THE ETHICS OF VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

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Latin America is a large region generally considered to be a part of the so-called "Third World," or "developing world." For the past five centuries, external European colonialism, internal colonialism (of majority by wealthy oligarchies), and other internal economic and political instabilities have combined to sink Latin America into a mire of wide-spread poverty, illiteracy, political repression, and human rights abuses. In some countries of this region, the percentage of people living below the poverty level is 70% or greater, as in the case of Brazil. Most of the countries have long been dominated by a small, extremely wealthy and powerful elite, while the bulk of the population--mostly descendants of the pre-columbian Native Americans--lives in the abject conditions of economic and political powerlessness. While this data does not mean that Latin America will soon starve to death, it does mean that there has been a grave problem with the distribution of resources and power for many centuries, a problem which has caused much of the unrest expressed in such forms as civil war.

From this context have come many attempts to respond to and change the present situation in Latin America. One of these responses is to advocate a **just revolution** to overthrow the powers of injustice and herald the fulfillment of Christ's proclamation of liberation of the poor:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
> because he has anointed me
> to preach good news to the poor.

> He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
> and recovery of sight for the blind,
> to release the oppressed,
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
> (Luke 4:18-19)

Another response is to advocate this same liberation of the poor through an ethic of **nonviolence**, claiming as a foundation the nonviolent teachings of Christ. Both of these responses have been embraced in a theology called **liberation theology**, which emphasizes that Jesus did not preach only the salvation of the soul but also the salvation of entire person, here and now, not just in the "by and by." The focus of this thesis will be the advocacy of violence under certain circumstances by liberation theologians, its implications for the gospel of Christ, and ways in which we might react to the dilemma of Latin America.

However, it is dangerous for me, a privileged white person living in the privileged country of the United States of America, to propose that one approach is more "justified" than another. We in this country are very much removed from the experiences and situations that have given birth to liberation theology. Yet it is a tremendously important question for people like us to agonize through--and it is agonizing, the more one finds out about the issues.

Why is it so important for those outside the developing world to struggle with liberation theology? First, it represents a conflict between the richer and the poorer nations of the world which will affect everyone directly or indirectly if it goes on much longer or explodes in wide-spread war. The present world situation requires all the nations on the globe to take an

expressed interest in each other and their welfare because of the obvious state of **interdependence** in which we all live. Our highly developed technology and communications systems have facilitated the possibilities of worldwide awareness and community; in the case of nuclear weapons, they have demanded it. Everyone on the earth is mutually threatened by such catastrophes as nuclear warfare and environmental destruction and its consequences, so the actions of one nation or even one person could have tremendous repercussions around the entire globe. The turmoil in Latin America, then, is not to be considered an "isolated" event, but rather a grave threat to everyone. We may not feel that we are being affected much right now, but the interdependent state of the world today will not permit such an illusion for very long.

Second, the United States itself is already involved in the very context from which liberation theology has come. The presence of U.S. multinationals in Latin America, their exploitation of labor and resources there, and U.S. economic and military support of the repressive oligarchies are only a few of the ways in which the U.S. is party to the oppression suffered by so many Latin Americans. Therefore, we have a deep-seated responsibility to familiarize ourselves with the entire situation and **respond** in an informed manner to the actions of our democratically elected government. While it may not be our place to pass sentence on the morality or validity of the violent and nonviolent approaches outlined in this paper, it is terribly important for us to examine the question because we are directly

involved, as citizens of the United States of America as well as members of an interdependent world. We are **responsible** for our world.

This thesis will concentrate on Latin American history and liberation theology in general in part I, the nonviolent ethics of Dom Hélder Câmara in part II, Camilo Torres' option for just revolution in part III, violence and nonviolence in the Scriptures in part IV, the situation in Guatemala as a case study in part V, and the response we need to make as United States citizens in part VI. I do not expect to come up with "the solution" to the situations which are addressed by liberation theology; surely if "the solution" existed, it would have been discovered long ago and hopefully implemented. Rather, I hope to arrive at a more complete understanding of the contexts from which this theology has risen, to evaluate its claims of being biblically based, to speculate on the viability of its turning to violence as a justified possibility for the oppressed nations of the world, to examine the viability of the alternatives of nonviolence, and finally, to propose an option for response.

PART I : LATIN AMERICA AND LIBERATION

The context. The cry of LIBERATION is going up all over Latin America, where the majority of the people are suffering from a long, violent history of oppression and exploitation. The violence present in Latin America is more than just the physical violence used by the rightist death squads to torture and kill those suspected of complying with the leftist guerrillas. It is more than the maiming and killing going on as a consequence of the many civil wars that tear apart this region. The violence of Latin America is also present in the very structures of society and in the international relations the various Latin countries have with the rich countries of the "North."

This kind of language is used to describe the phenomenon referred to as the North-South conflict, a conflict ensuing between the poorer countries mostly in the Southern hemisphere and the richer countries of mostly in the Northern hemisphere. The North-South conflict is illustrated in the following figures: approximately 15,000 people starve to death every day; two thirds of the world goes to bed hungry, and many do not even have beds; and, most telling, 20% of the world population controls **80%** of the world's resources (McAfee Brown, pp. 30-31). So as conditions continue to worsen in the South, including Latin America, there is an augmented dimension of violence--internal and external.

These types of violence have a centuries-long history in Latin America, beginning with the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the last few years of the fifteenth century. When

the Spanish arrived in "New Spain," as they called it, they brought with them a feudal economic system. The Spanish "pacified" the native population of "Indians," either by killing them in warfare or enslaving them, and then forced them to work on huge plantations called encomiendas or fincas. Spanish nobles or gentlemen were given rights to the properties they found in the New World, under the assumption that they were acting rightly in the name of Carlos I of Spain, as well as their Santa Religion (Holy Religion), and that the new lands belonged to the Spanish Crown by virtue of his power as king and the proper extension of Christendom.

The Indians, being thus dispossessed of their lands and displaced to work on the fincas, were forced to become Christian and be baptized. There are accounts of Indians being rounded up like animals in a corral and being kept there until they accepted Christianity and agreed to give up their native religion and be baptized. Indians of differing language groups were also intentionally put together so as to rid them of their native cultures and "civilize" and "pacify" them. Due to the warring, the harsh working conditions, the displacements, and the diseases brought from Europe by the Spanish (to which the Indians had no immunity), the Indian population was reduced by more than **six million** in the region of Mexico alone (GG02 Handbook of World Regional Geography, compiled by Bob Douglas).

Most Latin American countries, except the Caribbean nations, gained independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, starting in the 1820's. But the former political colonialism by

Spain was converted into two different but related types of colonialism--internal colonialism and external neocolonialism (McAfee Brown, p, 48).

Internal colonialism is expressed in the fact that all political and economic power is in the hands of a very few, and that power is used not to the benefit of the huge majorities (the Indians and many mixed-heritage people) but rather to the advantage of the ruling elites themselves (Ibid, p. 48). In the twentieth century especially, military power has also been instrumental in maintaining the power of the status quo. In many cases, the military has actually been the government; for example, Guatemala has been a military dictatorship, though at times by a different name, since 1954.

Therefore, in many countries of Latin America, as much as 80% of the arable land has historically been owned by as low as 1 or 2% of the population. Two thirds or more of the masses are physically undernourished, and attempts to cope with hunger include mud-eating, alcohol, and coca-chewing. Around one half suffers from infectious or deficiency diseases. Up to 75% are illiterate, and as many as half are unemployed or underemployed. The overwhelming majority is landless. And in some countries a child under age five has a 50% chance of living to see its fifth birthday (Miguez Bonino, pp. 22-23).

The so-called "democratic" structures cater to the "haves" and work against the "have-nots." Social mobility is possible only for those with the right connections or skin color, which excludes the grand majority of the people. Police and the army,

instead of protecting citizens, become the ultimate force of repression. Politicians act in accordance with those who pay them well enough (McAfee Brown, p. 30). Dictatorships have been such an integrative part of Latin American society largely because of the need to keep the great masses of people under control and subjected to minority rule, making opposition minimal for maintaining the status quo power structure.

The other type of new colonialism--external neocolonialism--is also fundamental to the problems of Latin America. The fincas initiated a form of agriculture called monocultural production, or one-crop agriculture, which was instituted to benefit foreign consumption and markets (first Spain and later other countries). These fincas, then, produced a single primary crop, such as cotton, bananas, coffee, sugar, cacao, or indigo (blue dye), none of which can supply a native population with the necessary food requirements to survive. All of these crops are very labor-intensive because they require many people and many man-hours for harvesting, but costs were kept way down by using slave labor (even after slavery had been abolished by Spain, conditions for the finca workers has remained essentially the same). The majorities were forced to practice inadequate subsistence agriculture on their own.

Thus the various countries became "available as suppliers of raw materials first and of cheap labor and manageable markets later on.... Indians and peasants were simply incorporated as cheap labor for production.... A free press, free trade, education, politics--all the 'achievements' of liberalism--were

the privilege of the elite" (Miguez Bonino, pp. 14-15). The result was indirect economic control by wealthy nations such as the United States, as foreign capital poured into Latin America to take advantage of the ripe, cheap market. Most extractive industries came under foreign control or ownership, and the institutions of production and distribution became largely controlled by absentee foreign capital (Ibid, p. 23). Loans, goods, and technical assistance was either made available or denied on the basis of whether or not it was advantageous to the foreign nation, and when loans were given, profits from the immense interest rates simply went right back to the wealthy nation (McAfee Brown, p. 48).

That nation would then back military and political leaders to keep dictatorships in control, using political and military interventions as well as economic techniques. The United States, for example, would claim that it was "fighting Communism" in Latin America, when a close look at its relations with the region reveals that in most cases it was a question of securing U.S. investment and business interests, which were also in the interest of the ruling elites because they could retain power by working with the rich United States. From approximately 1960 to 1970, the U.S. invested $3 billion in Latin America, which would appear to be a beneficial boost to the region's economies. However, during that same period, the U.S. reaped **$11 billion** in profits from its Latin American investments (Moosbrugger, p. 16). This trend appears not to have changed since then. The only Latin Americans who have significantly benefited from foreign

investment and control are the ruling elites (most often less than 5% of the population), who have become exorbitantly rich and powerful. The underdevelopment of the South and the development of the North have been two sides of the same coin; the North became developed by exploiting the South, and the South became underdeveloped by being exploited by the North.

The United States has an especially long history of intervening in Latin America, including well over 50 direct interventions by the transferring of troops or war materiel. United States policy has been greatly influenced by a desire to maintain "stability" in Latin America. "Stability" over the years has meant a strong status quo which is friendly to U.S. interests, and more recently the idea of fervent anti-Communism has been added (particularly after the Cuban Communist revolution of 1959). The anti-Communism was inspired by the Cold War attitudes following World War II, but it was also a direct result of Communism's being, by its very nature, a threat to U.S. capitalist economic interests. So the U.S. has acted directly and indirectly in the region to put down any rebellion against the status quo (for more on this topic, see the section entitled "Guatemala--a case study" in Part V).

United States intervention in and control of Latin America ranges widely, including affecting electoral campaigns and elections; conditioning of governmental policies by various economic and political means; involvement in military coups; limits on forms of ownership and relations with U.S. banks and corporations; and affecting certain political and social forces' oppor-

tunities to participate in the government. The U.S. has also interfered by opposing tariff barriers, producer-country agreements to defend prices of raw materials, agreements among debtor nations intended to get more favorable terms of financing, relations with socialist countries, participation in nonaligned country movement, and procurement of military supplies from non-U.S. sources. All of these methods have been used by the U.S. to exert control over Latin America and protect its interests there (U.S. Foreign Policy in Latin America, pp. 36-37).

Therefore, the situation in Latin America has been, for the most part, a case of institutional or structural violence. It is also known as the "violence of the status quo" or "established disorder" because it is an entire system that is wreaking violence on a whole population, as opposed to personal violence that occurs between two people or various groups of people. Structural violence lacks any one human perpetrator in particular; this is the "catch 22." It is a vicious cycle of lack of opportunity for the majority--poor health conditions, lack of sufficient employment, poor areas to live, poor education, poor legal protection. United States industries have perpetuated this vicious cycle in Latin America by paying poor wages to the latino workers, making immense profits, and then directing the money back to wealthy U.S. investors instead of using it to build economies that would ensure greater social justice for the latino people (McAfee Brown, pp. 36 and 38). Hunger, helplessness, underdevelopment, poverty, persecution, oppression, organized prostitution for subsistence, illiteracy, and social, economic,

and intellectual discrimination: these are not inevitable consequences of unsolvable problems, "but the unjust result of a situation that is maintained deliberately...a system based on the profit motive as the sole standard for measuring economic progress" (Ibid, pp. 44-45). "For decades we have been assured that 'changed persons will bring about a changed society'.... The institutional violence inherent in racism, poverty, and war does not come seriously under the purview of what is understood by 'changed' " (Edwards, p. 104). And how are the poor majorities to gain the power necessary to rise from poverty and oppression? Will the rich be likely to one day wake up and decide to share equally? "It is also something of an innovation in our time that the writings of religious men seek to show the necessity of violence where other means fail" (Ibid, p. 8).

The Church. The position of the Church in Latin America has historically been one of support for the status quo. The Church has thus been converted into an instrument of oppression as well.

The Church, a very powerful and wealthy institution in Spain, retained its power and wealth in the New World. It was supported economically and politically by those in the ruling circles, in whose interest it was to keep the majorities quiet and obedient so that they would not be able to rise up to take power. So the Church, already rooted deeply in tradition and founded on obedience to the Divine Will, preached acquiescence to the status quo as a divinely ordained order--the "will of God." People were taught to accept their lot in life and look to a

better existence only in the afterlife, a kind of "pie in the sky" theology. The poor were told that they were poor for a reason--although it be unknown to humans--and that they were to accept their lot obediently or be punished by God.

More recently, however, the Catholic Church has been altering its position. Bishops and popes in the past thirty years have begun to believe and teach that social injustice on a massive scale is a major cause of the present violence in Latin America, as well as being an evil in itself (Langan, p. 689). In fact, the encyclical Populorum Progressio of Pope Paul VI states that "revolutionary insurrection can be legitimate in the case of evident and prolonged tyranny that seriously works against the fundamental rights of man, and which damages the common good of the country" (Ibid, p. 695). The Medellin Conference of bishops in 1968 and the Puebla Conference in 1979 are an expression of heightened Catholic awareness of the plight of the majorities, the people, and of structural violence itself. These conferences resulted in mandates for working toward a more just ordering of society, a vital concern to the Kingdom of God, and a personal moral conversion accompanied by efforts to reform unjust **structures** in their entirety. Direct and indirect imperialism were denounced, and economic, political, and social justice were upheld as prerequisites to peace. Institutional violence was recognized to produce two other forms of violence--revolutionary and repressive violence--and the common goal of the Church was taken to be the termination of this cycle of violence, preferrably through nonviolent means (Ibid, p. 696). Violence, it was

decided, was most often wrong, but just war (or revolution) could not be forbidden in principle (Ibid, p. 699).

Liberation theology. The newer position of the Catholic Church is moving closer to what has come to be known as liberation theology. This is a theology "from the underside of history," born within the oppressed populations of the world--in the case of Latin America, the poor majorities (Gutierrez, p. vi). Liberation theology is the "second act," a result of the "first act" of commitment to the struggle of the poor to gain justice; in other words, "as people live out and reflect on that commitment, a theology emerges" (Ibid, p. vii). Praxis is an extremely important part of this theology: it is an ongoing process of reflection and action. It is not a mere intellectual abstraction or a configuration of theological talk but a very integral part of life for the communities from which it has arisen.

The fundamental questions addressed by this theology of liberation may be summed up thus: "How can we believe in God in a world that denies our personhood?"; "How can liberation come to us?"; "How can we become real people?" In order to answer these questions, one must look at the political, economic, and social structures of society as the context in which the theology can be raised and done (Ibid, p. viii). Oppressed people can have hope amidst the wreckage of their lives for the crucial reason that God always has been, is, and will be the great LIBERATOR of the downtrodden--and God has given the good news to the poor in the person of Jesus Christ (Ibid, p. xi).

Theology, praxis, and ethics are linked by the fact that "to know God is to do JUSTICE," while failure to do justice is to deny God (Ibid, p. xiii). In accordance with Matthew 25:31-46, the encounter with Christ is said to take place in the encounter with the poor person ("whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me").

This reading of the Bible is an example of the "militant reading" urged by liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez. He stresses a reading from the perspective of those living in the "underside of history"--the perspective of the outcast, poor, and oppressed. This is the perspective of liberation (Ibid, p. xvi).

But just what kind of liberation are we talking about here? Is it spiritual liberation from sin, as preached in the Christian gospel? Yes...this and much more. The liberation theologians maintain that the liberation spoken of in the Bible--in both Testaments--also refers to concrete political, economic, and social liberation. "The kingdom which Jesus proclaimed is not simply bliss for the spirit of man, but concretely peace, freedom, bread, and justice for the poor of this world (Brown, pp. 111-112).

In this way, the entire Bible is a story of liberation; but for our purposes here, a few individual texts can be examined in light of the liberation theme. The Exodus is probably the single most important liberation of the Old Testament, and it is referred to in countless places throughout the Bible. This story shows how God is the Liberator of the poor, oppressed, lowly people of Israel from exploitation and inhumanity (Gutierrez, p.

6). Moreover, Israel's exodus is seen to be only one among many. God, Lord of all the people of the earth, has liberated many other peoples as well: " 'Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?' declares the LORD. 'Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?' " (Amos 9:7).

Justice is the meaning of God's works of liberation, and those who follow the way of God must therefore practice justice as well: "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing" (Psalm 68:5-6). And

> " 'Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor....Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?' declares the LORD. 'But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.' " (Jeremiah 22:13,15-17)

To practice justice toward the poor through concrete actions is to know God and to follow God. In Amos 2:6,7 the prophet speaks of "selling the needy for a pair of shoes," which was at that time perfectly legal; therefore, God's condemning of the action in this passage is equivalent to a divine condemnation of legalized oppression of the poor (Sider, p. 15).

Moreover, Jesus is the continuance and also the fulfillment of God's action of liberation. Jesus, whose name comes from "Yoshua," or Liberator, identified himself with the poor, the weak, the oppressed, and came as a revolutionary--not to uphold

the legal system of the status quo but to free the downtrodden, challenging openly both political authorities and traditional scriptural interpretations (Boesak, pp. 73-74).

> "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1,2).

Christ means that God became poor and lived among us; he was born poor, chose to live with the poor, had a preference toward the poor in addressing the gospel, and was against the oppression of the poor by the rich (Gutierrez, p. 13).

Christ also means freedom: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17).

And finally, as we see in the book of James, "[a]s the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). In addition, if one benefits from oppression and does nothing to change the injustice, one is guilty before God. "Social evil is just as sinful as personal evil" (Sider, p. 15).

> Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying our against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you (James 5:1-5).

Jesus' concern for social welfare is evidenced throughout the gospels but especially in Luke: he blesses the poor and hungry (6:20-21a); he calls for us to practice justice with each other

(18:1-8); he preaches selling our goods and giving to the poor (18:22); and he urges us to include the poor and the outcast in our banquets, celebrations of abundance (14:12-14)--just to name a few examples.

Thus, the proclamation of the gospel is truly liberating when the poor themselves become its messengers; and to us, the rich, it "will not sound nice and it will not smell good," becoming, rather, a "stumbling block" (Gutierrez, p. 22). It will resemble Isaiah's songs of the Suffering Servant:

> "he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him....Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:2b,4-5).

Marxism. One of the tools many liberation theologians have used is Marxist dialectical analysis. According to theologian Miguel Miguez Bonino, the Church exists within the context of present-day history and politics, and therefore it must opt for those modern-day tools available to achieve liberation--i.e., the concrete political praxis of Marxism (Miguez Bonino, p. 95). Since there is no such thing as divine politics and economics, already determined to be crucial in liberation theology, we must apply the best human systems available (Ibid, p. 149). But, given the hostility of Marxism toward relgion, how can Marxism be integrated with the doctrines of the Church? Did Marx not say that religion was the great "opiate of the people"?

Different liberation theologians will give differing

emphases to Marxist methods, but most will agree on the basic validity of its technique of historical analysis. The fundamental tenets of Marxism focus on work; for Marx, work is the basic expression of human nature. Although there have been many notable accomplishments under the capitalist system, the majority of the people have been alienated from their work and therefore their very nature. Those in power, the bourgeoisie, benefit from the workers' production and seek to maintain control of the wealth, power, and means of production. History, then, is a dia-lectic of class struggle between the dominated and the domina- tors. Marxism strives for the reappropriation of the workers' own work and the products of their work--a common ownership of the means of production and a resulting classless society in which all are equal and none dominate the rest. The religion that Marx condemned as an "opiate" was the "pie-in-the-sky" religion that supported the bourgeois power structure and status quo which mandate that the few dominate and oppress the many.

For this reappropriation to occur, however, the class strug-gle must escalate so that the many--the proletariat--rise up and seize power from the dominant few, who will never simply give up or share their power without this type of violent revolution. From revolution follows a dictatorship by the proletariat, and finally a truly classless society--pure Communism.

Marxist methods are normally incorporated into the theology of liberation only insofar as the historical analysis is concerned. Marxism is very malleable. "It is an analysis of the

way in which socio-economic-political reality functioned at a certain point in history....It has been refined, supplemented, or developed....Marxism proposes a form of action as the rationality corresponding to history" instead of being a mere philosophical exercise (Ibid, p. 97). Therefore, Marxism is open to correction as historical conditions change and can help liberation theologians to understand, incorporate, and act upon the particular political, economic, and social context that exists in their modern world. Marxism is not just another useless protector of the status quo; it teaches us to see "the effort of the dominating class to maintain an economic system unable to provide for all people and allow them to realize their creative potentialities"--a "war prompted by greed and power" (Ibid, p. 119). Moreover, Marxism understands the human as worker, a view found in the Bible. Our dignity is tied both to our mission to subdue and cultivate the earth RESPONSIBLY and to our worship of God in the form of fulfillment and obedience to the law. This law contains the whole realm of our economic and political activity (Ibid, p. 109).

Liberation, revolution, and violence. The word "revolution" has come up more than once in this discussion of liberation theology. Are liberation theologians are preaching violent revolution to oust the wealthy, powerful minorities from their position of domination over the poor majorities? Are they legitimizing violence?

The question of violence in this case is extremely difficult

and complex. It is not the difference between taking up arms or abstaining from that violence: violence already exists in the world, in the form of structural or institutionalized violence. The problem is that a very few people in the world have nearly all the power, resources, and wealth available--and they are not simply going to give it up or share it with the rest. The question is this: how can the powerless become empowered? Violence is not the question in and of itself; violence is a problem of means. Which is worse--that millions of people die because of the structures of the status quo, or that large (unknown) numbers of people may die if a violent revolution is waged in the Third World? This is a very difficult question, and many revolutionary groups have already decided the answer and are carrying on guerrilla warfare in order to win liberation.

What is the Christian response to all this violence? According to some, the only possible Christian response is complete and unquestioned nonviolence or nonresistance. To others, "violence is not excluded from the Christian ethic, because if Christianity is concerned with eliminating the serious evils which we suffer and saving us from the continuous violence in which we live without possible solution, the ethic is to be violence once and for all in order to destroy the violence which the economic minorities exercise against the people" (Guzman, p, 77). But it is not even a question of violence versus nonviolence: there are countless positions in between the extremes. As one writer on the subject has said, "[i]n reality nonviolence is something we can preach to others only insofar as we practice it ourselves"

(Brown, p. 130). Is such a position possible? Perhaps...

The next two sections will examine two different ends of the spectrum of views, one the nonviolence preached by Dom Helder Camara, and the other the just revolutionary violence advocated by Camilo Torres.

PART II: VIOLENCE AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Camilo Torres. Camilo Torres, a Catholic priest from Colombia, was a liberationist who took off his cassock in order to join the efforts of the Army of National Liberation, a central Colombian guerrilla group. He was not an "advocate" of violence. But he was an advocate of social justice and liberation from the inhuman suffering that he saw in Latin America; and violence became the only means that he believed to have a chance at accomplishing this goal of justice. "Camilo was committed not to an ideology but to the situation of his people" (p. 54, Torres). In the words of Camilo himself, "I took off my cassock to be more truly a priest"; "[t]he Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin" (p. 29, Ibid).

Camilo was also a sociologist. He had come from an established and rather aristocratic family and was able to attend both seminary and the university. His first analyses of his society were quite reformist in nature, and it was only with time that he took the revolutionary point of view that he held when he was killed in the mountains with several other guerrillas. In his first sociological writings, he speaks of such things as urbanization and urban development. He calls for true land reform instead of the governmental practice called "colonization," which involved the parceling out of lands not already in use, or homesteading on uncultivated lands (p. 94, Ibid). Camilo's land reform was to include the redistribution of lands already in use, with its basis in the **cooperative**--a system or means of educating and training individuals to sacrifice individual interests for

the collective good. It was to exist within a whole network of cooperatives (of production, transportation, consumer activities, and the like) which would be accompanied by the necessary facilities of credit, loans, technical aid, and agricultural training (pp. 94-95, Ibid). He also realized that there would be no development without industrialization, which would build up the national work force by providing jobs to Colombian workers instead of continually relying on North Americans (p. 183, Ibid). The Colombian subsistence economy, consisting of the one-crop agriculture of export, was to be turned into a market economy with the poor majorities incorporated into the life of the country (p. 180, Ibid).

Camilo found the widespread rural violence that plagued his country to have begun not in the ruling class but in the masses of peasants divided into traditional parties by their circumstances. The social insecurity felt by the majority of the population, reflected in the lack of institutions of social security and the joblessness or underemployment of that majority, was one major factor. This, coupled with a social agressiveness awakened by the realization that mobility was impossible, had led the majorities to cling to the security of traditional groups. The result had been the fierce political sectarianism which was fuelled by the ruling classes with a kind of "divide and conquer" technique, instigating the different groups to fight amongst each other instead of against the rule of the oppressive minorities. (pp. 235-239, Ibid).

But Camilo was not content to simply theorize about differ-

ent elements of his society. He was always committed to acting out his faith by working with and amongst the peasants in order to bring about social justice on earth. He was no subscriber to any "pie in the sky and the sweet by and by" theology. Camilo was involved in countless nonviolent activities, such as workers' strikes, picket line marching, resisting of police, and public speaking. He spoke personally with workers, students, peasants, young Catholics, independent conservatives, and unaffiliated liberals. And he edited and wrote most of the material for a weekly newspaper called Frente Unido (United Front). He was arrested, jailed, and beaten several times as well (p. 29, Ibid), but he never abandoned his commitment to the people of Colombia.

"Frente Unido" was also the name of the movement that Camilo came to advocate in order to attain social justice for the Colombian majorities. He described three main motives for this movement: 1) The minority that holds the economic and political power will never be able to make a decision adversely affecting its own interests and power, or those of the foreign interests to which that minority is bound; 2) the political structure must be changed so that majorities, now powerless, can make decisions. However, now [1965] the majorities lack a political apparatus suitable to take over the government; and 3) the political apparatus sought must be oriented toward technology and organized around principles of action instead of a specific leader (to avoid the dangers of cliques, demagoguery, and personality cult) (p. 307, Ibid).

Camilo outlined nine specific objectives for the Frente

Unido as well, as follows:

1. Agrarian reform--there was to be expropriation without compensation and land development by cooperative and community systems, in accordance with a national agrarian plan granting loans and technical assistance; he who farmed the land would simply own it. Indian councils would take possession of lands and Indian communities be developed and strengthened.

2. Urban reform--inhabitants of houses in cities and towns would become the owners of their houses. And for houses "not in sufficient use" [i.e., rarely used houses of the rich] in the judgment of the government, the owner would be fined and the fines invested in housing projects.

3. Planning--planning would aim for the industrialization of the country, substitution of domestic products for imported products, an increase in exports, and a plan of investments to guide all public and private investments.

4. Tax reform--a progressive tax would be issued to those who received an income higher than that required to "live decently" (for example, 5000 pesos per month in 1965). Excess income not invested according to the investment plan would go directly to the state. No institution would be exempt from taxes, but salaries up to a certain limit (5000 pesos per month in 1965) would not be taxed.

5. Nationalization--there would be state ownership of banks, insurance companies, hospitals and clinics, manufacturing centers, pharmaceutical distribution, public transportation, radio and television, and firms exploiting natural resources. The state would provide free education, compulsory until the end of secondary or technical training.

6. International relations--relations would be carried on with all countries in conditions of equity and mutual benefit.

7. Social security and public health--an integral and progressive program of social security would be instituted to guarantee the right to health/medical care (without jeopardizing private practice). Elements related to unemployment, illness, disability, old age, and death would be studied. Those in health professions would be counted among the functionaries of the government.

8. Family policy--there would be guaranteed protection of women and children, by law; and parents who abandoned their children would be accordingly punished.

9. Armed forces--the amred forces would sustain a budget adequate to maintain themselves without using funds needed for health and education. The defense of national sovereignty would be the responsibility of all, and women too would be required to

undertake a term of civil service after reaching age eighteen. Indeed, women in general would be seen in their true equality with men and would take full part in the economic, political, and social activities of the country. (points #1-9 taken from pp. 307-310, Ibid)

Camilo also parceled out particular assignments for putting the Frente Unido in motion:

1. Groups of five to ten among the popular class (the majorities) were to discuss the platform of the Frente Unido, change it, and amplify it to better suit their needs.

2. The platform was to be disseminated through printed, copied, and handwritten material and also by reading it to the illiterate (a sizeable number of people).

3. Distribution and financing of the weekly newspaper (Frente Unido) was to be organized; the cost would be one peso per week. The newspaper would serve to unify the popular commands and create a large network supporting the whole organization of working and farming classes.

4. Command leaders were to be elected among the people and many different commands were to be formed--farm, factory, neighborhood, district, municipal, and departmental. This process would begin preparation for a convention to elect a revolutionary national command.

5. From the national convention, revolutionary assignments would be decided upon to determine the tactics for the takeover of power by the popular class. (This takeover would be either sudden or progressive, depending on the unity and organization of the popular class and the belligerent attitude of the oligarchy.) (points #1-5 taken from pp. 373-75, Ibid)

As Camilo stated, everyone--all the Christians, Marxists, nonaligned, conservatives, liberals, and poor--must unite and "we must convince everyone, through our example of the necessity of unity and of the possibility of attaining our final objective--the seizure of power by the people, whatever the cost" (p. 416, Ibid).

In addition to the Frente Unido platform, Camilo published in his newspaper specific messages to certain groups or about certain topics.

To Christians he wrote that love for neighbor was foremost on the agenda. To be genuine, this love had to seek to be effective, and to be effective in Latin America, the ruling minorities had to sacrifice privileges in order that the majority receive the power it still lacked (p. 367, Ibid). Revolution, he maintained, is a Christian obligation--the way to act now to achieve a government that will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, teach the unschooled, undertake works of charity, and express **love** for one's fellows (and not just for the few). Revolution is necessary to make love of all a reality (p. 368, Ibid). The Church must "become poor," must be placed in the hands of the popular class. Camilo even called for the expropriation of all Church lands and stated that possession of temporal goods by the Church was "against the wisdom of God." And the Church, he reminded, was not bound to any political or economic system; it represented a particular way of life--the way of love (pp. 332-33, Ibid).

Camilo also charged Christians with a Christian "apostolate" which he defined as "an activity whose purpose is to establish and extend the kingdom of God" (p. 261, Ibid). Christians are to labor for all people so that they are not lacking materially or spiritually. Camilo believed that one cannot be a Christian without fully understanding the problem of material poverty, so priority should be given to learning about poverty and to charity here and now (pp. 264 and 265, Ibid). The love of neighbor principle of Christianity means united action in assisting other humans despite a very pluralistic and contradicting world. Mono-

lithic dogmatism and exclusion of pluralism must not be allowed to foil the efforts (pp. 266 and 286, Ibid).

As has been stated, Camilo believed that the oligarchy would be the group to decide whether or not the revolution represented by the Frente Unido would be ushered in with violence, for they were truly the only ones with any power to choose. He also felt that this group lacked foresight; they refused to recognize that the revolution of structural change would come with or without their approval, so it was likely that it would indeed involve violence. And the Church could not turn a deaf ear to the process:

> The economic, military, ecclesiastical, and political powers will wage war with the people in the face of the revolution which is approaching, a revolution which consists of a change of structures. This change implies violence for those who retain power. But violence is not excluded from the Christian ethic, because if Christianity is concerned with eliminating the serious evil which we suffer and with saving us from the contiuous violence in which we live without possible solution, the ethic is to be violence once and for all in order to destroy the violence which the economic minorities exercise against the people (p. 27, Ibid).

Christians, he urged, must seek a program of authoritative economic planning, involving the nationalization of some or all means of production and also collaborating with Marxists for the service of the common good (pp. 288 and 290, Ibid).

But wait; how could Christians be expected to collaborate with Marxists--the prime accusers of religion as being the "opiate of the people"? Camilo argued that Marxist theory can be useful for revolutionary methods. And since Marxism is contextual, it can and must evolve its theory as it becomes evident that religion is not the opiate of the people. Moreover, Marxism

is geared toward the people, structural change, and technical planning, all of which Camilo recognized as necessary in Latin America (pp. 287-289, Ibid). He sought solidarity with all revolutionaries to work for the liberation of his homeland, including Communists, independent revolutionaries, and all those of other convictions (p. 371, Ibid).

Students also had an important function in Camilo's Frente Unido. Amongst a largely illiterate population, students in underdeveloped countries are a privileged group which possesses the instruments of social analysis and comparison necessary for finding possible answers to the existing structural problems. Students, having been crucial in the agitational phases of the revolution, must now follow through with participation and disciplined planning and organization, without falling victim to a loss of rebelliousness or dissipation into the bourgeois professional classes (p. 404, Ibid). By ascending to the level of the people without paternalism, students can learn from the them and better serve their revolutionary needs (p. 405, Ibid).

To the peasants themselves Camilo advised the development of of a strong desire and will to organize themselves and then also follow through with the revolution. He gradually adopted the position that rural violence may have been born in the countryside, but it had been initiated by the oligarchy, which fomented the divisions between peasants until this was no longer in its interest. The oligarchy then began hunting them down and killing them in the name of "peace, justice, and legality" (p. 392, Ibid). Camilo urged the peasants to prepare for the "final

great struggle" in the countryside in consolidation with the revolutionaries (p. 393, Ibid).

He also pointed out that the oligarchy maintains its power largely through the protection of the military; but the military, in Colombia and probably in other Latin American countries, rarely employs members of the oligarchy itself. Why would these farmers, workers, and other lower class citizens persecute and murder their fellows in order to protect the minority and its interests? Because of the lack of economic advantages (military personnel receive poor salaries and no side benefits), Camilo suggested that the situation was due to the sparcity of opportunities for members of the lower class (p. 377, Ibid). Therefore, he declared, "Military men: the United Front promises you to unify the popular class and to organize them to take power. Do not fail to join us on the field of battle where we will strike a fatal blow against the oligarchy that oppresses all Colombians, that oppresses you as it oppresses us" (p. 378, Ibid).

Even this oppressive oligarchy had a role in Camilo's United Front: it had the power to choose by which means the revolution would take place, with violence or without it. The question was not if the revolution would take place--just how. "Gentlemen oligarchs, the people no longer believe anything you say....unfortunately, you isolated, blind, and vain oligarchs appear not to realize that the revolution of Colombia's popular masses will not stop until the people seize power" (p. 424, Ibid). Camilo called for the oligarchs to be "realistic," to realize that the people were willing and ready to do anything to

effect change and were no longer mesmerized by the oligarchy's trickery or fraudulent elections (pp. 424-25, Ibid). "It is the oligarchy which is forcing us. The oligarchy has challenged the people, and we have accepted the challenge" (p. 412, Ibid).

Camilo came to believe that all church lands should be expropriated, the oligarchy/US imperialism complex destroyed, and all middle-class people (including priests) united with the poor to literally join their struggle (pp. 27-28, Ibid). But unfortunately, most of Camilo's fellow workers did not share his outlook on the Frente Unido of the poor. They supported it, but some wanted to exclude the Communists, while others wished to exclude people affiliated with the established parties (p. 29, Ibid). Others wanted to run for elective office, which Camilo opposed for himself as well as for the rest because it entailed compliance with the established system and "would have [made it] impossible for him to have worked out structural changes under such circumstances" (p. 55, Ibid). "The peasant, the worker, and the student loved him. But the United Front apparatus, ridden by sectarianism, constantly destroyed Camilo's message" (pp. 29-30, Ibid).

He soon came to a conclusion: because all legal means had been exhausted, and because those who controlled the legal means were not likely to give up their privileges, there was only one route left open. "The people know that armed struggle is the only remaining course....I have joined the armed struggle" (p. 426, Ibid). Camilo instucted the peasants to gather weapons, acquire guerrilla training, divide the work, be patient with the

movement, collect clothing, medical supplies, and provisions, and to **unite**--to emerge ready for war. He himself took the the mountains, joining the efforts of the Army of National Liberation (ANL), which had virtually the same goals as the Frente Unido (the liberation of the people from the oligarchy and US imperialism, built on unity at the peasant base and without traditional divisions) (p. 426, Ibid). He had been advised that the government knew of previous ties he had with the ANL and that he would be eliminated soon; so rather than be killed in the streets as a useless "sitting duck," Camilo chose to die as a revolutionary (p. 237, Guzman). With a cry of "NOT ONE STEP BACK! LIBERATION OR DEATH!!" he became a guerrilla fighter...and was killed in the mountains, in combat, four months later--a revolutionary.

PART III: NONVIOLENCE AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Hélder Câmara. As we have seen, liberation theology does not present a clear-cut picture of the best way to respond to the situation in Latin America. At the other end of the "spectrum" from Camilo Torres is Dom Hélder Câmara, also a priest and advocate of the theology of liberation, but a firm supporter of **non**violent revolution.

Dom Hélder was heavily influenced by both the Vatican II conferences (1962-1965) and Pope Paul VI's encyclical Populorum Progressio, which was issued in 1966 as a result of these conferences. With Vatican II, the Catholic Church adopted a doctrine of **social justice and action**, replacing the age-old "other-worldly" doctrine that had taught patience, endurance, and fatalistic acceptance amidst social inequity. Dom Hélder frequently quotes Pope Paul's encyclical as an expression of his own beliefs and intentions:

> Universal solidarity is not only a benefit to us when realized; it is our duty to bring it about....The past was often marked by relations of brute force among nations; the day is dawning when international relations will rest on mutual respect and friendship, cooperative interdependence, and a common advancement for which each bears responsibility....The survival of countless innocent children, access to a more human way of life for countless unfortunate families, world peace and the future of civilization are imperiled. (pp. 41-42, Revolution Through Peace)

Thus the Church has decided upon a radical redefinition of its role in the world. It wishes to serve rather than to be served, to play an active part in the development and economic integration of Latin America, "to be a servant and to become poor" (p. 49, Revolution Through Peace).

Dom Hélder is truly convinced of the reality of world interdependence and its role in world peace, and the East-West conflict is for him the prime example of this interdependence. Taking as his foundation the Vatican II concern for social justice, he demonstrates that the conflict between the two major blocs has been thwarting all attempts at social change in Latin America for many years. And the danger continues to escalate.

The landowners or elite, he explains, denounce any efforts to bring about land reform or power for the people, claiming such activities to be "Communist insurrections." They use the anti-Communist attitude to their advantage to control the actions of the majority of the Latin American people, while in reality they could care less about Communism or anti-Communism (p. 68, DeBroucker). The kind of "Communism" being denounced was expressed in a poem by Vinicius de Moraes: "We have no objection to the ownership of private property, provided that everyone can own property" (p. 68, Ibid). This, says Dom Hélder, is not Communism.

He urges us to see socialism (for pure Communism exists nowhere in the world) not as a monolithic machine of materialism, crushing of humans and human rights, hostility to religion, or plans for world dominance; it can mean "a regime that serves the community and humankind as a whole" (p. 45, Revolution Through Peace). The crux of the matter is that the Western bloc and the Eastern bloc see each other as a threat to their respective economic interests: "Let us not allow ourselves to be blinded by political passion. Let us not confuse the clash of economic

interests with holy war or ideological battles" (p. 45, Ibid). In other words, the East-West conflict should not be fought on Third World soil; it only feeds the flames of the North-South conflict.

Another dimension of the conflict, the threat of nuclear war, has contributed to world interdependence as well. According to Dom Hélder, the world has reached an impasse with war: "No one is quite mad enough to set off a thermonuclear war, now that nuclear bombs are no longer a monopoly and all the consequences of radioactivity are known....[and] Local wars are becoming more costly in money and in human lives than world wars" (p 46, Ibid). War has become a great absurdity because of its current power to destroy the entire globe and all humanity (p. 48, Ibid). The East-West conflict (the context of the arms race that has led in part to this stalemate) must be addressed because in this inter-dependent world, it affects more than just the two superpowers and their blocs. Latin America must be made free to say no to capitalism, no to socialism, and **yes** to a "personalist socialism" which fits the region's needs and includes a conscious, deliberate participation by more classes in the control of power, a sharing of wealth and culture, and an application of those Marxist principles which aim for social justice. Marxism and Christianity do not have to contradict one another (pp. 89-90, DeBroucker).

There is also a note of urgency in Dom Helder's appeal for social/economic justice in Latin America:

> This emancipation [from economic slavery] cannot be postponed, for it is no exaggeration to say that world

> peace is at stake. Our youth, our youth above all, have lost patience and are turning to desperate, violent, and radical causes. There is no time to be lost: we must prove to them that the democratic process is valid. We must make a mighty effort to save our countries from shameful and inhuman civil wars and to save humanity from a global conflict whose consequences none can foresee. (pp. 100-101, Revolution Through Peace).

He strongly believes that violence will not be the solution to the problems of Latin America, despite growing efforts by Latin American guerrilleros (guerrilla fighters) to bring about change through violent revolution. The superpowers, caught up in the East-West conflict, always involve themselves in wars of liberation in the Third World and dictate their outcomes (p. 75, DeBroucker). The war in Nicaragua is a good example of this involvement; for years, the U.S. has been supporting the Contras against the elected Sandinista government. Now that the Sandinista opposition has been elected (with millions of dollars of U.S. support), the U.S. will stop sending aid to the Contra "freedom fighters" because the opposition government is more in step with U.S. interests.

In addition to the intervention of the superpowers, violence is becoming less effective because guerrilla training is being outdone by anti-guerrilla tactics--training for cracking the guerrillas' strength, which lies in utilizing the inaccessible areas (p. 75, Ibid).

Although he respects those like Camilo Torres who feel obligated by conscience to opt for violence, Dom Helder believes that true social revolution must not come about through armed coup, guerrilla skirmishes, war, or any violence, for anything built on hate will tumble down. "Opting for nonviolence means to

believe more strongly in the power of truth, justice, and love than in the power of wars, weapons, and hatred....Personally I would prefer a thousand times more to be killed than to kill anyone" (p. 57, Ibid). He holds to a scheme that illustrates how answering violence with more violence simply perpetuates the violence in a continuing "spiral."

There are three parts to his scheme: the first is called Violence #1 and is defined as established, **structural** violence, caused by the egoism of some privileged groups to drive countless humans into sub-humanity like slaves. This kind of violence leads to Violence #2, the **revolt** by the oppressed and/or the youth resolved to fight for a more just and human world. And Violence #2 inevitably brings with it Violence #3, **repression** from the authorities trying to re-establish "public order," "national security," and a "free world" (pp. 34-36, Spiral of Violence). Moreover, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer; with the youth getting more desperate and impatient; with no steps toward structural change or justice or human rights: the world is threatened and is heading for a horrendous **spiral of violence** (p. 40, Ibid).

But how can nonviolence possibly be implemented in Latin America? When "access to the newspapers and magazines, to radio and television, is forbidden, without formal prohibition, but by secret but effective order, in the name of national security..."; "when meetings and gatherings are prohibited in public places... [and] conferences behind closed doors draw suspicion both on the speakers and the participants..."; when informers are encouraged

and "confessions" are wrested from "subversive" elements and when the communications media are obligated to spread lies or distortions of facts; when people send their children to school with hopes of their having a better life, only to withdraw them again in order to put them to work to help fight the family's hunger; can moral pressure, in the manner of Gandhi, really be used under such circumstances? (pp. 47-48, Ibid)

Dom Hélder's answer runs somewhat like this: it will do no good to replace old governments and men if the old mentality prevails. There must first be a breakdown of the old structures in people's minds if the structures of internal colonialism are to be overcome, and that process will have to be nonviolent. Dom Hélder calls the process **conscientization.**

Conscientization is the task of preparing the people for development--raising the social consciousness of both the poor majority and the elite (the managerial, governing, entrepreneurial classes), while making careful consideration of the culture and community development of the people (pp. 37, 94, and 142, Revolution Through Peace). It is also the raising of consciousness in countries which, like the U.S., are so influential in Latin America. Conscientization is not a passive movement but rather a complex of actions that require a great deal of strength, sacrifice, and self-control (p. 58, DeBroucker). Its aim is the creative participation of all the people in the making and control of their own history. And because of the interdependence of the modern world, it is also a global activity that crosses barriers of any kind in order to achieve worldwide

justice and peace. And global justice, says Dom Hélder, is the precondition to peace (p. 56, Spiral of Violence).

The process of conscientization is to be accomplished by a movement Dom Hélder calls the Action for Justice and Peace. It is to be composed of individuals all around the globe who understand the urgency of social justice and who are "hoping against all hope" (p. 69, Ibid). Dom Hélder calls these individuals members of the "Abrahamic minorities" (after Abraham, who also hoped against all hope) and describes their tasks in the following manner:

1. Individuals are to engage in discussions and go to hear speeches in order to identify other members of the Abrahamic minorities, those who are already in the process of having their consciousness raised (by reading, through the media, or however).

2. There is to be a network of communication between the Abrahamic minorities to pool resources, ideas, information, and activities.

3. The most important element for these groups will be "documentation," a process of gathering information, learning, and becoming very well-informed about the conditions in Third World countries and North-South relations in general.

4. Target contacts for these groups will be the leaders of the privileged classes and of various religions throughout the world; the hardest truths must be presented to them in the most authoritative, clear, and authentic way.

5. The Abrahamic minorities must also establish serious dialogues with members of the military, politicians, students and employees of universities, and international organizations (for example, UNESCO, the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, and the World Council of Churches). Other members of the Abrahamic minorities may be found there, and the universities in particular must be encouraged to discover new models of development which are dependent on neither the capitalist nor the socialist empires. Universities must also examine the reports by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as a source of information and critique.

6. Abrahamic minorities working in the media--press, radio, and television--must also be sought out as crucially influential and informative resources.

7. The youth, always very important in Dom Helder's scheme, are urged to DISCUSS, MAKE DECISIONS, AND ACT on this plan, to at least give nonviolence a chance. Dom Helder reminds us that the countries in which freedom exists to a greater degree--the U.S., for instance--have a greater responsibility for action because of the very fact that they possess more freedom and potential to ACT and influence.

8. The last (and perhaps most important) element of the Action for Justice and Peace is the effort that must be made in powerful, influential countries like the U.S. to change the structures of thinking about the world and dealing with other countries. The conscientization process must provoke a realization of the reality of global interdependence and a move toward more just international relations. It must be realized that world peace is at stake and that the role of such countries as the U.S. is crucial (points #1-8 are from pp. 63-77, Ibid).

Two of the results of Dom Hélder's Action for Justice and Peace are the "Providence Bank" and "Operation Hope." The Providence Bank receives money from voluntary donations and gifts. Its services include teaching the unemployed simple manual skills (for example, house-keeping for the rich) and providing free medical examinations and medicine to the poor (p. 62, Moosbrugger). Operation Hope employs experts in economy and sociology, welfare workers, and students to work together to arouse and shape the knowledge of the poor--their rights, duties and personal worth--and encourage them to rely on themselves (especially psychologically) (pp. 56-57, Moosbrugger).

However, do Dom Hélder's plans not forget the obvious resource of U.S. aid? In his own words, "Aid is certainly useful, but it will always be insufficient. The core of the problem will not be reached if no-one has the courage, which Populorum Progressio had, to denounce the monstrous injustice according to which the present policy of international trade is organised" (p. 28, Spiral of Violence). A mere handful of

immense corporations are masters of the world and manipulators of war and peace (usually war), heavily influencing governments, universities, the media, and even religious institutions; their activities comprise an "economic dictatorship" that controls the underdeveloped world (pp. 35-36, Revolution Through Peace).

> The systematic bleeding of the underdeveloped world is readily apparent when one compares what the underdeveloped countries receive in investment from the wealthy countries with the return to those countries on such investments....The injustice becomes starkly apparent when one compares the aid sent to underdeveloped countries with the amount they lose as a result of the wretched prices imposed on raw materials imported from the Third World. In the case of Latin America, that loss has been calculated to amount to $10.1 billion in the decade between 1950 and 1961 (p. 40, Ibid).

In other words, "until we bring about a radical reform in world trade policies, we will only be playing games" (p. 95, Ibid). What is needed is a worldwide effort, beginning with the Abrahamic minorities, to change the very structures of industrial enterprises, agrarian systems, and political systems; aid is nice, but it is simply not enough (p. 65, DeBroucker).

Lastly, Dom Hélder delegates an important role to the Church and its members; the Church is to utilize its transnational character to work with the Abrahamic minorities and help achieve Latin American **integration.** By integration Dom Hélder means a drawing together of Latin American nations, in cooperation and mutuality, to achieve self-determination and development; their first task is to work for a drastic reform in international trade policies and trusts (pp. 89-90, Ibid). Latin American nations must pull together as a unit in order to free themselves from both external and internal imperialism and colonialism, submis-

siveness to the U.S. through the Common Market, and control by the U.S.S.R. (pp. 84-85, Ibid). The Church is in a perfect position of influence within all the Latin American nations and can act as a catalyst and a cohesive force to bring them together with common interests and aims.

PART IV: VIOLENCE, NONVIOLENCE, AND SCRIPTURE

Violence and the Bible. Cain murdered Abel; the world was wiped out by a catastophic flood; Moses killed an Egyptian man; Yahweh destroyed the Egyptians who chased after Moses and his people as they fled Egypt; capital punishment was instituted by God and written into the Law; tribes rose up against other tribes in war; David killed Uriah in order to take Bathsheba as his wife; Yahweh led Israel in battle; women were raped and sometimes murdered: the Old Testament certainly has its share (and then some) of violence. Some people point out that it also presents a far-reaching vision of peace. Others, to explain God's "fighting for Israel" in holy war, say that it makes sense that a tribal people such as the Hebrews would assume that their God was concerned only with their people (Vanderhaar, pp. 62-63). Yet others maintain that the ancient Israelite worldview was one in which "[t]hey saw God's activity, not just in what we call the miraculous, but in everything. Anything that happened was caused by God" (Culliton, p. 20). Therefore, if humans were not "in step with" God's divine providence, the violence and war would continue (Ibid, p. 25). Also, say many, much of this violence has mythic imagery as its backdrop (for example, the story of the Red Sea) in order to reveal the transcendent meaning of the described event (Ibid, p. 16).

In any case, it cannot be denied that violence is a significant part of the Old Testament.

When it comes to the New Testament, however, most Christians are quick to point out that the Law of the Old Testament has been

fulfilled by the New and that all that Old Testament violence can be repudiated. But is there not violence in the New Testament as well?

First, Jesus was known to use violent metaphor and war imagery in his teachings. "If your right eye causes you to sin, then gouge it out" (Mt 5:29); "If your hand causes you to sin, then cut it off" (Mk 9:43); "He who...does not hate his father and mother, is not worthy of following me" (Luke 14:26); "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34). Jesus also talks about the violence of the end of the age, the tearing down the Temple, a place of suffering and "gnashing of teeth" for the unrighteous, and indeed his own imminent violent death.

Second, Jesus is accused of using violence in the cleansing of the Temple, when he drives out the money changers, the sellers and all their animals. In John's account, he is said to have used a "whip of cords."

Third, John the Baptist counselled a soldier of the Roman Army to be just and content with his pay; he did not condemn him for his violent profession, nor did Jesus condemn the soldiers he met during his ministry.

And, finally, somehow the doctrine of "just war" was developed by Christians using the Bible (including the New Testament) as their guide.

The process of creating a "just war" theory was not automatic, of course. The early Christian attitude toward war was generally one of refusing to serve in the military. However, Jews--the first Christians--were not required to serve in the

Roman Army at all, so they were rarely in a situation in which they had to choose one way or the other. Therefore, there was no clear pronouncement on the issue of Christian military service (Cadoux, p. 247). Still, the early Christians used war language and metaphor, as Jesus did, calling themselves "soldiers of Christ" and describing Christian life as "warfare" or a "battle." Many early Christians looked to a great military victory at the Second Coming. And victories of various armies over the Jews were seen as divine chastisement for falling "out of step" with God's divine providence (Ibid, p. 248).

Therefore, war was a source of doubt and confusion for early Christians; for some, abstinence was the only route, while for others, the monotheism, absolutism, military language, and frequent wars in the Scriptures (which were comprised of only the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament] at that time) led to the possibility of Christian soldiers and participation in war (Ibid, p. 250). With Constantine came the politicization of Christianity, the institution of Christian warring, the excommunication of Christians who quit the military, and eventually the prohibition of non-Christians in the military, while the killing of enemies in war was considered very praiseworthy and lawful (Ibid, pp. 256-57).

At the same time, however, existed other strands, such as certain Christian orders, which forbad Christians to be soldiers or kill in battle (Ibid, p. 259).

Over the centuries, Christians and non-Christians alike have also come up with a doctrine of "just war."

> But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them [the People] under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

This citation exemplifies a doctrine of just war which was used by American colonists to throw off the rule of the British in the American Revolution: the citation is from our own Declaration of Independence. Even today the theory of just war is strongly embraced by many, including Christians--particularly, certain groups of liberationists and liberation theologians. According to one writer, there are six main criteria for waging a just war:

1. having been declared by legitimate authority (for example, a head of state)

2. being carried out with a right intention (i.e., to promote peace)

3. used only as a last resort

4. following the principle of proportionality (the good accomplished must outweigh the costs, the evils of war)

5. having a reasonable chance for success

6. being waged with all moderation possible, with just means (i.e., no looting, massacres, killing and/or torturing of civilians or prisoners of war, and so on). (McAfee Brown, pp. 23-24)

Recent just war advocates, including many liberationists, add the following criteria: 1) if violent measures have already been used by the oppressors; 2) if all possible methods of legal criticism and legal actions have been patiently tried, to no avail; and 3) if a situation has arisen which is even more harmful to people than violent revolution would probably be (Brown, p, 132).

Related to the liberationist concept of just revolution is biblical apocalyptic theology. Apocalypticism "affirms the abso-

lute validity of God's promise to mankind through Israel and the historical locus of its fulfillment, yet it denies that present history, or the present institutions of humankind, could lead to that fulfillment (Ibid, p. 114). It also affirms that God will create something new and that salvation will take place by divine action in **worldly history**, not "another world" (Ibid, p. 116). The pitfalls of reformism (which holds to the reformability of old institutions and smooth progress forward) are avoided by apocalyptic theology: "It can demonstrate that though some institutions may need to be reformed, there are times when new institutions need to arise. There may be those moments when God wills the death of the old in order to effect the birth of the new" (Ibid, p. 119). All of this has revolutionary and possibly violent implications, especially when humans fall into step with and cooperate with God's revolutionary saving activity.

Jesus too was of the apocalyptic perspective. For the apocalyptic, "eternal life, heaven, [and] the kingdom, should begin now. In Christ one begins to be a part of the new creation" (Ibid, p. 121). Jesus called for the betterment of the condition of the poor in **this** world, a social revolution here and now (see "Jesus and social reform" at the end of Part IV). It was also a political revolution because there was to be no other authority but God. God was inaugurating the time of renewal and fulfillment and was effecting a revolution that would end the spiral of violence once and for all, liberate Israel, and bring salvation to other nations through Israel--and violence was a possibility in God's revolution, in the apocalyptic actions of

God (Horsley, p. 332).

Nonviolence and the Bible. There are, then, many passages in the Bible which have been cited in support of the ideas of the "just war." There are plenty of instances of "holy war" in the Old Testament, but Christians have often claimed that the New Testament can also be used to justify violence or war. A good example is the set of passages, cited earlier in Part IV, which describes Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. In John's Gospel, especially, Jesus is said to have betrayed his nonviolent ministry in a moment of unleashed anger by using a "whip of cords." Can we truly say that Jesus was nonviolent? Does the New Testament uphold a doctrine of just war?

A closer look at several of these texts will be helpful here. First, in John's description of the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus uses the "whip of cords" to drive out the **animals** (sheep and goats), not the people; he avoids personal injury. The other Gospels do not mention any whip, but in all cases Jesus refrains from striking anyone (p. 38, Culliton).

Second, Jesus uses violent symbolism when he states, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34-35a). The sword is a frequently used symbol in the New Testament, and it refers here to the intra-familial dissension that will be caused when some members of the family become Christian. Moreover, the language employed may be modeled after the Semitic mode of expressing the heightened poignancy of an unwanted effect by using terms of

purpose. The meaning would be understood in the following way: "...but the tragic effect of my coming has been, alas, dissension." It might also be a reference to the tensions that existed between the Jewish and Christian communities at the time that the Gospels were written (pp. 38-39, Culliton).

Third, there is no doubt that Jesus ordered the disciples to bring swords along with them as his ministry drew to a close (Lk 22:36-37). However, it is extremely significant that when one of the disciples attempted to **use** his sword, Jesus demanded that he put it away. Obviously, the disciple had misunderstood the purpose of bringing the swords. Jesus had told them that "he was to be numbered with the transgressors" in fulfillment of the prophecy; so the most logical explanation of the swords is that Jesus was using them as plants to bring about a nonviolent arrest. He knew that their carrying swords would be counted as subversive and would warrant arrest; it was a sure way to be arrested, tried, and executed--in fulfillment of the prophecies--without having to cause a violent uprising.

In addition to these passages, many have argued that both Jesus and John the Baptist supported the warmaking of the Roman Empire because they never denounced the Roman Establishment. John actually gave advice to a soldier, and Jesus praised the faith of a Roman centurion. However, John's instructions to the soldier were to refrain from extorting money, accusing people falsely, and grumbling about their pay (Lk 3:14). And Jesus did not praise the centurion's profession but his faith. Neither John nor Jesus came to condemn people but to bring them to a new

way of life--one of social justice, the Kingdom of God here and now. In the Kingdom, soldiers would not **need** to make war (for more on the Kingdom, see the section entitled **Jesus and social justice** later in Part IV).

The same can be said of the passage about paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus never advocates strict obedience to Caesar, which would include serving in the Roman army. The Jews were not required to serve in the army in the first place. And Jesus' answer to his questioners is ironic: he had caught them in possession of coins with graven images on them, which to a Jew was idolatrous (p. 36, Culliton). "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" does not mean that he supported paying taxes or that he bowed in any way to the Roman Establishment. In fact, according to Jesus' teachings of the Kingdom, there is no higher authority to which man must be subject but God; there are no oppressive hierarchies because all humans are equal under God. So Jesus, in a very inconspicuous way, was saying that in the Kingdom, one need **not** pay taxes to Caesar, which is far from advocating war in the manner of the Romans.

As for the doctrine of "just war" which has developed over the centuries, many criticize the application of the six or so criteria explained earlier because wars with personal interests at stake can be justified and molded to those criteria no matter what is happening. There is also the question of <u>who</u> will decide if wars meet the criteria. There are simply too many loopholes, critics say, and proponents can always nationalize a just cause for war (McAfee Brown, pp. 23-24).

What about all the war and violence imagery used by Jesus in his parables? War imagery is no more supportive of war than thief imagery ("the Kingdom will come like a thief in the night") is of thievery (p. 37, Ibid).

Therefore, although the Christian Church itself adopted many forms of "just war" after the death of Jesus, especially with the advent of Constantine's institutionalization of Christianity in the fourth century, Jesus himself was a faithful practitioner of nonviolence.

> Like the Sadducees, Jesus, in his revolutionary context, was for religion, but his religious zeal was directed to save others instead of himself. Like the Pharisees, he was interested in preserving the best in Judaism, but he insisted that love for people was more important than principles and that such love should be put into practice. Like the Essenes, he was for religious purity, but he refused the ritual purity of non-involvement. He wanted to live out this purity in the world. He was most sympathetic to the cause of the Zealots, but he believed that evil would not ultimately be overcome with evil, but only with good. He rejected quietism (the Essenes), an alliance with the Establishment (the Sadducees), hypocritical popular religion (the Pharisees), and the idea of the crusade (the Zealots) (p. 108, Brown).

There are countless examples of Jesus' nonviolent beliefs activism, centered on love, in the New Testament.

First, there are obvious references to nonviolence in the passages about murder as an evil act that makes one unclean (Mt 5:21-22, 15:18-20; Mk 7:20-23); love for enemies instead of hatred (Mt 5:43-44); abolishment of the "eye-for-an-eye" law, which is replaced with an ethic of not resisting an evil person (Mt 5:38-39); Jesus' refusal to comply with the Mosaic death penalty for the adulteress in John 8 (Jn 8:2-11); Jesus' refusal

to let one of the disciples defend him with a sword (Mt 26:52; Lk 22:49-51; Jn 18:10-11); and Jesus' refusal to defend himself from the accusations brought against him (Mt 26:62-63a; Mk 14:60-61). Jesus did use some violent imagery--like the sword of division in Mt 10:34--but those images fit into the context and understanding of his listeners. We too use a gruesomely violent image--the cross--as a symbol of ultimate suffering love, redemption, and salvation. The violent cross is for us a beautiful symbol of perfect love.

In addition to these, there are passages that **imply** a refusal to use violence. For instance, Jesus continually resisted the title of "Messiah," which carried with it the following popular conceptions: 1) the Hellenistic image of the "divine man" who masters or conquers all powers of evil, and 2) the Jewish image of the Anointed King, a religious-political leader who wipes out all the enemies of Israel and rules as the dominant royalty (p. 86, Edwards). Both of these are images of some sort of violence, like the conquering king; but Jesus clearly did not want to be identified with the violence or dominant political power associated with the title "Messiah." Likewise, when Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan before the beginning of his ministry (Mt 4:8-9; Lk 4:5-7), he was also resisting the temptation or possibility of ushering in the Kingdom with force, as ruler of the world and all its riches, accountable only to Satan (p. 26, Cadoux). He served God, not Satan, and God's way of establishing the Kingdom was **not** through common worldly power. Rather, Jesus represented a definitive break with the status quo.

Another example of implied nonviolence is the story of Jesus' calming of the waters. Jesus and the disciples had decided to take a boat across the lake and had fallen asleep, only to wake up and find themselves caught in a squall. The disciples were terrified and cried out to Jesus. "He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm" (Lk 8:24b). He then asked them, "Where is your faith?" As well as demonstrating the power of Jesus as the Son of God, the story illustrates the power of pure **faith** and **words**, which Jesus used to overcome the impending violence of the raging storm.

However, all of these vignettes show that Jesus was not simply passive; he was practicing **nonviolent resistance.** "[I]t cannot be intelligently maintained that Jesus passively accepted whatever wrong was perpetrated, even though some would caricature the nonviolence of Jesus by insisting that the nonresistance exemplified in Mt 5:39 were the sum and total of Jesus' teaching and conduct" (p. 68, Edwards). What is it that Jesus was resisting? For the most part, it seems that he resisted nonviolently that "violence" which prevents humans from being **free.**

Disease, sickness, blindness, lameness, demons/evil spirits, poverty, and hunger are all things which Jesus resisted (healings, concern for widows, exorcisms, and so on) and which enslave the body. The traditional interpretation of the Law, the Sabbath, prayer, fasting, tithing, worshiping God, and class relations, as well as fear and anxiety, enslave the mind and the spirit. Jesus set out to free people of these as well. And the

ultimate freedom given by Jesus is the freedom from death--as exemplified by his overcoming of the death of the widow's son (Lazarus), his own death, and Death itself.

Perhaps this line of thinking can better explain the cleansing of the Temple now. The Greek verb that has been rendered "to expel" or "to drive out" in English is actually an authoritative dismissal, not physical force. The same verb is used when Jesus is sent out into the wilderness, when God sends the workers to the vineyard, and when a splinter is to be taken out of the eye (pp. 33-34, Cadoux). Moreover, according to George R. Edwards, the place where the money changers, buyers, and sellers were located could refer to the "court of the Gentiles" (meaning "Nations"), the only place on the Temple grounds that the Jews permitted the Gentiles to go. Because of the market-like operation taking place on these grounds--the buying and selling of sacrifice animals--the Gentiles had been prevented from worshiping and praying at the Temple; but now Jesus had **cleansed** the Temple so that all the nations could be **free** to worship. Thus is revealed the "messianic ecumenism" of Jesus, as opposed to the nationalism of the Zealots (pp. 63-64, Edwards).

Jesus and social reform. The most striking reference of Jesus to freedom is his proclaiming of "the acceptable year of the Lord" and his fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in the synagogue--Lk 4:18-19, one of the key passages of liberation theology. Old Testament scholars identify the passage from Isaiah as a reference to the Jubilee Year: "This was no doubt the association

which would have been made by the audience at Nazareth. The Jubilee Year was that fiftieth year when the economic debts and inequities accumulated through the years would be cancelled" (p. 112, Brown). Jesus' claim was therefore a tremendously revolutionary one--one of revolutionary **freedom**, which is the central message of liberation theology as well.

The Jubilee Year included four different practices: 1) leaving the soil fallow; 2) remitting debts; 3) liberating slaves; and 4) returning to each individual his family's property (p. 64, Yoder). So Jesus' announcing the Jubilee Year aroused a very obvious image in the minds of his listeners, an image of liberation that threatened the status quo dominated by the Romans and the leading Jewish parties (the tetrarchs like Herod, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the chief priests, and so on).

The Jubilee Year meant the remittance of debts which people had accrued and which quite often had led to their having to sell themselves into slavery or be thrown in debtor's jail. These people had usually lost all of their property--their land and their flocks--and were often hopelessly in debt. The context from which the Jubilee Year arose is similar to the situation today in Latin America. In both cases, there is a large number of landless and powerless people living in conditions of economic and physical slavery, from which there seems to be no escape.

Jesus insisted that people start living **now** as though it were the Jubilee Year; he called for the **release** of the captives of physical and economic slavery and a **redistribution** of property so that the Kingdom might be brought about. "Forgive us our

debts, as we also forgive our debtors," Jesus instructed us to pray; this forgiving of debts is directly related to the Jubilee (p.66, Ibid). "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"; "Blessed are the meek/humble, for they will inherit the earth." Jesus was talking about a Kingdom not **of** this earth, but a Kingdom that is being brought upon this earth **now**, ushered in by himself, as people follow his teachings and begin **living in** and **practicing** the Jubilee Year. Therefore, the liberation theologians' having chosen this passage from Luke has the same revolutionary effects on the status quo as Jesus' first announcing the Jubilee Year. The revolutionary character of the Jubilee Year in Latin America becomes painfully evident as we see people being murdered there for speaking aloud about land reform and resource redistribution.

Jesus, then, was a practitioner of nonviolence, but he was definitely not apolitical. He addressed the social conditions of his time and emphasized the importance of social justice and well-being. The Establishment held the belief that those who were poor or physically ill in some way had **deserved** it, much the same attitude that is found in the three friends of Job. Jesus said **"no"** to this attitude; he healed the sick on the Sabbath. He raised from the dead the only son (and only social and financial security) of a widow. He called not only for mere tithing but also for giving to the poor, a complete redistribution of property and power with all people free from earthly leaders and under the authority of God alone. He accepted women as equals in the Kingdom, even allowing Martha's

sister Mary to be his student. The time for sharing, freedom, living out the Jubilee, feasting and joy--the Kingdom--is now. And the Kingdom is a nonviolent one.

PART V : THE VIABILITY OF VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

Guatemala--a case study. Theoretically, a basis does exist for the practice of both nonviolence and violence. In Christian doctrine today, there is also room for both. What about considering the question on the level of simple practicality?

An examination of the situation of Guatemala, the largest of the Central American countries, will provide some insight in dealing with this question. (Please note that much of the information used in this section came from personal conversations and listening to speakers, and it is therefore not documented).

Guatemala, like the rest of Latin America, was conquered and colonized by the Spanish in the 16th century. The country gained its independence from Spain in 1821 and experienced a history similar to that of other Latin American countries--internal colonialism and external neo-colonialism (as explained in Part I).

A small, powerful elite maintained a steel grip on the domestic affairs of Guatemala, while the poor majorities labored away on the fincas and later in the industrial plants and factories. Since the main products of these enterprises were geared not toward basic sustenance but rather foreign markets and luxury items, the interests of the ruling classes remained tied to foreign interests, particularly those of the United States and Western Europe. These foreign actors benefited directly from the low labor costs, tax incentives, and new markets to be found in Guatemala, and the ruling classes directly benefited from the aid and investments they acquired from abroad. Economic aid,

military aid, loans, and investment of foreign capital were used to develop and bolster the wealth and power of approximately twelve ruling families, while the rest of Guatemala's people continued to live in desperate poverty without health care, employment benefits, adequate education, or adequate food. Even today, 70% of the arable land is owned by a mere 4% of the population (Holleman, p. 318), and one of four children in Guatemala's rural areas dies before reaching the age of five (Ibid, p. 319).

Why not simply educate the people so that they can take power for themselves? There is a public education system in the country, and it is free, universal, and compulsory from age 7 to age 14. Why, then, is 54% of the population still illiterate? (Kurian, p. 777)

In 1985, 23.1% of the population had completed primary school; 3.3% had completed secondary school; and 0.2% had completed some level of higher education (Ibid, p. 777). But in the rural areas, where 61% of the Guatemalan people live (Holleman, pp. 318-19), only about 5% of the children finish the primary level. Is it, then, the fault of the poor themselves that they do not become educated and organize to gain power?

These figures fail to tell the whole story, unfortunately. Public school teachers are paid huge salaries so that they can buy classroom materials like books, desks, and the like, because these things are not provided by the state. However, with no one monitoring their activities, these teachers most often pocket the money and teach perhaps once or twice a week. Moreover, public

school teachers generally get their jobs through connections they have, and they retain them by taking advantage of the fact that there is no required re-licensure.

The rich, of course, can afford to send their children to good private schools where the teachers actually **teach** and more money is provided by various programs and private funding. But the public system is under the control of the Minister of Education, typically a military general or officer who allots it very little money. Expenditures on education in Guatemala account for a lower percentage of the nation's GNP than that of any other Central American nation. And as strange as it may seem to us in the United States, drop-out and low enrollment rates are also related both to the poor economic situations of many students and to the large (though unknown) number of students and faculty members who have been assassinated (particularly in the universities).

For those in power, the poor majority (with roughly 60% of the population being of Indian descent) has always represented a threat to security. Great pains have been taken to keep the poor in a position of utter powerlessness and dependency on the ruling classes for whatever kind of employment they might be able to acquire. Recently, the word "Indian" has come to be synonymous with "subversive" in the eyes of those in power. Thus, the scene has long been set for violent conflict between the paranoid minority which is trying to keep its power and the oppressed and repressed majority which has no power. And Guatemala is indeed one of the most violence-stricken countries in all of Latin

America.

As has been stated, the colonial system remained intact in Guatemala long after independence was declared in 1821 by the ruling elites. Laws were passed in the 19th century requiring titles to private property, which legitimated the appropriation of municipal and Indian communal lands (Guatemala, p. 18). And vagrancy laws required Indians to work for 150 days per year and carry a card showing how many days they had worked; "[t]hus in effect, the government was no more than a police force for the landowners (Ibid, p. 19). These laws were updated and remained in effect until 1944, when a reformist named Juan Jose Arevalo came to power. He abolished the vagrancy laws and all forms of forced labor, providing instead a code for minimum wages, the right to strike and organize unions, and the expropriation of the huge German-controlled fincas. However, he instituted no real land reform, and rural wages were hardly affected by the reforms made. The landowners' power was still very much intact (Ibid, p. 19).

In 1951 came the real challenge. Jacobo Arbenz entered the presidency with a platform of industrial modernization and independent national capitalism, which was to replace the dependence on foreign markets and nations. But Arbenz represented a threat to the status quo power structure: in 1952 he instituted the Agrarian Reform Law to eliminate all forms of slavery and semi-feudalism and to give land back to the agricultural workers, providing them with agricultural credit. This program was aimed at fincas with **unused** lands, compensating the former owners with

government bonds, and was therefore not an attack on private property in general. By 1954, 100,000 peasant families had received land from the government, utilizing only 16.3% of the available idle lands, and credit and technical assistance was being acquired from new state agencies (Ibid, p. 20).

These reforms were not acceptable to the wealthy minority nor to the foreign powers with economic interests in Guatemala. The extremely powerful U.S. corporation United Fruit Company (UF) was using only 15% of its 555,000 acres when the government offered it over $1 million for 387,000 acres to be used in the new program. UF claimed that it needed $16 million in compensation, and naturally, the government refused (Ibid, p. 20).

Now UF was backed by the U.S. State Department. As relations between Arbenz and the U.S. government became even more strained when Guatemala purchased arms from Eastern-bloc Czechoslovakia (in the height of McCarthyism and the Cold War), the CIA entered into the scene. The CIA sent planes to parachute Russian-made arms into Guatemalan terrain in order to be able to claim Soviet provisioning of Arbenz (Schesinger, p. 443). Thus the CIA justified the coup it inspired, organized, and financed in 1954 on the grounds of "maintaining security" in the hemisphere.

Was Arbenz really Communist? He did legalize the Communist Party, but his administration was comprised mainly of progressives. He never centralized stated power economically, politically, or ideologically, and he did more to increase private property than to abolish it. He never impeded right-wing views in

meetings and the press, and he relied mostly on his military colleagues for help and advice (Guatemala, p. 52). The coup was apparently the result of many other things: the perceived threat to U.S. investments and corporate power, the threat to international capitalist order posed by the new power given to the Indian/poor majority, the fact that Arbenz refused to submit blindly to U.S. dictates in foreign policy as so many other Guatemalan leaders had done, and the Cold War-inspired visions of Communism's spread from Guatemala to the other countries in the hemisphere (Ibid, p. 52).

The fact remains that since 1954, Guatemala has been under the control of the military, which was brought into power by the CIA-backed coup. Although the military allowed a civilian to be elected into the presidency in 1986, after years of fraudulent military-controled elections and severe governmental repression, the military is still safely locked into power and President Vinicio Cerezo has strictly limited power. He has freely admitted that he possesses only 30% of the power, while the military has the other 70%. The younger, more progressive sectors of the military had organized in the early 1960's to launch the continuing revolutionary insurgency movement against repressive military regimes, but the more reactionary sectors, supported by U.S. assistance and aid, have dominated government power since 1954.

Military power in Guatemala has proved to be a system of legalized terror and repression, as the government has turned its resources to waging war on its own people to fight insurgency and

maintain power. When he came to power in 1954, Carlos Castillo Armas revoked the Agrarian Reform Law and other progressive legislations from the 1944-54 period, establishing the National Committee for Defense Against Communism to "clean up" the political spectrum (Fauriol, pp. 33-34). The armed forces were soon given the political mission of creating a new constitutional order, strengthening the fight against Communism, and reorganizing the central government bureaucracy. In short, the military sought to break with its former status of being a tool of the governing elites and to claim the role of "protector of society" (Ibid, p. 46). Military governments thus began a long campaign to gain public support, while at the same time routing out insurgents and suspected insurgents and "subversives." As the revolutionary guerrilla movement bifurcated and picked up popular support, the military responded with intensified counter-insurgency programs that were assisted by CIA training and funds.

The revolutionaries had turned to guerrilla tactics in the first place because they could perceive no other way to cause change in Guatemala. Minor military rebellions and attempts at coups were easily put down by the army, and a broader and more powerful movement would have to come to include the peasants. Now many of the peasants were looking for leaders to organize them and lead them against the government, but they were no match for an increasingly professionalized army. Guerrilla warfare seemed to be the only route open to them.

The peasants were rebelling against this military establishment particularly because it had reclaimed all their property and

power after the progressive land reforms undertaken by Arbenz. So as government corruption spread through fraudulent elections, guerrilla activity escalated. The military government was unable to maintain itself through constitutional means, so the law of the land was converted into unlawfulness and "might makes right." The corruption of the military establishment was compounded by the repressive terrorist tactics it employed to fight the insurgency. So in the view of the revolutionaries, only violence could win justice at this point. The objectives of the guerrillas were basically centered around gaining control of the government and ensuring social justice. They came to identify with socialist and Marxist groups and tendencies.

The counter-insurgency tactics employed by the Guatemalan military governments were designed to wipe out popular support, the base of the guerrillas' strength. One of the first methods used was a "civic action" program--providing limited training, communications, health care, transportation, and so on--which was initiated in 1961 under the direct auspices of the U.S. Army (Guatemala, p. 194). However, it was supplemented by frequent military attacks and counter-terror campaigns directed at the poor rural populations suspected of cooperating with the guerrillas.

The guerrillas had stationed themselves in the mountains in order to be most effective with hit-and-run guerrilla tactics and to gain popular support among the masses of rural poor, who are mostly Indian; so the military soon came to equate "Indian" with "guerrilla" or "subversive" and launched massive terrorist

attacks against the poor rural majority. It was in this context that the infamous death squads were developed and perfected, after their birth in 1966 (Drinan, p. 478).

To illustrate the point, during the period between 1978 and 1982, frequently referred to as "the Terror," approximately 70,000 to 75,000 Indians were killed. Forty thousand people were "disappeared," and thousands were rounded up like animals and relocated into military-controlled "model villages" resembling concentration camps. The military freely boasts that 440 Indian villages were systematically destroyed and emptied of their inhabitants during this time (Lernoux, p. 556).

In a country of a little over 8 million, 1.5 million people have been displaced since 1978 (Montgomery-Fate, p. 820). There are also witness accounts describing the military's techniques aimed at destroying guerrilla support through sheer terror: they have thrown babies in the air and either shot them as in target practice or caught them on their bayonets, and they have doused children with gas and burned them alive after ripping out their fingernails and toenails (Holleman, p. 325).

At the same time, the guerrillas have harassed, robbed, and recruited peasants at gunpoint. The villagers know that the guerrillas' showing up in town means more repression and killing from the army. So when soldiers enter a village, many fear unwarranted violence and flee. But the army believes that fleeing people are doing so only because they are guilty of some wrong, namely, being guerrillas. So, as one officer said when asked what the army does with fleeing, unarmed people, "We shoot

them" (Nairn, p. 19).

Not surprisingly, the Guatemalan Army uses foreign-made weapons, weapon parts, and equipment, including U.S. grenades, helicopters, and bombs (Ibid, p. 20). Even after President Jimmy Carter broke off assistance to Guatemala in 1977 on the basis of the hideous human rights violations committed by the government, covert U.S. aid and machinery packages continued to reach Guatemala's military establishment.

In 1983, the Reagan administration re-opened the overt assistance lines to Guatemala. With the civilian Cerezo's election in 1986, aid was greatly increased on the grounds that Guatemala was now a democracy which needed U.S. support to strengthen that democracy and ward off Communist rebellion from within. However, Cerezo entered the presidency under several conditions imposed by the military which served to effectively safeguard its power in the country. Cerezo himself has chided Americans who think that military aid is a prerequisite for maintaining democracy: put plainly, "We don't need it" ("Truths for El Norte," p. 7). And the terror continues in Guatemala today.

Clearly, Guatemala's situation is quite precarious. The military establishment has virtually done away with any constitutionality, retaining power through extra-legal means and warring against its own population by using terrorist tactics against dissenters and suspected "subversives." The revolutionary guerrilla groups have become very diversified and often find themselves competing for supporters, despite the formation of an umbrella group in 1982 called the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional

Guatemalteca (URNG). The guerrilla groups are guilty of terrorizing the peasant populations as well. The poor themselves sometimes choose to join the guerrillas because they at least have the guns and resources to fight against the Army; and some join the Army to avoid being terrorized from the right, or more likely, because they have been forced to do so. But the majority wishes to live in peace and escape both the guerrillas and the Guatemalan Army, since collaboration with either one almost inevitably leads to terror and killing by the other.

Yet even by abstaining from support of either side and by practicing an ethic of nonviolence, the poor and Indian majority is suffering torture, oppression, and mass murder without any escape in sight. If they run from their oppressors in an attempt to avoid confrontation and conflict, they are killed under the suspicion of subversion. This situation is very similar to that in many other Latin American countries, particularly in Central America.

What can these people do in a situation in which neither violence nor nonviolence will work? What can the Church do? What can liberationists do? **What can we do?**

PART VI : "TAKING AWAY THE OCCASION"

Violence and nonviolence.

> The lack of technological development, the pigheaded oligarchies, and the foreign-based system of capitalism block the road to necessary transformations. They actively oppose anything that is against their interests, and hence create a general situation of violence. The choice is not between the status quo and change; it is between violent change and peaceful change (McAfee Brown, pp. 46-47).

Change must and will come in Latin America--but how? Who has the ability to make the choice?

Obviously, the bulk of the Latin American population is without economic or political power. Most have neither freedom nor bread and must choose which to seek first (Long, pp. 49-52)--and the choice seems to be made up for them by the pervasive presence of all the undernourished children crying out for food. Nonviolent tactics such as civil disobedience, boycotts, and the like will not be effective in Latin America because the poor have absolutely no power to either use or withdraw. In addition, law has often become corrupted by the establishment (as in the case of Guatemala), making civil disobedience meaningless. If the peasants walk off their jobs, they loose the only meager source of money available to them to sustain their families; they cannot simply keep a strike going for long periods of time. Those who speak out against the violence going on are most often assassinated; the Church in particular has become tragically victimized by violence in this way.

It may be easy for us in the U.S., living in comfort, to call for unconditional nonviolence on moral terms, but in reality this is a standard which we ourselves (or our government, rather)

have not been able to live up to either--the American Revolution, the Civil War, Vietnam, Korea, fuelling the Contra-Sandinista conflict, covert CIA actions...and the list goes on. And even our nonviolent Civil Rights Movement ended up involving violence. We must ask the question, To what extent may nonviolence truly be practiced? Just look at the violence which has come out of Jesus' nonviolent social revolution over the centuries!

However, violence is not the best bet either. How can the Latin American revolutionaries maintain their struggle for long without outside assistance? How long will it take before the superpowers intervene directly and escalate the crisis? How many lives will be lost in the guerrilla struggle and the subsequent terror by Latin American governments to destroy the guerrillas and any possible popular base they might have? With powerful neighbors like the U.S. on their doorstep, it is unlikely that the guerrillas will be allowed any sort of victory or reforms because "[t]hose responsible for the formulation of U.S. foreign policy perceive that socioeconomic change in the region results in the loss of U.S. control over Latin American countries" and a "polarization" that invites the presence of the USSR or Cuba (Bender, p. 34). If a revolutionary government actually comes into power, the U.S. does everything possible to quash it, as happened in Nicaragua between the Sandinistas and the U.S.-supported Contras. The U.S. wishes to avoid "another Cuba," where it failed (after direct attempts) to oust Castro from power. Cuba is an outstanding case.

So if neither nonviolence nor violence is likely to work,

what can be done? If we can condemn neither Hélder Câmara for his nonviolent liberationism nor Camilo Torres for taking up arms for the cause of the revolutionary guerrillas, on what ground are we left standing? Certainly not on holy ground.

Insofar as the beneficiaries of unjust, violent structures are implicated or involved in those structures, they are responsible, even though they may not will this violence upon others. We are not simply individual beings; we are social, communal beings. "To the degree that we are part of the evil our group is doing, and do nothing in the face of that evil, we share complicity. A hard truth. But an important one. Perhaps in our era apathy is the unforgivable sin" (McAfee Brown, p. 38).

The U.S., if we did not begin all the violence, is still aggravating and perpetuating a situation of unbearable injustice and violence in Latin America, as has been explained in a very cursory fashion with the case of Guatemala. United States so-called " 'economic aid' has been used as part of military policies that fuel war and deepen poverty. And when U.S. aid has been used to promote economic change, it has tended to emphasize the production of exports at the expense of equity and the environment" (Danby, p. 1). Between 1980 and 1989, over $7 billion in U.S. aid was sent to Central America. Three quarters of it was designated as "economic aid," and yet conditions for the poor majorities has worsened during the past decade (Ibid, p. 1).

Moreover, the United States always dictates how the aid can be used. As is the case with aid to most Third World countries, the U.S. tends to give economic aid in the form of material

goods, such as schools, to take an example. Following U.S. guidelines, all the building materials must come from the U.S., and these materials must be shipped by U.S. companies. The workers are also generally from the U.S. so most of the economic benefits flow right back to the U.S., while the Third World country in question ends up with...a school building. It is one school that would not exist otherwise, but this kind of aid is simply insufficient. To compound the problem, aid must be funneled through the local governments, and these governments often resell the aid or use it for their own purposes. There is virtually no "trickle-down" effect to the poor who really need the aid so desperately.

Therefore, the United States has a large role in the situation we have seen addressed by the Latin American liberation theologians. The U.S.'s task now is to break down the neo-colonialist and imperialist structures of its relations with the region and to encourage the countries of Latin America to cooperate in active and creative tasks of development (Bender, p. 46). And Latin America's task is to formulate and implement a collective strategy: regional economic integration, joint industrial programming, financial and commercial agreements, laws regulating foreign investment, coordination of foreign economic policies in international forums--overall regional coordination and cooperation (Ibid, p. 38). And of all these tasks must be carefully planned in order not to destroy the environment.

> I believe in the non-violent solution to the crisis in Latin America. It would help if the United States would stop military and economic aid to the oppressing regimes....They are kept in power by the forces that

> want to perpetuate them there, and this is the expression of the will of international capitalism....And the ruling elites are very much in love with foreign interests, because they are the latter's creation. Once you stop the flow of energy from the creators to the creation, the latter falls....So when you talk about peaceful solutions, here is a really good one: Produce in the United States a movement to stop giving money and resources to these repressive governments....There is nothing, I tell you, more peaceful than their fall. Convince the American people to stop using their money to repress people, to violate consistently the human rights of people, to violate everything the American Constitution stands for, to stop helping tyrannies" (Ramos, pp. 29-30).

Otherwise, the U.S. gives Latin America no choice but violence. The revolutionaries practice violence, and so do the governments they are fighting. But we must realize that the United States is guilty of practicing violence as well, and if we make peaceful revolution impossible, we will make violent revolution inevitable.

This is not to say that the power to solve the problems in Latin America resides solely in the United States and its policies. Instead, this is an appeal to set the wheels in motion to "take away the occasion" for violence, as the Quakers say. The Sermon on the Mount states this same idea clearly: not only are we forbidden to kill, but we are also to take away the occasion for killing--hatred. By working on the problem of structural violence, we attack the root of the violence problem. By merely building schools in Latin America, we are treating the "disease" of violence instead of using vaccinations to prevent the disease from ever spreading. So our efforts must be coordinated and sincere; our help will do no good if the repressive local governments of Latin America do not change, and they will

not change if we do not halt our support of the repression.

What shall we do? There is a great number of possible actions to be undertaken, and creativity is imperative for developing more strategies as time goes on.

The United States must begin to do the following: develop intensive education and raise awareness about the suffering and injustice experienced by the Latin American people, and also about current public events; emphasize communication and community with the region so that we have a common human basis from which to work; foment organizations to alleviate particular problems (such as Amnesty International, Bread for the World, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, and American Friends Service Committee); and work toward extending international order and law (perhaps reforming organizations like the United Nations by empowering them to help solve global problems such as the Latin American crisis) (Long, pp. 86-108).

At the same time, the United States must consciously end its economic and political support of the repressive regimes of Latin America. We must greatly expand and develop our nonviolent faculties, as there are over **190** different types of nonviolent action to be explored and implemented (Culliton, p. 291). There needs to be a lobby for the poor in order to make strides in changing U.S. foreign policy. And we must not simply withdraw from Latin America under the assumption that "everyone has the right to self-determination" because the ruling powers will then leave the state of affairs "as is." The U.S. must use its economic clout to encourage--perhaps force--the Latin American

governments to meet the needs of their people with effective foreign aid aimed at developing local economies without counterproductive restrictions. Yes, even nonviolent tactics may end up involving some degree of coercion; it seems unavoidable at this point. Coercion of some sort will be inevitable if the status quo, so violently determined to sustain itself, is to be subverted and the poor empowered to rise from their poverty and embrace justice at long last.

The Church is a fundamental part of this process--and a process it is, for change must come carefully planned, cooperatively. Christian individuals, organizations, and churches must withdraw investments from oppressive economic structures and seek alternative arrangements, as everyone else must do; they must investigate use of church land to make sure that it is being used as intended--as aid for deprived people; they must use their resources to encourage governmental authorities to explore and adopt nonviolent strategies, and also to boycott international firms which are guilty of exposed exploitation (such as violations of UN sanctions); and they must establish a commission to study institutional violence within church systems as well, to make recommendations regarding more just structures (Ramos, p. 46). It is well known, after all, that even the Church's history is riddled with exploitation and injustice. But this can and must change.

Why should we do all of these things? From a practical standpoint, it is in the interest of the United States to seek better, more sane and just relations with its Latin American

neighbors if it wants to remain relatively free from terrorist attacks in the coming years. This is especially true considering the approaching threat of nuclear terrorism due to widespread nuclear proliferation today.

From a theological standpoint, because we are Christians who claim to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, we simply **must** do these things. We are not called to respond by siding either with Dom Helder or with Camilo Torres; we are called to respond by taking sides, but the side we are to take is that of **the poor**, the oppressed. We in the United States have a very important role in liberation theology, but it is not that we should all pick up and go to Latin America to fight along with the guerrillas. Nor is it that we are to go preach nonviolence there. We could reach that point, but our primary call as Christians, in the United States, in 1990 and afterward, is to subvert the systems of institutional violence that continue to oppress Latin Americans every day--despite what we may wish in our hearts for those people. We are all a part of their oppression if we do not follow Christ's example of love for our neighbors and CHANGE the violent structures from which we personally benefit. We are to practice Jubilee living, to be "numbered among the transgressors" against the status quo, in faith. "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity" (Isaiah 61:8a). We now have the burden of knowledge, a very heavy burden indeed--and we are called to use it to transform injustice into justice, an absolutely necessary ingredient for PEACE. But we should not despair because of the

seemingly impossible task before us:

> Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
>
> Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"
>
> Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." (Luke 18:24-27)

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