

PART FOUR

THE CHURCH AND LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION (1962-1979)

In this last section we will undertake an analysis of the most recent era, which is pregnant with meaning and significant events. About a decade ago Latin America entered a new period of revolutionary change. Furthermore, the Church began to move into a new stage of its history. The converging of these two situations prefigures a new state of being in the panorama of the universal Church and of the cultural history of our world. Following the oligarchical revolution led by the Latin American Creoles at the beginning of the nineteenth century, this same oligarchy retained the political and social power well into the twentieth century in nearly all the countries of our geographical-cultural area. The Mexican revolution that began in 1910, however, signaled a new political, economic, and cultural reality, namely, the emergence of a new proprietor of power, that is, the *people* composed of a technocratic minority in their two essential elements: the proletariat created by industrialization and the rural workers together with “the student population and some from the middle class. This *popular revolution*, which possibly will conclude by the end of the twentieth century, produces a profound uneasiness in the oligarchy, in the liberal bourgeois State, and in the institutions that they founded—including the Church and the military class. This popular revolution stems from the Church’s experience of trying for three decades the pastoral solutions offered by the theology of the “new Christendom” such as Catholic Action and Christian Democracy. The oligarchy and liberal bourgeois have been even more disturbed by the directions signaled by the Second Vatican Council. Following the period of colonial Christendom and of the nationalism of the Creole oligarchy, the popular revolution signifies, in contrast, the integration of Latin America into one great country for Latin Americans.

The primitive Church, following a period of disorientation resulting from its Judaizing tendencies, began a second stage by being open to the conversion of the gentiles and eventually of the entire Roman empire, primarily as a result of the experience of the Christian community in Antioch and in conformity with the decisions of the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 50. From that first century of the pre-Constantinian Church and of Byzantine Constantinian Christendom, the second stage culminated with the evangelization of the Roman empire and its *colonies*. This period comprised the evangelization of the Byzantine empire, of Europe, and of Latin America, including the Christendom of the Indies. Only with the Second Vatican Council was the framework of the Roman empire—Latin and Hellenistic—surpassed in a real cultural sense, allowing the Church to engage universally in the evangelization of all cultures and of all people. The third stage in the history of the Church, which began in 1962, was climaxed in Latin America by a profound cultural phenomenon, namely, the popular

antioligarchical and antiimperialistic revolution. These two converging developments explain the events in the history of the Latin American Church during recent years. We will attempt to synthesize this history in a few words, describing first the general conditions of the culture, the “tenth” moment in the history of the Church, and the “theological significance” of this brief but fertile period.

To designate 1962 as the beginning of this new period in history may appear at the outset unjustified, for any periodification is an attempt to simplify what is really very complex. A new stage in the history of the Church in Latin America is clearly seen beginning in 1955 and terminating in 1968, that is, from the meeting of CELAM in Río de Janeiro in 1955 when, at the first General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Dom Hélder Câmara was consecrated Bishop of Recife and Olinda through the slow but irreversible conversion that the Second Vatican Council signified from 1962 until 1965, until in various national ways the conclusions and implications of the Council began to be implemented. In the second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, which met in Medellín in 1968, those conclusions and implications were spelled out even more stringently. In these thirteen years a new attitude was formed, and since Medellín a new ecclesiastical situation has developed.

CHAPTER X

THE LATIN AMERICAN CRISES OF LIBERATION

The nature of this crisis of liberation could be discussed on numerous levels. We prefer to limit our analysis to the crisis of the popular revolution, of the Latin American integration, and of the discovery of the cultural autonomy of our sociocultural group.

I. THE CRISIS OF THE POPULAR REVOLUTION

If the crisis of the national revolutions that began in the nineteenth century against the Spanish monarchy represented a prolonged struggle for national organization by a minority, first of all conservative and then liberal—the latter being profoundly influenced by foreigners—then the present revolution signifies an even greater and more violent crisis in that it involves the change in the exercise of power from an oligarchy to a people educated, cultured, and committed to authentic democracy. It further signifies the suppression of many privileges, not from a nihilistic desire for destruction, but rather from the humanitarian desire that everyone should have the right to benefit from the values of contemporary universal civilization. This crisis is even more painful when, with the confrontation between the oligarchy, so influenced and dominated by foreign power, and the people in the process of liberation imposes the dialectic of the dominating, developed, and superdeveloped countries upon the oppressed and underdeveloped countries which oftentimes are experiencing a deteriorating political process and an economic disintegration. The cultural and economic gap between the oppressive colonial oligarchy and the oppressed peoples becomes even more intolerable. The gap between the per capita GNP of the developed countries (such as the United States, Western Europe, and the Soviet Union) and the Third World is abysmal. This creates a progressive dialectical movement of humanity moving toward a convergence that cannot be achieved unless contradictions are overcome. It is too late, however, for an impoverished people to follow the direction characterized by the individualism of the Creole oligarchy. It is equally late for these countries to attempt to imitate the development of Western Europe, North America, or even of the Soviet Union. Possibly the countries of the Third World should attempt a “short-cut” and try to bypass those stages and diverse models followed by the developed countries if these underdeveloped countries are to be united on a level of equality with the rest of the world during the twenty-first century.

“The dialectic of the master and the slave” perhaps has never been more clearly illustrated than in Latin America. During the period of the conquest, the conquistador (and later the *encomendero*) pressed the Indian into service. Indigenous America became the servant of Europe. And if it is true that there was no racism in Latin America, there was certainly the total domination of the Indian. Furthermore, the Indian con-

tinued to subsist in history not as an Indian but as a mestizo. And the mestizo is the first conciliation, the true fellow inhabitant of Latin America.

During the period of the contradictory and weak, independent nation-states, the master was the Creole oligarch —the landholder who for the most part lived in the great cities —who controlled the people from the provincial capitals and from the land of the rural worker, the *campesino*, *gaucho*, and *peón*. At the same time the powerful landowners allowed the birth of the industrial, neocolonial bourgeois, and a new relationship of domination developed between the national or foreign capitalist and the proletariat. The nineteenth-century national revolutions displaced the Spanish minority, and the control of the countries passed to the Creole oligarchy; but it appears that the economic crisis of 1929 dealt a mortal blow to the political power of this oligarchy. There followed the development of the military class as a political force, but their ideals and life-style differed little from those of the oligarchy. The Liberal was then transformed into a Conservative and began to defend strenuously Latin American *Christendom* under the guise of “Western Christian Civilization.” This loss of power by the oligarchy, formerly Liberal, explains why conflicts between them and a large part of the Church ceased to occur: for the most part the ecclesiastical leadership came from this social class. Meanwhile, the bearer of the new political power continued to gestate, namely, the popular classes who were slowly being conscientized and who began to enter the struggle for power. At the same time, the Church was passing through a new experience in history as there was developing within her own precincts a parallel polarization to that taking place within Latin American culture. All of this manifested the characteristics of the inevitable, and the meaning of this process will become evident. One other clarification should be noted. If we are speaking of a popular revolution, one should not assume that it will take place in a uniform way or even simultaneously. This slow gestation will probably continue throughout the twentieth century as it acquires sometimes national and at other times Latin American characteristics. Many times the development will signify progress, but, at other times regression as when the people as a community fail to exercise their power and when a new class, neither the bourgeois oligarchy nor the military, but the technocrats of our modern, universal civilization, gain control. This new class will be supported by the people because they represent a means of wresting the power from the current minorities. But the time will come when the technocrats will also be the objects of the liberating criticism of future Christian prophets. Meanwhile it is necessary to discern correctly the situation in order to discover who are the actual prophets in the Latin American Church.

In the nineteenth century, as we have said in the preceding pages, a pact was established between Latin America and the industrialized countries, namely, with England and the United States, wherein Latin America was placed in a neocolonial relationship, no longer Iberic but rather Anglo-Saxon. At the end of the century Latin America had clearly structured its economy within its dependence on the new economic capitals of London, New York, sometimes California, and other times New Orleans. The landholding Creole oligarchy, rarely creatively bourgeois, received, however, the full impact of the economic collapse of 1929.

From 1930 until the decade of the 1960s, a stage in the political and economic history of Latin America ended. The Second World War began to modify and even to accentuate the traditional international division of labor. “The international demand for raw materials lost its dynamism as reflected in the evolution of structures in the industrialized countries.”¹ The decline in the prices of exportable raw materials to

the developed countries produced an incipient industrialization that allowed a simultaneous reduction in importation.

The Evolution of the Coefficients of Industrialization in Some Latin American Countries ²

	Argentina	Mexico	Brazil	Chile	Colombia
1929	22.8	14.2	11.7	7.9	6.2
1937	25.6	16.7	13.1	11.3	7.5
1947	31.1	19.8	17.3	17.3	11.5
1957	32.4	21.7	23.1	23.1	16.2

This industrial production resulted in a sudden growth of the proletariat class and the simultaneous loss of power by the oligarchy. The governments were able to promote industrialization by a process of accelerated inflation. This of course meant a widespread and profound social instability, which in turn led to the appearance of numerous dictatorships or reformist governments of a military type. In 1945, for example, the military overthrew the government in Brazil. That same year Juan Perón assumed power in Argentina. Three years later (1948) Manuel Odría established his dictatorship in Peru. In 1952 Batista took over in Cuba and Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla became dictator of Colombia in 1953, and in the following year Castillo Armas in Guatemala and Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay took control of their respective countries. Before this, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua had become dictators. During this time the Church generally maintained a working if not cordial relationship with the dictators. It was only after 1954, when the Church became critical of the Perón regime, that the situation began to change. There followed a new cycle of events in the toppling of one dictator after another and the attempt at civil reform by a neocolonial bourgeois. Perón fell in 1955, Odría in 1956, and Batista, Rojas Pinilla, and Pérez Jiménez in 1958. In Uruguay the *Blancos* replaced the *Colorados* who had governed since 1865. Jorge Alessandri replaced Carlos Ibáñez in Chile, and Adolfo López Mateos replaced Adolfo Ruiz Cortínez in Mexico. Somoza was assassinated in Nicaragua as was Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1961. Paz Estensoro returned to power in Bolivia in 1968, and Janio Quadros succeeded Juscelino Kubitschek in Brazil. Thus began the decade that we are analyzing in this section.

The dictatorships had produced ordinarily reformist governments of force but not really revolutionary governments. Consequently they did not effect any significant change in the governmental structures. But in the decade that followed, the governments adopted some rather radical positions as a result of two contradictory experiences. The first was the Cuban revolution of 1959 wherein Fidel Castro established a socialist state despite the opposition and intransigence of the United States. A short time later—primarily because of the failure of the political parties of Goulart in Brazil, Illía in Argentina, and Belaunde in Peru—there was another round of military takeovers. The *golpe militar* occurred in Brazil in March and April 1964, led by General Castello Branco and continued by Artur da Costa e Silva in 1967. In Argentina the Illía government fell to the military takeover of Onganía in 1966, and Belaunde was sent into exile by the Peruvian military in 1968. In Brazil the government followed a “hard” line defending the order of the bourgeois state and of “Western Christian Civilization” by the ruthless suppression of “subversion.” “Western Christian Civil-

zation” was a formula that approximately expressed the ideal of Byzantine Christianity in which the Caesar was over the Church, and to the Church in turn there was attributed a cultural function. Christians, as we will see, adopted different attitudes in regard to these events that demonstrate the diverse types of temporal, political, and cultural commitments.

Between Cuba with its socialist state (1959) and Brazil with its military dictatorship (1964)—highly organized and controlled from the Pentagon in coordination with the Latin American military—are situated the other Latin American governments. On the one hand is the old and now institutionalized oligarchy as seen in the party of the Mexican revolution (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has been in perpetual crisis since the government of López Mateos in 1964. On the other hand is the more recent example of the Christian Democratic party of Eduardo Frei in Chile with its “revolution with freedom” (1964-1970), and the even more radical “Popular Front” of Salvador Allende (1970-1973).

It is obvious that by means of these political epiphenomena a slow *popular revolution* is developing. At times there is advance and at other times regression, but the direction is irreversible—as can be seen in the example of the Peruvian military revolution that began in 1968—for all governments now set forth as the basis of their political task the will and well-being of the people. Agrarian reform, whether in Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, or Cuba, signals the progressive loss of power by the traditional landholding classes. The growing number and power of the trade unionists also indicate that the incipient industrial bourgeois faces a growing force that will not be dominated indefinitely.

The success of the *popular revolution* in Latin America of course depends on the degree to which Latin American politics and economics can be freed from the domination of the United States. In this regard, with the exception of Cuba, Latin American countries remain very much within the economic orbit of the North Americans. An indication of this fact can be seen in the slow growth of steel production in Latin America.

Production of Steel Ingots in Latin American Countries
(in Thousands of Tons)³

	1958	1960	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Brazil	1,362	1,843	2,396	2,604	2,983	2,923	3,713	3,667
Mexico	1,038	1,503	1,851	1,947	2,279	2,455	2,763	3,023
Argentina	244	277	658	913	1,265	1,368	1,267	1,326
Venezuela	40	37	225	364	441	625	537	703
Chile	348	422	495	409	544	477	577	638
Colombia	149	172	157	222	230	242	216	256

Industrial progress, no matter now impressive, will never allow Latin American countries to overtake the development of the United States or Western Europe, especially if one keeps in mind that fact that since 1965 “the United States has been unwilling to finance social revolution for Latin America as was proposed by various professors of economics of CEPAL. The United States has preferred to support the forces of the established order, that of the bourgeois state, which in turn has resulted in a growing disequilibrium which is continually becoming more violent.”⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that since 1960 the amount of violence has dramatically increased,

on the one hand by the military governments supported by the Pentagon and the national police (with their methods of torture often taught by the United States experts in counterinsurgency), and on the other hand by the rural and urban guerrillas. With the death of John Kennedy and the failure of the heralded Alliance for Progress program, the United States began to support all the forces in Latin America that called themselves “anti-Communists,” a euphemism for counterrevolution, that is, those governments that directed their efforts against the popular revolution through neo-colonial militarism. This confrontation between the military and the popular revolution can, however, modify the whole situation. It has been more than eighty years since the troops of the *caudillos* were educated and trained by the French and German military. These troops were professionalized, but not fighting any wars, they lost their historical reason for being. The combination of professionalism and frustration has obliged them to look for new fields of action. With the decrease in the political power of the oligarchy, the military has moved in to fill the political vacuum. These new political leaders are concerned, however, not with the external defense of their countries but with maintaining the internal order and the security of the bourgeois and “democratic” State.⁵ The Rockefeller Report of “The Security of the Western Hemisphere” declared, “Unfortunately, freedom and respect are denied too many people in the hemisphere,” a reference to certain military governments.

The forces of anarchy and subversion are rampant in the Americas. ...Our dilemma is how to respond to the legitimate desires for modern equipment without encouraging the diversion of scarce resources for the development of weapons which, in some cases, can be totally unrelated to real needs for security. ...The military leaders of the Latin American hemisphere are frequently criticized in the United States. ...There is a tendency in the United States to identify the police of the other American republics with acts of political repression more than with security.⁶

The solution was simply to arm the military, and the enemy of the military became the popular revolution. It is unfortunate that those who possess the weapons, namely, the military, do not understand that the real problem in Latin America —the problem that should be dealt with violently —is not subversion, but rather, it is the domination and economic, political, and cultural imperialism, and the suppression of all human potential of the Latin American that impede development.

It is possible that the time will come when the military will be the means of liberation. Perhaps the Peruvian case is the first hesitant, indecisive step in that direction. One should not think *a priori* that the army is unable to transform itself from a repressive to a constructive force or from a dominating to a liberating power . It does of course appear to, be very difficult for this transformation to take place.

Few documents are as farsighted as the study prepared by Monseñor Cândido Padim, Bishop of Lorena, Brazil, which he presented to the ninth General Conference of Brazilian Bishops in July 1968, and in which he said that the “political crisis that Brazil endured during the decade from 1950 to 1960 terminated with the military overthrow of 1964.” The ideological justification for the military takeover, according to Padim, was that “there are two blocks of nations in the world irreducibly opposed: the democratic and Christian West and the Communist and materialistic East. Between them there is a permanent and omnipresent antagonism, a total war.”⁷ The most serious defect of this twofold oversimplification is, he said, that Christianity is confused with Christendom and with Western Culture. Christendom could disappear while at the same time Christianity could flourish. But in the second place, Padim declared, this kind of reasoning makes a messiah of the military and permits the continuation

of Christendom, which by being confused with Christianity pretends to defend by arms the Kingdom of God, which is eschatological. Thus under the banner of the most sublime values the will to power and power itself are orchestrated for the disguised end of economic domination by the national and international oligarchies. Christianity is confused with Western Christendom, and the bourgeois world is identified with law and order. As a consequence, all forms of subversion are suppressed, and the revolution and struggle for liberation by the oppressed people are immobilized. The people continue to be exploited as much as was the Indian in the colonial *encomienda*, the *mitra*, or in the “personal service” required by the *encomendero*. The rural *peón* and urban worker continue to be as oppressed as they were in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonies. In defense of security and order the violence and repression of the unjust system are obscured. Yahweh said to Moses, “I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians” (Exod. 3:7-8). And Bishop Juan del Valle of Popayán, in a letter of August 1, 1551, wrote of the sufferings of the Indians in colonial Colombia, “It would seem that this land is more like that of Babylon than of Carlos I. ...What is certain is that the Indians are more exhausted than were the Israelites in Egypt.”⁸ Time passes but injustice continues.

II. THE CRISIS OF INTEGRATION AND THE DISCOVERY OF LATIN AMERICA

The process of national independence began in various countries in Latin America when Ferdinand VII fell to the army of Napoleon in 1808. This resulted in a division of the small American communities that were eventually parceled out amicably among the neocolonial powers. Only Brazil, because of the prudence of the King of Portugal, managed to maintain its unity while the artificial and lamentable division of the vice-royalties of Mexico, Peru, and the River Plate was being effected. But this movement of division or dispersion is today changing to a convergence, a coming together, despite the fact that in the past the neocolonial powers—today the United States—prevented Latin American integration as a means of perpetuating their indisputable domination. If from a political and economic point of view the reunification of Latin America is essential, this integration parallels the discovery of Latin America as an autonomous horizon of creative cultural life. It is now common knowledge that the Vikings were the first to arrive in America. In the year 985 or 986 Bjarni Herjolfsson apparently saw the coast of North America when his ship was driven off course while attempting to sail from Iceland to Greenland. Leif Ericson came in 1002 or 1003, followed by this brother Thorvald. Leif named one section of the coast *Helluland* or Land of Desolation. To discover a continent, however, is not merely to see it or walk on it. It is rather to incorporate it and introduce it into the world as a whole. The geographical discovery of America was the achievement of Columbus and Castille. But it has only been in the twentieth century, in the present stage of our history, that the cultural discovery of Latin America has taken place.⁹

1. The Movement toward Integration

One should not confuse contemporary Latin American integration with the disintegration that is taking place in the Americanism of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Monroe Doctrine insisted on “America for the Americans,” a position that has been variously modified from the time of Thomas Mann to the Rockefeller

Report that opposed all forms of Latin Americanism. I am not referring to the Pan American meetings in Washington in 1889, nor to the others in 1890, 1901-1902, 1906, 1910, 1923, 1928, etc., until their culmination in the foundation of the Organization of the American States in Bogotá in 1948. Nor am I depreciating the Pan American conferences that preceded Bogotá, namely, those of Montevideo in 1933, Buenos Aires in 1936, Havana in 1940, Mexico in 1945, and Río de Janeiro in 1947. Curiously this integration of the Americas was taking place at the same time that the Latin American struggle for economic, political, and cultural liberation was being attempted. The neocolonial powers —England in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth —have, however, opposed all Latin American reunification. The net result, therefore, has been that the wars for independence divided the continent into small countries that are dominated and oppressed by the neocolonial pact and without any fixed destiny in universal history.¹⁰

The first notable example of the Latin American of the future was Simón Bolívar, who attempted as early as 1821 to bring together the new governments in a conference wherein a kind of unity would be discussed. The Confederation that Bolívar proposed did not include Spain or the United States. Immediately, England reacted negatively to the projected meeting that was to take place in Panama. The ambassador of Gran Colombia, Joaquín Mosquera, journeyed south through Chile, arriving in Buenos Aires in 1823 with the mission of promoting the Panama conference. The British Foreign Secretary, George Canning, pulled all possible strings in order to assure the presence of England in the meeting so they could wreck it. Lucas Alamán in Mexico openly supported a Confederation as early as 1823. But when the conference was finally held in 1826, there were two delegates present from Colombia, two from Central America, two from Peru, and two from Mexico, as well as representatives from Great Britain and the Netherlands. The British and Dutch representatives, however, did not take part in the deliberations, and the United States representatives did not reach Panama until after the Congress had adjourned. The sessions concluded on July 15 with little of practical or lasting significance coming from them. The dissolution of the new Latin American states was inevitable, and the centers of power of the neocolonial pact proceeded to oppose in every way any real Latin American unity. All attempts to achieve unity, even the most modest, were opposed by the United States. On December 17, 1830, when Bolívar died in a borrowed bed, financially destitute, Gran Colombia had already divided into five nation-states. Subsequently, Panama was detached by the machinations of representatives from the United States who wanted to continue the construction of the canal begun earlier by the French.

The Confederation composed of Peru and Bolivia divided into two separate nations. The River Plate area separated into four sections: Paraguay, Uruguay, Buenos Aires, and the United Provinces. In 1823 the United Provinces of Central America, with their capital in Guatemala, separated from Mexico and Spain. The Honduran, Francisco Morazán, became president of these United Provinces of Central America in 1829, but by 1838 the federation was disintegrating and subsequently became five separate nations. There was a renewed effort in 1849 to reunite these Central American republics, but it failed. Perhaps the strangest attempt to promote a kind of unity can be seen in the filibustering invasion of Nicaragua in 1855 by the American soldier of fortune, William Walker. But his “glorious” escapade concluded in 1860 with his being executed by a firing squad. Guatemala’s most impressive political leader of the nineteenth century was General Justo Rufino Barrios who declared, “We shall never be a great country until we are a united country,” and he sought to impose federation

upon the four neighboring republics. Barrios and his army got as far as El Salvador, but unfortunately the General himself was one of the first to fall in battle. The United States, meanwhile, in its session of March 19, 1885, declared that “every attempt at Union by force with the other republics of Central America will be considered as unfriendly and hostile intervention in their rights, in view of the pending treaty regarding the interoceanic canal.”¹¹

With the termination of the Second World War in 1945, European nations began to talk of unity, and as a result of this influence different currents of opinion began to surface in Latin America in regard to more cooperation. Leaving aside the influence of the Church in this Latin American convergence—especially that of CELAM, which has been the only effective entity operating as a united force in Latin America, promoting integration in the programs of the political parties and diverse lay movements in general—it has been the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL), presided over by the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, Keynesian in tendency but not uncritically so, that has led numerous studies that demonstrated the advisability of economic integration. In the CEPAL meeting in Mexico in 1951 the five Central American governments—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—agreed to form the Central American Economic Council and the Organization of Central American States (ODECA). The General Treaty of Economic Integration was signed in Managua in 1960, which allowed for the creation of the Central American Common Market. This effort toward integrating the small Central American nations in a plan of economic cooperation “and with a coefficient of relatively high importation (approximately seventeen percent in 1960) created conditions conducive to industrialization.”¹² Unfortunately, however, this Central American experiment in unity was vulnerable to domination by the United States.

Representatives from other Latin American nations—Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Mexico—met in Uruguay in February 1960 and signed the Treaty of Montevideo, creating a Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA). It aimed at the development of a Latin American Common Market, and the original signers were later augmented to include Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Though there has been an active program of trade liberalization and tariff reductions, the treaty did not envision a completely free trade area such as that of the European Economic Community. In reality little has been achieved, and full economic, political, and cultural integration will apparently have to come in stages. Significant in this regard was the first Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, which met in Lima in December 1964, as well as the meeting of the presidents of all the American republics in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in April 1967, when, after three days of discussions, there was proposed the inauguration of a Latin American Common Market by 1970. The failure of the Alliance for Progress, however, together with the triumph of the “hard line” military governments and the increase in violence at various levels, have severely damaged the progress toward integration. “National security” has been deemed more important by the United States and the Latin American governments than the need for economic integration. Meanwhile, these political entities are apparently unaware that the dialectic of domination and oppression makes integration impossible.

Bolívar wrote prophetically in the invitations he sent to the governments regarding the Panama conference of 1826 that if the various governments did not condescend to participate, and if they refused to face the fact of the accelerating tendency toward unity in the world, independence and isolation could work to their own detriment. In

effect, the whole nineteenth century worked against Latin America, given the closed nationalistic egoism of the national governments who were occupied almost exclusively with internal issues. The net result was that the national oligarchies shortsightedly began to establish preferential relations with the neocolonial powers and were uninterested in any popular Latin American revolution. It is only now that some movement in that direction has begun to take place.

2. *Toward Cultural Liberation*

Possibly more important is the cultural awareness that is developing in Latin America, the discovery that our continent can be culturally autonomous and liberated from cultural dependence on the developed countries.

We must understand how to separate ourselves from monotonous routine in order to develop a reflective awareness of the colonial structures of our culture. And when this awareness of our dependence is effected by an entire intellectual generation, we will then see that we can have confidence in this cultural group and anticipate a liberated future. Surely there is a generation on our continent that agonizes to be Latin American.

The first to set forth with clarity the profound reason for this preeminent Ibero-American preoccupation was Alfonso Reyes in a discourse given in 1936 to the seventh meeting of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, a discourse that later he incorporated into his book, *Notas sobre la inteligencia americana (Notes on American Knowledge)*. Speaking of the generation previous to his own, the positivist generation that had been Europeanized, Reyes said,

The previous generation is believed to have arisen within the prison of various concentric fatalities.¹³ ...Having arrived tardy at the banquet of European civilization, America lives trying to leap over stages, hurrying its pace and running in one direction or another without taking time to carry through on all it is attempting. At times the leap is daring and the new form has the appearance of a meal withdrawn from the oven before it is thoroughly cooked. ...Such is the secret of our politics, of our lives, presided over by an office of improvisation.¹⁴

It is tragic that our cultural past has been so dependent and heterogeneous, at times so incoherent and disparate that we are a marginal or secondary phase of European culture. But even more tragic is that we have been unaware of this fact. It is of major importance, therefore, that we recognize that there is a culture in Latin America, and, even though some deny it, that our cultural originality is evidenced in our art and in our whole way of life. It is the responsibility of the intellectuals to uncover the structures of our culture, test its origins, indicate the deviations, and point us in the direction of liberation.

This is our mission: to make Latin Americans aware of the dependency of our culture, and not only aware, but also to be transformed into shapers of an autonomous way of life. And this is even more urgent when we recognize that "mankind as a whole is on the brink of a single world civilization representing at once a gigantic progress for everyone and an overwhelming task of survival and adapting our cultural heritage to this new setting. To some extent and in varying ways, everyone experiences the tension between the necessity for the free access to progress and, on the other hand, the exigency of safeguarding our heritage."¹⁵ As we become more Latin American this problem will be seen to lie at the very heart of our contemporary reflection. Shall we give emphasis to originality and cultural autonomy or to technological development? And how will we survive as a Latin American culture in the universalization taking

place at the level of contemporary technology? This problem is central to the most committed thinkers from Mexico to Argentina.

The Peruvian philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy in his work *Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?* (*Does a Philosophy Exist in Our America?*) poses precisely this question when he declares that

Hispano-Indian America was subjected first to Spanish power only to pass from this state of political servitude to being the economic colonies of the factories and markets of the British Empire, completely under its economic and even political control, an empire which was later inherited along with a network of power more efficient and closed by the United States of America. We have been dependent and are underdeveloped for this reason, and consequently we are countries with a culture of domination.¹⁶

Because of this fact the oligarchical national elites, especially those who are a part of the intelligentsia, are charged with the responsibility of oppressing the masses in the name of the international imperial powers. Culturally a population is oppressed when the people are simply and directly taught the science and the culture of the oppressors without this knowledge passing through the filter of a self-conscious awareness of domination that is being exercised by means of the same imported cultural structures.

The problem of our philosophy is inauthenticity. And inauthenticity is rooted in our historical condition of being dominated and underdeveloped countries. The development of our own philosophy is intimately related to our being able to overcome this domination and underdevelopment. If, therefore, we have an authentic philosophy, it will be the result of a transcendental historical change. And authenticity will be a part of the effort to overcome our historical backwardness by recognizing it and making an effort to remedy it.¹⁷

Furthermore, “the nations of the Third World such as the Spanish American countries will have to forge their own philosophy in contrast to the concepts assumed and defended by the current centers of power by making themselves felt in the history of our time thus assuring their independence and their survival.”¹⁸

This awareness of our cultural dependence and of our determination to reflect on it will lead to the discovery of a new, independent, liberated person and will signify a new beginning: the declaration of the cultural independence of Latin America in a revolution that will take time, but one that has already begun.¹⁹