence and up until the process of Liberal Reform. To the original characteristics of nationalism, like the revival of the indigenous past, Guadalupanism and racial mixing, starting from the second half of the 19th century important civic values were incorporated<sup>12</sup>.

The original nationalism would be secularized and little by little it would converge with the liberal nationalism that had as one of its main objectives to do without the relationship between politics and religion as a trait of the Mexican nation and as a characteristic of the public space. Even though under the liberal project the civic profile of the citizens was deepened, looking at the facts, catholic nationalism never stopped being part of the structure of the young nation nor stopped presenting itself as an alternative to deal the “social issue”. Making a claim about the

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<sup>10</sup> According to Gabriela Videla, the Family influences were important for his career. A part of his family were traditional catholics, from his father's side Mexico's archbishop, José Mora y del Río, was his uncle, he also had clergy and religious people in his family; his father had been a lawyer that defended the causes of indigenous groups, and had a mason uncle. G. VIDELA, *Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit.

<sup>11</sup> G. GIRARDI, *Conflicto entre solidaridad integradora y solidaridad liberadora*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> The original features of Mexican nationalism have been examined by D. BRADING, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, Era, México 1973; B. CONNAUGHTON, *Entre la voz de Dios y el llamado de la Patria*, FCE, México 2011; A. LEMPÉRIÈRE, *Entre Dios y el Rey: la República. La ciudad de México de los siglos XVI al XIX*, FCE, México 2013.

importance of catholicism as an element of the national identity, the Church vigorously propelled the development of multiple strategies to reorganize their lay groups, with the goal of actively participating in the definition of the new coordinates of public life. The social and political background of Mexican catholics provided, around the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, an important diagnosis about the poor conditions of the larger part of Mexican society.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in the context of the Mexican Revolution, the program and discourse of revolutionary nationalism began to coexist with Catholic nationalism, and both struggled to define the identity of Mexican society and the coordinates of the public space. The triumphant elites from the Mexican Revolution of 1910 turned nationalism into an ideological component of the new political regime, whose main objective was to reach political justice. To accomplish this, the State took on the role of guardian of the most vulnerable sectors of the population and accepted the responsibility of recognizing the universal rights of all Mexican citizens, with particular emphasis on some important social rights. This project intended to represent the Mexican nation by focusing on the most vulnerable sectors and giving the State the role of mediator of social conflicts<sup>13</sup>. With the primary interest of consolidating a political agenda based in the revolutionary nationalist rhetoric, the Mexican State became authoritarian and eventually imposed an approach that aimed for the homogeneity of Mexican society<sup>14</sup>. The crisis of revolutionary nationalism would be evident when social pluralism sprouted in different ways around the third quarter of the century.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the last century, the catholics created civil groups, elite groups, political parties, syndicates and projects due to improve the countryside, among other things, aiming to position catholicism as a creative proposition faced with the complex national

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<sup>13</sup> S. GORDON, *Equidad y justicia social*, in «Revista Mexicana de Sociología», LVII, 1995, 2, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> On this, see F.C. TURNER, *La dinámica del nacionalismo mexicano*, Grijalbo, Mexico 1971; O. PAZ, *El ogro filantrópico*, Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, México 1979; R. BARTRA, *La jaula de la melancolía*, Grijalbo, México 1987.

reality<sup>15</sup>. But towards the seventies, the institutional catholic project was also in crisis<sup>16</sup>. Thomistic philosophy as the axis of social organization had deepened the herarchical relations between the Church and the parishioners as well as an Eurocentric vision of the role of religion. Catholic nationalism in Mexico, as in other countries, maintained an organic view of society and the Church was conceived as a structure capable of assimilating social changes without breaking out from tradition, and without losing its character as a perfect society. Catholic nationalism in Mexico, as in other countries, maintained an organic view of society and the Church was conceived as a structure capable of assimilating social changes without breaking out from tradition, and without losing its character as a perfect society.

Against this national and institutional background, bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo constructed his own vision of nationalism. Its essence was to recognize plurality and the need for inclusion. The bishop of Cuernavaca, in fact, worked by a type of nationalism that could build a unity without uniformity, and called for returning to the essence of early Christianity, the basis of the «liberating Christianity»<sup>17</sup>, that it would not be linked to a specific culture, language, book or social and political order. From a re-reading of the Gospel, Sergio Méndez Arceo adopted a renovated vision of christianism and an encounter with the postmodern world. The bishop included a historical analysis, the acknowledgement of scientific advances, religious pluralism and cultural diversity, as well as

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<sup>15</sup> M. CEBALLOS RAMÍREZ, *El catolicismo social: un tercero en discordia. Rerum Novarum, la "cuestión social" y la movilización de los católicos mexicanos (1891-1911)*, El Colegio de México, México 1991; J. ADAME GODDARD, *El pensamiento político y social de los católicos mexicanos, 1867-1914*, IMDOSOC-UNAM, México 1991; R. BLANCARTE (comp.), *El pensamiento social de los católicos mexicanos*, FCE, México 1996; M.L. ASPE ARMELLA, *La formación social y política de los católicos mexicanos: la Acción Católica Mexicana y la Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos, 1929-1958*, UIA, México 2008.

<sup>16</sup> It is important to distinguish catholic nationalism from religious nationalism, according to which the State derives its political legitimacy from a religion.

<sup>17</sup> According to Löwy, a new fraternity among christian revolutionaries and atheist or agnostic revolutionaries. M. LÖWY, *Cristianismo de Liberación. Perspectivas marxistas y ecosocialistas*, Editorial El Viejo Topo, Barcelona 2019.

denouncing how a dated interpretation of the holy scriptures had provoked a misguided concept of nationalism with all its excluding dimensions<sup>18</sup>.

Méndez Arceo was a precursor of a plural and inclusive concept of Christian and Catholic action in public life, and within his church. It is important to keep in mind that the bishop held a doctorate in ecclesiastical history, and he knew the historic relations between the Mexican state and the Catholic church, and he was a key social agent of local politics. As an innovator in the field of pastoral action the bishop encouraged the distribution of Bibles inside the diocese, and developed an essay-writing competition based around Biblical themes, an event that promoted discussion around the teaching of the gospel and its relationship with daily life. Since then, the bishop promoted the growing participation of the people during mass and underlined the centrality of reading the Bible, utilizing his Sunday homily to incentivize Catholics into reflection. Years later, Méndez Arceo would affirm that the multiple limitations imposed by the Church itself for believers to read and analyse the Bible had restricted for many years «contact with the history of God's action in men [...] we particularly lost contact with historic Jesus [...] with what Jesus said and did»<sup>19</sup>.

Méndez Arceo assumed the challenge of questioning his own pastoral mission along with key elements of two encyclicals of the pontiff John XXIII: *Mater et Magistra* (May 1961) relative to the development of social issues in light of the social Christian doctrine, where the Pope recognized the interdependence of nations and the need for states to lend mutual aid<sup>20</sup>; and *Pacem in terris* (April 1963) relative to the peace between all peoples, from which the bishop picked up the idea about the traits of modern times like the elevation of the laboral world, the participation of women in public life and, specially, the emancipation of the peoples<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> M.J. BORG, *El corazón del cristianismo. Redescubrir una vida de fe*, PPC Editorial, Madrid 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Homily of the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1981, Personal Archive of Sergio Méndez Arceo, Box 66, Exp. 17, Years 1976-1982.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html) (last consultation: March 7, 2023).

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html) (last consultation: March 7, 2023).



Pope Paul VI became the leader of the Catholic Church in June of 1963, following the death of John XXIII. The new Pope was to lead the next three stages of the council. The first Council session (October 11th, 1962), in which bishop Méndez Arceo participated<sup>22</sup>, emphasized the development of the Catholic faith, the moral renovation of Christian life, the adaptation of ecclesiastic discipline to the needs of the time and the search for a better relationship with other religions, mainly eastern ones. During this occasion bishop Méndez Arceo had 7 interventions, 5 relative to the theme of liturgy and 2 on the scheme of the Church in the world<sup>23</sup>. He proposed various fundaments for debate about the role liturgy should play in the construction of new relationships between the Church and its followers. He emphasized that the parishioners should be incorporated into liturgical action, which should be carried out in a native language and reflect the social reality<sup>24</sup>. The principle of adaptability, which required recovering the particularities of the time, demanded a certain amount of freedom among bishops in liturgical matters, and the ecumenical principle sought to integrate all Christians. Along these lines, Méndez Arceo highlighted the special role that the liturgical and biblical movement had<sup>25</sup>, due to its pastoral focus on promoting unity with non-Catholic brothers<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Due to his solid intellectual formation and his profile, at that time, as a conservative bishop, Pope Pius XII had already appointed Méndez Arceo as a speaker at the First General Conference of the Latin America, a certain commitment of the bishop with the social demands of the region was already visible. On the matter, see G. GIRARDI, *Conversión de un obispo al cristianismo: la solidaridad liberadora en el proceso de maduración humana y cristiana de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, in *Don Sergio Méndez Arceo. Patriarca de la solidaridad liberadora*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Oral intervention 1, Outline treated: Liturgy, Session I, Book 4, p. 338, XXXV General Congregation, 6.12.62, taken from Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit., pp. 50-54 and Third intervention (written 2), Session I, Book 2, pp. 251-254, Written Contributions on the Liturgy, Chapter 2. The Eucharistic Ministry, *ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>25</sup> Being consistent with his points, in November of 1963, before departing for the second session of the Council that would begin on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September of that year, the bishop led in Cuernavaca the "Certamen Bíblico Nacional". Cfr. «Correo del Sur», September 29, 1963, pp. 8-12.

<sup>26</sup> C. SALCEDO PALACIOS, *Participación de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en el Concilio Vaticano II*, cit., p. 146.

The bishop also actively participated in several debates during the second session of the Council (September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1963), in which the nature and renovation of the Church, the role of bishops, the restoration of unity between Christians and the beginning of a dialogue with the modern world were discussed. Méndez Arceo had 4 interventions, in which he addressed, among others, two topics: the ecumenical role of the Church and the Church-State relations. Regarding the latter, he underlined the need to deeply reflect about the differences between religious and civil power, arguing in favor of concordance between the two, in order that human and religious freedom could be appreciated as a public and constitutional human right. In this sense, he explained:

Pastoral and ecumenic importance in this matter is [very] large [...] [ignoring it] would stray from the aim that's been proposed, that is, [...] dialogue with men of our times, both Catholics and non-Catholics; the first question the men of our times pose [is] How must we assemble that authority, that the Church claims for itself as of divine origin, with freedom in political, civil, intellectual order that, currently almost everywhere [...] the human, conscious of its own dignity, demands for himself in our times? [...] if the Council can't honestly give a firm and clear proposal, there won't be any colloquy or dialogue between the Church and the current world [...]<sup>27</sup>.

In another one of his notable participations, Méndez Arceo presented the Decree on Ecumenism, in which he affirmed:

[...] religious freedom is not a corollary, or an appendix, or a concession of modern mentality, but an eminent and fundamental Catholic principle. The progressive vision would appear logical: the Church of Christ and the atheist world, the Church and non-practicing religious men, the Church and non-Christian religions, the Church and Islamism, the Church and the Jewish, the Church and all Christians [...] Unity without freedom is not religious [...] the true Church of Christ is a foundation for unity in the world, even when not everyone is

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<sup>27</sup> Oral intervention 2, Session II, Book 3, pp. 352-354, LVI General Congregation, 25.10.63. Chapter 3, about the Laypeople in the Church's scheme, taken from Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit., p. 78.

congregated in it. [...] The Church, as a sacrament of unity, is the mean to achieve unity [...] the question of congregated men in a multi-religious society [...]»<sup>28</sup>.

At the Council, the topic of Freemasonry was only presented by the bishop of Cuernavaca<sup>29</sup>; furthermore, by defending Jews and also to not Christians, Sergio Méndez Arceo admit historic mistakes of his Church and demanded «generous and evangelical reparations». The bishop also recognized the work that Pentecostal groups had carried out, which were largely present in Latin America and with a well adapted liturgy to the social reality<sup>30</sup>. Even when he did not expect profound transformations to Church doctrine and its internal and external relations, he emphasized the capacity for adaptability that the religious institution should have, in the way of the *aggiornamento*.

### 3. *Contributions by the bishop of Cuernavaca to the third and fourth sessions of the Council*

Paul VI published his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, almost a year after the Second Vatican Council had begun, during the preamble to the third session, in August 1964. The Pope highlighted a triple task for the Church: delve into the mystery of the Church, observing its duty in the present, correcting its members' defects and motivating them to true renewal, as well as establishing better relations with the contemporary world<sup>31</sup>. With these ideas as a reference, at the third session of the Council

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<sup>28</sup> Oral intervention 3, Session II, Book 5, pp. 615-618, LXXI General Congregation, 20.11.63, Decree about Ecumenism, *ibid.*, pp. 85-87.

<sup>29</sup> About this issue, Méndez Arceo would attain a dialogue with some collaborators of the magazine «La Civiltà Cattolica». Cfr. «Correo del Sur», October 25, 1964, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Documents, session I, vol. 5, p. 618, cited by C. SALCEDO PALACIOS, *Participación de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en el Concilio Vaticano II*, cit., p. 145.

<sup>31</sup> This encyclical was considered at the time one of the great social messages, as it addressed the relationships the Church needed to build with the world and, therefore, it posed a benchmark framework for the development of the social doctrine of the Church. Even if, throughout the text, Paul VI claims he does not intend to say new nor complete things, as that is what the Council is for, he does highlight, from different points of view, the necessary comprehension of the social reality and of dialogue as the effective mechanism between the

(September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1964) Méndez Arceo elaborated his concept of religious freedom as a basis for ecumenism and as a fundamental value of Catholicism<sup>32</sup>. During one of his interventions on the theme “The Church and the Current World”, the bishop argued in favor of political participation of Christians and the role of seculars or civic society in the construction of a national project:

[The function of politics] as explained in *Pacem in terris*, is to procure the exercise of their rights to every member of civic society. [...] [it's necessary that] Catholics become conscious that participating in public life is demanded by human dignity [...] [in order to] pave the way and clear away obstacles for the free proclamation of the Gospel and for the open exercise of Christian life in Christ's ecclesial community [...] it's not the job of hierarchy, to the service of salvation, it's necessary acting within a concrete political order. [...] Seculars, for whom it's important to be inserted in temporal structures [...] should act as believers in the political order, until the last incarnation of the historic here and now can be reached<sup>33</sup>.

Bishop Méndez Arceo expressed, in one of his letters to «Correo del Sur», his own surprise due to the fact that the issue of the political activities of the laity had not provoked a deep discussion at the Council<sup>34</sup>. To elaborate on his arguments during the third session, at the 110th General Congregation, the bishop intervened with the theme “The Church at the service of God and the world”, and said:

[...] among the main signs of the times we must place the efforts to promote the responsibility and dignity of people and defending and increasing freedom [...] the Church must not only maintain religious freedom in its relations with other religions but, [...] it is appropriate to favor freedom in all of Christian life,

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christian communities and the civilian and political communities for a fruitful collaboration. [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html) (consulted on March 7, 2023).

<sup>32</sup> «Correo del Sur», October 4 1964, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Written intervention 2, Session III, Book 5, pp. 481-483, The Church in the Current World, taken from Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit., pp. 205-207.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from the bishop, in «Correo del Sur», October 6, 1965, p. 10.

in the practice of itself, avoiding coercion, for the Gospel is meant to provoke a free response from man [...] the true Christian law is not a law set in stone, but a law written in hearts [...]. With its authority, the Church must end that rigorism in merely ecclesial laws<sup>35</sup>.

Méndez Arceo invoked religious freedom as a key concept of Catholic theology and not only as a sign of a modern mentality. The most important factor for interaction was the acknowledgement of ecumenism, which he defined as an essential trait of society, called by God to be not Christian but multi-religious. This ecumenism alluded not only to relations between churches, but also to relations with non-Christian religions, with the atheist world and with Freemasonry. In this perspective, the bishop was one of the forerunners of a movement that became stronger during the 1990's, known as "macroecumenism"<sup>36</sup>.

The ecumenical principle, in the opinion of Méndez Arceo, demanded even recognizing Reformation values. On the other hand, although Marxism and socialism were not central issues of the Council, having presented the issue in opened a greater dialogue with Marxists and socialist alike. He argued that recognising the Church's character as a sacrament of unity amongst men demanded a dialogue between Christians and also with non-Christians<sup>37</sup>.

Another topic considered at the closing of the third Council session was Christian education. In November of 1964, the bishop gave an interview to a roman journalist regarding themes of Christian education and asserted that, while parents had the right to choose the type of education their children should receive and a public school system which respected said rights should be organised, the church and civil society also had the right to participate in education. Inspired by the chapter IV of *Lumen Gentium* (November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1964), on "The Laity"<sup>38</sup>, wich endows

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<sup>35</sup> «Correo del Sur», November 8, 1964, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> C. SALCEDO PALACIOS, *Participación de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo en el Concilio Vaticano II*, cit.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_sp.html) (consulted March 7, 2023).

the Catholic laity with broad power of action in different fields, but always in order to train responsible citizens, the bishop said:

The educational function of civic society, that is the nation, has the integration to social life of new generations as a goal, in order to communicate the inheritance of language, history, arts, literature, science, of traditions and moral values, so that the nation perpetuates and progresses. Civic society reclaims schooling as an instrument of national education [...]. With the awareness of civic society about its job of educating and its independence from the Church we must question if civic society has or does not have the right to cultivate and educate every citizen [...] the fundamental principle is much more broad than Catholic schooling, which is the Church's mission to herald the word of God [...]. Christian school is without a doubt a means for this integration [...]. The current evolution of civic society [...] vindicates education for itself, in order to promote and express national unity against the backdrop of temporal autonomy and common values of citizens [...] <sup>39</sup>.

Among the topics scheduled for the fourth session of the Council were Religious Freedom, the position of the Church regarding Large Religions, The Church and the Modern World and Christian Youth Education<sup>40</sup>. In the finished version of the draft included, additionally, the need to develop an Christian's anthropology and a cosmology<sup>41</sup>.

Towards the last session of the council, the bishop remained cautious about its results<sup>42</sup>. On October of 1965, Méndez Arceo pointed out that the conciliatory declaration on non-Christians had left him satisfied, because it represented the aperture of the Church to a broad sector of society to which, in their religious beliefs, the Church recognised «true ideas, and in their different ways of life there was still a glimmer of the Truth, which illuminates every man»<sup>43</sup>. He considered that, with it, the Church gave an universal example by recognising there were times in which attitudes did not correspond to the initial truth of respect towards human

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<sup>39</sup> Press interview, Rome, November of 1964, taken from Á. SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS, *10 cartas y 7 intervenciones de Don Sergio Méndez Arceo*, cit., pp. 177-180.

<sup>40</sup> Editorial, «Correo del Sur», September 26, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> «Correo del Sur», September 26, 1965, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from the bishop, «Correo del Sur», October 3, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from the bishop, «Correo del Sur», November 7, 1965, p. 8.

dignity, nor with the objective and personal right to be guided by one's own conscience, even if such was mistaken<sup>44</sup>.

Since the issue of Religious Freedom was central to him, the bishop pointed out:

[...] what we want to settle, after many centuries of intolerance and persecution from one and many parties [...] after a long process of purifying humanity where multiple influencing factors have arisen all around the world, is human dignity, which has to exist in accordance with its own conscience – well or badly formulated – and must therefore not be externally defiled by any coercing authority or pressure to believe or practice this or that religion. This does not mean negating the Church's authority to herald its truth, nor negating Church authorities imposing some rules; even when, to this end, we must proceed also in accordance with Christian freedom, whose principles are given by revelation<sup>45</sup>.

It is clear that the bishop of Cuernavaca also embraced the contents of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965). This document established that the bishops broaden their vision and pastoral action «*ultra fines propiae nationis*» (beyond the limits of nations) and to contribute to renouncing national selfishness, as well as fighting so that political leaders don't go behind the ambition to dominate other nations. The international relations should be governed by justice and solidarity, which could be achieved through various economic, political, social and cultural associations; public authority, governments and states had not been established to forcefully seclude citizens within geographical limits, but to ensure, above everything, common welfare, which can not be separated from the welfare of every human family<sup>46</sup>.

Another document that enriched Méndez Arceo's thinking was the conciliar decree *Ad Gentes* (December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965) relative to nations, in which bishops were urged to cultivate an ecumenical spirit amongst neophytes and to remind faithful Christians they are not different to other men neither by regime, nor language, nor by their political institutions. The

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Letter from the bishop, «Correo del Sur», October 31, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_sp.html) (consulted March 7, 2023).

Christian congregation should continue live for Christ cultivating their love for their homeland, yet entirely avoiding contempt towards other races and exaggerate nationalism, and promoting universal love towards men<sup>47</sup>.

The type of Christian nationalism professed by the bishop was based around recognizing one's own history in order to understand and connect with others' histories, not to oppose them. From the historical point of view, Christianity was not necessarily incompatible with nationalism. The patriotic spirit, like Christianity, is essentially inclusive, it emphasizes love for one's own country and the will to serve, but it allows finding common interests with other nations in order to achieve together what can not be achieved alone<sup>48</sup>.

For the bishop Christians who followed the teachings of Jesus should not be limited to act on a small geographic or mental realm, but be open to the entire world. Ecumenism would lead to the creation of an inclusive national identity, that could be useful not only to non-Christians, but also to atheists and Freemasons. This idea meant an important distinction with respect to Catholic nationalism, which at the time still insisted Catholicism was the main cohesive element in Mexican society. Méndez Arceo was convinced that all men should be recognized as part of the same great family, every Christian had the obligation to strive towards opening frontiers of every kind. The bishop pictured national transformation as part of the changes of a great transnational family, that is to say, inside a broad, historically and culturally built space in which relations, structures and social processes evoked an idea of identity built beyond national borders.

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<sup>47</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_sp.html) (consulted March 7, 2023).

<sup>48</sup> According to González Fernández, it is important to distinguish this idea from other similar in their terms, but not in their content. That is the case of Christian nationalism for which everyone that was not baptized was excluded from a country and only Christians could become citizens, for which every method was employed with the purpose of assuring the continued existence of Christianity in a nation, like what happened during the Inquisition, the expulsion of the Jews and the religion wars. Another case is that of the Christian nationalism that surged particularly in Spain within Catholicism, and that was built upon traditionalist principles, theocratic clericalist, ultra Catholic, antiliberal and even racist. All this has meant a return to a type of feudalism, lacking a solidarity dimension, and a violent break with modernity. E. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Nacionalismo y cristianismo*, Unión Editorial, Madrid 2016.



Sergio Méndez Arceo's vision was essentially pluralist and promoted the active and compromised role of the Church in profound social change processes, always on the basis of dialoguing with the different.

The Christian nationalism of Méndez Arceo would be the result of learning and interacting with other processes and realities, not at all alienated from Mexican society. The bishop did not absolutize the nation or what was national, and his adhesion to Humanism and, thus, Christianity, allowed him not to subordinate people to a real or fictitious nation, or to a social model. His alternative vision of nationalism was inviting to not linger on an archaic conception of nationalism, on an unsupportive selfishness and, instead, promoted the acknowledging that «true nobility of man does not rely on being born in this or that country, on some social or racial condition, on an inflamed idiosyncratic pride or on invoking particularities and differences in people detached from others' futures by creating frontiers»<sup>49</sup>. Christian nationalism appealed to common elements, shared traits, but also recognised differences and enriched itself with plurality. This kind of nationalism sought to demolish barriers and lay bridges. Absolutizing a nation was to stray from Christianity and ignore that its essence was to bond people and open frontiers.

By the end of the sixties the bishop of Cuernavaca evidenced the tangible weathering of Mexican Catholic nationalism. In July of 1969, when the bishop attended Puebla Autonomous University (BUAP) he asserted that the true reason for change in the Church were the poor which demanded justice. He emphasized that church structures had to be transformed in order to adapt to the severe national situation and, for the first time in a space as important as a university, he called for unity amongst Christians and Marxists in order to lead the way to a just society.

During the days after his conference, the newspaper «El Sol de Puebla» published the reactions of many local groups attacking Méndez Arceo. The Mexican Traditionalist Catholic Movement and *Cristianismo Sí* (Yes to Christianity) Movement declared that «communism had infiltrated the Church under the guise of progressivism», and collected signatures for the Archbishop of Puebla to admonish Méndez Arceo. On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1970 the Pastoral Letter *La firmeza de la fe católica* (The firmness of the Catholic

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

faith) was published, in which archbishop Octaviano Márquez y Toriz declared: «No one can be both a good Catholic and a true Socialist»<sup>50</sup>. In this document the Catholic hierarchy and conservative catholic community launched a campaign against the bishop of Cuernavaca.

#### 4. *Final comments*

At the beginning of the seventies, a sector of priests and seculars of the Catholic Church would attempt to give Christianity a new focus closer to national and popular realities<sup>51</sup>. The Vatican Council II strengthened many of Sergio Méndez Arceo's positions and convinced him to adopting them as the core of his theology and pastoral mission.

Sergio Méndez Arceo was a key figure in the history of the Mexican and the Latin American catholicisms. The Cuernavaca bishop taught the traditional principles of the Catholic Social Doctrine, but also promoted a new vision for the role of his Church and that of the layman catholics, that had as the key fulcrum a profound commitment with the most vulnerable and marginalized social groups. The contact points between his theory and Catholic Social Doctrine were the protection of the dignity of the human being, an active participation of Catholics in the development of solutions to social problems and the promotion of solidarity. However, Méndez Arceo clearly separated himself from that traditional vision in relation with the main objective of catholicism. He emphasized teachings derived directly from studying the Gospel, and the preferential option towards the poor as a theological principle and an axis in the advocacy of an ecumenical vision on his pastoral work. In this way, the bishop contributed to the development of a Latin American Theology that supported the idea of liberation from all oppressive structures, even from his own Church.

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<sup>50</sup> C. FAZIO, *Cuando la conversión de Méndez Arceo se hizo palabra la Iglesia mexicana salió de su mudez*, in «Proceso», 1983.

<sup>51</sup> J. YOUNG-HYUN, *Movimiento 'Sacerdotes para el Pueblo' y la transformación socioeclesial de México*, in «Revista Iberoamericana», XXI, 2021, 1, pp. 81-104.

Returning to Löwy<sup>52</sup>, it is possible to claim that the contribution of Sergio Méndez Arceo, and other bishops, to the development of Catholic social thinking in the American continent, was to position the Theology of Liberation as a movement that did not only focus on the confrontation between Catholicism and capitalism. The Theology of Liberation was the religious and cultural manifestation of the historical conditions of social unrest, poverty and marginalization characteristic of a good portion of the American continent, and therefore advocated overcoming the structural causes of social injustice. The Theology of Liberation was empathetic with the popular cultures and religiousness, an attitude that made it possible to stay close to local realities, and little by little overcome the historical tension of catholicism between tradition and modernity<sup>53</sup>. This vision contributed to a notion of being catholic different from that of institutional catholicism. By adopting principles like tolerance, a commitment with the very poor and the idea of liberation, the catholics affiliated to this movement transcended the frontiers of their own countries and contributed to the creation of a transnational community.

Méndez Arceo contributed to the construction of a particular conception of nationalism that strays far from a sociological, political and juridical notion of nation. Christian nationalism separated itself from Catholic nationalism, entrenched in conservative Christian morals, afraid of God, hierarchical and exclusive, and came to defend of a vision based on historical optimism, on religious freedom (which translates to Christian freedom), on ecumenism and, therefore, on a unity built on including other religions, Atheists and Freemasons. The Christian nationalism unlike the traditional Catholic full of descriptive and discriminative qualifiers, accepted differences as an ingrained element in true unity, not homogeneity. This nationalism maintained loyalty, devotion to the country and national traditions, yet is not opposed to other nationalities but assimilates, creates empathy; it does not tolerate intolerance, authoritarian attitudes and xenophobic expression.

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<sup>52</sup> M. LÖWY, *La guerre des Dieux. Religion et politique en Amérique Latine*, Éditions du Félin, Paris 1998.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-79.

Through his conception of Christian nationalism, the bishop of Cuernavaca was, in the case of Mexico, a forerunner of a globalizing vision of social action, since on the basis of a non-exclusive nationalism he opened up the possibility of building a global community, based on an internationalist project that would transcend national frontiers<sup>54</sup>. This nationalism did not segregate citizens by race, gender, social class, political affiliation nor religion. This nationalism did not boast its superiority, nor denied its deficiencies, much less disqualified alternate proposals of others and, instead, by recognising national particularities proposed brotherhood and learning through other societies. Sergio Méndez Arceo's work was key for a generation of bishops compromised with the causes of marginalized groups who created a social and civil movement that always made a high, profoundly conservative sector of the ecclesial hierarchy, uncomfortable. Among this generation there were José Alberto Llaguno (bishop of the Tarahumara), Bartolomé Carrasco (archbishop of Oaxaca), Samuel Ruiz (bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas), Arturo Lona Reyes (bishop of Tehuantepec) and Raúl Vera López (bishop of Saltillo). After the resignation of bishop Vera, in 2021, a cycle in the construction of a liberating alternative inside the Mexican Catholic Church, was closed.

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<sup>54</sup> On the internationalist vision of Méndez Arceo and his contribution to the political opening in Mexico see T. HERNANDEZ VICENCIO, *Sergio Méndez Arceo y su visión internacionalista*, in «Política y Cultura», núm. 38, enero 2012, UAM-Xochimilco, México.

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## ABSTRACTS

I. The «Solidarity-State». Università Cattolica, a post-World War II Think Tank on Social Thought (*Maria Bocci*)

Among the development models drawn up by the Italian Catholic world in the mid-twentieth century, we should consider that designed in one of the nerve centres of Italian Catholic culture, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. This essay analyses the contribution made by groups of professors and assistant professors, at first clandestinely, and later in political and institutional bodies, to the reconstruction of Italy, significantly influencing social thought in the postwar period. Their contribution stemmed from their reflections during the period between the 1930s and the 1950s, which were compared both with corporatism as well as Anglo-Saxon models and the New Deal, opting for the creation of a «Solidarity-State», which was an alternative to individualism and collectivism. This essay uses analyses of journals, books and debates, which have also been pieced together thanks to unpublished documentation.

II. Catholic Social Action in Post-War Germany: Pius XII and the Creation of Christian Trade Unions in the Federal Republic, 1948-1959 (*Simon Unger-Alvi*)

While the Catholic Church had re-emerged from the Second World War as a major political player in the newly founded West German Republic, its influence remained contested not only by Social Democrats and liberals, but also by Protestant interest groups within the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Against this background, this article analyzes the Vatican's strategy of social action pursued under Pius XII in order to attain a "Re-Christianization" of German society. In particular, it retraces Catholic attempts to strengthen its influence over the increasingly left-wing German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and the events that ultimately

led to the creation of the “Christian Syndicate Movement” in 1955 and the “Christian Trade Union Confederation” in 1959. Based on newly available documents in the Vatican Apostolic Archive, it is now possible to understand how the Church sought to steer these processes via the Nunciature of Aloysius Muench in Bonn. More importantly, however, these sources also allow us to understand how Catholic syndicalism was placed within a global strategy of social action pursued by the Vatican in order to contain the spread of Marxism.

### III. The Catholic Corporative Project in Cold War America. The Debate on the Industry Council Plan, 1940-1960 (*Susanna De Stradis*)

This essay address a peculiar aspect of American Catholic social thought and deeds in the postwar US: the efforts to restructure the social order along corporative lines. Though it was not the first time that this markedly European concept found an American audience, it was especially after 1945 that US Catholic leaders, both clerical and lay, devoted much energy to studying and spreading the corporative ideal. Following Pope Pius XII's persistent call for a third way between capitalism and communism, they argued that corporatism could offer their own country a viable alternative to both pre-New Deal *laissez-faire* and a full-scale Welfare State – the two most likely outcomes, they feared, of postwar economic reconversion. Still through the 1950s, the debate on corporatism kept providing the US Church with the conceptual tools to rethink some hot-button issues of the early Cold War, such as the value of pluralism, or the reasons and boundaries for State intervention in civil society.

### IV. American Catholics and Religious Intolerance in Franco's Spain (*Rafael Escobedo Romero*)

During Vatican II, American bishops and theologians played a decisive role in drafting the historic declaration *Dignitatis humanae*. American Catholics had become increasingly persuaded of the Church's urgent need

to openly endorse religious freedom as a human and civil right. They did so primarily because they had experienced firsthand liberty's advantages with regard to the Church's development in America. However, they were also continuously challenged by their fellow Protestant and secularist countrymen who pointed out the inconsistency of their feelings about freedom and their Church's official teachings. In this context, during the twenty years that preceded the Vatican Council, American discussions on religious freedom and church-state separation were often confronted with the situation of religious minorities in the officially Catholic Francoist Spain. News about Spanish religious intolerance thus became part of the big discussion about the "Americanness" of the Catholic religion.

V. The Networks of the Economy and Humanism Movement Through the Trajectory of Juan Pablo Terra, 1947-1957 (*Lorena García Mourelle*)

In the mid-1940s, the French movement Economy and Humanism sought to spread and expand its ideas and actions in Latin America, promoting the creation of local groups. In 1947, the Dominican friar Louis-Joseph Lebreton, founder of the movement, made his first visit to South America. In this context, the Common Good Teams, headed by Juan Pablo Terra, were created in Uruguay. This paper seeks to identify and analyze the Latin American networks built and developed by the Economy and Humanism movement through the trajectory of Juan Pablo Terra from 1947 to 1957, the year the Latin American Center for Human Economy was founded. Terra was one of the key actors in the dissemination and circulation of Lebreton's ideas and actions in Latin America. It is intended to explain the impact of Christian humanist thought in sectors of Uruguayan Catholic youth activism, as well as to study the role of these actors as disseminators and translators of the Economy and Humanism movement at the regional level.

VI. Between Civitas and Polis: Carlos Alberto Siri's neo-Thomist Approach for Democracy in Latin America (*Yves Bernardo Roger Solís Nicot*)

The essay seeks to discuss the social and civic contribution of Carlos Alberto Siri, a neo-Thomist philosopher from San Salvador. His reflections are based on his knowledge of social issues in Central and Latin America and a political perspective inspired by Catholic teachings. One of Siri's main concerns is the secularization process that progresses during the Twentieth Century, which could lead to an authoritarian path instead of the social democratic one. The main discussion Siri sustains in his work *The Predominance of the Civitas and the Insufficiency of the Polis* opens the possibility of a third way or a new path between capitalism and communism in relation to power and citizenship for Latin-American democratic processes. He promotes a change in the concepts of power and citizenship, going so far as to condemn the political regimes based on individualism (Capitalism) and atheism (Communism and Socialism), while favoring a democratic system socially integrated, built on Christian values.

VII. Jesuit Intellectual Networks and Socio-political Renewal in Latin America: About a Magazine, 1949-1959 (*Paolo Valvo*)

The essay aims to briefly reconstruct the history of the monthly Jesuit periodical «Latinoamérica. Revista mensual de cultura y orientación», published in Mexico by the Buena Prensa publishing house from January 1949 to December 1958, and then transferred to Cuba, where it was published by the Colegio de Belén in Havana from January 1959 until it was discontinued the following April, against the background of the Cuban regime-change successfully led by Fidel Castro. Particular attention is devoted to the continental vocation of the periodical and its insistence on the social question, in its many facets in the Latin American subcontinent, in order to understand to what extent «Latinoamérica» succeeded in interpreting, or at least intercepting, the anxieties for renewal that spread within the pre-conciliar Church (in America as in Europe) and that affected

all levels of Catholic presence in society, from the religious to the cultural, without neglecting the socio-economic context (often dramatic) in which religious and lay people found themselves working on a daily basis.

VIII. From Maritain to the «Brazilian Revolution»: the Social Thought of the *Juventude Estudantil Católica* (JEC) and *Juventude Universitária Católica* (JUC) (Marta Busani)

The essay reconstructs some decisive stages in the history of JEC (*Juventude Estudantil Católica*) and JUC (*Juventude Universitária Católica*) in Brazil between the 1950s and 1960s, highlighting the influence of the francophone model of “specialized” Catholic Action on the history of the two Brazilian student movements. Since the second half of the 1950s, the Brazilian JEC and JUC had expressed a desire to move beyond an approach that focused exclusively on the religious education in favor of a model that combined both faith education and social action. This led the leaders of the JEC and JUC to look for models that they initially found in Maritain’s thought, as documented by the debate around the «Ideal Histórico» at the turn of the Fifties and Sixties, or in the theory of «Engajamento», which they took from the model of French Catholic Action. In just a few years, however, young Brazilians would come to a radical critique of the foundations of Maritain’s thought, from which they had started, outlining the theoretical and practical basis for the Theology of Liberation elaborated by Gutiérrez in the early 1970s. The events of the JEC and JUC, even with some peculiarities, represent a paradigmatic anticipation of some processes that will affect some of the Catholic Action youth groups in South America and Europe after 1968.

IX. Efraín González Morfín, Intellectual and Promoter of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Laura Alarcón Menchaca)

Efraín González Morfín (1929-2012) was a Mexican Catholic politician and intellectual. His cultural formation was very solid thanks to the home

in which he grew up, as well as his thirteen years of training in Jesuit seminaries. He was the son of a prominent politician from Jalisco, Efraín González Luna, to whom he owes part of his intellectual formation. The essay sets out to analyse two fundamental elements in Efraín González Morfín's cultural trajectory: the in-depth study of Marxism and the active promotion of the Social Doctrine of the Church in both academia and politics. This led González Morfín to propose innovative changes in the National Action Party (PAN) Principles of Doctrine as well as in organizations such as the one he later founded, *Solidarismo*, and in business organizations such as the Social Union of Catholic Businessmen (USEM), always in the light of the Church's social doctrine.

X. Beyond the Social Doctrine of the Church. The Contribution of Sergio Méndez Arceo to the Second Vatican Council (*Tania Hernández Vicencio*)

The aim of this essay is to analyze the thinking and pastoral action of the 7<sup>th</sup> bishop of Cuernavaca, Morelos, Sergio Méndez Arceo, as an expression of a new catholic activism which, during the 1970s-1980s, resignified the role of the Church in Mexico, and turned it into an agent for change in Mexican society, which contributed to a new, distinct idea on the national self. Influenced by the complex socio-political situation of the state of Morelos during his first ten years as bishop as well as by the discussions of the Second Vatican Council and, later on, motivated by the political crisis in Mexico and Latin America, Méndez Arceo turned into a key actor for political change both nationally and in various neighboring countries. Starting from a review of a variety of documents from his personal archive, as well as the weekly journal «*Correo del Sur*», the essay shows how the bishop, through his thinking and pastoral action, questioned essential concepts such as catholic nationalism, civic catholicism and catholic citizenship.

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This volume gathers together the fruits of the dialogue between ten European and American scholars aimed at exploring the transnational horizons of Catholic social action from the post-World War II period to the Council years.

Through a plurality of approaches, some of the ways in which Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic, in a fruitful and ongoing exchange of views and experiences, have reflected on issues of social justice and democracy are examined. Their reflections were not abstract, but embodied in social, cultural and political experiences that have left their mark on the history and identity of local Catholicisms, helping to show the potential for change inherent in the Gospel and in the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Starting from these premises, this publication seeks to delve into ideal links and networks of relations that in the period following the Second World War have made the Atlantic a little narrower, highlighting the contribution of the Catholic world, in its different souls, to contemporary globalisation processes.

