

**CHE GUEVARA AND REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY
IN LATIN AMERICA**

Simon Topping

PhD in Contextual, Urban and Liberation Theologies

Biblical Studies Department

July 2003

Summary of Thesis

Title: Che Guevara and Revolutionary Christianity in Latin America

Course: PhD in Contextual, Urban and Liberation Theologies

Student: Simon Topping

The thesis, firstly, examines the degree to which revolutionary Christianity in Latin America was influenced by Che Guevara and, secondly, seeks to identify aims and objectives shared by Che Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America.

The four expressions of revolutionary Christianity studied in the thesis are: Camilo Torres in Colombia, "The Movement of Priests for the Third World" in Argentina, "Christians for Socialism" in Chile, and revolutionary Christianity during the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. These groups and individuals cover the period of the emergence and development of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s.

The research has identified three key points of influence, three shared aims and three shared objectives. I argue that Guevara was influential (1) as a revolutionary icon, (2) as one who legitimised Christian participation in revolutionary struggle and (3) as one whose concept of the "new man" was used and developed by some Christian revolutionary thinkers.

The three shared aims are identified as (1) socialist/communist society, (2) national liberation and (3) the emergence of the "new man".

The three shared objectives are identified as (1) revolutionary unity, (2) taking power and (3) conscientisation.

The thesis concludes with a summary of the research findings and an examination of Guevara's "new man" alongside the Christian concept of the "new being in Christ". The thesis proposes a synthesis of Guevara's "new man" with the "new being in Christ" by means of the establishment of small scale Christian co-operatives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Process</i>	2
<i>Sources</i>	2
<i>UK revolutionary Christianity in the 21st century</i>	5
CHAPTER ONE: CHE GUEVARA	7
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Aims	7
1.2.1 National liberation	7
1.2.2 Communist society	11
1.2.3 The “New Man”	15
1.3 Objectives	20
1.3.1 Taking power	20
1.3.2 Agrarian reform	23
1.3.3 Developing a new consciousness	25
1.3.4 Revolutionary unity and internationalism	27
1.4 Conclusion	29
CHAPTER TWO: CAMILO TORRES	30
2.1 Introduction	30
2.2 Influences	30
2.2.1 Maritain	30
2.2.2 Louvain	32
2.2.3 Contact with Colombian peasants	34
2.2.4 Contact with radical groups	38
2.2.5 Church documents	39
2.2.6 Marx	40
2.2.7 The Cuban revolution	42
2.2.8 Che Guevara	45
2.2.9 Influences: Conclusion	46
2.3 Aims	47
2.3.1 Socialist/communist society and the kingdom of God	47
2.3.2 National liberation	51
2.3.3 “Integrated Man”	54
2.4 Objectives	56
2.4.1 Revolutionary Unity	56
2.4.2 Taking power	63
2.4.3 Developing a new consciousness	69
2.5 Aims and Objectives: Conclusion	71

CHAPTER THREE:	
THE MOVEMENT OF PRIESTS FOR THE THIRD WORLD	73
3.1 Introduction	73
3.2 Influences	75
3.2.1 Local context	75
3.2.2 Worker priests	77
3.2.3 Church documents	78
3.2.4 " <i>Cristianismo y Revolución</i> "	82
3.2.5 Christian/Marxist dialogue	85
3.2.6 Peronism	87
3.2.7 Camilo Torres	87
3.2.8 The Cuban revolution and Che Guevara	89
3.2.9 Influences: Conclusion	94
3.3 Aims	95
3.3.1 "Change of structures" and socialist society	95
3.3.2 National liberation and Peronism	100
3.3.3 The "New Man"	103
3.4 Objectives	105
3.4.1 Discrediting the democratic process	105
3.4.2 Taking power	107
3.4.3 Conscientisation	110
3.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion	112
CHAPTER FOUR:	
REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY IN CHILE 1968-1973	114
4.1 Introduction	114
4.2 Influences	116
4.2.1 Church documents	116
4.2.2 Marxism	119
4.2.3 Camilo Torres	123
4.2.4 Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution	125
4.2.5 Che Guevara	126
4.2.6 Influences: Conclusion	129
4.3 Aims	129
4.3.1 Socialist society	129
4.3.2 The end of imperialism	132
4.3.3 The "New Man"	135
4.4 Objectives	136
4.4.1 Taking power	136
4.4.2 Revolutionary unity	140
4.4.3 Conscientisation	142

4.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion	144
CHAPTER FIVE: REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY IN NICARAGUA	146
5.1 Introduction	146
5.2 Influences	146
5.2.1 Augusto César Sandino	146
5.2.2 Church documents	149
5.2.3 The Bible	152
5.2.4 Base ecclesial communities	156
5.2.5 Marxism	162
5.2.6 Camilo Torres	164
5.2.7 The Cuban revolution and Fidel Castro	166
5.2.8 Che Guevara	169
5.2.9 Influences: Conclusion	174
5.3 Aims	175
5.3.1 National liberation and anti-imperialism	175
5.3.2 Communist society	176
5.3.3 The “New Man”	180
5.4 Objectives	184
5.4.1 Participation in the revolution	184
5.4.2 Armed struggle	191
5.4.3 Conscientisation	194
5.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion	197
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION: GUEVARA’S “NEW MAN” AND THE “NEW CREATION IN CHRIST”	198
6.1 Introduction	198
6.2 The influence of Guevara on revolutionary Christianity in Latin America	198
6.2.1 Revolutionary icon	198
6.2.2 Legitimisation of Christian participation in revolutionary struggle	199
6.2.3 Guevara’s revolutionary theory	201
6.3 The shared aims of Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity	203
6.3.1 The socialist/communist society	203
6.3.2 National liberation	204
6.3.3 The “New Man”	205
6.4 The shared objectives of Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity	206
6.4.1 Revolutionary unity	206

6.4.2 Taking power	207
6.4.3 Conscientisation	208
6.5 Guevara's "new man" and the "new creation in Christ"	210
6.5.1 Guevara's "new man"	211
6.5.2 "The new creation in Christ"	216
6.5.3 Possibilities for a contemporary application	228
Bibliography	234

INTRODUCTION

In 1994 I began a three year term as a Methodist minister in the Argentinian city of Rosario. Soon afterwards I discovered that Rosario was the birthplace of Ernesto “Che” Guevara. I was taken to see the damaged doorway¹ leading to the first floor apartment where Guevara’s family lived. In the following months I heard more about Guevara’s early history and his family’s move to the town of Alta Gracia in the hills near Córdoba, partly to help the young Guevara overcome his chronic asthma. Then in 1995 the Argentinian publishers *Legasa* produced a three volume “Complete Works” of Guevara. This was the first time that Guevara’s writings had been published in Argentina since the start of the military dictatorship in 1976. As I read Guevara’s complete works it became clear to me that many of the recurring themes in his writings also emerge in the writings of Liberation Theology. A number of questions formed in my mind. To what degree were Che Guevara, his writings and his personality, an influence upon the emergence of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America and the accompanying Liberation Theology? Regardless of direct influence, to what degree were the thinking, the aims and objectives of Guevara shared by revolutionary Christianity in Latin America? If there was a connection between Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America in the 1960-80s, is there any relevant application of Guevara’s legacy to the development of a revolutionary Christianity in the contemporary UK context?

I met with Dr Jose Miguez Bonino (a Methodist minister) in Buenos Aires whilst I was working in Argentina. I wanted to know what he thought of the idea of researching into the links between Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity. Dr Bonino felt that the area had not yet been looked at in depth and suggested that I examined four expressions of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America and their connections with Guevara: Camilo Torres in Colombia, the Argentinian group *Movimiento de sacerdotes para el tercer mundo* (Movement of Priests for the Third World - MSTM), *Cristianos por el socialismo* (Christians for

¹ The doorway still shows evidence of damage caused by a bomb placed outside during the period of military dictatorship (1976-1983).

Socialism - CPS) in Chile, and revolutionary Christianity during the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. These four groups have thus become the focus of my research.

Process

I will begin with an examination of the key elements of Guevara's thinking, practice and revolutionary theory (Chapter 1). Chapters 2-5 will focus on the four manifestations of revolutionary Christianity mentioned above. Each of these chapters will be divided into three parts.

Part one will study the formative influences upon the revolutionary Christian group or individual (in the case of Camilo Torres) in order to assess the degree to which Guevara acted as a direct influence.

Part two will examine the key aims of each group and set them alongside those of Guevara. For the purposes of this study "aims" will refer to the end goals, *what* Guevara and the revolutionary Christian group wanted to achieve.

Part three will study the key objectives of the revolutionary Christian group under consideration in order to identify where their objectives coincided with those of Guevara and where they differed. Again, for the purposes of this study, "objectives" refers to the means, *how* the end goals or aims were to be achieved.

Chapter 6 will summarise the conclusions of the research and examine the possibilities for a contemporary application of the research findings within the UK context.

Sources

I have relied upon the Legasa *Obras completas* (Complete Works) for many of my references to the writings and speeches of Guevara, giving my own translation.² These "Complete Works" are by no means complete and I have gathered further

² Ernesto Guevara, *Obras completas*, vols. I-III (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1995).

material from a wide range of other sources. The most comprehensive collections in English translation used in my research were *Che; Selected works of Ernesto Guevara* (eds. R. Bonachea and N. Valdés)³ and *Venceremos: the speeches and writings of Ernesto Che Guevara* (ed. J. Gerassi)⁴. On a visit to Cuba in 2000 I was able to acquire Cuban publications of selected speeches and writings unavailable outside the country.⁵

Primary source material for Camilo Torres is readily available in Gerassi's *Revolutionary Priest: The Complete writings of Camilo Torres*,⁶ with further biographical detail supplied by Broderick⁷ and Guzman⁸. Interviews, speeches and writings of revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua have been widely published. Ernesto Cardenal's four volume *The Gospel in Solentiname*⁹ reproduces the Bible studies he tape recorded with the base ecclesial community in Solentiname and provides an invaluable insight not only into the thinking of the local Christian community but also into Cardenal's own thinking.

Primary source material for MSTM and CPS has been considerably more difficult to locate. In part this is due to historical circumstances both in Argentina and Chile and in part due to the form much of the literature took: pamphlets, leaflets and letters, often with a very small circulation. In 1976 the military took power in Argentina. This was followed by a ruthless clamp down on all left wing organisations and individuals. Possession of any material which could be considered "subversive" was often sufficient to implicate a person. When Jose Miguez Bonino lent me some of his books and magazines from the period, he

³ Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés (eds.), *Che: Selected works of Ernesto Guevara* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

⁴ John Gerassi (ed.), *Venceremos: The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto Che Guevara* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1968).

⁵ The most useful of these have been E. Guevara, *Educación y hombre nuevo* (Habana: Editora Política, 1993), L. Martí, *Del pensamiento pedagógico de Ernesto Che Guevara* (Habana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1999) and A. Cupull and F. González, *Che: entre la multitud* (Habana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1995).

⁶ John Gerassi (ed.), *Revolutionary Priest: The Complete writings of Camilo Torres* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971).

⁷ Walter J. Broderick, *A Biography of the Priest-Guerillero* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

⁸ German Guzman, *Camilo Torres* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969).

⁹ Ernesto Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vols. I-IV (New York: Orbis Books, 1982).

explained that he had been able to save his literature by giving it to a U.S. Methodist Minister who was working in Argentina at the time, on the assumption that the police would not search the house of a U.S. citizen. But most others, Bonino explained, simply destroyed the literature in order not to be incriminated. However, I believe I have been able to gather a sufficient amount of primary material for analysis both from Bonino himself and from the library of the *Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos* (ISEDET) in Buenos Aires. In my bibliography I have identified the material photocopied from ISEDET which is not readily accessible in other libraries.

Material for the CPS in Chile has proved to be even more inaccessible than that for the MSTM in Argentina. The group itself numbered only 80 priests at its inception and, within Chile, lasted only three years until Pinochet's military coup in 1973. The document recording the text of CPS's first conference in 1972 in Santiago (*Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de los Cristianos por el Socialismo - PELCS*) has provided me with the most detailed primary source material.¹⁰ However, even this document does not present an exclusively Chilean perspective on revolution Christianity as the conference was attended by Christians from throughout Latin America.

A large number of the quotations included in the study have come from documents and books published in Spanish. As in the case of the Legasa *Obras completas* I have given my own translation of these quotations.

The study could have included a detailed examination of the writings of revolutionary Christians from other countries in Latin America, most notably Hélder Câmara in Brazil, Nestor Paz in Peru, the Golconda movement in Colombia and those movements in Central America described by Berryman in *The Roots of Religious Rebellion*.¹¹ However, it was necessary to draw some limit to the scope of

¹⁰ Secretariado de Cristianos por el Socialismo (ed.), *Cristianos por el socialismo* (Santiago: Editorial Mundo Nuevo, 1973).

¹¹ Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in the Central American Revolutions* (London: SCM Press, 1984).

the study and the four expressions of revolutionary Christianity I have focused upon cover the whole period of the development of revolutionary Christianity from the early 1960s under Camilo Torres to the early 1980s in Nicaragua after the victory of the Sandinistas. This allows for an examination of various expressions of revolutionary Christianity not only from the perspective of different geographical contexts but also from different moments in the short, but dramatically changing, history of the 1960s to 1980s in Latin America. Furthermore, a study of revolutionary Christianity from both before and after Guevara's violent death in 1967 allows for an assessment of the impact of Guevara's death, as well as his writings, upon the development of revolutionary Christianity.

UK Revolutionary Christianity in the 21st Century

The revolutionary Christians of Latin America participated actively in the struggle to change the social, political and economic structures which they believed were causing poverty, injustice and inequality in their countries. Whilst the contexts are dramatically different I believe that there is an urgent need for the development of a revolutionary Christianity in the UK which similarly participates in the growing struggle to challenge and to change the social, economic and political structures of our society. These structures are built upon the substructure of the capitalist free market economy. Unlike the period in which Guevara was writing, capitalism has now become the one dominant global economic order. A feature of capitalism which has not changed since Guevara's time is that it continues to generate massive social and economic inequalities which we now experience both within the UK and beyond. To use a phrase of Enrique Dussel, such inequality is an "equivocal sign" of the kingdom¹² and demands a radical Christian response. This research hopes to uncover resources for UK Christian participation in the struggle to reshape the social, economic and political order by studying the links between Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America. If Guevara was a catalyst for Christian participation in revolutionary struggle in Latin America can he, or his writings, be a similar catalyst for action in the UK today? What were the shared aims and objectives of Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America and are these

¹² E. Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 175.

aims and objectives relevant in the UK context today? Were there elements of Guevara's thinking not taken up by the revolutionary Christians of Latin America which UK Christians might usefully appropriate today?

CHAPTER ONE

CHE GUEVARA

1.1 Introduction

I will begin by examining the key themes which emerge from the writings of Guevara. What were his overriding goals? What transformation did he seek for Cuba, for the world at large and for individual people and how was that transformation to be achieved? I will attempt to break down and categorise Guevara's thinking into specific aims and objectives in order that, in later chapters, they may be set alongside those aims and objectives of Latin American revolutionary Christianity.

1.2 Aims

1.2.1 *National liberation*

Guevara's account of the Cuban guerrilla war leading to the overthrow of Batista is also an account of his growing realisation that it was not enough simply for a revolutionary movement to gain political power. Exploitation and poverty would only be eradicated when a country freed itself from economic domination by other countries.¹³ Guevara was especially thinking of the powerful political and economic influence which the United States of America exerted on almost all Latin American countries. According to Guevara, it was the presence of the big North American monopolies in Latin America which had created a situation of political and economic dependence upon the North.

In a speech made in 1960 entitled "Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence" Guevara outlined his argument. He claimed that giant companies from the United States, such as The United Fruit Company and Standard Oil, very often functioned as monopolies within Latin America, which gave them great control over the local

¹³ For examples of Guevara's views political and economic independence see Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 237 and Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected works*, p. 351.

economies.¹⁴ They were able to set prices, control supply and demand and pay wages at an oppressively low level. Furthermore, Guevara argued that such foreign companies were able to exert an influence upon the political leadership of the country.

National sovereignty signifies, firstly, the right a country has that no one interferes in its life, the right that a people have to choose the government and the way of life that best suits it. It depends on its own choice and only the nation itself is the one to decide if a government changes or not. But all these concepts of political sovereignty, of national sovereignty are fictitious if alongside them there is no economic independence.¹⁵

A country which is not in control of its own economy because it is “penetrated by foreign capital” can never be free of the “tutelage” of the country on which it depends. If the dependent nation’s national interests clash with the interests of the dominant country the dependent nation must give way. For Guevara, the only way out of this relationship of dependence which challenges the idea of political sovereignty is to become “absolutely economically independent”.

The country cannot even dream of sovereignty unless it possesses power which can respond to the interests and aspirations of the people, and popular power not only means that the Cabinet, the police, the judiciary are in the hands of the people. It also means that the economic organs pass over to the people.¹⁶

Guevara argues in his speech of 1960 that although the revolution has been successful, economic independence is yet to be achieved and will not be achieved so long as “a ship detained in the United States forces a factory in Cuba to stop working, when simply an instruction from one of the monopolies paralyses a centre of work in Cuba.”¹⁷ For this reason it was not sufficient for the Cuban revolution simply to remove from power the former leader, Batista, who acted as nothing more than a “puppet king” for the monopolies of the United States, according to Guevara.

¹⁴ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 30.

¹⁵ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 31.

¹⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 33.

¹⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 33.

The whole system had to be uprooted and replaced by an entirely new economic structure for the country, based upon national ownership of the economic organs.

Cuba's political and economic independence was also weakened, according to Guevara, by the fact that the whole economy relied very heavily on one principal export, that of sugar. This exposed Cuba to the fluctuations in the world price of sugar, which at times meant that the market price of sugar was less than the original production costs of the sugar. Guevara believed that the global market price set for sugar did not fairly reflect its true value. He identified three principle solutions to this problem.

Firstly, Cuba needed a programme of diversification in its agriculture, to reduce its dependency on sugar.¹⁸ Secondly, new trading agreements with the communist bloc should be established whereby these countries committed themselves to buy sugar from Cuba at its "true" value, which generally meant at a price higher than the world market price.¹⁹ Thirdly, Guevara advocated the rapid industrialisation of the country. The industry which had been present in the country before the revolution was largely foreign (US) owned and relied heavily on imported machinery and spare parts. Guevara uses the example of the Cuban nickel mine of La Moa to illustrate his argument. The final product of the mine was processed outside Cuba, in the United States. It was at this final stage that most of the profits were made.²⁰ Guevara's intention was that new state owned industries would be set up with the help of the communist bloc's money, machinery and technical support, until Cuba was in a position to run its own industries with its own locally produced machinery and parts, and its own locally trained technicians and engineers.

For Guevara, this economic dependence of Cuba upon the United States meant that history was repeating itself:

The lack of industry, and the great economic significance of sugar conditioned the development of external trade producing all the

¹⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 38 and *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 167.

¹⁹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 239.

²⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 83.

characteristics of colonialism: raw materials to the metropolis; manufactured goods to the colony. The Spanish Empire had done the same but with less ability.²¹

A constant inspiration for Guevara in much of his thinking in this area was the Cuban national hero José Martí. Guevara makes regular use of a quotation from the writings of Martí in his arguments in favour of economic independence:

Whoever speaks of economic union speaks also of political union. The country which buys rules, the country which sells serves; one must find a proper trading balance in order to be sure of liberty. The country which wants to die sells to only one country, the country which wants to save itself sells to more than one country.²²

Finally, as part of his call for national liberation through economic independence, Guevara questions the concept of “development.” Dussel identifies the mid 1960s as the moment when the “developmentalist” analysis of the relationship between rich and poor countries was first challenged.²³ However, as early as 1961 Guevara was pouring scorn on the language of development. It masked the real economic relationships between the poor countries and the rich and was deliberately propounded by those who would gain most from a maintenance of the status quo:

This is what we really are, we the sweetly named “underdeveloped”; we are colonies, semi-colonies, or dependent countries. We are countries whose economies have been distorted by the action of imperialist powers who have abnormally developed the industrial and agriculture branches of our economy in order to meet the needs of their own complex economies. This “underdevelopment”, or distorted development, carries with it a dangerous specialisation of primary resources, which leaves the threat of hunger hanging over all the people. We the “underdeveloped” must cultivate a single crop, sell a single product on a single market ... which imposes and fixes conditions.²⁴

²¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 294.

²² Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 66.

²³ Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America*, pp. 326-7.

²⁴ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 105.

1.2.2 Communist society

Guevara looks for a progression from socialism, which on more than one occasion he describes as “the abolition of exploitation of man by man”,²⁵ to the final stage of communist society:

So, in a given moment, on some day in the years to come - after passing through many sacrifices, yes, after having seen ourselves at the very edge of destruction - maybe after seeing how our factories are destroyed and then rebuilt by us again, after having witnessed the assassination, the killing of many of us and the reconstruction of what has been destroyed, at the end of all this, some day, almost without realising it, we will have created, along with the other peoples of the world, the communist society, our ideal.²⁶

A study of Guevara’s references to this final age of communist society reveals what he believed to be its principal characteristics: liberty or liberation for all people,²⁷ peace,²⁸ the affirmation of human dignity,²⁹ the abolition of discrimination,³⁰ social justice,³¹ the fair and equal distribution of society’s riches³² and the end of exploitation.³³

The final inauguration of the communist society would be the signal that humanity had triumphed over the forces of oppression, greed and exploitation. Guevara’s use of Marx is very evident in his thinking about this future age. Kee, however, claims that Guevara’s grounding in Marx is shallow and that he does not employ Marx’s notion of the progression of “epochs”.³⁴ He finds “no mention of the mode of production” in Guevara’s writing.³⁵ Yet when Guevara is seeking to outline the steps that must be taken in order to arrive finally at this utopian vision, he clearly employs Marx’s theory of the historical procession from one economic epoch of

²⁵ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, p. 352 and Guevara, in *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 239 and 243.

²⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 167.

²⁷ e.g. Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 211 and *Escritos esenciales*, p. 195.

²⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 243.

²⁹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, pp. 84 and 166.

³⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, pp. 84 and 194.

³¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 163.

³² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 173.

³³ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 179.

³⁴ A. Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (SCM Press: London, 1990), pp. 136-7.

³⁵ Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, p. 137.

history to another. In 1964 he describes Cuba's progress towards the goal of a communist society in these terms:

We have scarcely completed five years of the revolution. We have not yet completed three years from having declared its socialist character. We are in the middle of a period of transition, the stage of construction prior to passing into socialism, and from there to the construction of communism. But already we have established as our objective the communist society.³⁶

In a more direct way Guevara uses Marx's theory of the progressive epochs of history in a speech he delivered to textile workers in Cuba in 1963:

When Marx made his analysis of societies, primitive society, feudal society and before that slave-based society were already known about, as was capitalist society. What Marx did was to analyse why each one had existed. He demonstrated that everything was linked to production, that the consciousness of man was generated by the environment in which he lived, and that environment was governed by his relationships to production. Marx did something even more important: he demonstrated that capitalism had to disappear and give way to a new society; the socialist society.³⁷

On many occasions Guevara expresses great optimism about the world's progress towards this final epoch of the communist society foreseen by Marx. Some passages suggest that he regarded it as an inevitable historical process:

The taking of power by the working class is an historical necessity. No one can oppose the course of history, so that those who do not want to give way in the face of reason and in the face of the unified forces of the working class should prepare themselves and defend their wrong reasoning with arms, and they should also prepare themselves to succumb to an historical force which has not yet discovered the limits of its power, its expansion, its capacity for continual ascent.³⁸

The influence of Lenin is also evident in the thinking of Guevara. In the same speech made to Cuban textile workers quoted above, Guevara, as on many

³⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 229.

³⁷ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 174.

³⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 140.

occasions, outlines Marx's theory of the successive stages of history. He then goes on to reflect on the importance of Lenin's development of Marx's thought, especially Lenin's notion that the transition from one historical epoch to another was not simply a mechanical, determined process over which human kind had very little control. Rather, the process could be accelerated by means of "certain catalysts" and a socialist society could be established even when surrounded on all sides by the old capitalist order, as in the case of the Soviet Union in its early years.³⁹

Lenin's argument that it was possible to accelerate the process of moving from one epoch to another was very important to Guevara, because this is what he claimed had happened in Cuba through the revolution. He also claimed that this was equally possible to achieve in other parts of Latin America. In this respect he often found himself at odds with the thinking of many of the national Communist Parties in Latin America. They generally argued that the capitalist era had to run its natural course before a revolution could be contemplated. Guevara argued that the necessary conditions for a revolution began to mature much more rapidly once a revolutionary programme had been launched.

And to all our brothers of America, comrades, when they were saying that it was impossible to do anything at this time because the conditions were not mature, the Cuban revolution propelled itself into the struggle, shouting back to them: the conditions mature in the process itself!⁴⁰

Guevara was constantly encouraging a new attitude to work amongst the Cubans after the revolution. His understanding of work is again heavily influenced by his Marxism. Now that the worker's relationship to the means of production has changed so also his attitude to work must change. Guevara explains that his attitude to work is "based on the Marxist concept that man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity."⁴¹ This new relationship to work will finally lead

³⁹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 174, 183 and 202.

⁴⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 142-3.

⁴¹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 394.

to the “complete spiritual recreation”⁴² of the worker. Work will become a moral duty or a moral necessity.⁴³ Guevara even suggests that work should now become an act of love:

We could invite you to the sugar cane fields to see our women cutting cane with love and grace, to see our workers cutting cane with love, to see a new attitude to work, to see that it is not work which enslaves the man, but rather not being the owner of the means of production.⁴⁴

Lenin’s concept of “the vanguard” was extremely important to Guevara. The vanguard, for Lenin, is the party or group which, as McLellan puts it, “could propose and put into action ideas based on theories that were not generated in the working class itself..... that was in advance of - and acting for the future benefit of - the workers who were as yet ignorant of where their true interests lay.”⁴⁵ Guevara uses the idea of the vanguard in three different ways. At times Cuba, as a nation, fulfils the role of the vanguard, preparing the way for revolution throughout Latin America.⁴⁶ At other times it is the guerrilla army which acts as the vanguard of the masses.⁴⁷ Finally, it is the most dedicated of the workers who form the vanguard, by their example encouraging others to develop an entirely new attitude to work. Guevara is thinking especially of those who offer to do extra unpaid work for the sake of the revolution.⁴⁸

Guevara frequently highlights the fact that the truths of Marxism were discovered through the practical experience of guerrilla warfare and the subsequent revolution, rather than the ideology being in place before the struggle began.⁴⁹ When the expedition first landed on the shores of Cuba its primary objective was to overthrow a corrupt government. “Administrative honesty was to be the principal idea of the new Cuban government” Guevara explained in an article written in 1960.⁵⁰ But by

⁴² Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 394.

⁴³ Guevara, in *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 231.

⁴⁴ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 238-9.

⁴⁵ D. McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx* (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 253.

⁴⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 138 and 202.

⁴⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 283 and *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 261.

⁴⁹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 275-6.

⁵⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 268-9.

the end of the campaign, their experience had taught them that something much more radical was needed to end the experience of exploitation in Cuba. Thus it was that Guevara's own experience and his reading of Marx, Lenin and Mao fed off each other to produce his and Cuba's own brand of communism.

Guevara, at times describes the inauguration of the final era of communist society in apocalyptic terms. He foresees an inevitable and bloody conflict between the forces of imperialism and the forces of liberation:

One must recognise that imperialism is a global system, the final stage of capitalism, and we must defeat it in a grand global confrontation.⁵¹

Indeed as Anderson records the details of the Cuban missile crisis it seems that Guevara was quite prepared for the United States and the Soviet Union to launch their nuclear missiles, thereby provoking the final global confrontation between imperialism and the forces of communism.⁵²

But beyond this final confrontation there lies what Guevara describes in one of his most famous articles as the "kingdom of freedom"⁵³ - communist society.

1.2.3 *The "New Man"*⁵⁴

To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base.⁵⁵

The "new man" of which Guevara speaks is to be born out of the workers' new relationship to the means of production and is therefore a post-revolutionary figure who begins to emerge as the new economic relationships are established. As we have noted, under communism, the motivation of the worker will be radically

⁵¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 91.

⁵² J.L. Anderson, *Che Guevara - a Revolutionary Life* (London: Bantam Press, 1997), p. 545.

⁵³ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 195.

⁵⁴ Guevara, conditioned by his age, intended to include both men and women in his usage of the term "new man". When referring directly to Guevara's or Latin American Revolutionary Christianity's use of the term I will place the phrase in inverted commas. When discussing the contemporary application of the term I will use "new person" or "new being".

⁵⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 390.

different. Workers will be driven forward in their work by a sense of moral and social duty.⁵⁶ The worker's motivation for their work should be a desire to support all the members of the community, rather than the worker's previous motivation under capitalism which Guevara regarded as obsessive and self-centred.

Work loses the category of obsession which it has in the capitalist world and comes to be a pleasing social duty, which is performed with happiness.⁵⁷

For Guevara it was very important that, within the "new man", the former "material incentive" of the capitalist order should be replaced by the "moral incentive" of the socialist order.

The hours of work are no longer important, how much one earns is no longer important, financial rewards do not matter; what does matter is the moral satisfaction of having contributed towards the betterment of society, the moral satisfaction of putting something of oneself into the collective task, and seeing how, thanks to your work, thanks to that small part of your individual work ... a collective, harmonious labour is created, which is a reflection of a society which progresses.⁵⁸

It is therefore essential, for Guevara, that the "new man" must develop a new consciousness, a new mentality, in relation to his work and in relation to society. Guevara describes the battle being waged in the minds of the workers between the old mentality of capitalism which is inevitably on the wane, given the workers' new relationship to the means of production, and "the new revolutionary consciousness".⁵⁹ It was through the practice of voluntary work, workers doing extra hours at their place of work for no extra pay, that this new mentality could be most easily developed, according to Guevara.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 109.

⁵⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 155. See also Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, p. 263.

⁵⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 175.

⁵⁹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 170.

⁶⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 239.

Furthermore, it was necessary to develop this new consciousness not only within the individual “new man” but also at a national level amongst the countries of the socialist bloc, so that a sense of moral responsibility towards the needs of other peoples guided trading agreements rather than the cold logic of market forces.⁶¹

The qualities of the “new man” are clearly described on many occasions within the speeches and writing of Guevara. One of the most frequently mentioned qualities is a heightened sensitivity to other people’s experience of injustice. In a speech made to teachers and students of architecture in Cuba in 1963 Guevara mentions this quality as one of the “duties” of Cuban revolutionaries:

[It is] the duty to be sensitive to all the suffering in the world, to all the exploitation and injustice; a duty which Martí summarised and which we have used on many occasions, and which should be nailed to the head of our beds, in the most visible place, and that is that “every true man should feel on his cheek the blow struck on the cheek of any other man.”⁶²

It was this sensitivity in the face of injustice which Guevara highlighted in his letter to his children written before his final Bolivian expedition and which was to be given to them in the event of his death.

Above all, always be capable of feeling in the very depth of your being whatever injustice committed against whatever person in whatever part of the world. This is the most beautiful quality of a revolutionary.⁶³

The “new man” will also achieve a greater sense of wholeness than the “old man” of capitalism, whose experience of life was fragmented and dominated by materialism.

We are not concerned with how many kilograms of meat one eats or how many times a year one can go to the beach, nor how many beautiful foreign imports we can buy with our present salaries. We are

⁶¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 237.

⁶² Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 204.

⁶³ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 234.

concerned with making the individual feel more whole, with a greater sense of inner well-being and personal responsibility.⁶⁴

Another quality of the “new man” is to be his love for others.

Let me say to you, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality.⁶⁵

Guevara was aware that his advocacy of love might sound strange coming from someone who had strongly argued for the use of violence against those who resisted change. He argues that the love of the revolutionary, the “new man”, must be an “idealised” love directed to meeting the widest needs of humanity rather than a love which is reduced to “the small doses of daily love” practised by “common man” which bring about no lasting change for those who need it.⁶⁶

Central to Guevara’s concept of the “new man” was a spirit of sacrifice. The importance of sacrifice is not an emphasis which Guevara draws from his reading of Marx, who rarely refers to sacrifice. Rather, the experience of guerrilla warfare may have heightened Guevara’s awareness of the need for sacrifice. In his writings the guerrilla’s readiness to offer his life for the sake of the revolution is underlined.⁶⁷ Indeed, the guerrilla is seen as the precursor of the “new man”. In his essay “Socialism and Man in Cuba”, Guevara describes the period of guerrilla warfare in Cuba:

It was the first heroic stage, in which each one competed to obtain a position of greater responsibility, of greater danger, without any other satisfaction other than that of fulfilling one’s duty. In the attitude of our fighters one glimpsed the man of the future.⁶⁸

After the period of armed struggle that same spirit of sacrifice should be as deeply rooted in the mind of the worker. Indeed this new sacrificial lifestyle should be so

⁶⁴ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 193.

⁶⁵ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 193.

⁶⁶ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 193.

⁶⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 61.

⁶⁸ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 180.

much a part of the “new man” that sacrifice for the sake of the common good would be seen as simply a natural part of daily life: “what one has to do and what is natural to do”.⁶⁹ This must be so because the cost of bringing to birth a new age has to be borne by the forerunners of that revolution, by the vanguard, as Guevara would put it.

This is a generation of sacrifice; this generation, our generation, will not even remotely experience the benefits which later generations will experience. And we must be clear, conscious of this, conscious of our role, because we have had the immense glory of being the vanguard of the revolution in America.⁷⁰

The spirit of sacrifice should not just be a quality of the individual, it should be a quality of the nation as a whole. Guevara even suggests at one point that Cuba would be willing to sacrifice itself in a nuclear war in order to bring liberation to America.⁷¹

Guevara himself sought to act as a precursor of the sacrificial “new man”. He was renowned for his willingness to undertake voluntary work, cutting cane at the weekends while President of the National Bank. He was also extremely ascetic in his own private life; a teetotaller, he refused to allow himself or his family any special privileges in the new Cuba. As President of the National Bank and later as Minister of Industry, he refused to collect the salary he was due, continuing on his previous, and much smaller, soldier’s salary. Orlando Borrego, a government colleague of Guevara describes how he was criticised by Guevara for possessing an ostentatious car and ordered to change it because it was not one a “representative of the people” should be seen driving. “Che was super-strict ... like Jesus Christ,” recalls Borrego.⁷²

Finally, Guevara’s own personal sense of mission was closely tied to a spirit of sacrifice, the central quality of the “new man”.

⁶⁹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 171.

⁷⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 202-3.

⁷¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 72-3.

⁷² Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, p. 504.

I am convinced that I have a mission to fulfil in the world, and that in pursuit of that mission I must sacrifice the home, I must sacrifice all the pleasures of daily life of whatever type, I must sacrifice my own personal security, and perhaps I must sacrifice my own life. But it is a commitment I have with the people and I sincerely think that I cannot abandon it until the end of my life.⁷³

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 *Taking power*

Guevara became convinced that the first requirement for any radical change in society was a change in political leadership.⁷⁴ A revolutionary programme could not be implemented unless, firstly, political power was achieved. It was necessary to remove from political power those who represented the interests of the exploiters. The large landowners, foreign monopolies, foreign banks were the principal forces of exploitation in Cuba and throughout Latin America, according to Guevara. His greatest invective was reserved for the United States, which he regarded as a neo-colonial power seeking to establish political and economic control over the whole continent.

Political power must be transferred to that great majority of the people whose previous experience has been one of poverty, hardship and unemployment as a result of the exploitation of the powerful few. This transfer of political power must be achieved by whatever means are necessary. If a democratic transition was not viable, then a transition of power by violent means was entirely justifiable and necessary according to Guevara.

It would be an unpardonable error to underestimate the benefit which a revolutionary programme would gain by participating in the electoral process; in the same way, it would be unpardonable to limit itself to the electoral process alone and not see other means of struggle, including armed struggle, to obtain power, which is the indispensable

⁷³ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 147-8.

⁷⁴ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, p. 104. In this passage Guevara describes the “fundamental goal” of a Marxist-Leninist party as the “acquisition of power”.

instrument needed to apply and develop the revolutionary programme.⁷⁵

Guevara believed that certain conditions had to be in place before an attempt could be made to assume political power by violent means. These conditions are outlined in his essay “The Essence of the Struggle; Guerrilla Strategy and Tactics.” Firstly, all democratic means of bringing about a transition of power must be entirely exhausted.

Where a government has assumed power by means of some form of popular ballot, fraudulent or otherwise, and, at least, an appearance of constitutional legality is maintained, then it is impossible to generate a guerrilla uprising, because all the possibilities of a civic struggle have not yet been exhausted.⁷⁶

The second condition stipulated by Guevara for a successful armed struggle is the general support of the local population for the cause. If there exists a sense of antagonism, fear or mistrust on the part of the local population towards the guerrilla force, then there can be no hope of success.⁷⁷

Finally, Guevara insisted that, in the context of Latin America, a popular armed struggle could only be effective if it was launched from within the rural zone rather than within the cities. An armed revolutionary force operating in an urban setting was generally obliged to act as an underground movement and was extremely vulnerable to being entirely wiped out. A guerrilla group operating in remote countryside was more able to establish itself openly, build up support from amongst the local population, initiate in the area it controlled the social, political and economic changes it sought for the whole country and, as its support grew, move in towards the urban centres. The development of a permanent guerrilla “focus” on the ground in rural areas came to be known as Guevara’s “foquismo” theory.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 108.

⁷⁶ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 20.

⁷⁷ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 21.

⁷⁸ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 20.

These three conditions had to be in place in order for a transition of power by violent means to be appropriate, according to Guevara. If they were not in place political change should be sought through the democratic process. However, Guevara was fully aware that when the democratic option was chosen the chances of bringing about radical social and economic change within the country were very limited.

If a popular movement assumes the government of a country through wide and popular electoral support and resolves, consequently, to initiate the great social transformations contained within its manifesto which led to its triumph, will it not enter immediately into conflict with the reactionary classes of that country, and has not the army always been the instrument of oppression of that class? If this is the case, it is logical to reason that the army will take the side of its class and will enter into conflict with the elected government. The government may be brought down through a more or less bloodless coup d'état and the endless cycle begins again.⁷⁹

Guevara's doubts about the durability of the democratic option led him increasingly to see the option for armed struggle as the only effective and lasting route to power in the Latin American context. His most systematic argument in favour of the use of violence to bring about change appears in his essay "Guerrilla Warfare: a Method". He argues that the traditional ruling class have always used violence to maintain their power, but this violence is generally accepted because it has been "authorised" by the laws of the state, laws which, in fact, bolster up the ruling classes own oppressive rule. Guevara argues that "violence is not the patrimony of the exploiters, the exploited can use it too and, what is more, should use it at the right moment."⁸⁰

However, he remained forever conscious of the great price that was paid when a revolutionary force engaged in the armed struggle. In a speech he made to students in Uruguay in 1961 Guevara argued that the political situation in Uruguay permitted a revolutionary programme to be pursued by democratic means rather than through

⁷⁹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 108-9.

⁸⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 180.

the armed struggle. He warns his audience of the cycle of bloodshed which can develop when violent means are chosen in order to bring about political change.

Once the first shot is fired one never knows when the last shot will be fired. Because the last shot was not fired on the last day of [our] revolution; one had to keep shooting. They fired at us and, in turn, we had to be hard, we had to punish some people by death. They attacked us again, and again, and will keep on attacking us ... And this struggle, which naturally allows a very rapid construction of the country ... also leaves a series of consequences which, afterwards, are very hard to cure.⁸¹

1.3.2 *Agrarian reform*

Agrarian reform within Cuba and throughout Latin America was a key objective for Guevara. It was important to him for various reasons.

Firstly, it signalled the radical nature of a revolution. A true revolution from Guevara's point of view, was more than merely a change in political leadership, it should involve something far more profound; a radical transformation of the social and economic relationships within the country. In his article "Cuba, Historical Exception or the Vanguard in the Fight against Colonialism?" Guevara explains that in the early days of the Cuban revolution, the guerrilla war was greatly helped by the fact that their rhetoric about radical change and agrarian reform was not taken seriously by the United States.⁸² The government of the United States was very keen to replace Batista as president of Cuba because of his general unpopularity within the country and his worsening record on human rights abuses. The North Americans believed they could "do business" with the young leaders of the guerrilla army once they had come into power, and so maintain the general status quo. Thus it was that the passing of the Agrarian Reform law as the revolution's first act once in power came as a disturbing shock to the United States, according to Guevara. But by the time they realised that they were dealing with a different kind of revolution it was then too late to halt their progress. As Guevara said at the First Latin American Congress of Youth held in Havana in 1960 "They (the US) suddenly realised that

⁸¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 180.

⁸² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 101-2.

the Agrarian Reform law was much more rigorous and much more profound than the wise counsellors of their own government had suggested.”⁸³

Guevara was convinced that agrarian reform lay at the heart of any true revolution in Latin America. “No revolutionary government can truly call itself revolutionary, here in America, if its first measure is not to introduce an agrarian reform law,” Guevara claims in the same Youth Congress. But he goes on to add that such a reform must be truly radical, rather than just a few moderate concessions to the landless poor.

A government cannot call itself revolutionary if it says it is going to introduce or is introducing a tepid agrarian reform law. A government is revolutionary if it introduces an agrarian reform law which changes the rules about ownership of the land. Not only giving to the peasant land which is left over, but rather, and principally, giving to the peasant land which is not left over, that which is in the hands of the big landowner, which is always the best land, which renders the best harvest, and, furthermore, land which they stole from the peasant in times past.⁸⁴

Guevara describes how the importance of agrarian reform was driven home to him during the period of guerrilla warfare in the Sierra Maestra, as the guerrilla force recruited more and more of the local landless peasants to the cause. Guevara recognised that it was their intense desire for a redistribution of the land which fed their revolutionary zeal. As the guerrilla campaign advanced and more and more land came under their control so the redistribution of land took place, from the big landowners to the landless peasants, paving the way for the future Agrarian Reform law.

With agrarian reform as their banner, which already began to take place in the Sierra Maestra, these men began to confront imperialism. Know, therefore, that agrarian reform is the base on which the new Cuba will be built; know as well, that agrarian reform will give land to all the dispossessed but will dispossess the unjust owners; and know

⁸³ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 63.

⁸⁴ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 65.

that the greatest of the unjust owners are influential men in the State Department or in the government of the United States of America.⁸⁵

Agrarian reform was important to Guevara because he believed the process of reform provided a key stimulus for the revolution to go even deeper, to transform itself into a fully socialist revolution. In a speech delivered at a conference in Uruguay where the US aid programme for Latin America was being discussed, Guevara describes to the other delegates the nature of the Cuban revolution:

It is an agrarian revolution, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist, which has gone through a process of transforming itself, by force of internal evolution and external aggression, into a socialist revolution ... A socialist revolution which took the land from those who had much and gave it to those who earned their living on the land, or distributed it as co-operatives to other groups of people who had no land to work.⁸⁶

1.3.3 *Developing a new consciousness*

We have noted that a new consciousness is closely bound up with the emergence of the “new man” in Guevara’s thought. Indeed the “new man” is precisely the one who has developed a new consciousness and this consciousness is shown to be genuine in a new attitude to work, a sense of moral duty and a sacrificial spirit.⁸⁷ Guevara, strongly influenced by Marxist thought, argues that the new consciousness and the “new man” can only emerge as a consequence of a change in production relations:

What Marx did was to analyse the reason for each [society] and demonstrate that everything was related to production. He showed that man’s thinking is generated by the environment in which he lives, and that this environment is determined by production relations.⁸⁸

The development of a new consciousness is therefore seen by Guevara predominantly as a *post*-revolutionary process in contrast to the conscientisation process described by Freire which generally refers to the development of an

⁸⁵ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 275.

⁸⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 81.

⁸⁷ See section 1.2.3, pp. 15-20.

⁸⁸ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, p. 245. See also Carlos Tablada Pérez, *El Pesamiento económico de Ernesto Che Guevara* (Havana: Edición César Ramos, 1987), p. 182.

awareness of the structures of oppression and exploitation in a *pre-revolutionary* context. Indeed, the title of his most famous work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* assumes this pre-revolutionary context. It should be noted, however, that Freire does recognise two stages to the conscientisation process. The first stage relates to “the change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression”⁸⁹ and this is the main focus of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. But Freire also envisages a second, post-revolutionary process of conscientisation which takes place “through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order, which like spectres haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation.”⁹⁰

The struggle to expel these myths of the old order was a central concern for Guevara after the revolution. Whilst he held fast to his view that the “new man” and the new consciousness could only emerge after the transformation of production relations,⁹¹ he acknowledged that this change would not occur automatically. Despite the changes in economic relations brought about by the revolution Guevara noted that a proportion of the work force “still hold within them many of the bad habits inherited from another epoch.”⁹² The old consciousness, no longer appropriate to the new set of economic relations needed to be erased through dialogue and education:

There remains within the working class, however, some of that spirit that divided issues according to employer and employee ... So today, when we begin our industrialisation process and give a major role to the state, we see that many workers consider the state another employer. Our state is precisely the opposite of a patron-state [one that owns the means of production]; consequently long dialogues are being carried out with the workers to point this out. Workers are changing their attitudes, but for a while they put a brake on development.⁹³

⁸⁹ P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 31.

⁹⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 31.

⁹¹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 245, 302 and 394.

⁹² E. Guevara, *Educación y hombre nuevo*, p. 57.

⁹³ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, pp. 231-2. See also Martí, *Pensamiento pedagógico*, pp. 10-11.

The new consciousness appropriate to the new economic relations was to be forged not just through dialogue and education but also through the workers' willing participation in voluntary work. It was not the benefits to the Cuban economy of voluntary work which interested Guevara but rather its contribution towards developing a new attitude to work appropriate to the new economic reality.

Voluntary work is the genuine expression of the communist attitude toward work in a society where the fundamental means of production belong to the society; it is the example of men who love the proletarian cause and who subordinate to that cause their moments of recreation and rest in order to unselfishly fulfil the tasks of the revolution.⁹⁴

The replacement of the material incentive to work by the moral incentive would herald the birth of the "new man". Until that time Guevara accepts the continuing use of the material incentive to encourage people to work as a "necessary evil".⁹⁵ Guevara equates the moral stimulus with the new consciousness⁹⁶ and foresees the time when the material stimulus will wither away and be replaced entirely by the moral stimulus in the communist society of the future.

Material incentives are something left over from the past. They are something which we must accept but whose hold on the mind of the people we must gradually break as the revolutionary process goes forward. One type of incentive is definitely on the rise; the other must definitely be on the way to extinction. Material incentives will not play a part in the new society being created; they will die out as we advance. We must establish the conditions under which the type of motivation operative today will increasingly lose its importance and be replaced by nonmaterial incentives such as the sense of duty and the new revolutionary way of thinking.⁹⁷

1.3.4 *Revolutionary unity and internationalism*

During the period of guerrilla warfare, Guevara increasingly recognised the need to forge unity between the disparate groups and sections of the population opposed to

⁹⁴ Memorandum composed by Guevara and three other members of the government, Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 342. See also Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, pp. 305 and 307, Martí, *Pensamiento pedagógico*, p. 139, Guevara, *Educación y hombre nuevo*, p. 50.

⁹⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 303-4.

⁹⁶ Guevara, *Educación y hombre nuevo*, p. 77.

⁹⁷ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 243.

the Batista regime. In particular, he notes how the original guerrilla force, who were mainly from an urban, middle class background, came to recognise the importance of working with the local rural population. In the same way, the local peasants benefited from their close contact with the guerrilla force:

The peasant taught us wisdom, we taught him our sense of rebellion. Since then and forever the Cuban peasants, the rebel forces, and the revolutionary government march united.⁹⁸

Freire sees Guevara's emphasis on "communion with the people" as a key element in the forging of a revolutionary ideology.⁹⁹

As the war developed so the need grew for uniting the various revolutionary organisations and guerrilla forces. Anderson describes in detail the events leading up to the signing of *Unity Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra* by Castro¹⁰⁰ and Guevara's signing of the *Pedrero Pact*¹⁰¹ which sealed a local alliance between the *Directorio Revolucionario* and Castro's own guerrilla force *Movimiento 26 de Julio*.¹⁰² After the war, Guevara explains what the revolutionary struggle has taught them:

Now we are learning what is always learnt in revolution; that there cannot be disunion, that we cannot fight against great enemies, separated one from another, that there is only one common enemy ... imperialism.¹⁰³

Guevara recognised that such revolutionary unity had to be extended to the international level if his vision of a global transformation, articulated in his *Message to the Tricontinental*¹⁰⁴ was to be realised. Guevara calls upon the Socialist countries to practise "proletarian internationalism"¹⁰⁵ and support each

⁹⁸ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, p. 248.

⁹⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 319-32.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 354-5.

¹⁰² For the wording of the Pedrero pact, see Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Works*, pp. 41-2.

¹⁰³ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, pp. 177-8.

¹⁰⁴ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 379.

¹⁰⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 413-24.

other economically as smaller socialist countries sought to free themselves from “economic imperialist control”.¹⁰⁶ But Guevara called not just for economic unity. His internationalism envisaged a global military alliance of socialist countries which would overthrow the capitalist order:

What a luminous, near future would be visible to us if two, three or many Vietnams appeared throughout the world with their share of death and immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and repeated blows against imperialism, obliging it to disperse its forces under the attack and the increasing hatred of all the peoples of the earth! And if we were capable of uniting to make our blows more solid and infallible so that the effectiveness of every kind of support given to the struggling peoples were increased - how great and how near our future would be.

Finally, it appears that Guevara’s call for revolutionary unity extended even as far as the Christians of Latin America. In a passage attributed to Guevara by several revolutionary Christian groups Guevara notes the key role that the Christian masses of Latin America could potentially play in the revolutionary struggle:

Only when Christians have the courage to give a wholehearted revolutionary testimony will the Latin American revolution become unstoppable.¹⁰⁷

1.4 Conclusion

This brief survey of Guevara’s writings and speeches has highlighted those aims and objectives which were key to his revolutionary perspective. This will help us to identify, in later chapters, firstly the degree to which Guevara’s thinking acted as a direct influence upon the emergence of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America from the mid 1960s onwards, and secondly, regardless of direct influence, the degree to which Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity shared the same aims and objectives. Further detail of Guevara’s aims and objectives will emerge as we examine those of each revolutionary Christian group.

¹⁰⁶ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 237. See also Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 379-80.

¹⁰⁷ These words of Guevara do not appear in his published writings. However, they are words attributed to Guevara by several writers. For example, J.M. Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age* (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 2. See also pp. 90, 127 and 190.

CHAPTER TWO

CAMILO TORRES

2.1 Introduction

Torres was born into an upper middle class and anti-clerical Colombian family. His interest in Christianity was kindled through his contact with two French Dominicans in his first year at the National University of Bogotá in 1947. After joining the Dominican order and receiving his training and ordination in Colombia, Torres studied for a sociology degree at the University of Louvain in Belgium. On his return he became chaplain and a lecturer at the National University of Bogotá, but after supporting a student strike in 1962 he was forced to resign from both posts. Over the next three years Torres' outlook became increasingly radicalised and politicised. In 1965 he formed the United Front which he hoped would draw all opposition parties together into a popular coalition. This was rapidly followed by his enforced laicization by Cardinal Concha and his decision to join the Colombian guerrilla group "Ejército de Liberación Nacional" (ELN) in October 1965. In February 1966 he was killed in an ambush.

2.2 Influences

Camilo Torres and Che Guevara were born within six months of each other. The period of development of Torres' revolutionary Christianity (1961-66) coincides with the early years of the Cuban revolution. A study of the wide ranging influences upon Torres will enable us to assess the degree to which the Cuban revolution, and Che Guevara in particular, shaped his revolutionary thinking.

2.2.1 *Maritain*

At the time of Torres' enrolment at the National University of Bogotá he was yet to display any active commitment to Christianity, let alone radical Christianity. His attitude to the church was one he appears to have adopted from his parents, considering it to be a reactionary force in society and entirely out of touch with the

realities of contemporary life.¹⁰⁸ However, during his first (and only) term at University he came into contact with two French Dominicans, Father Blanchett and Father Nielly who were to kindle his interest in Christianity with a social orientation. According to Houtard, these French Dominicans, in turn, had been influenced by the thinking of Jacques Maritain.¹⁰⁹ In his writings Maritain calls for a “new humanism” or a “theocentric” or “Christian humanism”. This new humanism would offer a “third way” between capitalism and communism, it “would tend to substitute for bourgeois civilisation and for an economic system based on the fecundity of money, not a collectivist economy but a ‘personalistic’ democracy”.¹¹⁰ For Maritain “a political ideal of justice and civic friendship, requiring political strength and technical equipment, but inspired by love, is alone able to direct the work of social regeneration”.¹¹¹ It is possible that Maritain’s occasional reference to “efficacious love” in this context¹¹² may have provided the inspiration for Torres’ later use of the term.¹¹³

Torres’ introduction to the ideas of Maritain through his conversations with the Dominicans did not expose him directly to revolutionary Christian theory, but rather to a previously unexperienced line of Roman Catholic thinking which demonstrated a concern for social justice. Several years later, while studying at the University of Louvain in Belgium, Torres’ writing continued to reflect the influence of Maritain.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ See A. Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution to Revolutionary Praxis? An Examination of the Significance of Religious Belief for the Political Philosophies of Gerard Winstanley and Camilo Torres* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Kent at Canterbury, 1989), pp. 181-3.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in “Introduction: Camilo Torres and the Revolutionary Church”, in J. Gerassi, (ed.), *Revolutionary Priest: The Complete Writings and Message of Camilo Torres* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p.18.

¹¹⁰ J. Maritain, *What is Man?* [online]. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame. Available from: <http://www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/jm502.htm> [Accessed 14th March 1999].

¹¹¹ Maritain, *What is Man?* [Accessed 14th March 1999].

¹¹² J. Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*. [online]. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame. Available from: <http://www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/jm604a.htm> [Accessed 14th March 1999] and Maritain, *What is Man?* [Accessed 14th March 1999].

¹¹³ See pp. 54-5.

¹¹⁴ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, pp. 198-9.

2.2.2 Louvain

After his ordination as a priest Torres travelled to Belgium, to the University of Louvain. During his four years in Louvain, while he studied for his sociology degree, Torres was exposed to other new influences upon his thinking.

The very sociological studies which he was undertaking nurtured in Torres a belief that a “scientific solution” was needed for the problems which bedevilled Colombian society. At this stage Torres saw possibilities for change in his country if the scientific approach was combined with what Bradstock describes as a “spirit of selflessness”.¹¹⁵ At a later stage, Torres frequently expressed his conviction that the call for revolution could be justified as the logical conclusion of scientific research and analysis of the Colombian social context. The roots of this “scientific argument” for revolution can be traced back to his social science studies at Louvain. We see this “scientific” approach in the letter which Torres was later to write to Bishop Rubén Isaza in Bogotá, responding to the bishop’s request that he should resign from his university post and take up pastoral studies within the diocese:

I believe that either I can defend my forestated opinions by sound theology or that they constitute a working hypothesis which can be proved by empirical research.¹¹⁶

In his statement to the press which outlined the circumstances of his laicisation Torres explains how his scientific analysis led him to the revolutionary option:

I was chosen by Christ to be a priest forever because of the desire to consecrate my full time to the love of my fellow men. As a sociologist I have wanted this love to be translated into efficient service through technology and science. My analysis of Colombian society made me realise that revolution is necessary to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and procure a life of well-being for the needy majority of our people.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 196.

¹¹⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 305.

¹¹⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 325.

At Louvain Torres began to explore the possibilities of a merging together of objective scientific analysis with the Christian ideal of love. Gerassi describes it as a “committed sociology”¹¹⁸. Later, Torres himself speaks of the Colombian people’s need for “the attainment of a scientific ideal”¹¹⁹ and his own desire for a “rational nonconformity”.¹²⁰

Further influence upon Torres during his time in Europe came from his contact with other students who did not necessarily share his own Roman Catholic perspective. Much of this contact came through his involvement with the Colombian Team of Socio-Economic Investigation (Equipo Colombiano de Investigación Socio Económico - ECISE) which Torres helped to set up. The first policy document of this group reflects the point which Torres’ own thinking had reached by this stage. The document stresses the need for “strictly objective investigation” into the problems of Colombian society but at the same time calls for an “altruistic” approach to these problems.¹²¹

Torres travelled widely in Europe during his time in Louvain, often with a view to establishing new ECISE committees in other universities. Bradstock notes that a number of students in Berlin were strongly critical of Torres and the line of thought promoted by ECISE which continued to show evidence of the influence of Maritain.¹²² The Berlin students’ criticism came from a Marxist perspective and it seems that his time at Louvain provided Torres with his first significant exposure to Marxist thought, both through his visits to Eastern Bloc countries and also through his own reading of Marx.¹²³ In a later section I shall examine Torres’ use of Marx in his writings.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 21.

¹¹⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 320.

¹²⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 382.

¹²¹ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 195.

¹²² Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 198.

¹²³ For a discussion about the level of Torres’ exposure to Marxism in Louvain see Guzman, *Camilo Torres*, pp. 16-18.

¹²⁴ See section 2.2.6, pp. 40-42.

Despite these various influences upon Torres during his time at Louvain there is no evidence that Torres had yet developed a revolutionary perspective. Kee notes that Torres had read Marx at Louvain but that his writings “show no influence of ideological Marxism”.¹²⁵ Bradstock, likewise, argues that whilst Torres had developed the tools necessary for scientific research into society’s inequalities, he had not been given the tools for analysing and criticising those inequalities in a radical way.¹²⁶

These views are supported by an article which Torres produced in 1957, near the end of his time in Louvain. In his argument Torres still accepts the dominant view that solutions to poverty and inequality are to be found in a gradual reform of the present socio-economic system. Capitalism itself is not to be condemned, only the abuse of the capitalist system:

Christianity is such a powerful force that it is capable of humanising any system, even the capitalist one.¹²⁷

2.2.3 *Contact with Colombian peasants*

After his return to Colombia in 1959, Torres’ contact with Colombian peasants came about in two ways. Firstly, through his work with the Colombian Land Reform Institute (El Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria - ENCORA) and the School of Public Administration (La Escuela de Administración Pública - ESA). Torres was involved in various projects of both organisations which brought him into frequent contact with both the urban and the rural poor. In an interview given in 1965 Torres explains that one of the lessons he learnt from his work with ENCORA was that “true land reform carried out by peasants” could only take place when the “peasants” had developed an “awareness of themselves as a group” and once they had organised themselves “into a major pressure group”.¹²⁸ We see

¹²⁵ Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, p. 141.

¹²⁶ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 197.

¹²⁷ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 199.

¹²⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 321-2.

these two themes of conscientisation and organised opposition emerging later in Torres' writing when he is advocating a fully revolutionary programme.¹²⁹

Secondly, Torres' continuing sociological studies brought him into contact with the urban and rural poor and the conclusions of his research helped to shape his revolutionary thinking.

The first significant piece of sociological research which Torres undertook on his return to Colombia was a study of the effects of the "Radio Schools" upon rural communities in Colombia. This study was undertaken between the years 1958 and 1961. The first radio school had been established by a catholic priest, Father José Salcedo, in 1947 in the village of Sutazenza, and others had been established in surrounding villages. The radio schools intended to provide a service of information and education in villages where no formal means of education existed. Torres concludes his study by arguing that these schools had been effective in bringing about social change in these areas, but that this change was largely to be seen in terms of changing attitudes of the poor towards technical and cultural progress, rather than a change in their physical and economic conditions. The study warns of the danger of developing the expectations of the rural poor when this does not go hand in hand with an improvement in their economic state:

If the discrepancy between needs felt and the realisation of them is not reduced at a satisfactory pace, discontent ... could easily grow to encompass the whole government and all of society. This discontent could lead to a violent revolutionary situation as often happens when perceived needs find no pacific outlet or hope of solution.¹³⁰

In this study Torres still believes the solution to this problem can be found in "structural reform" rather than a radical change of structures.¹³¹ At this stage in the development of his thinking, revolution remains an ill which can be avoided by appropriate reform to the present system rather than something to be actively

¹²⁹ For example Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 387.

¹³⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 154.

¹³¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 156.

promoted in order to effect the wholesale structural change which alone can eradicate poverty and inequality.

Another highly significant study was read by Torres as a paper at the National Sociological Congress in Bogotá in 1963. The paper presented the conclusions of Torres' research into the effects of *La Violencia* upon the rural poor of Colombia. *La Violencia* was the term used to describe the prolonged period of violence and guerrilla warfare which had ravaged many areas of the Colombian countryside ever since the assassination of Jorge Eliézer Gaitán in 1948.¹³² Torres concludes that *La Violencia* had acted as a highly effective catalyst for social change in rural Colombia. In his introduction Torres claims not to be making any value judgements about the rightness or wrongness of using violence to bring about social change in rural Colombia, although he states that "violence, in general, cannot be justified from the moral point of view".¹³³ Torres' declared intention is to be an objective, scientific observer of the effects of rural violence in Colombia. However, it is difficult to believe that this study was not a significant factor in the shaping of Torres' attitude to the use of violence in a revolutionary struggle.

In the paper Torres explains how the activities of guerrilla forces helped to break down the isolation of rural communities:

Besides their regular system of communication, the armed forces were themselves a human system for transmitting news and introducing social values and standards of conduct, from the city to the rural area and between the various rural neighbourhoods. As a result the rural populations have entered into contact with each other, becoming aware of common needs and acquiring a group solidarity as they compared their own socio-economic conditions with other higher levels of life, both rural and urban.¹³⁴

These newly discovered channels of communication provided the starting point for the process of developing "class consciousness" amongst the rural peasant communities:

¹³² For an account of *La Violencia* see Broderick, *Priest-Guerrillero*, pp. 39-41.

¹³³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 191.

¹³⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 197.

Social change occurs because peasants, having created group solidarity (which Marx would call class consciousness), begin to form a pressure group which, when organised can become important in the transformation of the social, political and economic structure of Colombia.¹³⁵

As the paper progresses Torres lists the social changes which *La Violencia* has produced. *La Violencia* has broken up “peasant individualism” and encouraged “patterns of behaviour in which teamwork has become indispensable”.¹³⁶ It has encouraged the organisation of production within rural communities which, in turn, has forged “a mentality of co-operation, initiative and class consciousness”.¹³⁷ Through military successes in guerrilla warfare peasants have been able to overcome their “feeling of inferiority”. *La Violencia* created for the peasants “abnormal instruments” for social ascent. For example, it had allowed new leaders from the peasant class to participate in the informal systems of government in those areas under guerrilla control. Previously, access to political leadership was denied them by the ruling minority’s control of the (often fraudulent) electoral system.¹³⁸

In a passage reminiscent of Guevara’s description of the positive effects of the Cuban guerrilla war upon those who were involved,¹³⁹ Torres describes how *La Violencia* acted as a catalyst for change:

When we look at social change, we note that the very structures of this unofficial army of guerrillas changed the values, the attitude, and the conduct not only of those peasants who have joined the army but of those who have just had some contact with it. The guerrillas have imposed discipline requested by the peasants themselves. They have made authority more democratic and have given confidence and a sense of security to our rural communities, as we mentioned when we discussed the spirit of inferiority which has disappeared in the peasant areas where *La Violencia* has manifested itself.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 197.

¹³⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 201.

¹³⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 201.

¹³⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 218.

¹³⁹ For example Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 180.

¹⁴⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 229.

Reading a passage such as this, especially in the light of Torres' later decision to join a guerrilla force, it is hard to accept Torres' claim that he is merely an objective analyser of the facts who does not seek to form any value judgement based upon those facts. At the very least Torres seems to be intimating in this passage that *La Violencia* and the guerrilla warfare associated with *La Violencia* has generated some positive results within the rural communities.

In his conclusion to the paper, Torres, nevertheless, still expresses the hope that change will come about in Colombian society by means of "technically planned development"¹⁴¹ rather than through revolutionary change. He doubts, however, the ability of "the ruling class" to "adapt itself to social change that is inevitable".¹⁴² For Torres, if this "inevitable" social change is not permitted because the ruling class do not unblock the channels of advancement for peasant leaders then social ascent by means of violence remains the only other option for the rural peasant communities.

In conclusion, whilst we do not see Torres advocating an openly revolutionary programme for social and structural change, this study of the effects of violence in the context of a guerrilla war may well have influenced Torres in his later perspective on the use of violence within a revolutionary struggle.

2.2.4 *Contact with radical groups*

Bradstock highlights the dialogue which Torres had with student groups and, in particular, with communist students at the Central University in Caracas, Venezuela in April 1961. Shortly before this meeting the group of students had voted to pursue a revolutionary programme by means of guerrilla warfare. The students' criticism of U.S. interventions into the economic and political affairs of Latin American countries may well have helped to clarify Torres' own thinking on this issue.¹⁴³

Torres came into further contact with radical students in his role as assistant chaplain and lecturer in sociology at the National University in Bogotá. Indeed, his

¹⁴¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 244.

¹⁴² Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 244.

¹⁴³ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 205-6.

contact with radical students and his defence of a student strike which became violent¹⁴⁴ contributed to his dismissal from his post at the university on the orders of the Cardinal Archbishop of Bogotá, Luis Conda Córdoba.

The influence of radical students upon Torres may not have been as significant as Bradstock suggests, for it seems that Torres became increasingly aware of the limitations of the student body within an authentic revolutionary struggle. On two occasions Torres describes students as the ones who could offer “the spark of the revolution”¹⁴⁵ and as effective “agitators” of revolution, but, at the same time, he notes that their commitment to the revolution dwindles in the context of prolonged, direct revolutionary struggle. For Torres, so often the revolutionary “nonconformity” of students starts “to decay during the last years at the university when the prospect of being inserted into the social structure enters the student’s mental horizon.”¹⁴⁶ This demonstrates, for Torres, that “neither a true commitment nor an authentically revolutionary mentality has existed in the student body”.¹⁴⁷

Torres may well have been influenced in his revolutionary thinking by his contact with radical students but he became acutely aware of the limitations of that student radicalism.

2.2.5 Church documents

In marked contrast to the MSTM in Argentina and the CPS in Chile, Torres makes very little use of official church documents in his writings. Without question this is linked to the fact that Torres was active at an earlier period than the MSTM and the CPS. The Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, just a year before his death. The highly influential *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI was issued in 1967, after his death. The document of the Medellín Council of Latin American bishops, so frequently quoted by revolutionary Christians of Chile and Argentina, was produced

¹⁴⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 384 and 405.

¹⁴⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 382.

¹⁴⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 382.

in 1968. In the early 1960s Torres had very few official church documents to which he could turn for inspiration and support for his ideas.

On two occasions, however, Torres does make reference to Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.¹⁴⁸ On both occasions he does so to support the call for united revolutionary action. In his "Message to Communists" Torres includes a long passage from *Pacem in Terris* to justify his united action with communists. He introduces the passage in the following manner:

I prefer to live according to the standards of the apostles of the church and not the standards of the apostles of our ruling class. John XXIII allowed me to join in united action with the communists when he declared the following in his encyclical "Pacem in Terris".¹⁴⁹

Torres then cites a passage from the encyclical which argues that "false philosophical teaching" can, in time, become separated from the historical movements which such teaching originally inspired. A situation may eventually occur when it is appropriate for Christians to unite with these evolved movements "for the achievement of economic, social, cultural and political ends which are honourable and useful".¹⁵⁰

When Torres makes use of church documents in his writings it is not because they have been influential in the development of his thinking but rather he uses them to validate his own views. It is baffling, however, that Torres chose to justify his views by reference to a papal document in his "Message to the Communists".

2.2.6 Marx

We have already noted that Torres probably read Marx for the first time while he was studying at the University of Louvain, as well as meeting with students from the Eastern Bloc. We have also noted that, despite this exposure to Marxism, his writings were yet to reveal any real influence of Marxist thinking. After his return to

¹⁴⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 266 and 371.

¹⁴⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 371.

¹⁵⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 372.

Colombia, however, a growing usage and appreciation of Marxist thought can be detected in his writings.

At first his references to Marx appear to be very tentative, as if he did not wish to personally associate himself with the use of Marxist social analysis. In an article published in August 1960, in which Torres was responding to a question put to him about land reform he distances himself from a Marxist perspective:

When I referred to the landholding class, I did not in any way mean to speak from a Marxist view of class struggle. I only wanted to express the sociological reality.¹⁵¹

However, by September 1961 Torres is referring to Marx in a much more positive manner. In an article entitled "Building an Authentic Latin American Sociology" Torres condemns the "false disciples of Marx and Engels" who claimed that the bourgeoisie could never break out of their own class conditioning in order to fully identify with the proletariat cause.¹⁵² This was an important point for Torres to establish coming, as he did, from the upper echelons of Colombian society.

Torres makes further passing reference to Marx and his concept of class consciousness in his paper "Social change and Rural Violence in Colombia", written in 1963. However, by 1964 Torres is openly affirming the central importance of Marxist socio-economic analysis to the revolutionary struggle. In his paper read at the Second International Congress of Pro Mundi Vita in Louvain in that year Torres acknowledges that it was the Marxists who "began the movement advocating structural change".¹⁵³ He goes on to argue for the close collaboration of revolutionary Christians and Marxists, even if some of the Marxist means and "ends consequential to the essential ends" are evil.

When we regard the problem of tactics, we must ask whether, in a process which in itself is just, Christians, in deliberate and technical collaboration, could not simply disregard evil means and ends. If the

¹⁵¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 96.

¹⁵² Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 107.

¹⁵³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 286.

Marxist problem is closely analysed, I believe that an affirmative answer is possible. Dialectical and historical materialism in the mental process of Marxists appears to be so useful for revolutionary methods that it can be considered quite objectively.¹⁵⁴

Torres affirms that in such a collaboration it must be recognised that Marxists “have held the first place in respect of economic planning” and in a revolutionary context they “will take over the leadership of this planning”.¹⁵⁵ But Torres also draws a distinction between “pragmatic Marxists” and “dogmatic Marxists” who feel obliged to follow the official line of the Communist Party regardless of the specific requirements of the local context. This same problem was one which faced Castro and Guevara in Cuba.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, when discussing this point Torres makes direct reference to the situation in Cuba.¹⁵⁷ This distinction between dogmatic and pragmatic Marxist was to influence his later choice of guerrilla group.

The influence of Marxism upon Torres developed over the years. He moves from initially seeking to distance himself from Marxist thought to finally embracing its socio-economic analysis and seeking collaboration with Marxists in the revolutionary struggle.

2.2.7 *The Cuban revolution*

The period during which Torres’ thinking was moving from a reformist to a radical position was also the period when the story of the Cuban revolution was gradually unfolding. Whilst Torres makes very few direct references to the Cuban revolution in his writings it seems unlikely that the development of his thinking was entirely unaffected by the events taking place in Cuba. Guzman, an acquaintance of Torres, claims that Torres understood clearly the impact which the Cuban revolution was having upon the “process of liberation” in Latin America.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 289.

¹⁵⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 290.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, p. 627.

¹⁵⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 287.

¹⁵⁸ Guzman, *Camilo Torres*, pp. 50-1.

As we have noted, one of the factors which Bradstock highlights as being significant in the development of Torres' thought was the influence of new radical groups. Bradstock argues that the Cuban revolution had encouraged this radicalism in these groups:

The first factor was the mood of radicalism and militancy Torres encountered among certain sections of the student, worker and peasant communities, which in large part may be explained in terms of a "trickle-down" effect from the events in Cuba of 1959-61.¹⁵⁹

According to Bradstock the triumph of the Cuban revolution did not immediately lead Torres to believe that such a revolution could be repeated elsewhere in Latin America. However, Castro's victory over the U.S. backed invasion force in 1961 made Torres think again about the viability of such a revolution.¹⁶⁰ Bradstock also suggests that these events in Cuba helped Torres to rethink and then reject the "development model" as a way of understanding the Latin American countries' economic relationships with the industrialised countries of the north, especially the United States.¹⁶¹ This, in turn, led to Torres seeing the solution to Colombia's problems lying, not in a change of political leadership, but rather in a fundamental change in the economic relationships, both internally and externally.¹⁶²

Torres does make direct reference to Cuba, amongst other countries, in his article on land reform. He raises the question of whether the proposed land reform in Colombia would follow the pattern of land reform in Cuba or that of other countries who had recently introduced new land reform laws. The fact that the article, printed in August 1960, makes references to Cuba suggests that Torres was aware of the Cuban Land Reform Act which had become law in May 1959. This Land Reform Act had been extremely radical and had led to the extensive expropriation and redistribution of land.¹⁶³ The Act had caused outrage in the US where many US citizens had lost land they owned in Cuba, without compensation. When Torres

¹⁵⁹ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 203.

¹⁶⁰ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 203.

¹⁶¹ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 203.

¹⁶² Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 204.

¹⁶³ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 63-5.

produced his manifesto for the United Front party in 1965 it included a section on agrarian reform which envisages the same radical redistribution of land as that contained within the Cuban Land Reform Act.¹⁶⁴

In his paper "Revolution: Christian Imperative", delivered to the University of Louvain, Torres produces a table which seeks to explain how structural change has taken place, or could take place, according to the different conditions present in each country.¹⁶⁵ Cuba is listed as a country where violent revolution was the only option available for bringing about structural change (because of the lack of desire and foresight on the part of the ruling class combined with a high popular demand for change). At the time of writing this paper, in 1964, Torres still sees "reform" as the most likely means of structural change in Colombia. Within a year Torres had come to the conclusion that the Cuban option of violent revolution was the only remaining option for Colombia.

Finally, as noted above, Torres refers to Cuba as an example of a country where (under Castro) a pragmatic revolutionary programme, which took into account the peculiarities of the local context, had come into conflict with the dogmatic Marxism of the Communist Party. Torres clearly favoured the pragmatic revolutionary programme and this may well have influenced his decision to join the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) which was a Cuban trained and backed guerrilla force. Gerassi notes that there were other left wing guerrilla groups active in Colombia at the time which Torres could have opted to join; the Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARC) which followed a Soviet line, and two others which were Chinese backed.¹⁶⁶

If the Cuban revolution was an influential factor in the formation of Torres' revolutionary thinking, then why is so little explicit reference made to it in his writings? In the period after his return to Colombia from Louvain this, in part, may be explained by his desire not to alienate himself completely from the church and

¹⁶⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 296.

¹⁶⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 281.

¹⁶⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 28-9.

university authorities for whom he worked. We see a similar reticence in his use of Marxist analysis in these years. Then in his final years, Torres' principle objective was to bring together a broad and popular front in favour of revolutionary change. He states on more than one occasion that he hoped to bring together "the Christians, the Marxists, the non-aligned, the members of the MRL¹⁶⁷ and of the ANAPO,¹⁶⁸ the Liberals, the Conservatives, and all the poor of Colombia"¹⁶⁹ into a united force. His attempts to present himself as a neutral in terms of party politics, but in favour of revolution, may well have discouraged him from making explicit references to the Cuban revolution.

2.2.8 *Che Guevara*

It is possible to find some limited references to the Cuban revolution in the writings of Torres, but he makes no direct references to Che Guevara. Kee links Guevara and Torres together through the fact that Torres chose to join the ELN guerrilla force just two weeks after Castro made public the letter in which Guevara had explained to Castro his decision to become a guerrilla fighter once more.¹⁷⁰ However, it is likely that Torres was influenced in his decision to join the guerrillas primarily by the events taking place in his own country and his increasing realisation that his attempts to lead the United Front to political power by non violent means were doomed to failure, largely due to the increasing sectarianism within the organisation.¹⁷¹

An indirect link to Guevara may exist in Torres' choice of guerrilla group. Bonino describes the ELN as a "Castroist movement [which] offered the most efficient organisation" for Torres.¹⁷² Another commentator describes the ELN as "Guevarist inspired".¹⁷³ It is certainly true that Guevara was closely involved in the training and preparation of Cuban backed guerrilla groups who became active throughout Latin

¹⁶⁷ *Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal*, The Revolutionary Liberal Movement.

¹⁶⁸ *Alianza Nacional Popular*, The National Popular Alliance.

¹⁶⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 416.

¹⁷⁰ Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, p. 140.

¹⁷¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷² Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, p. 45.

¹⁷³ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 212.

America.¹⁷⁴ Anderson suggests that joining the ELN in Colombia was one of Guevara's options when he decided to return to revolutionary struggle as a guerrilla.¹⁷⁵ What attracted Torres to the ELN was its independent revolutionary line; it was not answerable either to the Soviet or Chinese Communist Parties. As such the ELN reflected both Guevara's and Castro's desire for local revolutionary programmes modelled on the needs of the local context and not on any official dogma of the Communist Party, be it Soviet or Chinese.

The lack of references to Guevara in Torres' writing again might be explained by his desire to present himself as a "neutral revolutionary" who could draw people from any political tradition to the revolutionary cause. However, another explanation seems more likely. Torres' period of activity came before the death of Che Guevara. In the period 1959-65 the inspirational revolutionary figure in Latin America was Fidel Castro rather than Che Guevara. We find some evidence for this in Torres' own article "Two Subcultures" written in 1964. Torres produces a table in which he presents the differing perspectives of reality which occur according to social class. In this list Castro is perceived by the upper classes as "communist leader" and by the lower classes as "revolutionary chief".¹⁷⁶ If this table had been produced after Guevara's decision to become an international guerrilla fighter in 1965 and particularly after his death in 1967 it is much more likely that Guevara would have fitted the role of "revolutionary chief".

2.2.9 Influences: Conclusion

This survey of the influences which shaped Torres' revolutionary development suggests that the direct influence of Guevara was not significant, certainly in comparison with other factors. In the chapters on the MSTM, the CPS and revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua we will note, by contrast, the frequent references to Guevara within the literature. The active period of all these groups came after Guevara's death. This suggests that the growth of Guevara's influence upon revolutionary Christian groups throughout Latin America is connected to his

¹⁷⁴ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 393-7.

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, p. 609.

¹⁷⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 258.

death, or possibly his decision to rejoin the international revolutionary struggle as a guerrilla. His death not only turned Guevara into a revolutionary martyr and icon, but also into a figure whose life and death resonated with certain Christian ideals; his sense of mission, his self-sacrificial commitment to a cause, his death in pursuit of another country's "liberation". Torres, writing before Guevara's death, did not view him from this perspective.

2.3 Aims

There may be little evidence to suggest the direct influence of Guevara upon Torres but to what degree do these two revolutionaries of the same period and continent, one Christian and one atheist, share the same aims (this section) and objectives (next section)?

2.3.1 Socialist/communist society and the kingdom of God

Torres describes his manifesto for the United Front as one "which attempts a type of socialist state and the liberation of Colombia from North American imperialism".¹⁷⁷ In early writings, however, Torres presents reformist and "developmentalist" solutions to Colombia's social and economic woes.¹⁷⁸ Gerassi argues that Torres is still only calling for what he describes as "liberal-socialist reforms"¹⁷⁹ in his Pro Mundi Vita lecture "Revolution: Christian Imperative" given in Louvain in 1964. This same lecture suggests to Bradstock, however, that Torres had finally concluded that only profound social, political and economic change, rather than gradual reform and "development," could provide the solution to Colombia's problems.¹⁸⁰ The fact that this lecture was delivered only five months before Torres produced the first draft of the manifesto for the United Front

¹⁷⁷ Guzman, *Camilo Torres*, p. 105.

¹⁷⁸ In his 1962 lecture "Urbanisation and Urban Reform", Torres argue for "reform-orientated goals of social welfare," Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 187. See also the conclusion to "Social Change and Rural Violence in Colombia" in which Torres still hopes for social change through "economic development" under the existing leadership in Colombia, Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 244.

¹⁷⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 25.

¹⁸⁰ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, pp. 233-4.

suggests that Torres must have been nearing the full development of his revolutionary thinking.

In the lecture Torres echoes Guevara's earlier (1961)¹⁸¹ and Gutiérrez' later (1970)¹⁸² negative attitude towards the "development model":

Indigent countries have been called underdeveloped countries, developing countries, or countries moving toward development. The various designations have finally acquired a euphemistic character more in accordance with paternalism than with any technical standard. There are, of course, various degrees and stages of underdevelopment. However, an underdeveloped country is different from a developing country. The former is structurally unable to develop itself.¹⁸³

In the same lecture Torres, like Guevara, argues that a revolution can only be described as a genuine revolution if it introduces structural change rather than piecemeal reform.

When we hear talk of frequent revolutions or coup d'état in Latin America, for instance, it is not a question of real revolution, because the structures are preserved intact. All that happens is a simple change of personnel in public office.¹⁸⁴

Similarly, Guevara argues that a revolution in itself has achieved nothing unless it puts an end to the "economic control which imperialism exercises over the country".¹⁸⁵ Guevara's view is that this economic control can only be ended by means of the implementation of a radical socialist programme, such as that put in place by the Cuban Agrarian Reform Act. This is precisely the form of structural change which Torres advocates in the manifesto of the United Front.

A further passage from "Revolution: Christian Imperative" makes it quite clear that Torres has rejected the reformist/development model in favour of the call for

¹⁸¹ See pp. 9-10. Guevara's criticism of developmentalism came in an article published in the Cuban magazine *Verde Olivo* in the same month as the Bay of Pigs invasion.

¹⁸² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 21-37 and 82-4.

¹⁸³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 271.

¹⁸⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 273-4.

¹⁸⁵ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 237.

the type of radical change in the social and economic structures which will lead to a socialist society:

Pressure to obtain reformist changes has tried to provide solutions of transaction, that is, solutions which cover interests common to both the upper and the popular classes. These do not change the structures but merely adapt them to these common interests, if they exist at all... Pressure to obtain a revolutionary change aims at a transformation of the structures themselves. In particular, this involves a change in the structure of property, income, investments, consumption, and education and a change in political and administrative organisation.¹⁸⁶

Torres' aim of political, social and economic transformation within Colombia and beyond was closely linked to his theology of the kingdom of God. Christians could be creatively involved in bringing in the kingdom of God through their participation in the struggle for revolutionary change. Torres rejected not only the idea of an "other worldly" kingdom of God, far removed from this present one, but also the notion that the kingdom could only be established through the intervention of God rather than through the labours of Christians. He speaks of "building the kingdom",¹⁸⁷ of "establishing" and "extending" the kingdom of God.¹⁸⁸ The Christian is called to "labours that build the kingdom".¹⁸⁹ Torres ranks these kingdom-building labours in order of importance: "We should lead people to love, with that love manifest in surrender of self; we should preach the gospel; we should celebrate external rites - Eucharist and sacraments".¹⁹⁰

The manifesto which Torres drew up for United Front was highly utopian in nature. It is almost as if Torres is equating the establishment of the kingdom of God with the implementation of his manifesto. Indeed, Bradstock argues that one of the weaknesses in Torres' thought is that he came to identify the full establishment of the kingdom of God with the historical situation in Colombia:

¹⁸⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 280.

¹⁸⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 261.

¹⁸⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 304.

¹⁹⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 164.

What is significant about Torres' eschatology, ... in relation to his revolutionary praxis, is the belief he appears to have held ... that, notwithstanding the disappointments he encountered, the kingdom of God could be realised as a result of the structural changes the revolution would usher in in Colombia.¹⁹¹

In his "Message to the Christians" Torres states that "revolution is ... the way to obtain a government that will feed the hungry, clothe the naked and teach the unschooled. Revolution will produce a government that carries out works of charity, of love for one's fellows".¹⁹² As Bradstock further notes Torres is clearly alluding to the parable in Matthew Ch. 25 which describes the return of Jesus at the end of time.¹⁹³ Torres' use of this parable does not prove beyond doubt that he linked the actual coming of the kingdom of God with revolutionary change; nevertheless it is clear that the values and principles of the Kingdom of God, as Torres saw them, were precisely those values and principles which he hoped would be established by means of a socialist revolution. His revolutionary vision and his vision of the kingdom of God seem to merge in this way.

Guevara, as an atheist, makes no link between his revolutionary programme and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. His language, however, is as utopian as that of Torres. Guevara speaks of the revolutionaries who struggle to "leave behind the kingdom of need and enter the kingdom of liberty".¹⁹⁴ On many occasions Guevara speaks of the "perfect society".¹⁹⁵ This society Guevara equates with the coming of the communist era, "a classless society, where all differences will disappear,"¹⁹⁶ "a new world where all that is old and transitory will disappear forever".¹⁹⁷ Guevara believed the world would move rapidly towards a "new future".¹⁹⁸ As this new society comes into being so humankind would "perfect

¹⁹¹ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 242.

¹⁹² Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 368.

¹⁹³ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, pp. 243-4.

¹⁹⁴ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 195. Guevara also uses the expression "kingdom of liberty" in "On the Budgetary System of Financing", Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 302.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 169, Guevara, *Obras Completas*, vol. I, pp. 150 and 167.

¹⁹⁶ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 169.

¹⁹⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 167.

¹⁹⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 176.

itself,”¹⁹⁹ the “new man”, still now a “subjective aspiration,”²⁰⁰ would become a reality.²⁰¹ In the perfect society of communism the “new man” becomes the norm.

Like Torres, Guevara is just as convinced that that the process of transformation into the “perfect society” is fully realisable within a concrete historical context:

The masses not only know the possibilities of victory, they already know their destiny. They know with increasing certainty that, whatever the historical tribulations in the short term, the future is the people’s, because the future is one of social justice.²⁰²

Guevara’s vision of the process which would bring in the “perfect society” is more apocalyptic than Torres’ description of the revolutionary transformation which he appeared to believe would lead to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Torres certainly foresees a violent confrontation between the ruling classes and the popular classes in Colombia prior to revolutionary change,²⁰³ but his vision of this future confrontation is generally limited to the national Colombian context. Guevara, by contrast, describes how the battle against imperialism would lead to a “great, global conflagration”.²⁰⁴ Guevara’s vision of the future is thus not only more apocalyptic but also more global. Anderson notes that both Castro and Guevara, during the Cuban missile crisis, were fully prepared to support a USSR nuclear attack on the USA, thereby provoking a global nuclear war. It is possible that Guevara believed that such a nuclear confrontation would cause the downfall of global capitalism and lead to the inauguration of a new and final era of global communism.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 239.

²⁰⁰ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 191.

²⁰¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 180.

²⁰² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 112.

²⁰³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 361.

²⁰⁴ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 91.

²⁰⁵ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 544-5.

2.3.2 National liberation

One of Guevara's most frequently repeated themes is the need for national economic independence.²⁰⁶ Political independence could not be achieved without economic independence.²⁰⁷ The struggle was therefore against international imperialism which sought to control other countries by means of economic, as well as political, dependence.²⁰⁸ The global figurehead of international imperialism was the United States of America. As Torres developed his thinking in this area, so his views increasingly coincided with those of Guevara.

In 1961 Torres wrote a paper entitled "Building an Authentic Latin-American Sociology". He argues that Colombian sociology is a product of "the cultural colonialism that coexists with economic and political colonialism".²⁰⁹ Colombian sociology needs to create its own agenda rather than accepting the agenda handed down by sociologists from the West. This meant that "such subjects as social revolution, social change, sociological effects of land reform, community development and imperialism must be on the agenda of Latin-American sociological problems".²¹⁰

In later articles Torres' criticism of Colombia's dependency on the wealthy, industrialised nations moved from the realm of academic influence to that of economic relations. In his lecture given in 1965 "Revolution: Christian Imperative" Torres notes how a relationship of economic dependence for poor countries can develop with either the Western or Eastern Bloc powers:

In the investment of foreign capital, the political factor is determinant. The division of the world into two camps, capitalistic and socialistic, means that the underdeveloped countries that are aligned with the one or the other are subjected to a monopoly of external financing. The lack of competition which this polarisation entails puts the underdeveloped

²⁰⁶ See pp. 7-10.

²⁰⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 67.

²⁰⁸ See Guevara's essay "Cuba, su economía, su comercio exterior, su significado en el mundo actual" in Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 291-311.

²⁰⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 102.

²¹⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 105.

countries unconditionally in a state of dependence on the investing country.²¹¹

Coincidentally, it seems that one of the factors which led to Guevara's decision to leave Cuba and return to guerrilla warfare in 1965 was the relationship of economic dependence which the USSR was beginning to exert over Cuba.²¹²

In the introduction to the manifesto of the United Front Torres notes the close links between the ruling elite of Colombia and the "foreign interests to which it is bound". The manifesto goes on to state that the goals of "socio-economic development" and "national independence" run counter to the interests of the ruling elite and their allies abroad.²¹³ Whilst no foreign country in particular is mentioned within the manifesto in later writings Torres identifies the United States as the chief colonial power responsible for this relationship of economic dependence.²¹⁴ In one of his last "messages" published in the United Front's newspaper *Frente Unido* Torres graphically describes the nature of the U.S. economic relationship with Colombia (a year earlier, in 1964, Guevara had described Cuba's pre-revolutionary relationship with the U.S. in very similar terms²¹⁵):

Even if it wanted to, our oligarchy could not industrialise Colombia. Its North American partners would not allow it ... We all know that our economy is dependent on the coffee we sell primarily to the United States and on the "aid" which this same United States gives us. We all know that ours is a beggar's state which is dependent on the crumbs that the Americans feel like giving us ... What interests the United States is to have countries which supply it with raw materials ... at low prices and which purchase from it at high prices ... all the products of its industry which we need. The United States controls our economy, and our oligarchy is very happy to be its agent and servant here.²¹⁶

The language which Torres finally comes to use in relation to the neo-colonialism of the United States is almost indistinguishable from that of Guevara:

²¹¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 272.

²¹² Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 595-6.

²¹³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 307.

²¹⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 356.

²¹⁵ Guevara, *Obras Completas*, vol. I, pp. 291-3.

²¹⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 410.

Not one step back. Down with Yankee imperialism. Long live the revolution. Away with the oligarchies. Power for the people, until death.²¹⁷

2.3.3 “Integrated Man”

In September 1963 Torres delivered a lecture in Bogota entitled “The Integrated Man.”²¹⁸ Kee, suggesting that a link might exist between the two terms, asks the question: “is this integrated man so very different from Guevara’s new man?”²¹⁹

It is clear that the language which Torres uses to describe the formation of the “integrated man” is very different to Guevara’s language about the formation of the “new man”. Torres speaks of a “natural and supernatural reality” and a “natural and supernatural knowledge”. The integrated man is the one who successfully brings together into one life these natural and supernatural elements. All humans have a “supernatural vocation” and the evidence that this vocation has been realised in the “integrated man” is a life which demonstrates genuine love:

The integrated man, from the material and spiritual standpoint, and in the natural and supernatural perspective, should be someone who loves.²²⁰

Guevara presents his most ordered thinking about the “new man” in his article “Socialism and Man in Cuba”. This was published in 1965, two years after Torres’ lecture on the “Integrated Man”. Although neither writer appears to have been directly influenced by the other and despite the “supernatural” character of Torres’ “integrated man,” it is nevertheless possible to identify some elements common both to the “integrated man” and Guevara’s “new man”:

Both figures are motivated by love. Torres and Guevara both argue that this love is to be expressed in practical, concrete action. Torres, describes this as “efficacious love”. As we have noted Torres may have developed the concept of “efficacious

²¹⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 27.

²¹⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 245-9.

²¹⁹ Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, p. 144.

²²⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 248.

love” from his reading of Mauritian.²²¹ It is certainly a term taken up by later Liberation Theologians, especially John Sobrino.²²² Torres argues that genuine love must have a practical impact upon the real world:

Love is our moral imperative, and if it is real, it ought to be integrally efficacious, both in the natural and supernatural sense. If we are not efficacious, if our lives produce no fruit (for by this we shall be known) we are not loving. Consequently, the temporal commitment of the Christian is a mandate of love.²²³

Torres questions the usefulness of acts of charity which do not tackle the roots of the poverty experienced by the masses; “inefficacious charity is not charity at all”.²²⁴

For this love to be genuine, it must seek to be effective. If beneficence, alms, the few tuition-free schools, the few housing projects - in general, what is known as charity - do not succeed in feeding the hungry masses, we must seek effective means to achieve the well being of these majorities.”²²⁵

Likewise, Guevara claims that “the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love” which must be “transformed into concrete deeds”.²²⁶

Both figures are products of the post-revolutionary changes in social, economic and political relationships. Torres sees “efficacious love” as the “fruit” produced in the life of the “integrated man”.²²⁷ But, this love cannot be truly efficacious when performed within the context of capitalist economic relations, because those relations continue to oppress regardless of loving action. Under the new set of economic relations generated by a revolution, acts of love work in union with the economic structures and so become efficacious. This is the argument which runs through Torres’ “Message to the Christians”. He concludes this “message” in the following way:

²²¹ See p. 31.

²²² See J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (London: SCM Press, 1978), pp. 135-6 and 214, and J. Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p. 47.

²²³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 248.

²²⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 263.

²²⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 367.

²²⁶ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 398.

²²⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 248.

After the revolution we Colombians will be aware that we are establishing a system oriented towards the love of neighbour. The struggle is long; let us begin now.²²⁸

Just as “efficacious love” only becomes truly possible in a post-revolutionary setting, so the “integrated man” whose central quality is “efficacious love” can only begin to emerge after the revolution. Similarly, as we have noted,²²⁹ Guevara’s “new man” is a product of post-revolutionary economic and social change.

*Both the “new man” and the “integrated man” represent a final stage of wholeness and completeness in the development of humankind. The “integrated man” is the one who has realised his “supernatural vocation”. Guevara describes the “new man” as one who “feels more complete, with more inner richness”.*²³⁰

*Both the “new man” and the “integrated man” are characterised by a spirit of sacrifice. Torres relates this sacrificial quality to the call of Jesus to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.²³¹ In the writings of Guevara the spirit of sacrifice is embodied in the guerrilla fighter who is willing to give his life for the revolution, and the worker who gives his labour for the benefit of society.*²³²

2.4 Objectives

2.4.1 Revolutionary unity

As Torres’ commitment to revolutionary struggle deepened, so did his conviction that an essential prerequisite to revolution was a broad, popular coalition. This hoped for coalition would bring together a wide range of groups who shared a common desire for radical, structural change at the political, economic and social level. In an article written in 1964 Torres identifies the need for the popular class

²²⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 369.

²²⁹ See pp. 15-6.

²³⁰ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 193.

²³¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 248-9.

²³² For Guevara’s views on sacrifice see section one, pp. 18-20.

to be brought together into one coalition in order to become an effective political force.

The popular classes, comprising the large majorities, do not constitute pressure groups because they do not possess an awareness of their common needs or a unity of action. They have no organisation that is national in scope, not even a minimum of common political objectives. If the majorities fail to obtain these requisites, Colombia will never become a real democracy.²³³

Early in 1965 Torres began work on the manifesto for his new political organisation, the "United Front," which he hoped would act as a unifying force for all the opposition groups to the traditional political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Torres distributed the first draft of the manifesto to his close friends and supporters and, after various amendments and additions, including a passage on the rights of women, Torres made public his manifesto on May 22nd 1965 at a student rally.

The publication of the manifesto caused an immediate and final rupture between Torres and the church authorities. Cardinal Concha declared that the manifesto contained "points which are irreconcilable with the doctrine of the church".²³⁴ A few days later Concha denounced Torres for proclaiming "violent revolution" and argued that in so doing he had separated himself from the "doctrines and directives of the church".²³⁵ On June 24th Torres asked for laicisation which Cardinal Concha authorised on June 26th. Just a few days later Torres met with Fabio Vasquez Castaño, leader of the ELN guerrilla force.

At this meeting it was agreed that Torres would join the guerrilla group at a later date, but, in the meantime, dedicate himself to building up support for the United Front. Torres spent the next few months travelling the country and delivering speeches to many different groups in an attempt to rally support. He set up small groups of United Front supporters across the country, groups which he described as

²³³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 251.

²³⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 27.

²³⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 258.

comandos. He also launched the weekly newspaper *Frente Unido*. Torres used the newspaper as a platform for addressing the key groups whose support he regarded as vital if the United Front was to succeed as a political movement. The paper ran articles written by Torres entitled "Message to Christians", "Message to Communists", "Message to the Military" and further "messages" to "The Non-aligned", "The Trade Unions", "Peasants", "Women", "Students", "The Unemployed" and to "Political Prisoners". Torres' penultimate "message" and the last one to be published in the movement's newspaper was addressed to the "Oligarchy" and was a bitter condemnation of their refusal to respond to the United Front's demands for structural change within Colombia. Torres' final "message", indeed his final piece of writing, was entitled "Message to Colombians from the Mountains".

Torres believed that the United Front would be held together as a popular movement by a number of key common objectives. These objectives would be shared by the majority of the popular masses because of their common experience of poverty and oppression, regardless of the political party or political philosophy to which they might nominally adhere. According to Torres, revolutionary change could occur only if the masses, presently divided into various religious and political factions, could be drawn together into a united front by these common objectives and so create a political force broad and strong enough to challenge the ruling elite.

If we do not agree on the objectives, we are going to be scattered, each one of us on his own side. The Catholic side is going to be separated from the non-Catholics. The left wingers are going to be divided from the right wingers, the Liberals from the Conservatives, the peasants from the workers. And those who are in favour of the central union are going to be divided from those who oppose it. Therefore, we must build a minimum platform on which we can all agree and for which we can all fight.²³⁶

The common objectives which, according to Torres, would draw the Colombian masses together into an "indestructible" revolutionary force are the ones laid out in

²³⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 350.

his manifesto for the United Front. Torres wanted the manifesto to be distributed to all parts of Colombia believing that it would act as a catalyst for united action on the part of the popular classes.

The manifesto firstly calls for agrarian reform so that “the land will belong to the one who directly farms it”. With echoes of the Cuban Agrarian Reform Act of 1959 the manifesto states that “no land will be purchased. What is considered necessary for the common good of the people will be expropriated without compensation.” Urban reform would also mean that “all the inhabitants of the houses in the cities and towns will become owners of the houses in which they live”. The manifesto goes on to propose import substitution as the key to economic development.²³⁷ The proposed tax system would redistribute wealth from the richest to the poorest. A comprehensive programme of nationalisation was to take place. The state would also introduce “an integral and progressive programme of social security to guarantee to the population the right to health and medical care”. The armed forces would be maintained “without excessive siphoning off of the funds necessary for the health and education of Colombians”. The final paragraph of the manifesto, a paragraph added after the first draft, states that women would engage in social, economic and political activity on equal terms with men.²³⁸

As we have noted, the manifesto of the United Front, almost wholly the work of Camilo Torres, proposes a utopian socialist state.²³⁹ The policies outlined in the manifesto bear many similarities with those which Castro and Guevara were introducing into Cuba in the years after the revolution. Torres believed that the manifesto focused on what the popular classes really wanted despite their traditional allegiances to different political parties. The call for radical, revolutionary change would, he believed, draw the Colombian poor together into a

²³⁷ In Cuba, Guevara had also advocated a policy of import substitution. See Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 83, where Guevara expresses the hope that, with Soviet technical assistance Cuba will be able to produce its own nickel rather than exporting the raw material to the US and buying back the finished product as an expensive import. See also Guevara’s essay “Cuba, su economía, su comercio exterior, su significado en el mundo actual” in *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 291-311.

²³⁸ See Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 307-10 for the objectives of the manifesto.

²³⁹ See p. 49.

political force which could challenge the power of the ruling elite. For Torres it was vital that the United Front manifesto should not be identified with any one political faction or party. Yet, despite Torres' desire to remain politically "neutral" he is forced to acknowledge that his manifesto is proposing the creation of a socialist state:

It was necessary to build a union around concrete objectives which would unify all Colombians regardless of religious belief, party, or group and leader attachments. The platform [manifesto] of struggle of the United Front of the People can be realised only after the people have taken power. Its only novelty consists in its seeking the common points of the revolution without entering into religious or party differences. It can be accepted by Catholics and non-Catholics, by poor Liberals and poor Conservatives, by the revolutionary elements of the MRL, the Communist, ANAPO, and Christian Democratic parties, and especially by the revolutionary elements of the non-aligned in these groups. However, it is necessary to explain that this platform leans toward the establishment of a socialist state, that is, "socialist" understood only in a technical and positive sense, not in the ideological sense. We offer practical, not theoretical, socialism.²⁴⁰

Bradstock describes this strategy of Torres' as that of "political pluralism".²⁴¹ Torres' insistence upon the non-party-political nature of the United Front provided a way for him to defend himself and the United Front against the accusation of being communists. Torres knew that his opponents would seek to discredit his movement in this way. The Colombian popular classes, deeply rooted in Roman Catholicism, understood communism to be incompatible with Christianity. If the United Front was portrayed as a communist inspired movement then Torres could not hope to achieve the broad popular support which he believed to be vital for the success of the United Front. At the same time Torres did not want to lose the support of the Communist Party whose national network of local cells provided Torres with an efficient means of disseminating the manifesto of the United Front.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 400.

²⁴¹ A. Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 257. Bradstock traces the roots of Torres pluralism to his experience of the European ecumenical movement during his time in Louvain, where the Catholic church was beginning to develop new relationships with other churches, other faiths and with Marxism.

²⁴² See Broderick, *Priest-Guerillero*, p. 279.

Besides advocating political “neutrality” or pluralism Torres seeks to avoid the accusation of being a communist in several other ways. Firstly, he points out that he remains fully committed to the Christian faith, so that if Christianity and communism are incompatible because of the atheistic nature of Marxism, as the traditional political parties would always argue, then he could not be a communist.

The ruling class has said that I was a Communist while I was still an active priest. Now they are going to say it much more, although I declare that I agree wholeheartedly with the doctrine of the church, that I am still a Catholic, and that I will never cease to be a priest “because when one is ordained one remains a priest forever”. They will go right on calling me a Communist, and they will say the same of everybody who circulates this platform even if at the same time that person declares himself Christian and receives communion every day.²⁴³

However, whilst arguing that he cannot be a communist because he is a Christian, Torres also makes it clear that he is not “an anti-communist”. In his “Message to Communists”, published in the *Frente Unido* just one month before he joined the ELN, Torres explained why he was not anti-communist:

As a sociologist I am not an anti-communist because the communist theses concerning the fight against poverty, hunger, illiteracy, lack of shelter, and absence of public services offer effective scientific solutions to these problems. As a Christian I am not an anti-Communist because I believe that anti-communism implies condemnation of everything that communists stand for.²⁴⁴

In the same article Torres explained that he was prepared to work with communists in pursuit of “our common goals: against the oligarchy and United States domination; for the winning of power by the people”. But, again, he underlined that he did not want to work with communists alone but rather “with all independent revolutionaries and revolutionaries of other convictions”.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 354.

²⁴⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 370.

²⁴⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 371.

Torres' final defence against the accusation that he and his United Front movement were communists was to argue that this kind of attack was designed to create a false division between Christians and communists by those who were opposed to revolutionary change. According to Torres there was more to bring them together than to divide them.

Why do we Catholics fight the communists - the people with whom it is said we have most antagonism - over the question of whether the soul is mortal or is immortal instead of agreeing that hunger is indeed mortal? ... Certainly, we Catholics who ourselves want the church to be poor are not going to fight with those who are against a rich church.²⁴⁶

Torres believed that the strategy of "divide and rule" had been used successfully by the ruling classes in order to maintain their position of power over the masses. The traditional political classes had set the people against each other on issues based purely on "sentiment and tradition"²⁴⁷ obscuring their common cause which was the struggle for liberation from poverty and exploitation. Torres hoped that the United Front would provide the means for the popular classes to identify their common cause and come together as a massive force of opposition to the ruling classes.

However, this hoped for unity forged by the United Front failed to materialise. During the course of 1965, divisions within the leadership of the United Front worsened. There were disagreements about the participation of the Communist Party, and other political parties, in the movement. Another dispute arose over whether the United Front should participate in the next general elections. The newspaper *Frente Unido* had rapidly falling sales and Torres could only rely on three other full time workers to help him deal with the situation.²⁴⁸ Evidence of Torres' dissatisfaction with the level of organisation comes through in his "Message to the United Front of the People", published in the *Frente Unido*, in which Torres states that the organisation is "not as extensive or disciplined as we

²⁴⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 350-1.

²⁴⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 357.

²⁴⁸ Broderick, *Priest-Guerillero*, p. 298.

had hoped".²⁴⁹ It was this deteriorating situation which finally prompted Torres to abandon the political struggle and join the ELN with whom he had already developed close links.

Torres believed that the success of a revolution in Colombia depended on bringing together different groups and parties by establishing certain common objectives. We see the same emphasis in the revolutionary strategy and writings of Castro.²⁵⁰ Guevara also argues that revolutions should not begin with a specific party political label attached to them: "revolutions are not socialist, revolutions are the people's cries of desperation".²⁵¹ According to Guevara only once a revolution has begun to make concrete progress will the characteristics of a specific social, economic and political system emerge.²⁵² Unlike the Cuban revolution, however, Torres failed to achieve that unification of forces and it may be that by the time he left to join the ELN he had decided that only violent opposition would be effective in bringing about that unity.

2.4.2 *Taking power*

Torres was very aware that the radical programme of structural change set out in the manifesto of the United Front was largely irrelevant unless political power was achieved in order to implement those changes. Indeed the manifesto itself states that "the final objective is the creation of a pluralistic political force capable of seizing power".²⁵³

In the manifesto, and on many other occasions, Torres argues that power must be taken by the popular classes because those presently in power, the minority ruling elite who control the electoral system, would never act against its own interests.

²⁴⁹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 414.

²⁵⁰ Fidel Castro, *Fidel in Chile* (Santiago:Quimantu Ltda.,1972) p. 93. "Revolution is the art of uniting forces ... in order to engage in decisive battles against imperialism. No revolution, no process can have the luxury of excluding any force, despising any force ... and one of the factors which determined the success of the Cuban revolution, when we were a small group initially ... was the policy of uniting, uniting, uniting, adding together incessantly".

²⁵¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 147.

²⁵² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 147.

²⁵³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 300.

- A group acting against its own interests would be a sociological absurdity. The seizure of power by the majorities must be preached. The majority must take over the government to change the structure through economic, social and political reforms that favour the majority. This is called revolution.²⁵⁴

Torres is dismissive of the electoral option within the context of Colombia. Bradstock, following Broderick, traces the first signs of Torres' rejection of the democratic route to power to his meetings with communist students in Venezuela in 1961. These meetings appear to have convinced Torres that most democracies in Latin America were only "pseudo-democracies" controlled by the economic, military and political power of the United States and headed by "tin-pot presidents".²⁵⁵ Again, a year later, Torres found himself at odds with the majority of the other participants at a conference held in Buenos Aires to discuss church reform. Torres is recorded as having argued strongly against participation in elections and the formation of Christian democratic parties.²⁵⁶ Then in 1963, in his sociological study "Social Change and Rural Violence in Colombia", Torres describes the defects of the electoral system in what he still describes at this stage as "underdeveloped" countries:

Elections are carried out with a series of economic pressures on the voter, such as a threat of being dismissed from a job or a promise of some reward. In the underdeveloped countries, besides electoral fraud, elections are controlled by minorities through the executive committees of the political parties and the *gamonal* leaders who exert economic, social and religious pressures that tend to support the power structure and keep the channels of social ascent firmly blocked - pressures that make only the conformist elements get elected.²⁵⁷

By the time Torres had produced his manifesto for the United Front he was convinced that the movement should not participate in the forthcoming Colombian general elections. In his "Address to Union Delegates", delivered in July 1965, Torres speaks of the "comedy of democracy" and an electoral system controlled by the oligarchy.

²⁵⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 330.

²⁵⁵ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 206.

²⁵⁶ Bradstock, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 207.

²⁵⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 218.

We must not allow ourselves to be misled by the myth of elections, unless the popular class controls the electoral system, presents a programme of fundamental change of the institutions, breaks up the present political power system so that the majority constitutes the main pressure group and determines the policy and makes the decisions of the government.²⁵⁸

Broderick notes that there were several groups within the United Front, including the Communist Party, who opposed Torres' abstentionist policy and that this disagreement on strategy was to be "the touchstone destined to divide the members of his United Front".²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the leading article in the first edition of *Frente Unido*, written by Torres himself, was entitled "Why I am not Participating in the Elections". In this article Torres lists his key objections.

Firstly, he argues that Colombians were obliged to choose between either the Liberal or the Conservative parties in the elections. Torres saw this as a contrived way of limiting genuine political choice and dividing and ruling the popular classes: "anything which divides the people is against their interests". He further insisted that the whole electoral apparatus was in the hands of the oligarchy so that "the one who counts votes, elects". Also, the very presence of a small minority of opposition parties in parliament would allow the oligarchy to argue that a truly democratic system existed. Torres believed that the money spent on an electoral campaign in such circumstances could be better used to organise and unify the popular class from the bottom.²⁶⁰

Finally, Torres uses the same argument employed by Guevara against opting for the democratic route to power. Torres suggests that even if the oligarchy, through error, allowed the opposition to win an election it would certainly not allow it to stay in power for very long. The oligarchy, with the support of the military would "annul the elections and stage a coup".

An oligarchy which has no qualms about murdering revolutionary leaders, throwing the country into violence, and supporting a military

²⁵⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 348.

²⁵⁹ Broderick, *Priest-Guerillero*, p. 278.

²⁶⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 365.

regime is not going to hand over power merely because the opposition has won a majority of votes.²⁶¹

Likewise, Guevara notes that a democratically elected, popular government would immediately come into conflict with “the reactionary classes of the country” and the army which is “the instrument of oppression of that class would ensure the overthrow of that government by means of a military or even a bloodless coup”.²⁶²

Having rejected the democratic route to power, Torres is left with two other potential routes to power. Firstly, there is the option of what Torres calls “ideal peaceful revolution”.²⁶³ This revolution would theoretically occur, according to Torres, in a situation where the ruling class have sufficient foresight to see that change is needed and inevitable, where a desire for change has reached a high level, and where pressure for change amongst the popular classes is at a maximum.²⁶⁴ However, Torres recognises that there is no historical example of all these elements coming together to produce a peaceful revolution. This leaves only one practical option for Torres; that of violent revolution. The factor which most often prevented a peaceful revolution from taking place, in Torres’ view, was the lack of foresight on the part of the ruling class, their inability to accept change which was detrimental to their own interests. Thus it is the ruling class who cause a revolution to be violent as they seek to defend their interests against the growing pressure and desire for change.

What is really happening is that the members of the ruling class know that they are the ones who will determine whether the revolution will be peaceful or violent. The decision is not in the hands of the popular class but in the hands of the ruling class.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 365.

²⁶² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 109.

²⁶³ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 281.

²⁶⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 281.

²⁶⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 361.

Torres further argues that the ruling class will naturally be the ones who initiate the violence because they are the only group financially capable of launching and sustaining military activity.²⁶⁶

However, there are occasions when Torres, rather than claiming that the ruling classes are the ones responsible for violence, suggests that there is moral justification for engaging in armed struggle. In an article published just four days before he joined the ELN Torres argued that the church's doctrine of the just war provided the moral justification for violent revolution.

The followers [of the United Front], when planning the take-over of political power ... necessarily have to make a tactical decision - to follow through to the ultimate consequences and use whatever means the oligarchy leaves open to seize power. This attitude has no great ideological consequences because the church itself has established the conditions for a just war. However, many so-called revolutionaries in fact do not wish to follow through to the ultimate consequences.²⁶⁷

A few months earlier, in a speech given at a conference at the Grancolombiano University, Torres explained why violent revolution within the Colombian context could be categorised as a just war:

Violence is not excluded from the Christian ethic, because if Christianity is concerned with eliminating the serious evils which we suffer and with saving us from the continuous violence in which we live without possible solution, the ethic is to be violent once and for all in order to destroy the violence which the economic minorities exercise against the people.²⁶⁸

Torres' final justification for armed struggle is much more pragmatic and, as such, closer to Guevara's attitude towards the use of violence within a revolutionary context. By June 1965 Torres had decided that "only by a bloody war" could the National front government be removed from power.²⁶⁹ In the final article written by Torres, "Message to Colombians from the Mountains", he states that "all sincere

²⁶⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 361.

²⁶⁷ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 401.

²⁶⁸ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 27.

²⁶⁹ Guzman, *Camilo Torres*, p. 78.

revolutionaries must realise that armed struggle is the only remaining way open".²⁷⁰ Having rejected the electoral route to power, having endeavoured over the previous year to organise and motivate a broad popular and national movement which he hoped would peacefully sweep the ruling classes from power, Torres had finally concluded that the only practical means of taking power was through violent revolution. Torres had come to the same viewpoint as that expressed by Guevara:

When the conditions for peaceful struggle are exhausted, when the reactionary powers continue to trick the people, not only can one raise the flag of revolution, but one must raise the flag of revolution.²⁷¹

Torres ends up with an attitude to the use of violence which is far closer to that of Guevara than to that of his Latin American contemporary Helder Cámara. Both Torres and Cámara argue from the perspective of pragmatism but with different conclusions. As we have noted, Torres comes to the view that the use of force is the only practical response remaining to those who seek radical change in Colombia. But Cámara, within the Brazilian context, rejects the use of violence on "tactical" grounds.²⁷² Responding directly to Guevara's call for many more "Vietnams" around the world,²⁷³ Cámara argues that "guerrilla war only tackles the warlike power with great force when it has another great power behind it".²⁷⁴ Thus, for Cámara, successful guerrilla warfare within a poor country is conditional on that country becoming a "satellite in the capitalist orbit, or ... in the socialist orbit".²⁷⁵ No genuine liberation is achieved. Cámara also argues that the ruling elite, will finally "yield to the violence of the peaceful"²⁷⁶ which Cámara defines as "liberating moral pressure".²⁷⁷ Torres' own experience of struggling to transform the attitudes of the ruling elite lead him to the view that they would only yield in the face of armed revolution.

²⁷⁰ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 426.

²⁷¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 214.

²⁷² Quoted in Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, p. 126.

²⁷³ H. Cámara, *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), p. 42.

²⁷⁴ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, p. 45.

²⁷⁵ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, p. 45.

²⁷⁶ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, p. 55.

²⁷⁷ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, p. 55.

2.4.3 *Developing a new consciousness*

Both Torres and Guevara are concerned with the process of “conscientisation” amongst the masses, but a different focus emerges in their understanding of the process (neither specifically use the term “conscientisation”).

In most passages Torres regards the raising of the consciousness as a broadening of the horizons of the popular class, a process enabling the “social ascent” of the peasant, an increasing awareness of the possibilities for change, growth and development as a social group.²⁷⁸ This developing “class consciousness” will eventually lead to calls for radical economic and political change, possibly by means of revolution. Torres’ approach to conscientisation in a pre-revolutionary context bears many of the features of Freire’s conscientisation process, developed by Freire and others through adult education campaigns in the North East of Brasil in the early 1960s. Freire similarly recognises the need for the forging of a class consciousness as an essential prerequisite to challenging and transforming “an unjust reality”.²⁷⁹ Conscientisation is fundamentally a pre-revolutionary process for both Freire and Torres, although as we have noted, Freire recognises that conscientisation needs to continue in the post-revolutionary setting.²⁸⁰

Guevara, places the focus for the development of a new consciousness much more in the post-revolutionary setting and, unlike Freire and Torres, links it closely to a change in economic relationships. A new consciousness is formed in the worker appropriate to the newly acquired ownership of the means of production. According to Guevara, Marx “demonstrated that everything was related to production and that the consciousness of man was generated by the context in which he lived, and that context was formed by the relations of production”.²⁸¹ Only the vanguard (generally seen by Guevara as the guerrilla fighter) is likely to acquire this new consciousness prior to the change in economic relations.

²⁷⁸ See Torres’ essay “Social Change and Rural Violence in Colombia” in Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, pp. 188-244.

²⁷⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 141.

²⁸⁰ See p. 26.

²⁸¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 174.

Torres traces the beginnings of the conscientisation process amongst the Colombian rural poor to the establishment of the Radio Schools in Sutatenza. In 1961 Torres published his research into the effects of these radio schools upon the local population and notes their success in changing the values of the peasants:

The acquisition of the ... radio receiver and interest in listening to its programmes marks the first step in the process of change ... On coming into contact with this agent of change, the narrow peasant minds opened up to wider horizons and a desire for betterment was born in them.²⁸²

As we have already noted Torres argued that the experience of *La Violencia* also contributed significantly to the raising of “class consciousness” within the rural population.²⁸³ This was further encouraged, according to Torres, by the National Front government of the mid 1960s. Torres argued that for years the traditional political parties had managed to divide the popular class by appealing to “sentiment and tradition”.²⁸⁴ In the judgement of Torres the National Front government now represented only the interests of the privileged classes in its policies, thereby enabling the popular classes to finally identify their common causes:

The National Front is accelerating the social struggle in Colombia by instituting itself as the first class party in Colombia, a party of the privileged class which consolidates the union of oppressors against the oppressed challenging the popular class to constitute, according to the advice of José Antonio Galán, “the union of the oppressed against the oppressor”.²⁸⁵

We have noted that Torres understands the conscientisation process as the development of class consciousness in a pre-revolutionary setting and as a prerequisite of a successful revolution. On one occasion, however, Torres does refer to the development of consciousness in a post-revolutionary setting. He cites Cuba as an example of how a value system can be changed by revolution. Yet he does not directly link this change with a change in economic relations. Indeed, he suggests, in

²⁸² Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 143.

²⁸³ See pp. 36-38.

²⁸⁴ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 357.

²⁸⁵ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 387.

this early writing, that social values could be changed by a nationalist revolution as much as by a communist revolution,²⁸⁶ an idea which Guevara would have rejected.

There are occasions when Guevara describes the development of a new consciousness in a pre-revolutionary context but in terms very different to those of Torres. In one passage he explains that in some countries the development of a “social consciousness”²⁸⁷ had come as an inevitable next step. It had occurred as “a mechanical change, because there were so many objective conditions in place that the transition to socialism was simply a question of form, That is to say, the consciousness of everyone pointed to the need for a new society”.²⁸⁸ Clearly Torres did not experience the development of a “social consciousness” as a “mechanical change” in Colombia and his frustration with the disintegration of the United Front, whose key objective was the development of this consciousness amongst the masses, led to his final decision to join the armed struggle.

2.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion

Torres and Guevara were producing their most significant writing during the same period and the aims and objectives expressed in these writings converge in many areas. Both are convinced of the need for a radical change in the social, economic and political structures of poor countries. Both argue that when change by democratic means is not viable the option of change through violent revolution is justifiable. Both have a vision of a new humanity and a new society emerging as a result of the change in economic relationships and social and political structures. Some of the differences in analysis which do arise can be attributed to their specific contexts. Torres writes from a pre-revolutionary context in Colombia, Guevara from a post-revolutionary context in Cuba. This is perhaps most clearly seen in their different thinking concerning the process of conscientisation. Torres’ vision of the future is primarily shaped by his theology of the kingdom of God, although he is

²⁸⁶ Gerassi, *Revolutionary Priest*, p. 178.

²⁸⁷ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 175.

²⁸⁸ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 175.

aware of Marx's writings on the communist society which appear to be the principle influence on Guevara's vision of the future. Finally, and perhaps surprisingly given Torres' use of the concept of the kingdom of God, Guevara emerges with a more global vision of the future whereas Torres remains largely tied to the Colombian context.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MOVEMENT OF PRIESTS FOR THE THIRD WORLD

3.1 Introduction

Eight days after the death of Che Guevara, on 15th August 1967, a group of eighteen Roman Catholic bishops from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including Archbishop Helder Cámara, issued a document entitled “Manifesto of Eighteen Bishops from the Third World”.²⁸⁹ The document was their response to the papal encyclical “Populorum Progressio” and was produced in the hope of communicating to a wide audience what the co-authors believed to be the main thrust of that encyclical :

As the poor people of the world become conscious of who they are and conscious of the exploitation of which they are still victims, this message will give courage to those who suffer and fight for justice, justice which is the indispensable condition for peace.²⁹⁰

A small group of priests in Buenos Aires decided to distribute copies of this “Manifesto” to their colleagues throughout the country. Those who received the “Manifesto” were encouraged to demonstrate their support for it by adding their signatures to the document. The response to the document was far greater than those who distributed it had imagined possible and by January 1968 270 priests had signed the document. Contact was then made with all these priests, who were to form the nucleus of a group that was soon to become known as “The Movement of Priests for the Third World” (Movimiento de sacerdotes para el tercer mundo - MSTM).

The first national meeting of the newly formed group took place in Córdoba at the beginning of May 1968. This meeting formulated a letter which was sent to the Pope and to the conference of Latin American bishops which was to take place a

²⁸⁹ See A. Henelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (New York: Orbis, 1990), pp. 48-57.

²⁹⁰ R. Concatti and D. Bresci, *Sacerdotes para el tercer mundo; crónica, documentos, reflexión* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones del movimiento sacerdotes para el tercer mundo, 1972), p. 37.

few months later, in August of the same year, in Medellín, Colombia. In the letter the group expressed its opinion on the use of violence in the Latin American context.²⁹¹

By September 1968 the group had begun to produce its own bulletin entitled *Enlace* ("Link"), so called as it was intended that the bulletin would act as a continuing link between the Argentinian priests who had put their signatures to the "Manifesto of Eighteen Bishops". Between 1968 and 1973 twenty eight editions of this bulletin were produced and it functioned as the official mouthpiece of the group.

The conclusions of the conference of bishops in Medellín gave added impetus to the group and by the end of 1968 the central committee in Buenos Aires had formulated an "action plan". Domingo Bresci, an early member of the group, summarises the three elements of this "action plan":

To raise consciousness and to educate at every level about the situation of exploitation in which the majority of the people live;
to denounce the abuses and injustices of a society subject to capitalism, to the international imperialism of money and to neo-colonialism;
to add to the weight of protests and repudiations the force of "deeds" which shift opinions and accelerate changes.²⁹²

Over the next few years the MSTM were to engage in numerous public acts of opposition to government policy, including, on several occasions refusing to celebrate mass on Christmas Eve. Joint acts were planned with trade union groups to protest at factory closures, job losses or exploitative conditions of work. The most common form of protest used by the group was jointly signed letters sent to government leaders or key figures in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The high point of the group's power and influence came in December 1972 when General Juan Perón, soon after his return to the country after more than 15 years exile, asked to meet with a delegation of the group. This meeting took place before he established any formal contact with the church hierarchy and thereby underlined

²⁹¹ J. Segundo (ed.), *Iglesia latinoamericana ¿protesta o profecía?* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Busqueda, 1969), pp. 74-8.

²⁹² Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 13.

the importance he attached to the group. Perón used the meeting to congratulate the group for having contributed significantly to the process of creating the conditions necessary for a new period in Argentine political history.²⁹³

After this meeting the influence and the cohesion of the group began to wane. One section of the group advocated an even closer identification with the Peronist cause. Another section doubted whether Perón was capable of setting in motion the socialist revolution which they so desired. This disillusionment increased when Perón won the presidential elections in September 1973 but subsequently failed to introduce the radical changes in government policy which the group sought.

The military junta which took power in March 1976 heralded the end of the group's public activity. The junta launched a "Process of National Reorganisation", a euphemism for a violent and repressive campaign that was designed to eradicate left wing guerrilla activity in the country but soon came to target any left wing organisation. During this period 16 of the 524 members of the group were either assassinated or "disappeared" and another 47 were forced to leave the country for their own safety.

3.2 Influences

As in the case of Camilo Torres, a study of the various formative influences upon the MSTM will allow an assessment of Guevara's direct influence upon the group. A notable contextual difference between Torres and the MSTM is that all of Torres' writing comes prior to Guevara's death whereas all of the MSTM literature post-dates his death.

3.2.1 *Local context*

The conditions of extreme poverty, experienced by many within Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s, have been highlighted as influential factors in the emergence

²⁹³ A full account of this interview between Perón and the Priests for the Third World is given in J. Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes para el tercer mundo: un debate Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Guadalupe, 1992) pp. 227-232.

of a radical response from amongst the Roman Catholic clergy.²⁹⁴ At the first two national meetings of the MSTM in 1968 and 1969, great emphasis was placed on the local socio-economic context and “the situations of subjection which the population suffers”. Each diocese was given time to describe their own context and the impact of poverty, unemployment and exploitative work practices upon their own people.²⁹⁵ Furthermore, many of the early letters of protest written by members of the movement use extensive descriptions of their local context as the basis of their argument for the need for change. A letter from clergy and lay people of the diocese of Corrientes, written in March 1968 and addressed to “The Man of Today”, is a good example of this style of letter:

There exists a high level of unemployment in the Province. In the capital more than 5,000 unemployed roam the streets and a number no less great suffer from underemployment, with very low salaries.

If we analyse the gross internal product we see that 45% is formed by arable and cattle farming, which reveals the basically agrarian structure of the Province. 80% of the income from this farming exclusively benefits the landowners, and the remaining 19% is shared out amongst the great mass of rural workers and their families. It is easy to imagine the suffering which this distribution produces ...

15% of the population is debilitated by parasitic disease and we are faced with the saddest reality of all: that of infant mortality. This is a clear indication of the lack of medical support and an adequate diet. In Corrientes 1,580 children die a year, 132 per month, four a day. The 5,000,000,000 pesos which benefit the oligarchy means 1,580 dead children a year.²⁹⁶

Despite the many letters of protest written by members of the movement from the provinces, letters which generally highlighted the suffering caused by rural poverty, the principal context from which the ideas, the leaders and the inspiration of the movement came was that of the shanty towns around the major towns and cities. Many of the priests who came to be involved in the movement had their parishes based within these *villas de emergencia* and they spoke out of that context.²⁹⁷ The

²⁹⁴ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 256.

²⁹⁵ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 11.

²⁹⁶ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, pp. 112-3.

²⁹⁷ G. Pontoriero, *Sacerdotes para el tercer mundo; el fermento en la masa* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1991), p. 17. See also Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 218.

movement should therefore be seen primarily as an urban movement rather than as a rural movement. This is an important difference between the context out of which the MSTM developed its thinking and the context out of which Guevara developed his vision and revolutionary theory, which was primarily rural. The Cuban revolution took shape amongst the rural peasants of the Sierra Maestra, and Guevara argued that in Latin America the rural context should be the starting point for any revolutionary programme which sought to bring about radical change.²⁹⁸

The emergence of the MSTM can be seen, in part, as a reaction to the experience of human suffering which many priests were witnessing as they worked within their local parishes. Such suffering had begun to generate a heartfelt desire in many clergy for radical political, economic and social change which would bring an end to this experience of poverty and exploitation. In this way they echo the sentiments of Che Guevara for whom the need to overcome the injustice and exploitation, suffered by the majority of the Latin American population, was the primary motivating factor for revolution.²⁹⁹ A significant difference, however, is the primarily urban context from which the MSTM developed their thinking rather than Guevara's rural context.

3.2.2 *Worker priests*

The 'Priests for the Third World' movement in Argentina traces its deepest roots to the experience of the "worker priests" initiated amongst the national clergy in the mid 50s.³⁰⁰

So Pontoriero begins his historical survey of the movement. After acknowledging the influence of the French worker priests of the 1940s, Pontoriero goes on to describe how the Argentinian worker priests established an important link with the industrial work force and with the trade unions which represented them. The priests' activities also brought them into close contact with Peronism which dominated the trade union movement of the time. Ever since the military coup of 1955, when Perón was removed from power, the Roman Catholic church had been

²⁹⁸ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 20.

²⁹⁹ For example Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 161-3.

³⁰⁰ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 9.

viewed with suspicion by the Peronists. The leadership of the church in 1955 had given its public blessing to the new military government. The contacts which the worker priests were now making with Peronism were to create a tension within the church which was to intensify in the coming years. This tension was between those who wanted the church to establish itself within the context of the working (and unemployed) masses and those many within the hierarchy of the church who wanted the church to maintain its traditional role as advisor and spiritual guide to the leaders of the nation.

Although the worker priests formed a small percentage of the clergy in the 1950s, Pontoriero claims that “they prepared the ground, almost unconsciously, so that the ideas of the Second Vatican Council had somewhere to take root”.³⁰¹ Dodson argues that by 1968 the “worker priest experiment” in Argentina had led to “[a] ‘pooling’ of highly motivated priests with common, radicalising experiences”:

These priests were politicised to a working class political culture heavily influenced by the legacy of Peronism. The result was a strongly unified perspective which gave a large measure of coherence to their movement.³⁰²

Martín, however, questions the importance of the worker priests upon the movement. He argues that they forged their closest links not with the industrialised work force, as in the case of France, but rather with the populations of the shanty towns forming around the major cities of Argentina. Martín describes the population of these shanty towns as the “subproletariat”.³⁰³

3.2.3 Church documents

The series of documents issued by the Roman Catholic Church during the 1960s had a powerful influence upon the emerging MSTM. Of these documents the most significant were the Second Vatican Council documents (1962-65) and the papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio* which were both published before the founding of

³⁰¹ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 10.

³⁰² M. Dodson, “The Christian Left in Latin American Politics” in *Church and Politics in Latin America*, (ed. D. Levine; London: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 121.

³⁰³ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 218.

the movement, and the documents produced by the Conference of Latin American bishops in Medellín (1968) and the conference of Argentinian bishops in San Miguel (1969). These last two conferences were held after the founding of the movement but were to have a considerable influence upon the early development of the movement's thinking.

Pontoriero highlights two elements of the Second Vatican Council which were of particular relevance to the Latin American context and the emerging MSTM. Firstly, the council signalled an awakening interest on the part of the Roman Catholic Church in the causes of global poverty. The council raised the issue of the economic relationship between the rich and poor countries and questioned the justice of that relationship. Secondly, Pontoriero argues that certain passages within the documents of the Second Vatican Council open the door to dialogue and collaboration with non-Catholics. In particular, Pontoriero believed that allusions were being made to potential dialogue with socialists and Marxists.³⁰⁴

The papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio* takes further the reflections on political and economic ethics raised by the Second Vatican Council and seeks to ground those reflections within the contemporary national and international contexts. Martín lists the specifically economic issues covered by the encyclical which were of particular interest within the Latin American context: the ethics, or lack of ethics, behind the functioning of the global markets, the possibilities for "underdeveloped" countries to sell their raw materials at a reasonable price on the global market and the options for investing more in the development of poor countries and less on the arms trade.³⁰⁵

Populorum Progressio was warmly received by many of the more radical diocesan clergy groups in Argentina, groups which very soon after the publication of the cyclical were to join the MSTM. Many of the letters of protest written by diocesan

³⁰⁴ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, pp. 11-2.

³⁰⁵ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 83.

groups at this time use quotations from *Populorum Progressio* to give official papal backing to their calls for radical change.³⁰⁶

Populorum Progressio also has importance in the shaping of MSTM's attitude to the use of violence within the context of revolutionary change. Pontoriero describes Paul VI's attitude to the use of violence as presented in the encyclical:

Taking into account the unjust conditions in which millions of the faithful were living and the possible movement of these towards a violent search for social justice, the Pope nevertheless rejects revolutionary insurrection, but makes an exception of those cases "of evident and prolonged tyranny, which seriously threatens the fundamental rights of the person and dangerously damages the common good of the country".³⁰⁷

These words from the encyclical were to be frequently quoted by members of MSTM as they sought to articulate their response to the argument for the use of violence for the purpose of achieving radical political, economic and social change.³⁰⁸

Populorum Progressio was also the inspiration for the "Manifesto of the Eighteen Bishops from the Third World" which, in turn, acted as the catalyst for the emergence of MSTM. The "Manifesto", however, takes even further the implicit criticism of the capitalist economic order found within the encyclical and speaks of Christianity as "true socialism".³⁰⁹

Although the conference of Latin American bishops in Medellín took place after the foundation of the MSTM its conclusions were to have a profound influence upon the subsequent thinking and direction of the movement. Medellín, once again, took forward the Roman Catholic Church's new line of thinking on the ethics of the global economic order, this time from a specifically Latin American perspective.

³⁰⁶ For example, 'A un año de la Encíclica "Populorum Progressio" in Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, pp. 119-120.

³⁰⁷ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 13.

³⁰⁸ See Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 241 and Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 13.

³⁰⁹ A. Devoto and H. Cámara, *Manifesto de obispos del tercer mundo: respuesta al clamor de los pobres* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1968), p. 17.

The message of the conference centred on a prophetic denouncement of the injustice and exploitation experienced by the majority of the population in Latin America. Furthermore, it stressed the importance of linking this prophetic message with concrete action designed to bring about change.

The document of the Medellín conference is constantly cited in the writings emanating from the MSTM, thereby claiming the authority of official church teaching for their arguments. For example, the following passage from the Medellín document is frequently quoted to support the MSTM's attack on the national and international economic order:

The Latin American business system and the economic system itself are based upon an erroneous conception concerning the very purpose of the economy. A business, in an economy which is truly human, should not be understood as belonging to the owners of capital, because a business is fundamentally a community of people and a work site, which needs capital for the production of goods. A person, or a group of people cannot become the property of an individual, or a society, or the state. The liberal capitalist system ... has as a precondition the primacy of capital, its power and its discriminatory use for the production of profit.³¹⁰

The Medellín document is also used by the MSTM to support their call for direct action in favour of the poor,³¹¹ to support their call for a “conscientisation” of the oppressed people of Latin America³¹² and to challenge the reactionary attitude of the institutionalised church in Argentina.³¹³

Finally, the influence of the Medellín document can be seen in the arguments put forward within the MSTM concerning the use of violence. A recurring theme occurs within the writings of the movement which claims that the violence which, first and foremost, should be condemned is the “institutionalised violence” of the ruling classes rather than the violence of those seeking liberation from oppression.

³¹⁰ For example: Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 226 and Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 127.

³¹¹ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 142.

³¹² Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, pp. 132 and 142, and Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 87.

³¹³ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 136.

In a letter from a group of priests from the city of Santa Fe a passage from the Medellín document is quoted which points the finger at those who, from their point of view, are the principle perpetrators of violence in Latin America:

Who are the violent? Those who impose, collaborate or help to consolidate the present structures which institutionalise diverse forms of violence. "If they jealously retain their privileges, and above all, if they defend them using violent means themselves, they make themselves responsible before history for the explosive revolutions caused by desperation (Medellín)."³¹⁴

The final church document which had a significant influence upon the MSTM was the one produced after the conference of Argentinian bishops which met in San Miguel in April 1969. This document, though somewhat more constrained in its language, nevertheless reflects the general perspective of Medellín:

We argue that, during a long period of history, which is still in progress, there has appeared in our country an unjust structure. Liberation should be realised, then, in all sectors where there is oppression: in the judicial, the political, the cultural, the economic, the social.³¹⁵

3.2.4 "*Cristianismo y Revolución*"

In September 1966 a radical Catholic magazine was launched in Argentina entitled *Cristianismo y Revolución*, under the editorial leadership of Juan García Elorrio. This magazine was widely read by those Roman Catholic clergy who were later to become members of the MSTM and it was clearly an important formative influence upon the movement. After the foundation of the MSTM, *Cristianismo y Revolución* gave the movement its full support. Articles were often carried in the magazine about the activities of the movement³¹⁶ and, over the years, several members of MSTM contributed articles for the magazine.³¹⁷ However, the magazine was never an official mouthpiece for the movement and, during its short life, it presented a

³¹⁴ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 90.

³¹⁵ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 136.

³¹⁶ For example "Los que vinieron a servir" in *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (Buenos Aires, 1970), pp. 17-20.

³¹⁷ For example R. Dri, "Alienación y Liberación" in *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), pp. 59-64.

more radical revolutionary line of thought than the writings emanating from the MSTM over the same period.

In 1967 the editor of the magazine, García Elorrio, formed the *Comando Camilo Torres*. This group's most famous action was to disrupt an official state mass being celebrated in the cathedral of Buenos Aires. García Elorrio, before his arrest, read out a prayer which asked for greater freedom for the trade unions and an end to the exploitation and injustice experienced by the working classes of Argentina. The group contained many young Roman Catholic activists, some of whom were later to become leaders of the *montoneros*, the left wing guerrillas forces which operated in the mountainous northern regions of Argentina in the mid seventies.³¹⁸

This extreme militancy was the hallmark of the magazine. In language highly reminiscent of the writings of Che Guevara the call to armed struggle for the liberation of Latin America was repeatedly made. Indeed, many of the arguments and lines of thought articulated by Guevara find expression within *Cristianismo y Revolución*. Like Guevara, the magazine rejected democracy as a viable way of bringing about radical change in the Latin American context.³¹⁹ North American ("yanki") imperialism is condemned, and, as with Guevara, the United States is accused of forcing Latin American countries into relationships of economic dependence, which in turn threaten the national sovereignty of those countries.³²⁰ But perhaps most significantly of all, and in contrast to the later position of the MSTM, the magazine unequivocally advocates the use of violence to bring about structural change. In an open editorial letter printed in the magazine in 1967 and addressed to the archbishop of Tucumán, Monseñor Aramburu we read the following:

In the midst of the revolutionary struggle which is the sign of our times, there is also a place for the Christians who, in love, recognise the reason and the basis of a new violence which ends that daily experience of

³¹⁸ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, pp. 31-2.

³¹⁹ J. García Elorrio, "Bajo el Signo de Camilo" in *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 4 (1967), p. 2.

³²⁰ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 5 (1967), pp. 1-3.

violence imposed by those men who never come to be real men and therefore, never come to God.³²¹

Other articles and letters carried by the magazine leave no doubt about its complete support for the armed struggle. The defence speech at the trial of Régis Debray was reproduced in its entirety. Debray accompanied Che Guevara in his final guerrilla campaign in Bolivia and was captured by the Bolivian army shortly before Guevara's death. Interviews with Argentinian guerrilla organisations were carried³²² as well as reports on ongoing guerrilla activity in other parts of Latin America.³²³ Guerrillas who had died in action received eulogies³²⁴ and recent guerrilla activities in Argentina were listed. Letters from individual guerrilla organisations describing the details of their latest action were printed in the magazine. For example:

The Revolutionary Movement of Argentina communicates to the people that in the occupation of the main building of the 16th police division of Córdoba, carried out by the commando unit "Hilda Guerrero de Molina" on the 26th August the following equipment was recovered: four machine guns ... eight semi-automatic pistols ... one rifle ... eight helmets, eight berets ... three typewriters. The Revolutionary Movement of Argentina reiterates that all the elements taken, especially the arms which were paid for by the people and handed over by the dictatorship to repressive forces, are now in our power and at the service of the people.³²⁵

Within the pages of *Cristianismo y Revolución* we find the most radical expression of revolutionary Christianity in Argentina. As noted above, the influence of Che Guevara is evident throughout its pages, both as a romantic icon of the revolution and as a revolutionary theorist.

The influence of the magazine began to wane after the death of García Elorrio in a car crash, which Pontoriero describes as a "presumably intentional accident".³²⁶

³²¹ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 5 (1967), p. 1.

³²² *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 28 (1971), pp. 56-70.

³²³ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 25 (1970), pp. 21-4.

³²⁴ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), p. 5.

³²⁵ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 58.

³²⁶ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 30.

3.2.5 Christian-Marxist dialogue

The development of Christian-Marxist dialogue both in Europe and in Latin America during the early 60s can also be seen as an influential element amongst the various forces that were to bring the MSTM into being. The works of Roger Garaudy and Ernst Bloch had already generated much interest in a debate between Marxism and Christianity in Europe and many Latin American Roman Catholic clergy who did their studies in Europe at this time found themselves engaged in such dialogue.³²⁷ Martín, however, rejects the argument that the influence of Marxism upon Latin American thinking came exclusively from Europe. He points to the meetings that were initiated between Christians and Marxists in Argentina as early as 1962, about the same time as such encounters were beginning to take place in Europe.³²⁸

In 1965 further dialogue took place at the University of Buenos Aires between two Roman Catholic priests and future members of the MSTM, Carlos Mugica and Guillermo Tedeschi, and the Marxists Juan Rosales and Fernando Nadra. However, as Martín makes clear, such dialogue did not produce a closer rapport between the two sides. The Marxists regarded the position of Mugica in particular as too idealistic.³²⁹ This echoes the general attitude of the Soviet backed Communist Parties throughout Latin America towards the revolutionary programmes of the time.³³⁰

When one turns to the literature of MSTM itself the influence of Marxist language and Marxist analysis is clear. The concept of class struggle is frequently employed.³³¹ From its very inception the movement advocated the transfer of the ownership of the means of production from private hands into the hands of the people (the “socialisation” of the means of production, as it was frequently

³²⁷ For an overview of Christian-Marxist dialogue in the 1960s see T. Ogletree (ed.), *Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue* (London: Abingdon Press, 1968).

³²⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 158 and 166.

³²⁹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 167.

³³⁰ For an account of the negative attitude of the Bolivian Communist Party towards Che Guevara's Bolivian expedition see Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 684-5 and 704-5.

³³¹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 170.

described).³³² The movement's belief in the "march of history" towards revolutionary change suggests the influence of the historical determinism found in Marxism.³³³ Mugica, one of the movement's leading thinkers claimed that Marx and Lenin "had paraphrased the gospels".³³⁴

However, some within the movement questioned the appropriateness of trying to apply pure Marxism to the Latin American context. Rubén Dri, in an article published in *Cristianismo y Revolución* in 1970, argues that the liberation of the proletariat should not be the primary objective of revolutionary struggle in the Latin American context. Rather, the pursuit of national liberation should be the fundamental objective of the revolution. This is because, according to Dri, in Latin America the focus of economic conflict is not primarily between the proletariat and the owners of capital as in classical Marxism, but is to be seen more in the way separate nations relate economically to each other.

The principal contradiction does not take place between owner and worker, but between imperialist countries and their colonies, between the centre and the periphery. The process of 'proletarianisation' is extended to entire countries. The workers of the central countries indirectly participate in the exploitation of the peripheral countries; they do not stop being exploited by the capitalists, but they also benefit from some of the 'surplus value' which is produced in the colonies.³³⁵

National liberation from imperial power was therefore the starting point for the revolution in a Latin American context, according to Dri. A socialist revolution could then be set in motion as the next stage, once national liberation had been achieved.

The influence of Marxism upon the MSTM is clear. However, many members of the movement, like Dri, believed that traditional Marxist theory had to be radically adapted before it could be applied within the Latin American context.

³³² Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 75-6 and pp. 170-1.

³³³ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 74.

³³⁴ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 114.

³³⁵ Dri, "Alienación y liberación", *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 60.

3.2.6 Peronism

The rise of militant Peronism in the 1960s forms another part of the general context from which the MSTM emerged. The worker priests of the 50s and 60s played an important role in establishing links between the more radical elements in the Roman Catholic Church and the Peronist working classes, together with the trade unions which represented them. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic youth organisations such as *Juventud Universitaria Católica* and *Juventud Obrera Católica* were beginning to build bridges with Peronist organisations during the same period, despite opposition from the Catholic hierarchy who had very publicly supported the military coup of 1955 which had ousted Perón.³³⁶

For many of the priests who were to become members of the MSTM, the rise of militant Peronism was highly significant because it seemed to provide an ideal vehicle for leading the working class masses of Argentina forward towards revolutionary change in the country, as Dri suggests in an article published in *Cristianismo y Revolución*:

Socialism cannot be proposed and then left in the air, it must be grounded in an existing reality, which is the people. The proven loyalty of the masses to Peronism constitutes a key element in the incorporation of the masses in the revolutionary process.³³⁷

It is this vision of a Peronist revolution which ultimately led many within the group to a sense of disillusionment, for when Perón did come to power his government did not seek to introduce a radically socialist programme.

3.2.7 Camilo Torres

References to Camilo Torres within the main body of MSTM literature are not as common as one might expect for a revolutionary Christian group which became active in the period shortly after his death. On one occasion Torres' death is compared to the sacrificial giving of Christ.³³⁸ His decision to join the revolutionary

³³⁶ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 14-5.

³³⁷ Dri, *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), p. 17-8.

³³⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 110.

struggle in Colombia is described by Mugica as a movement from priesthood to prophecy.³³⁹ Mugica also makes use of Torres' term "efficacious love," arguing that the best way to engage in efficacious love is through participation in revolutionary struggle.³⁴⁰

The limited references to Torres within the MSTM literature may be connected to the movement's reluctance to wholeheartedly support armed struggle as Torres had so clearly done. When we look at those individual and groups on the fringes of the MSTM who did give their unequivocal support to the use of violence we find, in contrast to the MSTM, that Torres acts as a greater source of inspiration and influence. For example, Pontoriero traces the movement of the more radical elements of the Catholic Student Youth organisation (*Juventud Estudiantil Católica*) away from the influence of the pacifist Mugica and towards the option for armed struggle. As this process occurs Pontoriero notes that Torres becomes "the new model" for them.³⁴¹

The influence of Torres is clearly evident in the writings and actions of Juan García Elorrio, the editor of *Cristianismo y Revolución* and a leading Argentinian Christian advocate of armed struggle.³⁴² As we have noted Elorrio gave his "direct action" group the name *Comando Camilo Torres*. *Cristianismo y Revolución* itself published many articles on Torres and his significance for revolutionary Christianity. In 1971 the magazine contained a report of the day conference entitled "Homage to Camilo Torres" which took place at a Methodist college in Havana in the same year. The report describes how the conference studied the implications of Torres' phrase "revolution is a Christian imperative".³⁴³ Another edition carried an article from the Spanish priest Domingo Lain Sanz who had chosen to follow in the steps of Torres and join the ELN in Colombia.³⁴⁴ An early edition of the magazine commemorated the first anniversary of Torres' death by producing a series of

³³⁹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 131.

³⁴⁰ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 157.

³⁴¹ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, pp. 31-2.

³⁴² See D.C. Hodges, *The Legacy of Che Guevara: A Documentary Study* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), pp. 195-7.

³⁴³ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 28 (1971), pp. 26-9.

³⁴⁴ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), pp. 32-3.

articles on his growing significance.³⁴⁵ In his editorial entitled “Under the Sign of Camilo,” Elorrio describes the “evangelical charisma” of Torres which led him ultimately to join the armed revolutionary struggle. Elorrio argues that this decision of Torres has opened up the way for other Christians to choose armed struggle as a legitimate way of bringing in the radical changes which revolutionary Christianity sought:

Camilo died for his people, he died with a gun in his hand: a new sign and a new sacrifice which prophetically shook all America. Camilo went before us in order to be the first in Love. His life and his death demand from us each day an authenticity in our concrete commitment to the struggle. Camilo presents to us a sign of contradiction, of scandal, of search, of union, of sacrifice, of action, of violence, of commitment. We accept this sign and we support it.³⁴⁶

3.2.8 *The Cuban revolution and Che Guevara*

It is clear that the Cuban revolution of 1959 helped to awaken the aspirations of those who sought radical political and economic change in Latin America in the early 1960s and onwards. Historians of the MSTM, such as Martín and Pontoriero, have underlined the significance of the Cuban revolution as an important formative influence upon the emerging movement.³⁴⁷ Martín sees the Cuban revolution as one of the three key “historical forces” of the period which helped to shape the movement; the other two being the second Vatican Council (to which he later adds the conference of Medellín) and the rise of militant Peronism.³⁴⁸ Bonino argues that the triumph of the Cuban revolution was a “crucial” moment in the “awakening of a revolutionary consciousness” not just in Argentina but throughout Latin America.³⁴⁹ The success of the Cuban revolution suggested that revolutionary change within the context of Latin America and under present conditions was historically realisable, and not just a utopian dream as many of the national communist parties of Latin America argued. Furthermore, Cuba itself sought to be more than just a distant Caribbean example of a successful revolution and actively endeavoured to export

³⁴⁵ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 5 (1967).

³⁴⁶ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 5 (1967), pp. 2-3.

³⁴⁷ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, pp. 16-7.

³⁴⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 74, 154, and 266.

³⁴⁹ Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, p. 33.

revolution to other parts of the sub-continent, including Argentina. Indeed Guevara was personally responsible for the setting up of the Cuban backed guerrilla force which inserted itself in Northern Argentina in 1963, and he had hopes of joining that campaign in person.³⁵⁰

The influence of Guevara himself upon the emergence of the MSTM is more difficult to quantify. There is no doubt that one particular saying of Guevara was highly influential in radical Christian circles and acted as an affirmation of the part that Christians of Latin America could play in the revolutionary process:

When the Christians dare to give themselves wholeheartedly to revolutionary witness, the Latin American revolution will be unstoppable, since up till now the Christians have allowed their doctrine to be used as an instrument of the reactionaries.³⁵¹

Beyond this quotation his direct influence upon the group can be seen in two ways: First, as an icon of the revolutionary cause, and second, as a direct source of revolutionary theory. A cult surrounding Che Guevara very rapidly developed after his death, assisted by Alberto Korda's widely distributed photograph of him. Guevara came to epitomise revolutionary sacrifice, the ideal of the revolutionary who is prepared to die for his beliefs. He offered a romanticised example of selfless commitment to other nations' struggles for liberation. Indeed, for some, Guevara appears to take on a Christ-like role and persona. This idealised image of Guevara clearly acted as a source of inspiration to the students of Latin America and to the young radical clergy of the time. Martín argues that this role of revolutionary icon was the principal influence of Guevara upon the emerging MSTM rather than the influence of his ideas and revolutionary theory.

In this period, the mention of Camilo Torres and Che Guevara, men who had died for the Latin American revolution, emerge in contexts which give them an epic dimension, but without further reflection on

³⁵⁰ For a detailed description of the unsuccessful Cuban backed guerrilla campaign in Argentina see Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 537-594.

³⁵¹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 163. See also, L. Gera, *Teología, pastoral y dependencia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1974), p. 91.

their significance, neither critical, nor analytical, nor even methodological.³⁵²

It is, indeed, difficult to gauge the degree to which the writings and theory of Guevara, rather than his cult image, had a direct influence upon the group. On occasions, direct reference is made to Guevara's writings. For example, Gera turns to Guevara to support his view that love is not only a central motivation for revolutionary Christians but for all revolutionaries. He quotes Guevara's statement that "the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love".³⁵³ However, many of the ideas and objectives which Guevara and the MSTM seem to share may have come to the movement not from Guevara but from the other sources whose influence upon the movement has been described. Yet the question remains as to whether those sources, in turn, had been influenced directly by Guevara. The influence of Guevara is particularly evident in the magazine *Cristianismo y Revolución*.³⁵⁴

In two areas the influence of Guevara's thinking upon the MSTM can be seen more obviously. Firstly, Guevara's advocacy of guerrilla warfare as the only viable option for most of those who suffered from oppression in Latin America had rapidly reached the ears of most radical Christians on the sub-continent during the 1960s. Guevara was thus recognised to be the leading proponent of the argument in favour of the use of violence to bring about political *and* economic change. The debate about the validity of the armed struggle raged within the MSTM throughout its history and Guevara's theory of guerrilla warfare provided a line of argument for those members of the MSTM who sought a more militant solution to Argentina's problems. It is true, however, that the decision of Camilo Torres to join the left-wing guerrilla forces in Colombia added another, specifically Christian, dimension to the debate about the use of violence. A fuller account of the MSTM attitude towards the armed struggle will be given in the next section.

³⁵² Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 157.

³⁵³ Gera, *Teología, pastoral y dependencia*, p. 104 (note).

³⁵⁴ See pp. 83-4.

Secondly, the term “New Man”, usually written with capital letters, is used with great frequency within the writings of the MSTM.³⁵⁵ As we have noted, the “new man” is also one of Guevara’s key concepts.³⁵⁶ Again, it is difficult to be certain that Guevara provides the exclusive source for the use of this term. It is a term which is also found within the New Testament and at times the term seems to be used by writers within the movement more in the New Testament sense of personal conversion rather than in the sense of a transformation brought about by a change in economic relationships which is how Guevara uses the term.³⁵⁷

Influence for the use of the term also may have come from the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* which contains a section entitled “Christ as the New Man”. Here, the new being in Christ emerges when “the Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son who is the first born of many brothers receives ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ (Rom.8;23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love. Through the Spirit ... the whole man is renewed from within”.³⁵⁸

The document of the Medellín conference makes use of the term and, in a complete reversal to Guevara, sees the “new man” as an essential prerequisite to a radical change of structures:

The uniqueness of the Christian message does not so much consist in the affirmation of the necessity for structural change as it does in the insistence on the conversion of men, which will in turn bring about this change. We will not have a new continent without new and reformed structures, but, above all, there will be no new continent without new men.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ For example Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 90, 144, 176, 177, 194, 198, 217 and 241, Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, pp. 16 and 91, Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 136, and Gera, *Teología, pastoral y dependencia*, p. 110.

³⁵⁶ See pp. 15-20.

³⁵⁷ For a fuller analysis of the MSTM’s use of the term “New Man”, see pp.103-5.

³⁵⁸ W. M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1967), pp. 220-1.

³⁵⁹ Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*, vol. II, (Washington: Division for Latin America - USCC, 1973), p. 57.

Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* frequently refers to the “new man,”³⁶⁰ although Freire himself may have derived his use of the term from Guevara. He makes frequent references to Guevara’s writings in the book and quotes from Guevara’s “Man and Socialism in Cuba” in which Guevara describes in greatest detail the nature of the “new man”.³⁶¹

Gutiérrez also employs the term “new man” in *A Theology of Liberation*, published in the period of MSTM’s active life. It is interesting to note, however, that on several occasions Gutiérrez himself links his use of the term directly with Guevara.³⁶²

The “Manifesto of the Eighteen Bishops,” which was so influential in the forming of the MSTM, speaks of “a new humanity, which does not honour money accumulated in the hands of the few but money distributed among workers, manual labourers and farmers”.³⁶³ This conception of a “new humanity” is very close to that of Guevara, but the direct evidence of Guevara is not possible to prove.

Cámara himself, who indicates that he has read Guevara,³⁶⁴ speaks in terms similar to Guevara of the “new man” who will be “a *free and conscious* being, progressively freed from a thousand kinds of servitude so that his inalienable freedom can flourish and he will be truly free, free even from himself, free to give himself to others”.³⁶⁵

The term “new man” clearly had a wide usage during the time that the MSTM was active. This usage extended even beyond the Latin American context. The black theologian, James Cone, employs the term in his book *God of the Oppressed*.³⁶⁶ It is therefore hard to identify the key influence for the use of the term within the MSTM. However, we have noted that in the cases of Freire, Gutiérrez and, possibly,

³⁶⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 22-3, 25, 30 and 137-8.

³⁶¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 62.

³⁶² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 91, 236-7 and 146.

³⁶³ Henelly, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, p. 53.

³⁶⁴ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, p. 42.

³⁶⁵ H. Cámara, *Revolution through Peace* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1972), p. 31.

³⁶⁶ J. H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 217-9.

Cámara, the influence of Guevara can be traced to their usage of the term. Furthermore, on at least one occasion, a member of the MSTM, Rubén Dri, signals the direct influence of Guevara in his use of the term:

Che Guevara also speaks of the new man who is forged by the socialist revolution, a man distinguished by his sharp social conscience, motivated by a sense of moral responsibility and an extension of the heroic attitude into daily life.³⁶⁷

3.2.9 *Influences: Conclusion*

During the 1950s and 1960s it is possible to identify a broad range of historic forces which influenced and shaped the MSTM. Many of these forces fed off each other, making it difficult to be certain about the original source of the ideas and arguments being formed at the time. Whilst it is clear that the MSTM found a great source of inspiration in the new documents emerging from the Roman Catholic church during this period, those documents alone do not explain the emergence of this radical group of Christians committed to revolutionary change. The success of the Cuban revolution must also be seen as an important formative influence upon the movement. The writings of Che Guevara were rapidly disseminated throughout Latin America after the Cuban revolution. It is clear that some of his ideas had an impact upon the movement, most notably his call to armed struggle and his concept of the “new man,” although, as we have seen, it is difficult to establish the degree to which the use of this term within the MSTM can be directly attributable to Guevara. Despite the influence of Guevara important differences remained between the aims and objectives of Guevara and those of the MSTM and the next sections will examine those differences.

³⁶⁷ Dri, “Alienación y Liberación”, *Cristianismo y revolución* 26 (1970), p. 61.

3.3 Aims

3.3.1 "Change of structures" and socialist society

Throughout the MSTM literature we find a repeated call for a "change of structures".³⁶⁸ In the first document produced by the movement, a letter written to the conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín in 1968, the phrase is employed:

For many, this liberation is impossible without a fundamental change in the socio-economical structures of our continent.³⁶⁹

The document produced by the Medellín conference refers to "unjust structures"³⁷⁰ and, as we noted, calls on "new men" to change these structures.³⁷¹ Martín suggests that, in addition to the influence of the Medellín document, the MSTM was also influenced in its use of this term by the prophetic language of the Bible. He gives Isaiah 65:17 as an example of such language:

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.³⁷²

Whatever its origins, the call for a "change of structures" became a common way for the MSTM to articulate its desire for revolutionary change. Many of the open letters written by provincial MSTM groups use this phrase as a rallying cry. An example of this is the open letter written by MSTM priests and lay people from the diocese of Corrientes in March 1968. The letter concludes with the following phrase printed in capital letters:

³⁶⁸ For example, Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 146 and 161, Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 91, *Cristianismo y revolución* 26 (1970), p. 61, A. Mayol, N. Habegger and A. Armada, *Los católicos posconciliares en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galera, 1970), p. 200.

³⁶⁹ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 76.

³⁷⁰ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 146.

³⁷¹ See p. 92.

³⁷² Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 146.

Authentic peace will not be achieved until we have achieved structural change, which will initiate an era of new institutions which will allow us to experience the values of human dignity.³⁷³

Even when this phrase is not explicitly used in relation to the hoped for revolution, nevertheless the assumption that the revolution will involve wholesale social, economic and political change is nearly always present. Within *Enlace*, the periodical issued by the movement, revolution is defined as “the radical renovation of the established order”.³⁷⁴ Lucio Gera, a member of MSTM, talks of revolution as “the radical and urgent transition from an old order to a new order, from one type of society to another type of society”.³⁷⁵ In the same article Gera argues against the idea that changes can be made to the existing system through reform. Only revolution will bring about the changes necessary:

It is not enough just to retouch the present, introducing interior correctives to the system; a revolution does not arise from within a system, emerging from its own factors, as a logical process of the system itself, but rather against the system, introducing new and extrinsic factors, which destroy it.³⁷⁶

This passage underlines the emphasis within the MSTM on the need for a revolution which genuinely changes the system rather than tinkering with it or simply replacing the leadership. “We are not about changing people, but changing the system”, declared an open letter of the MSTM in May 1969.³⁷⁷ In this respect a link can be established with Guevara, who rejected the idea of a merely “putschist” revolution which simply replaced one political leader with another, but left the general, social, economic and political system in place. He describes how, before the military campaign in Cuba got under way, several members of the group believed that all that was needed was simply to take power to overthrow Batista. It was only through the experience of the war and living amongst the rural peasant

³⁷³Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 116. See also the letter written by priests and laity from the Chaco province in December 1968, p. 128.

³⁷⁴Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 59.

³⁷⁵Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 225.

³⁷⁶Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 225.

³⁷⁷Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 93.

community that it began to dawn on the group that a much more radical, structural change was needed.³⁷⁸

If the MSTM were seeking a radical “change of structures” and “system”, what was then nature of this new system? It is clear from the literature that the introduction of a socialist society was seen as the solution. This call for the establishment of socialism within Argentina and throughout the whole of Latin America is repeated again and again. Within the “Manifesto of the Eighteen Bishops”, the document which provided the catalyst for the formation of the movement, socialism is described as the natural successor to capitalism.³⁷⁹ The “Manifesto” then defines socialism in terms of Christianity: “True socialism is Christianity lived out in all its fullness, in the just distribution of goods, and the fundamental equality of all”.³⁸⁰ In similar vein, the MSTM priest and theologian Eggers Lan argues that socialism is the political system which accords most closely with the values and principles of Christianity:

Given that the number of people who are owners is very small, it is very likely that they will act according to human nature and look after their own individual profit to the detriment of the rest of society. And taking into account that the Good News promises the liberation of the oppressed and radically condemns the profit motive, the ethical and religious orientation of the gospel’s message leads us, today, to search for an ideological commitment most appropriate to our Christian calling in the alternative of socialism.³⁸¹

Gera, in his survey of the movement’s thinking, gathers together passages from a number of MSTM documents which clarify the movement’s understanding of this desired socialist society:

The new order to which many men aspire will take the shape of a socialist society: A society in which everyone has genuine access to material and cultural benefits. A society in which the exploitation of man by man constitutes one of the most serious crimes. A society whose structures make that exploitation impossible ... So that this can

³⁷⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 8-13 and pp. 268-269, and *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 81.

³⁷⁹ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 39.

³⁸⁰ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 43.

³⁸¹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 175.

become a reality we consider it necessary to eradicate definitively and totally the private ownership of the means of production. This means eradicating forever the concept of business based on profit as an incentive for work (Declaration of Co-ordinators, 27th June, in the light of the events in Córdoba).

We make our option for a Latin American socialism which necessarily implies the socialisation of the means of production, of economic, political and cultural power (Basic Agreements, Colonia Caroya, Córdoba, 2nd May 1969 and the Communiqué of Santa Fe).³⁸²

Gera identifies two key elements of socialism as it is understood by the MSTM. Firstly, the primacy of “people” over profit, instead of the relationships under capitalism where this primacy is reversed, and secondly, the primacy of the good of all over the good of the privileged few. Gera also underlines the importance of what the movement frequently terms “the socialisation of the means of production”:

This concept does not postulate the abolition of personal property, but rather the validity of an economic democracy which permits the social control and the active participation of the people on the level of the planning agencies and in the economic management of the means of production ... It proposes, therefore, the eradication of the current regime of private property, so that everyone, and not just some individuals, can have personal property.³⁸³

One notable feature of the movement’s thinking about socialism is how its arrival is seen as an inevitable process. In language which has echoes of the historical determinism found in some Marxist thought, documents of the movement talk of the “march of history”,³⁸⁴ leading the world inexorably towards a socialist society. It is possible that the emphasis on this unstoppable progress towards socialism was fuelled by the movement’s failure to articulate a concrete political strategy for bringing in such a socialist society. It is common within the MSTM literature for reference to be made to “the signs of the times”,³⁸⁵ namely the increasing poverty, exploitation and oppression of the masses and their emerging consciousness of the causes of this injustice. These “signs of the times” pointed to an imminent and

³⁸² Concati and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, pp. 230-1.

³⁸³ Concati and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 232.

³⁸⁴ Eg. Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 74.

³⁸⁵ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 140-4.

radical transformation of society. This transition was already “in progress and irreversible ... beyond the normal comings and goings of history”.³⁸⁶

The sense of the inevitability of the coming of socialism is strengthened because of the link that is made between the future socialist society and the kingdom of God, in a manner similar to that of Torres.³⁸⁷ If the socialist society is seen as the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth and if it is believed that God will establish his kingdom at the end of time, then the coming of this society can then be understood as inevitable and ordained by God. In the following passage Gera makes this link between the imminent, inevitable arrival of a new historical age and the inbreaking of the kingdom of God:

Prophecy concentrates on these “signs of the present time”. At certain moments, as in the present time, these signs occur in an overwhelming way. It happens that the material and spiritual forces which drive history have come to be accumulated and concentrated in such density that they become unstoppable, shaping an explosive historical moment. All these happenings signify that we have arrived at a change in history ... the point at which history enters into a greater maturity. It is the time of the inauguration of something new, in which the imminence of the Kingdom presses and disturbs. A new age arrives and whoever resists entering into it appears out of time, out of touch with history.³⁸⁸

A comparison of Guevara’s and the MSTM’s description of the hoped for socialist society reveals that they shared many similar objectives: the socialisation of the means of production, a society based on equality and freedom from discrimination, a society freed from the oppressive power of economic imperialism. In addition, both Guevara and the MSTM introduce a degree of historical determinism into their thinking, seeing the historical process as virtually inevitable.

³⁸⁶ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes* p. 153. Dri, however argues against this concept of the inevitability of the coming of the socialist society in *Cristianismo y Revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 61. Dri’s views, should be seen an exception to the more widely expressed notion that the coming of the socialist state was an inevitable process.

³⁸⁷ For example, see R. Dri, *La utopía de Jesús* (Buenos Aires: Impresiones Sud America, 1987), pp.174-83.

³⁸⁸ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 215.

But some important differences emerge as well. Guevara sees a crucial role for the revolutionary “catalysts” who, through concrete action are able to speed up the process whereby the old capitalist epoch is replaced by socialism. Much of Guevara’s written work is devoted to describing the practical strategies which need to be applied in order to generate this catalytic action which provokes revolution. The MSTM present no such practical strategies but put their confidence in the socialist revolution’s “natural” progression. Furthermore, whilst Guevara recognises the need for national liberation from imperialist domination he does not become permanently enmeshed within a particular nationalist cause. His decision to leave Cuba in 1965 and continue the revolutionary struggle in other countries underlines his internationalist vision. As we shall note in the following section, the downfall of the MSTM was to throw itself behind one political group, Peronism, which then failed to deliver the promised socialist revolution. Having called for a “change of systems, not of persons” it ultimately found itself campaigning for a change of national leadership which did not then lead to a change of system.

3.3.2 National liberation and Peronism

The rejection of “developmentalism” as a step towards national liberation from the economic control of other countries is a feature of the MSTM literature. In this way the MSTM shares the perspective both of Guevara³⁸⁹ and Torres.³⁹⁰ The poverty of the Third World countries exists not because they are at an early stage in the development process, but because of the oppressive and exploitative economic relations which they have with the rich countries. The rich countries “develop” at the expense of the poor countries, who are permanently locked into the status of being “underdeveloped” because of the unfair economic relationship. To encourage the idea that economic progress is most likely to occur through gradual development and reform helps to weaken the desire for revolution. Habegger’s attack on “developmentism” is a good example of the general attitude within the movement to this theory. In this passage he argues that “developmentalism” has also prevented real change within the church as well as society in general:

³⁸⁹ See p. 10.

³⁹⁰ See pp. 48-9.

Developmentism: it has gained credibility because of Paul VI's phrase: "development is the new name for peace". It calls upon the powerful, the monopolies and governments in turn to advocate reforms in order to avoid revolution, while the people must resign themselves to the idea of solutions to their problems coming from above. The experience of history, however, shows that only "the people themselves can save The People" and that all national transformation will be born in the struggle of the oppressed. "Developmentism" also serves to encourage liturgical reforms and modernisation in worship without requiring a profound personal conversion, nor a critical attitude towards the world.³⁹¹

Ruben Dri replaces the language of "developmentalism" with the language of class struggle. He argues that, within the Third World context, whole countries are subject to the imperialist domination of rich countries and thereby the "proletarianisation" of the nation. The struggle for liberation thus becomes not the cause of just some sections within the country, but a national cause, a national struggle to overcome the domination of the "capitalist countries".³⁹² First there must be national liberation, then a socialist revolution could take place within the country. According to Dri, Peronism provided the focus for this struggle for national liberation, within the Argentinian context.

The MSTM call for a new socialist society increasingly became linked with the nationalist cause and thereby with Peronism. Within the literature there is evidence of a growing belief that a revolutionary programme would only have a chance of success if it carried with it the broad support of the masses.³⁹³ It was clear to many of the MSTM priests, working in the urban slums of the big Argentinian cities, that Peronism had won the hearts of those masses. Thus it became a common view within the movement that to identify with the Peronist cause was to identify with the people, especially the urban poor. As Dri put it: "the people, the masses, feel both Christian and Peronist at the same time".³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Mayol, Habegger and Armada, *Los Católicos posconciliares*, p. 201.

³⁹² Dri, *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 60.

³⁹³ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 216-27, *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), p. 17, *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 64.

³⁹⁴ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 219.

In this way, Peronism was increasingly seen by many within the movement as paving the way towards a popular revolution, it was the “preparation for the coming of socialism”.³⁹⁵ Peron, himself, until the end of 1972, still in exile in Spain had encouraged the linking of Peronism with the socialist cause by condemning the individualism of capitalism and speaking of his hopes for what he described as “national socialism”.³⁹⁶ Furthermore, his public condemnation of “North American imperialism” won him increasing support within the movement.³⁹⁷

This growing support for Peronism found official expression in a statement issued by the MSTM at their third national conference in 1970:

This revolutionary process and this road towards socialism does not begin today ... In Argentina we believe that the Peronist experience and the long term loyalty of the masses to the Peronist movement constitutes a key element in the incorporation of our people in the said revolutionary process. We believe that recognition of this fact on the part of all the revolutionary forces will help to consolidate the unity of all those who struggle for the national liberation.³⁹⁸

On Peron’s return from exile in November 1972 he demonstrated his support for the MSTM by inviting a delegation from the movement to a meeting at his house in Buenos Aires. This meeting received great public attention as it acted as a deliberate snub to the leaders of the Argentinian Roman Catholic Church whom Peron had still not received.

However, the enthusiasm for the Peronist cause was not shared by all the members of the movement, many of whom did not believe that Peron, once in power, would be prepared to introduced truly socialist changes to the political, economic and social structures of the country. In September 1973 Perón did come to power through democratic election, but, as feared, once in power, he failed to introduce a socialist programme. This led to a great sense of disillusionment within the movement and a deepening of the divisions between the different factions.

³⁹⁵ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 176.

³⁹⁶ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 175.

³⁹⁷ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 227-8.

³⁹⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 220.

3.3.3 The "New Man"

In the section on "influences" we have noted the frequent references to the "new man" within the MSTM literature.³⁹⁹ We have also noted a number of different sources for the use of the term, including Guevara. Did Guevara and the MSTM share the same understanding of the term? An answer to this question may shed light on the degree to which Guevara acted as a direct influence on the group.

I have argued that Guevara sees the "new man" as a post-revolutionary figure. As a person changes his or her relationship to the means of production so a new consciousness develops within the person. Thus Guevara's "new man" is a consequence of the revolutionary process which establishes a socialist economic system and a new set of economic relationships. In this way the "new man" is a product of the revolution, rather than the "new man" being the one who produces the revolution.

When we turn to the MSTM literature it is clear that on many occasions Guevara's understanding of the term is employed. In the movement's publication "Our option for Peronism" the "new man" is described as the "final objective" of socialism.⁴⁰⁰ Habegger talks of the need to establish a socialist society which would "allow the development of the new man and creative work".⁴⁰¹ Gera, who at other times refers directly to Guevara's writing,⁴⁰² speaks of the "construction of a collective 'new man' in a renewed and liberated society".⁴⁰³ A report of their national conference of 1970 in *Cristianismo y Revolución* describes the movement's desire for the "advent of the new man as a result of a revolutionary process of liberation".⁴⁰⁴ A summary of the results of a questionnaire sent out to MSTM priests in 1970 describes the desire of many priests to "prefigure" in the here and now, under capitalism, the future "new man".⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁹ See pp. 92-4.

⁴⁰⁰ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 176.

⁴⁰¹ Mayol, Habegger and Armada, *Los Católicos posconciliares*, p. 200.

⁴⁰² Gera, *Teología, pastoral y dependencia*, pp. 91 and 104.

⁴⁰³ Gera, *Teología, pastoral y dependencia*, p. 110.

⁴⁰⁴ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 24 (1970), p. 18.

⁴⁰⁵ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 217.

However, at other times we find the term being used of the one who has been “converted” to the revolutionary cause. The “new man” is the one who will be able to promote revolutionary change because of a newly discovered way of understanding the world. Used in this way, the “new man” produces the revolution rather than being produced by the revolution. The “Manifesto of the Eighteen Bishops” argues that conversion of the person comes first, before any change in social and economic structures can be expected. The new person, created through conversion, will then be empowered to promote change within society:

From the doctrinal point of view, the church knows that the gospel demands the first and radical revolution: the conversion, the total transformation of sin into grace, of selfishness into love, of pride into humble service. And this conversion is not only interior and spiritual, it is directed to the whole person, corporal and social as well as spiritual and personal. It has a community aspect full of consequences for the whole of society.⁴⁰⁶

This same line of thought is found in later MSTM literature. The open letter of the MSTM priests of the Santa Fe province, using a phrase from the Medellín document, declares: “The new Argentina which we all desire will not be produced without new structures: ‘but such new structures will not occur without authentically renewed and liberated men’”.⁴⁰⁷ Concatti describes the “new man” as one willing to offer up his own life for the sake of inaugurating a new world.⁴⁰⁸ In this sense, it is the “new man” who brings in the new world rather than the other way round, as in the writing of Guevara.

In an article written by Dri for *Cristianismo y Revolución* we see the term being used in these two different ways, apparently without the difference being recognised:

St Paul spoke of the new man who no longer lived for himself but for others, the one who has passed from selfishness, the root of all alienations or sins, to the other-centredness of love for one’s neighbour.

⁴⁰⁶ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 39.

⁴⁰⁷ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 91.

⁴⁰⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 177.

Che Guevara also speaks of the new man who is forged in socialist revolution, a man who is distinguished by his sharp social conscience, by being motivated by the moral incentive, by extending the heroic attitude [of the guerrilla fighter] into daily life. On this point the gathering of bishops in Medellín affirm that “the originality of the Christian message does not consist, directly, of an affirmation of the need to change structures, but rather in the insistence on the conversion of the man, who then demands those changes”.⁴⁰⁹

Dri correctly presents Guevara’s use of the term when he describes the “new man” as one who is “forged” by the socialist revolution. The revolution produces the new person. But the passage he then cites from the Medellín document states that the opposite process occurs. According to the document, Christianity insists on the primary importance of converting the person. Only after conversion is this new person empowered to demand structural change. The new person produces the revolution.

Guevara’s understanding of the “new man” is developed principally out of his Marxism. The similar way in which some MSTM writers use term suggests the influence of Guevara, but other usage points to influence from church documents such as the Medellín document and the “Manifesto of the Eighteen Bishops” (and, possibly, *Gaudium et Spes*). Guevara uses the term in a radically different way to these church documents, but the difference seems never to have been properly analysed within the MSTM.

3.4 Objectives

3.4.1 *Discrediting of the democratic process*

The writings of the movement highlight a widespread belief among its members that the desired “change of structures” could not be brought about through the democratic process. In his study of MSTM literature Martín concludes that within the movement “the normal position is to affirm that the solution for Argentina

⁴⁰⁹ *Cristianismo y Revolución*, no. 26 (1970), p. 61.

cannot consist of a return to an electoralist regime".⁴¹⁰ "The myth of democracy" is not wanted, but rather "the real exercise of power by the people".⁴¹¹ The democratic process is seen as a system which allowed the ruling oligarchy to maintain its power simply by buying votes as each election came round. An open letter of MSTM priests from the province of Santa Fe talks about the "democratic game" which "initiated the unjust structures under which we presently suffer".⁴¹² The letter sent by the MSTM to the Medellín conference of bishops attacks the democratic system as it operates within the Latin American context using words quoted from a previous conference of Latin American bishops:

In Latin America we experience a democracy which is more a formality than genuine, where, at times, real freedom of organisation is lacking. The political systems are characterised by different forms of oligarchy ... In many countries the military power constitutes one of the most decisive factors in the political sphere.⁴¹³

Another open letter compares the democratic power of the political parties to that of military governments:

You know the process of our country. It is a road which brings us to the uselessness of the political parties whose discredited and tarnished image rebounds directly upon the democratic system. This vacancy of real power and the political parties' lack of representativeness are excuses for the ultimate recourse of the liberal capitalist system: the military coups ... whose true objective is to save the interests of the privileged classes. The political parties and the military coups are two sides of the same coin. With both, the popular masses are neither represented, nor heard in the demands they make for their rights.⁴¹⁴

We also find Guevara, on many occasions, using very similar language in his condemnation of the democratic system as it generally found expression within the Latin American context. Guevara, however, writes in the light of the Cuban military campaign. His experience of the almost unstoppable cycle of violence which an armed revolution can unleash leads him to advocate the democratic option for

⁴¹⁰ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 245-6.

⁴¹¹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 246.

⁴¹² Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 91.

⁴¹³ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 75.

⁴¹⁴ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 114.

change wherever this exists as a genuine possibility.⁴¹⁵ Clearly, it was the belief of the MSTM that the democratic option was not viable within the Argentinian context of the late 60s and early 70s.

3.4.2 *Taking power*

Having rejected the democratic process as an avenue to power for those who wished to bring about the necessary “change of structures” the MSTM was obliged to reflect upon other options. Naturally, this led to the consideration of the use of violence in the context of an armed revolutionary struggle. However, there is a considerable amount of ambiguity in the position of the movement in relation to the use of violence.

The central theme of the movement’s first letter, written to the conference of Latin American bishops in Medellín, was that of violence. The letter argues that the whole of Latin America, for several centuries, had been a continent of violence. Specifically, the letter refers to “the violence that the privileged minority, from the time of Columbus, has practised against the immense majority of an exploited people”.⁴¹⁶ It is an institutionalised violence “fundamentally rooted in the political, economic and social system governing almost every one of our countries”.⁴¹⁷

The same letter identifies a growing awareness amongst the people of the causes of this suffering and a desire to seek their liberation. However, attempts to change the system by peaceful means have been almost exhausted, according to the letter, largely due to the oppressive resistance to change on the part of the “privileged minorities”. The letter states that, in the light of this experience, many see no other option available except that of the use of violence. According to the MSTM this use of violence should not be condemned by the church:

This ... allows us to see with clarity that one cannot condemn an oppressed people when these people feel obliged to use force in order to liberate themselves ... If such condemnation were to come from the

⁴¹⁵ See pp. 20-3.

⁴¹⁶ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 77.

⁴¹⁷ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 77.

Latin American Church, the church would, once more, appear to be the 'opium of the people', at the service of those who, for centuries, have practised the violence of exploitation and oppression which has produced starvation, ignorance and misery.⁴¹⁸

The letter further argues that the church would appear highly hypocritical if it were to condemn those who, in the contemporary situation, sought to free themselves from oppression through the use of violence, whilst, at the same time, "paying homage" to the great heroes of the wars of independence at the beginning of the 19th century, who achieved liberation for their countries from colonial power by violent means.

The overall thrust of the letter is that the church should not condemn those who resort to violence to free themselves from oppression. It does not, however, positively argue for the participation of Christians in the armed struggle. Rather, it limits itself to a sentence which asks that tolerance be shown to Christians as they seek different ways to achieve liberation.⁴¹⁹

This position of neither condemning the use of violence on the part of oppressed peoples, nor actively advocating personal participation of Christians in the armed struggle is sustained throughout the life of the movement. The MSTM finds itself somewhere between Torres (and even Freire, who describes the violence of the oppressed as a "gesture of love"⁴²⁰) on the one hand, and Cámara, who actively argues for non-violent resistance,⁴²¹ on the other.

Frequently, passages from church documents are used to support the perspective of the movement. We have already noted how a group of MSTM priests from the province of Santa Fe used a passage from the Medellín document to argue that the blame for the violence of the oppressed should be laid at the door of their oppressors.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 77.

⁴¹⁹ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 78.

⁴²⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 32.

⁴²¹ Cámara, *Spiral of Violence*, pp. 56-7.

⁴²² See p. 82.

The MSTM also claims support for its argument that the violence of the oppressed should not be condemned by use of a key passage in the papal encyclical "Populorum Progressio". The encyclical, in a general statement, rejects the option of armed struggle to bring about liberation from oppression. However, it makes an exception in the case of "prolonged and evident tyranny which seriously injures the fundamental rights of the person and dangerously damages the common good of the country".⁴²³ It was the view of some within MSTM that many countries in Latin America met the criteria outlined in this exception and that use of violence to overcome such "tyranny" was both understandable and justifiable according to the teaching of the church.⁴²⁴ However, even with the apparent support for armed struggle found within this encyclical, the movement's official statements were only ever prepared to go as far as defending the actions of others who used violence in their struggle for liberation. No argument can be found within the literature which actively promotes the use of violence as a legitimate strategy for revolutionary Christians. Indeed, the movement was never able to come to a common mind about its attitude to the use of violence. At its third national conference in 1970, the following statement was issued:

The movement does not allow itself to give opinions or take up a specific position on tactics and strategies of groups or organisations, giving freedom to the movement's members to form their own opinions.⁴²⁵

Thus, the movement never adopted the forthright position advocated on the pages of *Cristianismo y Revolución*, which gave unequivocal support for the armed struggle. Yet despite the MSTM's somewhat ambiguous attitude to the use of violence, many individual members of the movement made their positions very clear. Some, such as Carlos Múgica, promoted a pacifist line: "I am prepared for them to kill me; but I am not prepared to kill".⁴²⁶ Others came out clearly in support of the armed struggle and active participation in that struggle. In an article in "Enlace" Ruben Dri talks about the need for "the struggle to carried on up to the

⁴²³ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 13.

⁴²⁴ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 13.

⁴²⁵ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 229.

⁴²⁶ Pontoriero, *Fermento en la masa*, p. 31.

annihilation of the enemy".⁴²⁷ Torres was held up as a positive role model by many members of the movement. As we have noted, his decision to become a guerrilla is described by one member of MSTM as a transition from priesthood to prophecy.⁴²⁸ Martín also claims that a small number of the movement's members had close links with guerrilla organisations in Argentina and that some MSTM priests were active members of these organisations.⁴²⁹

It is clear that there are significant differences between the attitude of the MSTM and Guevara towards the use of violence. It is certainly true that on several occasions Guevara underlines the needs to exhaust the peaceful options for change before resorting to armed struggle.⁴³⁰ Nevertheless, one gains the impression from his writings that, for him, the use of violence was not so much a moral dilemma as a strategic one. For Guevara, the armed struggle was unquestionably the right option if the conditions were in place. At one point he also argues that armed struggle is an unavoidable consequence of class struggle.⁴³¹

For the MSTM, the use of violence was much more a moral dilemma. The ambiguous position which the movement maintained in relation to the use of violence created another problem for them which they were never able to overcome. Whilst calling for a revolution and a wholesale "change of structures", and having rejected the democratic option, they failed to offer any other strategy for bringing about that revolution. The ends were clearly articulated, but the means remained an unresolved question for the MSTM.

3.4.3 Conscientisation

It does not come as a surprise that the MSTM, writing from a pre-revolutionary context, understands conscientisation as an educational, awareness raising process by which the oppressed become conscious of the dynamics of their oppression and increasingly call for radical change. We have noted that Guevara, in contrast,

⁴²⁷ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 159.

⁴²⁸ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 131. See also p. 88.

⁴²⁹ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 239-40.

⁴³⁰ Eg Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 214 and p. 281.

⁴³¹ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. III, pp. 37-8.

generally understands the developing of a new consciousness as a post-revolutionary process, in which the old consciousness of capitalism is seen to be no longer appropriate under the new social and economic relationships.⁴³²

The movement's periodical *Enlace* features many reports from MSTM members which describe the conditions of deprivation and alienation suffered by the urban and rural poor in the areas where the priests were working. The reports frequently highlight the lack of awareness amongst the people of the social, political and economic forces behind their experience of poverty. One report claims that the people "have no consciousness of the need for change".⁴³³ Another speaks of the "absolute lack of a political consciousness amongst the proletariat and subproletariat, which makes them accept as normal a marginalised life".⁴³⁴

In this context a clear objective of the MSTM was the raising of a new consciousness among the people and Martín notes that a particular sentence from the "San Miguel Document," issued by the Argentinian bishops in April 1969, was frequently cited by the MSTM to justify this emphasis upon conscientisation:

The education of the consciousness falls especially to the Church so that all citizens live in dignity ... and, recognising the oppression they suffer, assume personal responsibility and dedicate their efforts towards achieving complete liberation.⁴³⁵

The MSTM also make use of a phrase from the Medellín document which stated that "the lack of a political consciousness in our countries has made the educative action of the Church indispensable".⁴³⁶

This process of conscientisation would help to unmask oppression not only at the national and local level but also at the international level. Gera argues that the

⁴³² See pp. 25-7.

⁴³³ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 194.

⁴³⁴ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 195.

⁴³⁵ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 88.

⁴³⁶ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, pp. 119-20.

“liberation of the consciousness” would “demythologise the imperialist dominator”.⁴³⁷

At the second national conference of the MSTM in 1969 practical suggestions were put forward as to how conscientisation might take place at the grass roots level:

To be conscientised and to conscientise we suggest, amongst other measures, the following: the development of greater participation in the life of the exploited people, especially at the workplace; the use of pedagogical methods of conscientisation; links with worker and neighbourhood organisations; sermons with a social content; exposure of situations of injustice through the press, etc ...⁴³⁸

Conscientisation is thus perceived as an essential prerequisite to revolutionary change. The MSTM describe conscientisation in a manner similar to Freire (and Torres). Freire, however, also foresees that the new consciousness must continue to develop after revolutionary change.⁴³⁹ This need for post-revolutionary conscientisation, the major focus for Guevara, is not emphasised by the MSTM.

3.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion

The MSTM and Guevara shared many similar aims and objectives. Both advocated a revolution which changed structures rather than just political leadership. Both were highly sceptical of the possibilities of such revolutionary change occurring by democratic means. Both saw socialism as providing the answer to injustice, alienation and exploitation. Both recognised the need for the poor countries to free themselves from the economic imperialism of the rich countries. Both saw the need for the development of a new consciousness, although the focus for this process was seen as pre-revolutionary for the MSTM and post-revolutionary for Guevara.

But there are differences as well. Most notably the MSTM, unlike Guevara, failed to propose any concrete strategies or methods for taking power in a revolutionary

⁴³⁷ Martín, *Movimiento de sacerdotes*, p. 207.

⁴³⁸ Concatti and Bresci, *Crónica, documentos, reflexión*, p. 17.

⁴³⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 31.

context. Furthermore, the MSTM allowed itself to become identified with the cause of one national, political party, whereas Guevara was always able to maintain his internationalist vision of the revolution. Finally, the MSTM was never able to come to a common mind as to how the “new man” would emerge and does not often link the formation of the “new man” with a change in his relationship to the means of production generated through a socialist revolution. For Guevara, of course, the “new man” could only emerge through such transition.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY IN CHILE 1968-1973

4.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the 1960s, influenced by the French worker priest experience, several radical Chilean Roman Catholic priests began to work within factories and industries, seeking to identify themselves with the hopes and needs of the labouring class. Other priests moved to live and work amongst the poor of the shanty towns, others settled in the countryside in order to share the life of the rural poor. In the same way, these priests sought to participate actively in the people's struggle for social and political change.⁴⁴⁰ The first united action of Christian revolutionaries took place in 1968, shortly before the Medellín conference of bishops, when a small group took control of the cathedral in Santiago. This group was made up of disaffected members of the Christian Democratic Party (*Democracia Cristiana*), priests belonging to *Acción Católica* and members of a radical Catholic group called the "Camilo Torres Movement". The focus of the group's protest was a plea that the Chilean church should identify itself with the people's struggle for liberation from oppression.⁴⁴¹ In the aftermath of this event two new churches were formed; the Young Church of Santiago and the People's Church of Valparaíso both of which advocated a radical political programme.

In April 1971 eighty Chilean priests came together to make a public declaration of their revolutionary commitment. The key elements of this declaration are summarised in the document produced after the "First Latin American Meeting of Christians for Socialism" (*Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo* - PELCS) which took place in Santiago in April 1972:

Their public declaration is an important advance in the ideological struggle. They attack private ownership and the capitalist system and demonstrate their commitment to the working class. Their faith in Jesus

⁴⁴⁰ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 93. See also A. Gheerbrant, *The Rebel Church in Latin America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974) pp. 61-4.

⁴⁴¹ Gheerbrant, *The Rebel Church*, p. 93.

Christ, their solidarity with the exploited and their scientific analysis lead them to postulate socialism.⁴⁴²

These eighty priests were the force behind the subsequent creation of the group "Christians for Socialism" (*Cristianos por el Socialismo* - CPS). This group produced further documents, letters and declarations and formed local groups. In November 1971 Fidel Castro visited Chile and during his stay he met with representatives from CPS. This led to an invitation on the part of Castro for a delegation of CPS members to visit Cuba. This visit occurred the following year, a month before the PELCS conference. Costas describes the CPS as the "principal catalyst" of this conference, although many Latin America revolutionary Christian groups participated, including the Golconda movement from Colombia and the MSTM from Argentina.⁴⁴³ The CPS continued to function until the military coup of 1973. During this time they gave strong support to the government of Salvador Allende and persistently challenged the stance taken by the leaders of the Roman Catholic church in Chile who increasingly questioned the political process taking place under the "Popular Unity" government of Allende.⁴⁴⁴ Dodson argues that it was the context of a Marxist-led government which created a greater level of confrontation between the CPS and their church hierarchy than we find between the MSTM and the Argentinian church hierarchy:

It was much easier for the Argentine hierarchy to follow the lead of the Third World Priests in a country with widespread popular unrest and virtually no political freedom, than for the Chilean hierarchy to accede to the demand of Christians for Socialism that they explicitly ally the church to the UP [*Unidad Popular*] government *in power*⁴⁴⁵ and against the very large number of Chileans who opposed that government.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² Gheerbrant, *The Rebel Church*, p. 94.

⁴⁴³ O. Costas, *Theology at the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), p. 75.

⁴⁴⁴ See "The Declaration by Several Bishops of Chile" and the reply of the CPS, "The Bishops and the Preaching of the Petit Bourgeoisie" in Philip E. Wheaton (ed.), *Christians for Socialism: Highlights from Chile's Religious Revolution* (Washington: Ecumenical Programme for Inter-American Communication and Action, 1973).

⁴⁴⁵ Dodson's italics.

⁴⁴⁶ Dodson, *The Christian Left*, p. 127.

As Smith records, the CPS did not disappear when Pinochet came to power but rather developed into an international organisation of radical Christians.⁴⁴⁷

4.2 Influences

4.2.1 Church Documents

As in the case of the MSTM it is clear that documents produced by the Roman Catholic Church during the 1960s had an important impact upon the revolutionary Christians of Chile. The influence is seen not so much in providing radical Christians with new lines of thought, but rather in providing “official backing” for some of the analysis and thinking being developed by revolutionary Christian writers in Chile. In a manner similar to the MSTM these writers could now support their calls for radical political, social and economic change by referring to key passages in church documents such as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Populorum Progressio*, and the Medellín document. The conservative stance of the local Chilean church hierarchy could also be challenged by reference to these documents.

The group who took over the cathedral in Santiago in 1968 subsequently produced a declaration for the press containing a passage from *Populorum Progressio* which underlined the need for people to be freed from the misery of poverty, poor health and lack of education. The words from *Populorum Progressio* are used to harangue the Chilean church authorities:

We ask the Church to come out in defence of the oppressed, to risk letting go of its privileged position in order to encourage the liberation of the exploited and that this be done, not in a small-minded and vindictive spirit, but rather motivated by an evangelical spirit. “The present situation has to be confronted bravely, and the injustices which it brings with it must be confronted and overcome. Development demands audacious and profoundly innovative transformations. Urgent reforms must be undertaken without delay” (*Populorum Progressio* N° 32).⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ R. Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile: Challenges to Modern Catholicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 231 and 249.

⁴⁴⁸ Segundo, *¿Protesta o profecía?*, p. 217.

Later, the CPS were to raise certain questions concerning this particular passage from *Populorum Progressio*. The document calls for urgent reforms but nowhere specifies the nature of these reforms. For the CPS it was a failing of the document that it was not able to provide answers to the question of what kind of political and economic structures were to replace the present unjust and exploitative ones.⁴⁴⁹

Another key passage from *Populorum Progressio*, one frequently quoted by the MSTM, is also employed in the Chilean context. It is the passage in which the option for “revolutionary insurrection” is rejected “except in the case of evident and prolonged tyranny, which gravely threatens the fundamental rights of the people and dangerously damages the common good of the country”. The passage is regarded as crucial by both groups because, for the first time, the church is seen to be acknowledging the validity of the revolutionary option for Christians under certain conditions.⁴⁵⁰

The church documents certainly influenced the choice of vocabulary used by the Chilean Christian revolutionary groups in their writings. As with the MSTM the term “international imperialism of money” is employed as part of the attack on the capitalist economic system.⁴⁵¹ This term comes originally from *Populorum Progressio* and is also taken up and used in the Medellín document.⁴⁵² When describing the damaging affects of capitalism and imperialism upon the people of Latin America the phrase “institutionalised violence” is used on several occasions.⁴⁵³ Again this phrase is borrowed from the Medellín document.⁴⁵⁴ “Significant acts” is another phrase used in the literature.⁴⁵⁵ This, too, comes originally from the Medellín document and is used in the call to Christians to participate by means of direct action in the struggle for revolutionary change.

⁴⁴⁹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 107.

⁴⁵⁰ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 107.

⁴⁵¹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 72.

⁴⁵² Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 107. See Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day*, vol. II, p. 57.

⁴⁵³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 46 and 72.

⁴⁵⁴ Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day*, vol. II, p. 61.

⁴⁵⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 26.

However, unlike anything found in the main body of the MSTM literature, occasionally criticism of the Medellín conference is expressed within some of the literature from Chile. There is the suggestion that the Medellín conference deliberately excluded some radical theologians and priests from participating.⁴⁵⁶ The genuine progressiveness of the Medellín conference is also questioned. Did Medellín produce a radical and permanent transformation of the Latin American church's approach to social issues such as poverty, exploitation and inequality, or was it offering a short term "tactical" support for the radical Christians of the continent:

A tactical ally can transform itself into a strategic enemy. Given the present links between "sociological Christianity" and capitalism, it is not unusual for groups which appear to be progressive, or of the left, to convert themselves over the long term, strategically, into enemies of an authentic revolutionary process. In this respect one will perhaps have to analyse the post-conciliar progressivism, in particular Medellín, the understanding of people in the hierarchy and the attitude of those "leftist" Christians whose capacity and generosity in lending a tactically beneficial service to the revolutionary process ends up running out of steam and even turning into a brake on the same process.⁴⁵⁷

As with the treatment of *Populorum Progressio* it is noted that the Medellín conference drew attention to the structural causes of poverty in Latin America but failed to provide an answer as to how these causes of poverty might be overcome:

What kind of reforms are we talking about? In Medellín the situation from which we must extricate ourselves was defined even more clearly: different forms of marginality, excessive inequality between the social classes, growing frustration, repressive power unjustly exercised by certain dominant sectors, tensions which derive from the dependence of our countries on one centre of economic power ... We must find a way out of this situation. But in which direction should we go?⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 48 and 95-6.

⁴⁵⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 22-3.

⁴⁵⁸ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 107-8.

4.2.2 *Marxism*

The CPS and other revolutionary Christian groups in Chile operated within a political context which was quite unique in Latin America at that time. The *Unidad Popular* government of Salvador Allende was the first democratically elected government in Latin America to contain a majority of Marxist and left leaning political parties within the coalition. From the very beginning the CPS had developed a very close and creative link with the government. This warm relationship helps to explain the emphasis found within the CPS literature on the importance of dialogue between Christians and Marxists, although other factors also existed which may have encouraged this emphasis. In a later section we will consider, in particular, the influence of the words both of Guevara and Castro concerning the importance of unity amongst all revolutionary groups.

The closeness of this partnership between the Marxist government and the CPS is clearly demonstrated by the president's participation in the PELCS meeting. President Allende delivered a speech to the conference in which he quotes from the writings of Camilo Torres and underlines the importance of unity between Marxists and Christians within the Chilean context.⁴⁵⁹ This point is further driven home by Allende in a letter he sent to the conference:

The political force which today governs Chile and which I have the honour of representing is the culmination of a permanent and unbreakable alliance between Christians and non-Christians, between men under different ideological banners who have understood with clarity that the real conflict of our time and therefore the great dividing line, is not to be found on the religious level nor in the realm of philosophical ideas, but rather between imperialism and the dependent countries, and within these, between the great exploitative bourgeoisie and the immense mass of the exploited.⁴⁶⁰

Further links were established between Christians and Marxists when the political party *Izquierda Cristiana* was founded in 1971. The party closely reflected the political and theological thinking of the CPS and other revolutionary Christian

⁴⁵⁹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 60-2.

⁴⁶⁰ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 63.

groups. They were to form a coalition with the *Unidad Popular* in the parliamentary general elections of 1973. At these elections the *Izquierda Cristiana* gained 50,000 votes and provided two ministers for the Allende government. As we shall see later this context of democratic participation in the political process was to influence the CPS and other Chilean groups both in their attitude towards the use of violence by revolutionary groups for the purpose of taking power and in their perception of the validity of the democratic process itself.

The influence of Marxism upon revolutionary Christianity in Chile was not just limited to a good relationship with the Marxist government. There is much evidence of the use of Marxist analysis within the literature. Indeed, Smith argues that the CPS were attempting to forge what he describes as a "Christian-Marxist synthesis".⁴⁶¹ Frequent reference is made to the need for Christians to use Marxist analytical tools in order to properly understand the mechanisms which create suffering, poverty and inequality. The introductory document to the PELCS conference highlights the importance of using scientific tools, especially those of Marxism in order to uncover the structural causes of exploitation:

By means of a deep and scientific reading of reality, one must, analytically, break through the outward, superficial appearance of actions and ideologies. For this the approach of historical materialism, or in other words, the situating of history within the material and worldly domain, and the recourse to the Marxist instruments of analysis (so long as one is aware that Marxism is part of the historical process in progress and not a dogma) appear indispensable.⁴⁶²

The debate which took place between the archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríques, and the CPS before the PELCS conference highlights the anxiety of the Chilean Roman Catholic Church authorities that the CPS had been too greatly influenced by Marxist thinking and analysis. In a letter to the CPS the archbishop explains that he has read the introductory document prepared for the PELCS conference by the CPS and now feels he must decline their invitation to participate in the conference. He then outlines the reasons for his decision:

⁴⁶¹ Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile*, p. 230.

⁴⁶² Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 20-1.

After studying this document I have come to the conviction that you will be holding a political meeting, with the desire of launching the Church and Christians into a struggle on the side of Marxism and Marxist revolution in Latin America. The only solution which you see for liberating man is - in your judgement - Marxism. As you can understand, my dear friend, it appears absolutely inappropriate for me to support a meeting of priests which is following a line which, in my opinion, is not the line of the church and which affirms things and behaves in a way which is totally opposed to the expressed declarations of the National Episcopacy.⁴⁶³

In reply to this letter, Gonzalo Arroyo, on behalf of the organising committee for the PELCS conference, seeks to clarify the position of the CPS in relation to Marxism:

As our Document makes clear we do not wish to take Marxism as a dogma. Nevertheless, we think that it offers valuable scientific instruments for understanding and transforming the social reality, above all in Latin America. We believe that this method of analysis is not something fixed for all time. Rather, it should be continually corrected and modified. Precisely that contribution which you ask of Christians in your letter could be, together with many non-Christians, that of widening and deepening those aspects of the Marxism of the textbooks which appears closed, narrow or inadequate.⁴⁶⁴

The CPS's use of this "method of analysis" leads to frequent references to the Marxist concept of class warfare. The traditional philosophical approach of the church which begins with abstract truths and then moves to relate those to human experience is contrasted with the new, dialectic analysis of history and reality which Marx offers:

From Hegel, and above all from Marx, a different logic is introduced. This begins from the basis that human relations are, essentially conflictive. The first act is not a reflection upon the human essence and its first principles. Rather it is the recognition that man finds himself, without having sought it, in the middle of a conflict. Daily life presents man with problems which he has not chosen and it demands that he solve them in an order which, again, he is often unable to choose. The conscious response to conflict is what is called praxis. But praxis is not something arbitrary; it presupposes reflection: that reflection is called theory.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 188.

⁴⁶⁴ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 197.

⁴⁶⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 102.

On one occasion the concept of class warfare is even applied to the saving work of Christ and the emergence of the “new man”. The passage also provides an example of an attempt to reconcile the New Testament concept of the “new man” with Guevara’s “new man” of the revolution:

Christ, the New Man, “sent to liberate the oppressed” (Luke 4) offers himself up even to the ultimate consequences. His sacrifice introduces a movement towards unity within the internal processes of class warfare, but this movement does not suppress class warfare, rather it orientates it towards the eventual disappearance of the contradictions which originated it. Only in this way will the real new man and real peace emerge.⁴⁶⁶

In the Chilean report prepared for the PELCS conference an overview is given of the Roman Catholic church’s attitude towards the concept of class warfare through successive documents and encyclicals. The report concludes that the official documents of the church have always viewed class warfare as something negative, as a concept which engenders “hatred, envy and destruction”.⁴⁶⁷ The report argues that whilst an awareness of class struggle may create a sense of hatred directed towards the opposing class, that hatred should not be denounced but rather seen as an understandable response to the unmasking of those who are really responsible for poverty and exploitation. Once the revolutionary process begins the exploiter, rather than the exploited, will then be the one who starts to feel hatred towards the opposing class:

Up until now, what normally happens is that when the dispossessed open their eyes, they begin to feel hatred. But there is a moment in the revolutionary process in which the subject of the hatred changes: the owner who feels his interests threatened begins to experience it. Whereas the other is more likely to experience hope, although it is true that one cannot completely wipe out the old history of resentments.⁴⁶⁸

The influence of Lenin is also evident within the writings of Chilean revolutionary Christianity. Not only is his influence made clear through the use of direct quotes

⁴⁶⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 123-4.

⁴⁶⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 115.

⁴⁶⁸ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 116.

from his writings,⁴⁶⁹ but also in the use of his concept of the vanguard: that group of fully conscientised men and women who can act as catalysts in a pre-revolutionary context.⁴⁷⁰ The use of this concept is particularly notable in the writings of the *Izquierda Christiana*. A document produced by this group a year after the military coup is entitled “To the Christians in the Vanguard”. The document describes the specific role the Christians have in this revolutionary vanguard:

We believe that the task of the Christians in the vanguard ... can be summed up in the three following central slogans:

Unite the Christians in the vanguard in order to share the vanguard of the revolutionaries as a whole.

Struggle in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in order to smash the dictatorship, using all the means which the dictatorship, with its presence, makes necessary.

Struggle in the vanguard in order to create a society of free and equal men, in a republic of workers with a wide social base; a socialist society in a process of uninterrupted democratisation.⁴⁷¹

4.2.3 *Camilo Torres*

Torres provided revolutionary Christianity in Chile with a recent source of inspiration for Christian participation in revolutionary struggle. Even before the creation of the CPS his influence upon radical Chilean Christians is clear. We have noted that one of the groups which occupied the cathedral in Santiago in 1968 had named itself the “Camilo Torres Movement”.⁴⁷²

Frequent references to Torres appear in the CPS literature. Gonzalo Arroyo claims Torres was one of the key factors in the emergence of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America. Elsewhere, he is described as the “prototype” of the priest who engages in political action,⁴⁷³ a “martyr” of revolutionary Christianity,⁴⁷⁴ and the

⁴⁶⁹ E.g. Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 46-7 and 117-8.

⁴⁷⁰ For example, See V. I. Lenin, *What is to be Done?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 239.

⁴⁷¹ Organisation of the Christian Left, *The Christian Left: Significance and Role* (Santiago: Organisation of the Christian Left, 1974), p. 8.

⁴⁷² See p. 114.

⁴⁷³ *Cristianismo y revolución*, no. 28 (1971), p. 43.

⁴⁷⁴ J. Eagleson (ed.), *Christians and Socialism: The Christians for Socialism Movement in Chile* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 149.

“heroic example” of revolutionary commitment.⁴⁷⁵ A document of *La Izquierda Cristiana* describes Torres’ death as a “symbol of Christian commitment to the Latin American revolution, taken to its purest and most heroic form”.⁴⁷⁶ As a symbol of revolution Torres’ name is linked with that of Guevara.⁴⁷⁷ On one occasion Torres and Guevara are described as “true examples of the New Man, people who have made a difference for the revolution.”⁴⁷⁸

The influence of Torres in Chile appears to lie less in his writings and revolutionary theory and more in the example of his life and personal commitment as a Christian to the revolutionary cause. However, Torres’ words in his “Message to the Christians” that it is “the duty of every Christian to engage in the revolution” are cited in the literature.⁴⁷⁹ It was a phrase which consolidated the call of the revolutionary Christians of Chile for greater support amongst Christians in general for the Marxist led government of Allende.

In early 1973 the CPS organised a meeting to pay tribute to Torres on the seventh anniversary of his death. A document prepared in advance of the meeting highlighted the three key elements of what the document described as “the message of Camilo”:

- Revolutionary unity: this was an important theme for the CPS as they sought to forge stronger links between Allende’s government and the more progressive elements of the Chilean church.
- Honesty to the consequences of commitment to revolutionary struggle: for Torres this led to separation from the church in order that he might pursue his revolutionary calling. For the CPS it meant an end to Christianity’s traditional legitimisation of the capitalist economic order.
- Willingness to “give and sacrifice to the end”: Torres’ death, like that of Guevara, acts as a symbol of complete commitment to the revolutionary cause.

⁴⁷⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 94.

⁴⁷⁶ Christian Left, *Significance and Role*, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 291.

⁴⁷⁸ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 8 and p. 18.

4.2.4 Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution

Between 10th November and 4th December 1971 Fidel Castro visited Chile at the invitation of the Chilean government. His visit proved to be of great significance for Christian revolutionary groups in Chile especially in terms of their understanding of the role Christians could validly play in a revolutionary programme within the Latin American context. On several occasions during this visit Castro expressed the view that Christians should form a “strategic alliance” with Marxists in order to create an effective revolutionary front.

When one studies the similarities between the objectives of Marxism and the most precious precepts of Christianity one will realise how many points of coincidence there are - the parish priest who experiences at first hand hunger, sickness, death and human suffering, those priests who work with the humble families in the countryside and identify with them and struggle together with them, or the selfless people who dedicate their lives to tending to the sick - when one really identifies all these similarities, one will see how a strategic alliance is possible between revolutionary Marxists and revolutionary Christians.⁴⁸⁰

In another speech Castro underlines the fact that he does not just see revolutionary Christians as short term tactical allies, who are brought together only for a limited period like “travelling companions” and then go their separate ways, but rather he sees them as long term strategic allies:

We were saying that the alliance [with revolutionary Christians] was not tactical, we are not talking about the theory of travelling companions, but quite simply a strategic alliance. One must unite these forces and one must unite these elements because imperialism is not weak: imperialism is powerful, and one must join together forces to defeat it and defeat its allies.⁴⁸¹

During Castro’s visit a meeting was arranged between Castro and representatives of the Christian revolutionary groups in Chile. The meeting helped to reinforce this concept of revolutionary Christianity entering into a strategic alliance with Marxists. It also led to an invitation to visit Cuba and in the following year, two months before

⁴⁸⁰ F. Castro, *Fidel en Chile* (Santiago: Quimantu Ltda., 1972), p. 272.

⁴⁸¹ Castro, *Fidel en Chile*, p. 205.

the PELCS conference, a delegation of twelve Chilean priests, all of whom were members of the CPS, went to Cuba and met again there with Fidel Castro. The subsequent "Message to the Christians of Latin America" produced by the delegation in Havana, had an important influence upon the revolutionary Christians of Chile and upon the PELCS conference. It concludes with the following statement:

Together with all those on our continent who are really committed to fighting for the oppressed in rural and urban areas in order to gain power; together with all true Latin American revolutionaries, whatever their philosophical or religious beliefs; convinced with Comandante Fidel Castro that to be victorious, the alliance between Christians and Marxists cannot be tactical, but must also be a strategic one; we commit ourselves as Christians and give ourselves wholly to this immense effort of liberation; and with our brother in the priesthood, Camilo Torres, we repeat: "The duty of the Christian is to be a revolutionary; and the duty of a revolutionary is to engage in the revolution".⁴⁸²

The direct influence of this dialogue with Castro upon the revolutionary Christians of Chile and upon the PELCS conference can be seen in the opening line of the Introductory Document prepared by members of the CPS for the conference:

Fidel Castro, in his recent visit to Chile, met with 120 priests and members of religious orders of the left. He affirmed, on several occasions that Christians "are not merely tactical but strategic allies" of the Latin American revolution. Without doubt, these words are signs of new times for the church which, sociologically, has been qualified as conservative on many occasions. The affirmation of Fidel corresponds to a new situation within the continent.⁴⁸³

4.2.5 *Che Guevara*

It seems clear that Che Guevara did exert a direct influence upon the revolutionary Christian movement in Chile in the late 60s and early 70s but with a different emphasis to that influence he exerted upon the MSTM in Argentina over the same period. This is due to the radically different political contexts in which revolutionary Christianity developed in the two countries. In Argentina, with its background of military governments and a depressing history of failures in the democratic system,

⁴⁸² Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 18.

⁴⁸³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 14.

Guevara's call for radical measures (including the use of violence) in order to take power was highly relevant. Hence the unresolved debates which took place within the MSTM about the use of violence and the greater relevance of Guevara's theory and example of guerrilla warfare.

In Chile the situation was very different; a Marxist government had been democratically elected under an electoral system that was widely trusted. Prolonged debates about the use of violence in order to take power were therefore of little relevance within this particular context. Of much greater importance to the revolutionary Christians of Chile was the search for an appropriate role for Christians within the ongoing revolutionary transformation which was taking place. Perhaps surprisingly, it is here that the direct influence of Guevara can be found. On repeated occasions a quotation from Guevara is used to highlight the essential role that Christians could and should play in the revolutionary struggle. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is a quotation which was sometimes used by the MSTM.⁴⁸⁴ However, in Chile it takes on much greater significance for the revolutionary Christians as they sought to identify their role and their objectives:

When the Christians dare to give themselves wholeheartedly to revolutionary witness, the Latin American revolution will be unstoppable.⁴⁸⁵

The central importance of these words of Guevara are made clear in the conclusion to the national report of the CPS produced for the PELCS conference. This report ends with three quotations, two from St. Luke's gospel and then, thirdly and finally, the words of Guevara.⁴⁸⁶ These words, together with Castro's references to a "strategic alliance" with revolutionary Christians, gave those Christians the sense of legitimacy they sought for participation in revolutionary struggle.

⁴⁸⁴ See p. 90.

⁴⁸⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 46 and 128.

⁴⁸⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 128.

Guevara is also influential as a revolutionary icon. The “Young Church of Santiago”, which came into being after the “taking” of the cathedral in Santiago issued a statement after its first meeting which begins with the words:

Meeting under the sign of Christ, Camilo Torres and Che, we Christian revolutionaries of Chile have come together for the First National Meeting of the Young Church.⁴⁸⁷

This iconic image of Guevara was further heightened when Castro, in his meeting with members of the CPS describes Guevara as a “priest”:

Yes, one could say that Che was a priest, in his attitude and conduct. (I don't want that published. I'm simply saying it to you all here). But what I mean is that his conduct was that of a priest because of his example. He denied himself everything. He was stoic, very open and completely unselfish.⁴⁸⁸

Despite Castro's pleas for this idea not to be broadcast outside the meeting, his words are picked up in one of the reports produced for the PELCS conference in which Guevara is described as a “prototype” for the priesthood.⁴⁸⁹

The term “new man” also appears within the writings of the CPS and other Christian revolutionary groups of Chile.⁴⁹⁰ As with the MSTM it is very difficult to identify the primary influence for the use of the term. In our survey of the influences upon the MSTM we noted how many of those influences also use the term “new man” (*Gaudium et Spes*, the Medellín document, Freire, Gutiérrez, Cámara).⁴⁹¹ Revolutionary Christianity in Chile was exposed to the influence of these same documents and writers. However, in the section on shared aims we shall note that the term is used far more frequently with the sense given to it by Guevara than we find within the MSTM literature.⁴⁹² Guevara's focus on the “new man” as a post

⁴⁸⁷ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 14.

⁴⁸⁹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 247.

⁴⁹⁰ For example, Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 123-4 and Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, pp. 8 and 10.

⁴⁹¹ See pp. 92-4.

⁴⁹² See pp. 135-6.

revolutionary figure fits well with the Chilean context in which the process of transforming social and economic relationships had begun under the Allende government.

It is more difficult to identify the direct influence of Guevara in the area of attitudes to capitalism, the hopes for socialism and the need for conscientisation, although there exists many similarities between Guevara's thinking and that of revolutionary Christianity in Chile, as we shall see in the next section. Rather, his primary influence should be seen in his call to Christians of Latin America to start participating in the revolutionary process and thereby make that process unstoppable.

4.2.6 Influences: Conclusion

It is clear that the CPS and the MSTM share many of the same influences, but the different contexts of the two groups affects the focus of these influences. The words of Torres concerning revolutionary unity are more important to the CPS than his attitude to the use of violence, which was the significant factor for the MSTM. Likewise, Castro's comments about a possible "strategic alliance" have a greater impact on revolutionary Christianity in Allende's Chile than they did in the pre-revolutionary context of the MSTM in Argentina. This also applies to Guevara's influence. The focus of his influence in Chile lies in his call for Christians to participate in revolutionary struggle so that the revolution in Latin America becomes unstoppable. There is also evidence that the CPS were influenced by Guevara's concept of the "new man." We shall examine in more detail their use of the term in the following section.

4.3 Aims

4.3.1 Socialist society

Quite clearly the very name of the principle revolutionary Christian group in Chile, *Cristianos por el Socialismo*, indicates one of the key objectives of the group - the

establishment of a socialist political and economic programme. In his speech to the PELCS conference the Mexican bishop Méndez Arceo explained what he believed to be the principle aim of all those who had gathered for the conference.

I am here for the same reason that you, the participants from all over Latin America, are here. I share the conviction that for our underdeveloped world, there is no other solution but socialism. Namely, the social appropriation of the means of production which involves an authentic participation of the community, in order to prevent those means of production being used as instruments of domination in the hands of an oligarchy or a totalitarian government.⁴⁹³

The group of CPS priests who travelled to Cuba to meet Fidel Castro also expressed their total commitment to socialism in a document produced in Cuba.

From Cuba, we reiterate our conviction that historically socialism is the only way by which our sub-continent can collectively and concretely break the chains of capitalist and imperialist oppression.⁴⁹⁴

On some occasions in the Chilean literature a link is made between the establishment of socialism and the establishment of the kingdom of God. At times the introduction of socialism is regarded as an essential element in the process which will ultimately lead to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God:

The cause of liberation is the destruction of capitalism and the construction of socialism. This is a fundamental step in order that the Kingdom of God might draw near.⁴⁹⁵

At other times socialism and the Kingdom of God are described as if they were one and the same. In the CPS report presented to the PELCS conference “the evangelical hope” of left wing Christians is described as a “critical stimulus in the process of constructing socialism ... they [left wing Christians] have as their goal ‘the new heaven and the new earth’ which is the joint work of God and revolutionaries.”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 53.

⁴⁹⁴ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 17.

⁴⁹⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 128, see also p. 122.

⁴⁹⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 96.

Clearly, the establishment of a global socialist order was an objective shared by Guevara. Although, at times, his language concerning the introduction of this new order is highly apocalyptic in nature, we have noted that, as a declared atheist, Guevara never describes the coming socialist age in terms of the Kingdom of God.

The attitude of the Chilean revolutionary Christians to socialism was shaped by their unique context in Latin America. They spoke out of a situation in which a democratically elected government was already seeking to implement a radical socialist programme. They could see the enormous obstacles which confronted a socialist government even after winning a general election. The power of national and international owners of capital to resist such changes was immense. The CPS accepted that the government would have to form alliances with owners of smaller to medium sized businesses in order to make any progress at all and that the implementation of a socialist programme would need to be gradual and piecemeal.⁴⁹⁷ These difficulties which the Chilean government experienced in introducing its socialist programme are echoed in the writings of Guevara in Cuba. Even after victory in the war, the process of transformation to socialism was painfully slow for Guevara. It was only once the Agrarian Reform law had been introduced that Guevara felt progress against the landowners and other owners of capital was being made.⁴⁹⁸

The revolutionary Christians of Chile were convinced that socialism could be introduced whilst keeping within the legal constraints of the Constitution. This they described as the “Chilean Way” to socialism.⁴⁹⁹ This “Way” put great trust in the continuing neutrality of the military. As a document of *La Izquierda Cristiana* puts it shortly before the military coup: “we do not believe that the contradictions that are developing at the interior of the Armed Forces can generate politically significant changes”.⁵⁰⁰ Later events that year were to prove them very wrong.

⁴⁹⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 73-4.

⁴⁹⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 64-5.

⁴⁹⁹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 81.

⁵⁰⁰ Christian Left, *Significance and Role*, p. 16.

4.3.2 *The end of imperialism*

It is no surprise that the call for an end to the global capitalist economic order permeates the literature of the revolutionary Christian groups of Chile. Capitalism is the great enemy which must be overcome so that a new order of justice, equality and peace might be established. The experience of exploitation and oppression within the Latin American context is attributed directly to the workings of the capitalist system:

The roots of the struggle are found within the capitalist mode of production which broadly predominates in Latin America. The system, internally based on certain centres of industrial growth and brought into being by foreign capitalism ..., leads to economic crisis, it marginalises large sectors of the population and generates a worsening political and social disintegration in the various countries, whilst international capitalism, headed by the United States, prospers at an ever increasing rate, both economically and technologically.⁵⁰¹

The CPS shared Gutiérrez' view that capitalism has created a relationship of economic dependency on the part of the poorer Latin American countries towards the wealthy, industrialised countries of the north.⁵⁰² The pejorative term "dependency capitalism" is used on several occasions within the literature.⁵⁰³ Capitalism also creates a sense of alienation amongst the people, alienation from that which they produce by their labour and alienation from their fellow human beings. This leads to the development of a "false consciousness" which, in turn, prevents the people from identifying those economic structures and relationships which best suit their interests, rather than the interests of the owners of capital.⁵⁰⁴

The CPS follow Guevara, Torres and the MSTM (and Gutiérrez) in rejecting the theory of "developmentalism". Rather, the CPS claim that capitalism is the direct cause of underdevelopment.

For us, underdevelopment is nothing other than a product of the capitalist system and of imperialism. It is these factors: capitalism

⁵⁰¹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 24.

⁵⁰² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 84-8.

⁵⁰³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 40 and 182.

⁵⁰⁴ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 126.

and imperialism which continue to create a divisiveness between men and nations that is increasingly more violent ... This domination is apparent in the economic and cultural spheres as well as in the areas of politics and the military. Therefore, we denounce as insufficient all developmentalist, reformist, capitalist or neo-capitalist solutions that merely contribute to the process of maintaining and compounding this situation of underdevelopment.⁵⁰⁵

As a consequence of the rejection of the "development model", all "reformist" terminology is rejected within the Chilean literature. The language of reform is regarded as another tool of capitalism, used to generate false consciousness amongst the oppressed sections of the population. What was needed, from the perspective of the revolutionary Christians of Chile, was not reform but wholesale revolution. The Chilean report presented to the PELCS conference strongly condemned what it termed "Christian Reformism". It was in the policies of the political party *Democracia Cristiana* that the CPS and other leftist groups saw the outworking of this Christian reformism.

The *Democracia Cristiana* attributes a Christian inspiration to its proposals for a new system: communitarianism. In concrete terms this means initiating reforms in agriculture, education, housing and economic planning. But, in fact, it offers no structural change to the economy or society. Rather it strengthens neo-capitalism and its ideology of liberty and democracy, which are weapons of the dominant class. It develops a policy of integration of the urban and rural poor into an oppressive structure ... it seeks to reconcile the masses with the bourgeoisie and divides the working class. Therefore this new Christian political project is incapable of solving the contradictions of neo-capitalist society with its exploitation of the majority of the nation and its growing underdevelopment.⁵⁰⁶

A very negative attitude towards the United States is also bound up in the condemnation of capitalism. The US is seen as the great imperialist power in the world, who, with its allies "work fanatically together in support of their crass, egotistic and criminal self interest", whilst seeking to "disunite, terrorise and instigate discord amongst the poor of the continent".⁵⁰⁷ The US is accused of

⁵⁰⁵ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 91.

⁵⁰⁷ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 17.

seeking to establish its global dominance either through oppressive economic relations with poor countries or through direct military intervention as in the case of Vietnam.⁵⁰⁸ After the military coup of 1973, those revolutionary Christian groups who continued to produce documents clearly identified the hand of the US behind the overthrow of Allende.⁵⁰⁹

This wholesale rejection of capitalism is, of course, present in the writings of Guevara. In his attacks it is far more common for Guevara to employ the word “imperialism” where the literature from Chile would more normally use “capitalism”. For Guevara, imperialism was the final and most violent and exploitative stage of capitalism. Imperialism was the “common enemy” of the exploited people of the world and caused “oppression of every type, assassinations, political oppression, economic oppression and the distortion of a country’s development”.⁵¹⁰ We have noted how Guevara predicted that “a great world wide conflagration” would be needed to overthrow this global imperialism and produce genuine liberation for the exploited.⁵¹¹

The condemnation of the US as the driving force of global capitalism is even more ferociously expressed in the writings of Guevara than in the literature of revolutionary Christianity in Chile. For Guevara, it seems that the battle against the US is indistinguishable from the battle against imperialism:

All our action is a war cry against imperialism and a call for unity amongst the people in their opposition to the great enemy of the human race: the United States of America.⁵¹²

Although, in general, Guevara comes across as much more aggressive in his condemnation of the US there can be no doubting the hostility felt by the revolutionary Christians of Chile towards that country. This is clearly expressed in

⁵⁰⁸ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 51.

⁵⁰⁹ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p.18 and *La Izquierda Cristiana* (Santiago: Organización de la Izquierda Cristiana, 1976) p. 4.

⁵¹⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, pp. 177-8.

⁵¹¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 91. See p. 51.

⁵¹² Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 95.

the support which the CPS (and other Christians from across Latin America) gave to the Vietnamese people in their war against the US. During the PELCS conference a letter was sent to the president of North Vietnam which condemned “recent criminal acts of Yankee imperialism against its people”.⁵¹³ In the same way, Guevara expressed complete support for the North Vietnamese in their struggle. Indeed, in one of his most famous articles he argues that new “Vietnam wars” should be launched throughout the world by those people suffering at the hand of North American “imperialism”.⁵¹⁴

4.3.3 *The “New Man”*

We have noted that within the MSTM literature the usage of the term “new man” varies from writer to writer.⁵¹⁵ At times it refers to the person who, in a pre-revolutionary setting, has developed a new consciousness of their social and economic context and the structures of their oppression. At other times it refers to the person who will emerge only after radical change has taken place with the realisation of socialist and then communist society. This is the way Guevara uses the term. Revolutionary Christianity in Chile also uses the term almost exclusively with this second meaning. Both Guevara in Cuba and revolutionary Christianity in Chile are speaking from the context of the actual development of a socialist programme in their countries and, perhaps as a consequence, tend to view the “new man” as a post-revolutionary figure. The MSTM, writing, from a pre-revolutionary context, are not so focused in their use of the term and frequently describe the “new man” as a pre-revolutionary figure.

Within the Chilean context the “new man” is a future figure who will appear only after the contradictions of class warfare have been overcome.⁵¹⁶ Only the development, under socialism, of a socialist consciousness “will give a base and foundation to the new man and new society which we wish to form”.⁵¹⁷ The new society of the future cannot simply be “the mirror image of capitalist concerns and

⁵¹³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 33.

⁵¹⁴ See “Crear dos tres ... muchos Vietnam es la consigna” in Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 83-96.

⁵¹⁵ See pp. 103-5.

⁵¹⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 123-4.

⁵¹⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 86.

interests” but rather the “real life expression of the genuine values of our people. Only then can we see the emergence of the New Man”.⁵¹⁸ Socialist society will lead to “the creation of a New Man, who thinks critically, has brotherly concern for others and is willing to suffer.”⁵¹⁹

Revolutionary Christianity in Chile sought to forge stronger links between Christians and Marxists.⁵²⁰ The PELCS document argues that “realisations of Marxism,” such as the Cuban revolution, offer to Christians manifestations of “their own aspirations for a new society and a new man”.⁵²¹ In return, Christian faith “makes its contribution, in and through committed Christians, to the construction of a qualitatively different society and the emergence of the new man”.⁵²²

We have noted that both Torres and Guevara are described as “true examples of the New Man”.⁵²³ This phrase suggests that while the Chilean revolutionary Christian literature generally shares the view of Guevara, that the “new man” emerges in a post-revolutionary context, prefigurations of the “new man” in someone such as Torres may occur in a pre-revolutionary setting.

4.4 Objectives

4.4.1 *Taking Power*

As with the MSTM in Argentina it was a fundamental objective of the Christian revolutionary groups in Chile that those in support of a revolutionary programme which sought to dismantle the capitalist economic order and replace it with socialism, should gain political power in order to set that process in motion. However, the two groups differed radically in their understanding of how that political power might be achieved. We have seen how the MSTM largely rejected

⁵¹⁸ Eagleson, *Christians and Socialism*, p. 5.

⁵¹⁹ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 8.

⁵²⁰ See pp. 140-1.

⁵²¹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 258.

⁵²² Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 300.

⁵²³ See p. 124.

the democratic path to power.⁵²⁴ Their own experience of the democratic process in Argentina had led to a great sense of cynicism and disillusionment with the democratic option. In this regard the MSTM reflects fairly closely the thinking of Guevara, who nevertheless conceded that under certain conditions the democratic option was viable.⁵²⁵ The leading Marxist and revolutionary groups in Chile believed that those conditions were in place in their country and that a government with a genuinely socialist programme could gain power by democratic means. So it was that in 1970 a range of Marxist and social democrat parties formed the coalition "Popular Alliance" and participated in the general election. Their victory in those elections seemed to confirm that the "Chilean Way" to socialism was indeed viable. The CPS report to the PELCS conference defines this "Way":

It respects the rules of the bourgeois democracy, so that with power in the hands of the government, power achieved by means of an election, and with the power of the mobilised people, it manages to use at least part of the existing legality in order to transform the bourgeois democracy into a popular one.⁵²⁶

The PELCS conference was held a year and a half after the elections of 1970 and it provided the CPS with an opportunity to reflect, in their report to the conference, on the progress of the "Chilean Way" to socialism. The report notes some important advances which had been made by the government; the nationalisation of several key industries and banks, the introduction of an agrarian reform bill and progress with the redistribution of income. But it also notes the growing resistance to the policies of the government amongst certain sectors of the population; the coming together of the national bourgeoisie in a united front against the government, the opposition of the majority of the national newspapers and the power of the opposition parties in parliament who were able to unite and vote out many of the governments proposals. For this reason the CPS report does not express great confidence in the government's chances of achieving all its objectives:

⁵²⁴ See pp. 105-7.

⁵²⁵ See pp. 20-23.

⁵²⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 72.

The Chilean process towards socialism is yet to arrive at the point of no return. The downfall of capitalism in the transition to socialism depends on the workers' conquest of the power, not only of the government, but also of the state (parliament, the legal system).⁵²⁷

It is certain that from Guevara's perspective this statement overlooks, deliberately or otherwise, one of the key constituent elements of the state apparatus, an element which, for Guevara, it was absolutely essential for the workers to control in order for a revolution to be truly irreversible - the military.

The debate about the use of violence to effect revolutionary change had raged throughout the active period of the MSTM in Argentina. Given the apparent initial success of the "Chilean Way" it is hardly surprising that the use of violence is hardly ever debated within the Chilean literature. When it is mentioned there is generally a recognition of the fact that the Chilean context presents an almost unique situation within Latin America in that period. It had not been necessary to resort to violence in order to bring about change. There is, however, a recognition in the literature that the use of violence may well be necessary in those countries where the democratic road to power was not an option because of the corrupt nature of the of the democratic system, or the complete lack of democracy. The letter produced by the CPS delegation in Cuba unequivocally gives support for the use of violence by revolutionary Christians if the conditions required it:

If we are committed to destroying institutionalised violence and the militancy of the minority, then we Christians cannot refuse to fight in defence of the right to live, and in order to institute a new regime of justice and equality. If reactionary violence prevents us from building such a just and egalitarian society, we must respond with revolutionary violence.⁵²⁸

This statement reflects more closely the attitude of Torres and Guevara to the use of violence than it does the attitude of the MSTM in Argentina who, despite having

⁵²⁷ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 72.

⁵²⁸ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, pp. 17-8.

conditions more appropriate than Chile for armed struggle, were never able to openly advocate, as a group, the use of violence by revolutionary Christians.⁵²⁹

Within the specifically Chilean context, the revolutionary Christian groups issued no great call to arms. Left wing Christians were encouraged to get involved in party politics rather than join a guerrilla army. The aim was to work alongside Marxist and other left wing political groups, whether Christian or not, in order to effectively implement a socialist programme, and to do this whilst working within the constitutional limits. More important than differences of religious belief was a united political front in the world of politics:

The workers have their organisations, parties and class movements. Christians of the left place themselves in these fronts of the struggle rather than forming parallel organisations.⁵³⁰

In hindsight it is clear that the “Chilean Way” to socialism failed to take seriously the power of the military and its capacity to intervene in the political process. As we have noted, references to the military within the literature assume its continuing political neutrality. This neutrality is assumed precisely because of the commitment which the “Popular Alliance” government of Allende had made to abide by the terms of the constitution. The military coup of 1973 exposed the strength of another “alliance” which existed between the military and the owners of capital whose interests were gravely threatened by the economic transformation taking place in the country. Thirteen years earlier Guevara had noted, with great clarity, the potential demise of the democratic route to socialism when it failed to confront the power of the army:

And when one speaks of power by means of the electoral system my question is always the same: if a popular movement assumes the government of a country by means of a general popular vote in its favour and then resolves consequently to initiate the great social transformations which were outlined in its manifesto and which led to its victory, will it not immediately enter into conflict with the reactionary classes of that country? And has not the army always been

⁵²⁹ See pp. 106-10.

⁵³⁰ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 123.

the instrument of oppression of that class? If this is so, then it is logical to reason that this army will take the side of its class and will enter into conflict with the constitutional government. That government then may be brought down by means of a largely bloodless coup and the endless cycle begins again ... What is difficult to believe is the idea that the armed forces will accept with good grace profound social reforms and tamely resign themselves to their own liquidation as a class.⁵³¹

4.4.2 *Revolutionary unity*

Castro had described revolutionary Christians as potential “strategic allies” of the Marxists in the revolutionary struggle.⁵³² The Marxist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, had also affirmed his belief that Marxists and Christians could work together to construct socialism.⁵³³ The revolutionary Christians of Chile took these words to heart and the establishment of unity between Christians and Marxists became one of their principle objectives. Gonzalo Arroyo, the secretary general of CPS, expressed his hope that the mutual revolutionary zeal of Christians and Marxists would overcome the philosophical differences between them:

We do not have the luxury of choosing our allies. The deepening of our faith has drawn us closer to all those who collaborate in the common task of human liberation. So it is that philosophical divisions between Christians and Marxists assume secondary importance in the face of the urgent need for effective revolutionary action.⁵³⁴

Arroyo recognised that any alliance between Christians and Marxists would require some radical rethinking by both groups. Christians would have to challenge the traditional teaching of the church concerning Marxism. It was widely condemned as unchristian and likely to encourage the “sin” of conflict rather than peace. Marxists, likewise, would need to review their attitude to Christianity, which was generally regarded by them as a reactionary, conservative force in society. The church was seen as a supporter of those values enshrined in the bourgeois democracy. Aware of the hostility in some Marxist circles to collaboration with Christians, Arroyo uses a quotation from the works of Lenin to argue that Marxists should be prepared to

⁵³¹ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, pp. 109-110.

⁵³² See pp. 124-5.

⁵³³ See p. 118.

⁵³⁴ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 45.

incorporate Christians into the revolutionary struggle. True Marxism, according to the passage from Lenin, “never unconditionally rejects any particular form of struggle”,⁵³⁵ especially if that “form of struggle” has arisen from the masses themselves. Thus those revolutionary Christians who emerge from the ranks of the masses and who enter the revolutionary struggle should be accepted and affirmed by Marxists. Guevara himself adopted this inclusive attitude to Christians seeking to join the revolutionary cause during the Cuban war. For some time a Catholic priest, Father Guillermo Sardiñas, was a member of Guevara’s column and apparently the two men spent much time in political debate.⁵³⁶ One of Guevara’s closest friends and a fellow commander in the Cuban war, Camilo Cienfuegos, appears to have derived much of his revolutionary zeal from his Christian faith.⁵³⁷ Finally, as we have noted,⁵³⁸ support for Christian/Marxist collaboration was provided by Guevara himself with his call for Christians to “dare to give a revolutionary witness” so that revolution in Latin America would become “unstoppable”.⁵³⁹

This “fruitful synthesis of theoretical positions” would contribute to the unity of the working classes and the left in Latin America, according to Arroyo.⁵⁴⁰ It would also help to demonstrate “that the fundamental opposition in our continent is not between Christians and Marxists (as imperialism and the bourgeoisie of various countries proclaim) but between the exploiters and the exploited”.⁵⁴¹

In practical terms, the objective of revolutionary unity led to the call for Christians to join the political parties which represented the interests of the working classes, rather than form their own specifically Christian parties, as had occurred in the early 1960s with the Christian Democratic Party.

⁵³⁵ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 118.

⁵³⁶ Anderson, *Revolutionary Life*, pp. 298 and 285.

⁵³⁷ H. Gambini, *El Che Guevara: la biografía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1996) p. 205.

⁵³⁸ See p. 126.

⁵³⁹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 128.

⁵⁴⁰ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 47-8.

⁵⁴¹ Wheaton, *Christians for Socialism*, p. 16.

4.4.3 Conscientisation

We have already noted the importance of Guevara's words concerning the "unstoppable" nature of the Latin American revolution once the Christians had "dared" to get involved. Not only are these words quoted on several occasions within the Chilean literature, the concluding words of the final document produced by the participants at the PELCS conference are, once more, these words of Guevara.⁵⁴² Indeed, two quotations from Guevara are used to end this document. Alongside the familiar quotation used elsewhere, we have these words, also attributed to Guevara :

Christians should definitively opt for the revolution, and particularly so on our continent, where the Christian faith is so important amongst the popular masses. But Christians, in the revolutionary struggle, should not attempt to impose their own dogmas, nor proselytise for their churches. They should not come with the intention of evangelising Marxists, but neither should they seek to hide away their faith in order to assimilate with them.⁵⁴³

If Guevara believed that the Christian contribution would make the revolution unstoppable then it was evident that Christians had a crucial role to play. But what was the specific role that Christians were to play in the revolution? From the perspective of the revolutionary Christians in Chile the role was quite clear. Christians were to play a central role in the dismantling of the false consciousness created in the masses by the capitalist economic system. The Christian revolutionaries believed that for too long capitalism had been given legitimacy by the official teaching of the Church, both in Chile and world wide:

The bourgeois ideology uses the Christian faith, converting it into a religion which legitimises oppression and pseudo-christian values. It has given a sacred character to "democracy" and "liberty" and has made "love" something that is incompatible with revolution. The rights of the person, which in their current version have functioned as the rights of the dominant class, are defined as essential elements of Christianity.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 302.

⁵⁴³ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 302.

⁵⁴⁴ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 126-7.

Communism had been condemned as atheistic by the Church and therefore to be rejected by true believers. Indeed, the defenders of capitalism had encouraged Christians to see the mechanisms and economic relationships of capitalism as “natural” and “divinely ordained”.⁵⁴⁵ The CPS and other groups understood their role to be that of breaking down this Christian legitimisation of capitalism by unmasking what they regarded as its truly oppressive nature. They wished to demonstrate to the Christian masses of Chile that capitalism actually opposed the real interests of the working class, whereas socialism better accorded with the values and principles of Christianity. Gonzalo Arroyo, the secretary general of the CPS explained what he regarded as the fundamental objective of the PELCS conference in his opening address to the conference:

We organisers believe that the principal contribution of this conference is not the argument about which party position is correct, but rather to have an impact on the Christian consciousness, both here in Latin America and in the world, contributing to the destruction of that apparent religious legitimacy of capitalism which the majority of the countries of Latin America and throughout the world are accustomed to accept.⁵⁴⁶

This religious legitimacy given to capitalism and its perception as a “natural phenomenon” is also identified by Guevara as a significant factor in the generation of a false consciousness amongst the people:

Direct propaganda is occurring when it is explained to the people that the class system is unavoidable, either because it has some divine origin, or because it is part of the mechanical process of nature.⁵⁴⁷

The “ideological battle”⁵⁴⁸ over the consciousness of the people was to be fought both internally, within the church and externally, amongst the masses. It was this battle which the Chilean revolutionary Christian identified as their specific role in the wider revolutionary struggle. If capitalism could no longer rely on a blessing from the church, its ideology would be weakened and the long rejected option of

⁵⁴⁵ See Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, pp. 126-8.

⁵⁴⁶ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 42.

⁵⁴⁷ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 185.

⁵⁴⁸ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 122.

socialism might gain appeal as a viable option for the Christian masses of Chile and Latin America.

There is less emphasis within the CPS literature on raising awareness about the economic, social and political structures of poverty and oppression, which we find within the writings of Torres and the MSTM, but rather a specific focus on the dismantling of the religious legitimacy given to capitalism. This different emphasis reflects the different contexts. Torres and the MSTM are seeking to generate a popular challenge to the ruling elite's hold on power. The CPS are seeking to win over support of the masses to the socialist programme being introduced by the Chilean government. Only occasionally does the CPS literature describe conscientisation in Guevara's terms, as a post-revolutionary product of a change in economic relationships.⁵⁴⁹

4.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion

There is considerable convergence between the aims and objectives of revolutionary Christians in Chile and those of Che Guevara. Capitalism is roundly condemned by both. However, the revolutionary Christians' hopes for the establishment of a new socialist order are bound up with their belief in the coming of the Kingdom of God in a way that Guevara would have found inappropriate. The vision for socialism expressed by the Chilean writers is tied more to the national context or, at best, to the Latin American context, whereas Guevara's aspirations for socialism are truly global. Like the MSTM the Chilean writers do not generally link the process of conscientization with a change in the people's relationship to the means of production, whereas, for Guevara, "the new man" is only ever a product of these changes.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the revolutionary Christians of Chile and Guevara in terms of their aims and objectives lies in their different strategies for taking power. For Guevara, it was essential that all the organs of state

⁵⁴⁹ In the PELC document it is noted that an important element in the construction of socialism is the parallel development of a new consciousness which, in turn, will give rise to the "new man", Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 86.

were under the control of the revolution, especially the armed forces. The Chileans believed it was possible to introduce a revolutionary programme whilst leaving untouched certain apparatus of the state, including the constitution and the armed forces.

Finally, Guevara had a direct impact on the Christian revolutionary groups as they sought to identify their specific role in the revolution. His words affirmed the validity of their involvement in the struggle and enabled them to identify the particular contribution they could make, namely to challenge the religious legitimacy which the church had given to capitalism.

CHAPTER FIVE

REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY IN NICARAGUA

5.1 Introduction

In this section I will examine the formative influences upon those Christians who actively participated in the Sandinista revolution of 1979 in Nicaragua, focusing in particular on the writings of the poet, priest and minister of culture in the Sandinista government, Ernesto Cardenal. The historical background to revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua will emerge as we examine the influences which shaped it. The section will conclude with a study of the direct and indirect influence of Che Guevara upon revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua.

5.2 Influences

5.2.1 *Augusto César Sandino*

In 1928 Sandino, a leading figure in the Nicaraguan Liberal Party, chose to continue opposing the rule of the Conservative Party through armed struggle when all the other Liberal leaders capitulated in the face of threatened military intervention by US marines.

For over five years Sandino continued his military struggle against the Nicaraguan National Guard and US marines. During this period his perception of the struggle changed. No longer did he see it as a struggle between the Liberal and Conservative parties but rather as a struggle for national independence against the forces of a foreign aggressor - the United States of America.

As support for Sandino grew, both in Nicaragua and in the US, the decision was taken to withdraw the US marines. Soon afterwards, in 1934, Sandino travelled to Managua to negotiate a truce with the government but was assassinated in the capital. The head of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza García, was held

responsible for the assassination. After Sandino's death Somoza was able to establish control of the country, wiping out what remained of Sandino's forces.

In the early 60s the figure of Sandino was revived when a new revolutionary organisation the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) was formed in Nicaragua. The organisation's founders, Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge and Silvio Mayorga chose to incorporate the name of Sandino into the title of the organisation because they believed that there were several points of convergence between Sandino's struggle and their own. In particular the FSLN connected with Sandino's perception of revolutionary struggle as a struggle for national liberation from imperialist control. In addition, those members of the FSLN with a Marxist formation found significance in Sandino's approach to the struggle for national liberation. Sandino sought allies not amongst sympathetic members of the national oligarchy, nor amongst the national bourgeoisie, but principally amongst the workers and peasants of Nicaragua. This preference for allies amongst the popular masses is made clear in Sandino's "Manifesto" of 1930:

Our army recognises the support which sincere revolutionaries have given it in its hard struggle. But, with the sharpening of the conflict, with the growing pressure on the part of Yankee bankers, because of the character which our struggle has taken, the waverers, the timid ones, abandon us. Only the workers and the peasants will go on until the end, only an organised force will achieve victory.⁵⁵⁰

In this way Sandino's struggle for national liberation could be interpreted as a class struggle, thus giving credibility, through the name of Sandino, to those members of the FSLN who wished to set the Sandinista revolution of the 1960-70s in the context of a class struggle.

However, the Jesuit and member of the Sandinista government, Fernando Cardenal, downplays the links between Sandino and Marxism, arguing that neither Sandino nor the Sandinista revolution should be interpreted as Marxist. The

⁵⁵⁰ Quoted in G. Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo: La confluencia* (Managua: Centro Ecueménico Antonio Valdivieso, 1987), p. 28.

primary influence of Sandino, for Fernando Cardenal, is as an advocate of national sovereignty.

It's a mistake to call this a Marxist-Leninist revolution. If you had to choose a name it would be the name Sandinista. Because this is a revolution in the tradition of Sandino, a nationalistic, anti-imperialist revolution. Here we have a mixed economy. Sixty percent of the economy is in private hands. In Bolivia, the government has taken seventy percent of the economy and no one calls Bolivia "communist."⁵⁵¹

Sandino's influence upon specifically Christian revolutionary thought during the Sandinista revolution is perhaps most clearly seen in his rejection of institutionalised religion, without rejecting belief in God. Ernesto Cardenal makes reference to a famous phrase of Sandino in which he rejects "that God who screws the poor". Cardenal then goes on to describe the new religious faith which Sandino developed:

Christianity was, for Sandino, the religion of the conquistadors which was accepted by the cowards of the country, it is the blessing which justified and still justifies the oppression of the poor and their submission. It was not for him a liberating faith, but neither did he want to reject all religious experience. Sandino sought the alternative in another direction, in a different and distant message, not linked to oppressive power ... The centre of his faith is Love, and he used to write it in capital letters, personalising it. He had said: "our cause will triumph because it is the cause of justice, because it is the cause of Love".⁵⁵²

In a pamphlet entitled "Light and Truth", written by Sandino in 1931 he presents his view that history is ultimately controlled by the "law of Love".⁵⁵³ The pamphlet describes how Sandino's religious faith was based on his conviction that Love will finally triumph over injustice and oppression and will establish "the kingdom of Perfection, Love, with their favourite daughter Divine Justice".⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ P. Zwerling and C. Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1985), p. 78.

⁵⁵² E. Cardenal in his introduction to Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. III.

⁵⁵³ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 50.

⁵⁵⁴ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 51.

As Girardi notes, an emphasis on the centrality of love in the context of Christian faith emerges as one of the key themes in the writings of revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua during the period of the Sandinista revolution. Sandino's focus on divine Love may be seen as his principle legacy to revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua.

If the revolutionary Christians recognise their profound convergence with Marxist atheists, how much more must they recognise that convergence with a religious militant like Sandino.

The fundamental ground of that convergence is the importance of love of others, expressed in the option for the poor and oppressed, which constituted for Sandino, as for the Christians, the axis of their ethical and religious approach.⁵⁵⁵

5.2.2 Church documents

The frequent references in the literature of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua to the documents of certain conferences and councils of the Roman Catholic church suggests that these documents played an important role in legitimising a more radical commitment on the part of the church to social, economic and political change.

On 17th November 1979 the Nicaraguan bishops issued a pastoral letter which represents the high water mark of the Nicaraguan church hierarchy's support for the revolution. From this time onwards, the official church attitude to the Sandinista government became increasingly hostile, so much so that the archbishop of Managua, Miguel Obando y Bravo, was to become a figurehead for opposition to the revolution. The pastoral letter of 1979, however, stands in very close harmony with the perspective of the Christian revolutionaries of Nicaragua. The document produced by the Latin American bishop's conference in Puebla of that same year is used to support the letter's declaration that Christian faith should bear testimony through its "commitment to the poor and opposition to social injustice".

⁵⁵⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 53.

Without this solidarity our announcement of Good News would be an empty word. A liberating evangelism implies a commitment to the liberation of our people. As the bishops in Puebla have said: "The gospel should teach us that, in the face of the realities in which we live, we cannot, in Latin America today, truly love our neighbours and therefore God without committing ourselves to them at the personal level and, in many cases, at the structural level."⁵⁵⁶

The Christians who personally participated in the Sandinista revolution frequently turn to official church documents to justify their involvement in the struggle for radical structural change. The four priests who took up office in the Sandinista government came under increasing pressure from their own bishops, despite the pastoral letter, to give up their government posts and return to more traditional church work. In defending his participation in the government Fernando Cardenal recalls a phrase from the Medellín conference document which, in turn, suggests the influence of Camilo Torres' concept of "efficacious love":

It isn't just my work with literacy, or my work with youth, that gives me a life so in keeping with my priestly and religious state. It's my whole political participation in the revolution. Sometimes you can study so many things. You can read book after book. And all of a sudden one day you find, couched in a simple phrase, something that illuminates everything you've been reading and studying. I remember a phrase like that in the Medellín documents. It says that political activity is the "noblest and most efficacious form of practising charity".⁵⁵⁷

"God's preferential option for the poor" was another key phrase which emerged from the Medellín conference. As Bradstock notes, the four priests argued that their political involvement was one way of demonstrating in concrete terms this preferential option for the poor on the part of Christians.⁵⁵⁸

In Girardi's review of the various factors which have helped to shape a revolutionary perspective in Nicaragua he places the Vatican Council and the

⁵⁵⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 353.

⁵⁵⁷ T. Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 55.

⁵⁵⁸ A. Bradstock, *Saints and Sandinistas: The Catholic Church in Nicaragua and its Responses to the Revolution* (London: Epworth Press, 1987), p. 60.

Medellín conference at the top of his list. He argues that the council and the conference helped the church in Latin America to change from an introspective concern for its own problems and order to a genuine commitment to the poor in their daily struggle against poverty and exploitation. Girardi sees the Latin American church moving from a relationship of “dialogue” with the outside world to a call for the liberation of the world.

The importance of Medellín, as with the [Second Vatican] Council, rests not primarily with the episcopal assembly and in the documents which it emitted, but rather in the church movement, in the climate of renovation and commitment which shook the Christian sectors of the continent. In the continental ambit it awoke the hope that the church as a whole, led by its bishops, could commit itself to the liberation of the poor.⁵⁵⁹

The Christian revolutionaries of Nicaragua, like those from Argentina and Chile, turned to Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* as well as the Medellín conference documents for support in their decision to defend the use of violence within the context of revolutionary struggle. Both Bradstock and Berryman note that Gaspar García Laviana, a Spanish priest turned Sandinista guerrilla fighter, cited *Populorum Progressio* in order to legitimise, from the church's perspective, his decision to join the armed struggle. García Laviana argued, like the MSTM and the CPS, that *Populorum Progressio* permitted revolutionary struggle “in the case of evident and prolonged tyranny”.⁵⁶⁰

The development of base ecclesial communities (BECs) in Nicaragua increased the tension between the official church hierarchy and what became known as “the Popular Church”. The term “Popular Church” was used by the church authorities to denote that part of the Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua which represented the viewpoint and aspirations of revolutionary Christianity. The bishops argued that the growth of BECs was undermining the unity of the church and challenging their authority. The “Popular Church” argued that the spread of BECs was entirely in line with the spirit of Vatican II and the conferences of Medellín and Puebla.

⁵⁵⁹ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 323-4.

⁵⁶⁰ Bradstock, *Saints and Sandinistas* p. 22, Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, pp. 76-7.

According to Francisco Solano, a priest committed to the Sandinista revolution, these conferences gave official support for much greater lay initiative and lay participation in the life of the church.

If the Popular Church is defined as a church with lay initiative, this is encouraged by the hierarchical Church in Vatican II, Medellín and Puebla. The church in the base communities is the model chosen for Latin America on an institutional level. The result of such lay initiative has been changes and renovation of the church into a Living Church. It's had great impact on people's lives. There is the danger for the hierarchy, for the bishops, or even priests, that ecclesial base communities can appear threatening, as if something is happening apart from their control. But those of us who have been involved concretely in these communities have experienced entirely the contrary. The base communities tend to fortify and strengthen the unity of the church.⁵⁶¹

Finally, the encyclical of John XXIII *Pacem in Terris* is used by revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua to justify a closer dialogue between Christians and Marxists. The encyclical notes how "false philosophical doctrines about the nature, origin and destiny of man" become detached from the historical movements they originally inspired. These historical movements, as they take on new ideas and inspirations are made more open to meaningful dialogue with the Christian community. Therefore, as the encyclical states "a coming together or a meeting of a practical nature which yesterday did not seem opportune or productive, today, by contrast, may be, or tomorrow may come to be".⁵⁶²

5.2.3 *The Bible*

Girardi argues that one of the most important achievements of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua has been to effect a major reinterpretation of what it means to be a Christian. The revolutionary Christians have rejected the Christianity founded on a "spiritualistic faith" which is interpreted for the believer by the church.⁵⁶³ Now the focus for the Christian is no longer "an abstract worship

⁵⁶¹ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, pp. 24-5.

⁵⁶² Quoted in Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 278.

⁵⁶³ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 344.

of God, but rather love of humankind, complete identification with the poor”.⁵⁶⁴ To “know” God and to “do the will of God” is no longer linked to religious belief and faith but to loving action in favour of the poor. The revolutionary Christians found support for this new perspective in their re-reading of the Bible which, as we have noted, was made considerably more accessible to lay Christians through the decision of Vatican II to translate it into local languages.

Several passages emerge as central to this new perspective. The Johannine call to love of one’s neighbour is frequently cited in the literature,⁵⁶⁵ perhaps most notably John 13:13: “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”. Miguel d’Escoto describes how this verse was significant to him in his journey towards becoming a revolutionary Christian.

I started to have a brand new understanding of what death is. What we always used to say, and meditate on - those words of our Lord, “greater love than this no one has, than to lay down one’s life for one’s brother’s and sisters” - this now became something utterly real for me. I came to see that the cross was the greatest act of love. It was the total gift of love. It was the total gift of love: you not only give your goods, you give your life itself.⁵⁶⁶

The parable of the Final Judgement in Matthew 25 is also frequently cited as evidence of Jesus’ emphasis on loving commitment to the poor and oppressed. The Cardinal brothers use the parable as a means of justifying their personal involvement in the revolution as members of the Sandinista government. In his interview with Zwerling and Martin, Fernando Cardenal refers to Matthew 25 as a biblical passage which legitimises his, and others, full participation in the revolution:

The revolution coincides exactly with the Gospel. The heart of the New Testament is the message of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25, where we are instructed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and comfort the prisoners. This has been the work of the

⁵⁶⁴ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 345.

⁵⁶⁵ For example Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 345 and Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 101.

⁵⁶⁶ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 110.

revolution which has transformed life for the poor people, the hungry, naked and homeless of this country. Because I have been working for the poor there has been no divorce between my priestly and revolutionary work.⁵⁶⁷

The discussion of Matthew 25 within the Solentiname community⁵⁶⁸ highlights some of the key themes developed by revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua. The passage leads Ernesto Cardenal to consider the nature of the Last Judgement. He tells the group that the Cuban writer Fina García Marruz has likened the triumph of the Cuban revolution to the Last Judgement: “for everything that had been secret came out into the light and you found out who had been with the people and who had been against the people and you rewarded some and punished others”.⁵⁶⁹ Cardenal then goes on to identify the Final Judgement with the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. In a passage which suggests the influence of Guevara’s concept of the “new man” Cardenal speaks of the returning Christ as a collective “New Person”.

The complete Judgement, of “all the nations” as it says here, will not come until the kingdom of God is established on all the earth. And it seems to me that the Son of Man will not come as an individual, as he did the first time; he will be a collective Christ, he will come as a new society, or rather a new species, the New Person. Father Chardin says that just as for the first coming of Christ it was necessary for the individual human being to have reached a certain degree of evolution, for his second coming it’s going to be necessary for all of society to have reached a certain special degree of evolution.⁵⁷⁰

Finally, Matthew 25 provokes discussion within the Solentiname community on the nature of Christianity itself. Cardenal uses the passage to argue that faith and belief in God do not make someone acceptable to God, but rather loving action. “Those who are saved” says Cardenal “appear here as though they had no faith in Christ”.⁵⁷¹ This was an important point for the revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua who sought to justify their alliance with atheist revolutionaries in the

⁵⁶⁷ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 77.

⁵⁶⁸ See pp. 160-2 for a description of the Solentiname community.

⁵⁶⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 50.

⁵⁷⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 50.

⁵⁷¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 53.

FSLN in the face of mounting criticism from the church authorities. Atheism, Cardenal argues, is not a bar to “doing the will of God”.⁵⁷²

Another key passage is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Fernando Cardenal argues that the Good Samaritan parable highlights the Christian obligation to “take sides” in the revolutionary struggle. “Either you’re with the slaughtered or your with the slaughterers”.⁵⁷³ D’Escoto reads the Good Samaritan parable as a call to Christians, but perhaps especially to priests like himself, to respond to the suffering of their people.⁵⁷⁴

Berryman cites a document produced by the BECs which also makes a reference to the Good Samaritan story in order to support those priests who had chosen to leave aside their pastoral (and later priestly) duties in order to participate actively in the Sandinista government. Reflecting on the new conditions present in Nicaragua after the revolution the document asks: “is not a part of this historic newness the presence of some priests in services that many Christians see as the service of the Samaritan?”⁵⁷⁵

When the Solentiname community discusses the Good Samaritan parable the dominant theme which emerges is that love of God is “secondary” to love of neighbour. “The two are fulfilled by the second” as Cardenal puts it.⁵⁷⁶ A member of the group argues that “the law talks about love of God and love of neighbour, not just love of neighbour”. In response, Cardenal claims that “those who love God without loving their neighbour are not carrying out the law, but they are carrying out the law if they love their neighbour without loving God”.⁵⁷⁷ As the line of thought develops in the Bible study another member of the group suggests that “the atheists who are revolutionaries are the good Samaritan of the parable”.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 55.

⁵⁷³ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 74.

⁵⁷⁴ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, pp. 114-5.

⁵⁷⁵ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 263.

⁵⁷⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 102.

⁵⁷⁷ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 97.

⁵⁷⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 99.

This leads Cardenal on to suggest that Che Guevara might provide a good example of the love of God and neighbour.⁵⁷⁹

Cardenal and other revolutionary Christians within Nicaragua turn to the parable of the Good Samaritan to support their view that practical love of one's neighbour is more authentically "Christian", even when performed by atheists, than a slavish compliance with the rules and rituals of one's religion. In this way the parable is used to support the collaboration of Christians and atheists in the revolutionary struggle. Both were fulfilling the role of the good Samaritan.

The Bible studies conducted within the Solentiname community and recorded by Ernesto Cardenal provide a clear example of the influence of the Bible upon the development of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua amongst poor lay Christians. As the examples of the studies of the Final Judgement and the Good Samaritan demonstrate, the Bible is read in the context of a strong desire for social and economic change on the part of most of the readers. The desire for change informs and shapes their reading of the text which, in turn, strengthens their desire for change. The study of the biblical passages provides them with a scripture-based authority for a radically different interpretation of what it means to be a Christian, enabling them to challenge the "official" biblical teaching of the church. Two themes, in particular, run through the four volumes of Bible study: the pre-eminence of practical, or in Torres' words "efficacious", love of one's neighbour and the identification of the kingdom of God with a post revolutionary socialist or communist society.

5.2.4 *Base ecclesial communities*

Berryman traces the first example of a BEC in Nicaragua to 1966 when Father José de la Jara established a group in San Pablo, a squatter camp on the outskirts of Managua. Over the following years many other BECs emerged at the local parish level. Two communities, the Rigüero and Solentiname communities, gained particular notoriety. Neither are typical of the normal BEC model and they will be

⁵⁷⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 100-1.

discussed separately later in this section. Sister Peggy Healy, in her interview with Zwerling, describes the development of BECs in Ciudad Sandino, where she was working. Her account provides an example of how other BECs were emerging in other parts of the country:

The Christian communities in Ciudad Sandino began as the basis of parish work in Santo Domingo ... The idea was to read and to study the Word of God and bring the Word of God as a light to their lives, to use it as a way to better understand their own reality and to respond to it in a Christian way ... These communities grew in our parish until there were two or three in every sector.⁵⁸⁰

Healy goes on to describe how these meetings led to a deepening of community and political activity:

It had a role in their looking at their reality and seeing what they had to do as Christians. And that referred to very simple things in the barrio, like service to those members of the larger community who were in particular need ... Later, they looked at the needs in the barrio and how the Christian community could respond to those needs as a group motivated by faith. Naturally, their action began to be more politically involved as the situation of repression grew worse and worse.⁵⁸¹

The BECs of Ciudad Sandino, as elsewhere in the country, ultimately became involved in direct political protest. In the case of Ciudad Sandino this included coordinating successful campaigns against increases in the water rates, the need for a local cemetery and improvements in the local bus service. Towards the end of the 1970s, as the national "insurrection" began to take hold, Healy explains how it seemed a natural process for members of the local BECs to move from local, political protest to active participation in the revolutionary struggle:

A number of young people went off to fight, including some members of the Christian community as well. So the Christian communities' involvement evolved through their own faith experience as the struggle

⁵⁸⁰ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 243.

⁵⁸¹ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 244.

deepened. They did these things as part of their faith commitment to their brothers and sisters.⁵⁸²

Healy also notes that, during the period of revolutionary struggle, the BECs were able to provide the local leadership and co-ordination which the FSLN were seeking.⁵⁸³ Girardi, too, notes the important impact which the BECs had upon the revolutionary process, providing “points of encounter between the vanguard and the popular masses”.⁵⁸⁴ Luis Carrion, originally a member of the Rigüero community and later an FSLN commander, acknowledges the key role played by the BECs, not only in supplying a rich source of new revolutionary activists, but also in overcoming hostility towards the idea of revolution amongst many Christians in Nicaragua:

At times the base communities acted as quarries, and also as means of spreading information. In this way they were very important, since they served to break the taboo about the incompatibility between Christians and Sandinistas. Through them a vision of Christianity was spread which was favourable to the interests of the people. I would say that these were very important roles played by the base communities.⁵⁸⁵

The evidence thus suggests that the BECs, in general, made a significant contribution not only to the revolutionary formation of individual Christians but also to the progress and ultimate success of the revolutionary struggle. The rereading of the Bible from the perspective of their own local contexts was an important factor in the development of the radical theology and politics of the BECs. In later sections we shall examine the degree to which other influences, such as Marxism, the Cuban revolution, and the writings of Castro and Guevara, also had an impact upon the development of radical Christianity within the BECs.

The members of the Rigüero community, founded by Uriel Molina in a slum area of Managua, were mainly drawn from Christian university students studying in the capital. Sister Mary Hartman, who had been working with Uriel Molina in the

⁵⁸² Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 245.

⁵⁸³ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 246.

⁵⁸⁴ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 248.

⁵⁸⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 249.

Riguero barrio since 1970, describes the impact which the university students made upon her thinking:

In 1974, a group of university students came to live in our barrio. They were studying subjects like anthropology, economics and political science. These students, from wealthy families, had come to share their lives with the poor people of the barrio. They gave courses and led study groups. They helped me understand social conditions and the work of multinational corporations ... Their example gave me a concept of what it was to be a Christian. And their example gave me courage to act too.⁵⁸⁶

One of the most significant achievements of the Riguero community, according to several of its members, was overcoming the sense of isolation experienced by many Christians living within the barrio. The community encouraged people to reject the idea that Christianity was a private religion concerned only with personal spiritual matters. A former community member, Alvaro Baltodano, explains how the reading of the Bible together led people to challenge the view that a Christian was simply “a man who did nothing more than go to mass. Rather the Christian should participate in the community, should participate with all other people of good will within the barrio. And even more, the Christian should concern himself with the development of the barrio, the organisation of the barrio, and should not be isolated”.⁵⁸⁷

The Riguero community was a significant influence in the revolutionary formation of many Christians who were later to become leaders within the FSLN both during the period of guerrilla warfare and on into government. Mary Hartman, in her interview with Zwerling in 1985, comments on how many of the university students who participated in the Riguero community were, by 1985, members of the Sandinista government.⁵⁸⁸ Whilst it was the student members of the community who went on to leadership positions within the revolutionary struggle, Molina provides evidence that the poor of the barrio developed a greater social and political awareness and activism as a result of their interaction with the students of the community:

⁵⁸⁶ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 142.

⁵⁸⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 325.

⁵⁸⁸ Zwerling and Martin, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 142.

We deepened our faith and our political commitment. Soon there were reactions, as was to be expected. Once when dairy-owners raised milk prices, the young people could explain the problem, since they were linked to the parish council and parish religious organisations. After some reflection, a decision was made to organise a boycott and stop milk trucks by throwing tacks on the road.⁵⁸⁹

According to Girardi, Christian communities, like the one in Riguero, provided “a place of fraternity, of collective maturing, of mutual education, of social service, of demanding criticism and self-criticism, of reflection and a search for liberty”. As such, these communities acted “as an anticipation and promise of the future society for which they are fighting”.⁵⁹⁰ However, despite the claim that these communities were forerunners of the future, post-revolutionary society, with the exception of the Solentiname community, there is no evidence of attempts by BECs to restructure the local community’s economic activities along the lines of those new economic relations envisaged within a future socialist society, by means, for example, of local co-operatives.

Ernesto Cardenal founded the Solentiname community in 1965, guided by his spiritual director, Thomas Merton. Cardenal’s original intention was to establish a contemplative community with one or two other companions. Soon, however, they were drawn into close contact with the neighbouring peasant community. The shared reading and discussion of the Bible became a central element in the developing life of the community and, according to Cardenal, profoundly “radicalised” the group.⁵⁹¹

Over the years the Solentiname community extended and developed its activities. However, in October 1977 the community was destroyed by the Nicaraguan National Guard. Two months later, in his “Letter to the People of Nicaragua”, Cardenal gives a brief description of the community prior to its destruction:

⁵⁸⁹ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, pp. 63-4. See also Berryman p. 72 for further evidence of direct action within the Riguero barrio.

⁵⁹⁰ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 332.

⁵⁹¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 272.

We had in that distant corner of the lake a great library ... We had a collection of pre-Columbian art found in Solentiname ... We had a large guest house ... We had ovens for ceramics and a large shop for all kinds of handicrafts ... We were also developing communal work for young peasants through a co-operative. The co-operative, with the help of a German institution, was about ready to begin a dairy and factory of European style cheese.⁵⁹²

During his visit to Cuba in 1970 Cardenal describes the focus of the community's life:

I explained that we try to lead a life in common, with no "thine" or "mine", a life of voluntary poverty - free from the desire for money and from the demands of a society of consumption. We live in brotherly union, all working for the community.⁵⁹³

The conversations recorded in *The Gospel in Solentiname* confirm Cardenal's view that the community reading of the Bible was a significant factor in the revolutionary formation of those Christians who participated. In a later section we shall note the extent to which Cardenal also introduced to the community the writings of revolutionary thinkers such as Marx, Lenin, Mao, Castro and Guevara alongside the reading of the Bible. Cardenal argues that it was this "radicalised" Christianity which prompted the members of the Solentiname community to join the armed struggle against Somoza.

One day it happened that a group of boys and girls from Solentiname, because of profound convictions and after having let it mature for a long time, decided to take up arms. Why did they do it? They did it for only one reason: for their love of the kingdom of God, for the ardent desire that a just society be implanted, a real and concrete kingdom of God here on earth. When the time came, these boys and girls fought with great valour, but they also fought as Christians.⁵⁹⁴

Cardenal describes the Solentiname community as a "near paradise"⁵⁹⁵ and as a "seed and prefiguration of the revolution".⁵⁹⁶ Girardi states that "Solentiname is

⁵⁹² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 273.

⁵⁹³ Cardenal, *In Cuba* (New York: New Directions Books, 1974), p. 276.

⁵⁹⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 274.

⁵⁹⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 274.

⁵⁹⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 333.

the eve of the revolution, and the revolution is the day after Solentiname".⁵⁹⁷ Unlike the Rigüero community and other BECs, this "prefiguration" of the revolution also included an attempt to develop new economic models on a local scale which sought to reflect the economic relations which would exist after the revolution. At one point Cardenal describes the creation of a "commune" which was to "work the land in common and to live owning everything in common". This he sees as an "example of what ought to be done in this country and in all of Latin America".⁵⁹⁸ However, Cardenal makes no further reference to this commune and the plans for a dairy co-operative had to be abandoned when the community was destroyed in 1977. Nevertheless, Cardenal's emphasis on the creation of new economic models suggests that he regarded them as an important element in developing a Christian revolutionary consciousness.

5.2.5 Marxism

Ernesto Cardenal underlines the important influence of Marxism upon the development of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua. He argues that Jesus provided "the goals of social change, the goals of perfect humanity",⁵⁹⁹ while Marxism provides the "scientific method for studying society and changing it".⁶⁰⁰ Cardenal dismisses the idea that Marxism and Christianity are mutually exclusive and argues, instead, that the two complement each other. Fernando Cardenal presents the same argument as his brother:

The gospel contains no manuals of architecture, engineering, or social science to help us in the practical building up of this new society, which the kingdom of God obliges us to build. As Vatican II clearly states, the kingdom of God, begins to be built in concrete history. So we have to have recourse to all the sciences that can help us: philosophy, physics, chemistry, engineering, the social sciences - and among the social sciences, Marxism.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 334.

⁵⁹⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 149.

⁵⁹⁹ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 31.

⁶⁰⁰ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 31.

⁶⁰¹ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 77.

Girardi agrees with the Cardenal brothers that the motive for turning to Marxism was “essentially political and not philosophical” providing a “valid scientific instrument for ‘understanding the national reality’” and a “guide for elaborating an effective strategy”.⁶⁰²

Within many of the BECs and certainly within Cardenal’s community at Solentiname, Marxist literature and thought was set alongside the Bible.⁶⁰³ Girardi notes that this “coexistence of Bible readings and Marxist readings was not the exception but rather the rule in militant Christian groups”.⁶⁰⁴ Uriel Molina describes how, every evening in the Rigüero community, “after university classes, we had a session analysing Nicaragua using Marxism as a method”.⁶⁰⁵ Cardenal also explains how the reading of Marxist literature was a key factor in the revolutionary formation of the young Christians linked to his community in Solentiname:

In our community the young people and the neighbouring peasants who more closely identified themselves with us were turning themselves into revolutionaries ... We began to have seminars on Marxism and do a lot of reading. We read Mao and all the speeches of Fidel that we could, and, in this way, we were progressively developing an identification with the Sandinista Front.⁶⁰⁶

Girardi argues that the interest in Marxist literature amongst radical Christian groups in Nicaragua came about because of their emphasis on “the primacy of love” which emerged through their reading of the Bible.⁶⁰⁷ The revolutionary Christians were interested in love in action, a love which was effective in challenging and changing the social and economic conditions which led to poverty and oppression:

⁶⁰² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 330.

⁶⁰³ For example Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 44, 79 and 114, and vol. IV, pp. 29, 103, 159 and 199. See also M. Randall, *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983), p. 71, where a member of the group mentions that university students would visit them “with their Christian faith and their Marxism”.

⁶⁰⁴ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 329.

⁶⁰⁵ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 63.

⁶⁰⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 330.

⁶⁰⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 428.

The fundamental problem [for radical Christians] is not the existence of God, but the existence of love as an historical force and the liberation of the oppressed.⁶⁰⁸

This emphasis on working for the liberation of the oppressed was understood as a common, unifying theme of Marxism and Christianity, and permitted the differences, particularly at the philosophical level, to be ignored. Ernesto Cardenal argues that he was drawn to Marxism through his reading of the Bible:

I have said many times that I am a Marxist for Christ and his gospel, and that I was not drawn to Marxism by reading Marx, but by reading the gospel ... I'm a Marxist who believes in God, follows Christ, and is a revolutionary for the sake of his kingdom.⁶⁰⁹

The influence of Marxism upon revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua is clear. It provided a means of analysing the social and economic structures of the country, it was used to shed a new light on biblical stories and reinterpret those stories from a revolutionary perspective and it resonated with the emphasis, within radical Christianity in Nicaragua, on "identification with the poor" and the liberation of the oppressed.

5.2.6 *Camilo Torres*

The influence of Torres upon revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua is less evident than it is for the CPS in Chile and the more radical fringes of the MSTM in Argentina. It is in the writings of Ernesto Cardenal that Torres' influence emerges most clearly.

On several occasions Cardenal refers to Torres' phrase "efficacious love".⁶¹⁰ Within a Solentiname Bible study group he argues that, prior to the revolution, love was limited to individual acts of charity. But now, after the revolution, "the

⁶⁰⁸ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 428.

⁶⁰⁹ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 32.

⁶¹⁰ For example Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, pp. 18, 27 and 32.

efficacious love of Camilo Torres is possible,” through which “one can efficaciously perform works of mercy for the entire society”.⁶¹¹

Cardenal also tells a Solentiname study group that “Father Camilo Torres believed that to celebrate an authentic eucharist one should fight for social change”.⁶¹² In the light of Torres’ stance Cardenal later suggests that the eucharist and communism are linked through the Greek word *koinonia*. A member of the study group responds by saying:

I believe that the logical consequence of the eucharist is that men hold all things in common. Whilst they do not live in communion, they cannot celebrate the true eucharist which Christ began.

I [Cardenal]: Camilo Torres said that for this reason he would stop celebrating the mass.⁶¹³

Cardenal also refers to Torres’ decision to request laicisation in the context of Cardenal’s own battle with the Nicaraguan church hierarchy who wished him to abandon his political activities. Cardenal suggests that he might follow in the steps of Torres and ask for temporary laicisation if the attitude of the church were to harden.⁶¹⁴

Few references to Torres occur outside the writings of Ernesto Cardenal. In the Solentiname Bible studies the death of Torres is seen as evidence of the truth of Jesus’ prediction that his followers would suffer.⁶¹⁵ Along with Guevara, Torres is said to have risen “as a living force in the people”.⁶¹⁶ It is also claimed, in a study group, that Torres, Sandino and Guevara (and Christ) all realised that their deaths were necessary “in order to awake the revolutionary consciousness of the people”.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹¹ E. Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1979), vol. IV, p. 38.

⁶¹² Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 107.

⁶¹³ Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vol. IV, pp. 79-80.

⁶¹⁴ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, pp. 29-30.

⁶¹⁵ Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 154.

⁶¹⁶ Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 68.

⁶¹⁷ Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 121.

5.2.7 *The Cuban revolution and Fidel Castro*

The Cuban revolution was also a highly significant factor in the development of Ernesto Cardenal's revolutionary Christianity. On two occasions Cardenal was able to visit Cuba. In 1970 he stayed for several months and then returned for a few days in 1971. During this second visit he was able to have a private conversation with Fidel Castro. His book, *In Cuba* provides an account of these two trips. In his book Cardenal acknowledges the many shortcomings and failings of the revolution but, nevertheless, regards it as an important model for those seeking radical change in Nicaragua. In his interview with Cabestrero, Cardenal describes the impact Cuba made upon him, employing the familiar phrase of Camilo Torres:

Later I went to Cuba, and there I saw that the Cuban revolution was love for neighbour - the gospel in action, "efficacious charity".⁶¹⁸

Cardenal eulogises over the city of Havana, describing it as a "joyful city", freed from the misery of poverty. It is a city "that is bound to please a monk, a meditator, anyone who in the capitalist world has decided to withdraw from the world."⁶¹⁹ Cardenal praises the achievements of the revolution which include the "abolishment" of many major diseases,⁶²⁰ redistribution of land and wealth, improvements in agriculture and education,⁶²¹ and improvements in the legal system through the development of "People's Courts".⁶²² On seeing poor families rehoused in the former mansions of the rich Cardenal calls to mind the words of the Magnificat:

It was very moving to see the children of farmers and labourers in the houses of millionaires. I thought: here is where the song of Mary in the Magnificat has been fulfilled: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away".⁶²³

⁶¹⁸ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 27.

⁶¹⁹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 6 and 7.

⁶²⁰ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p.74.

⁶²¹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 205.

⁶²² Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 39.

⁶²³ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 71.

Cuba represents, for Cardenal, “the ideal of evangelical poverty, together with equality and fraternity, and Christians ought to be the first to defend this system”.⁶²⁴ In his conclusion to *In Cuba* Cardenal summarises the powerful impact which Cuba had made upon him:

A great change had taken place in my life; it was the most important experience since my religious conversion. And it was like another conversion. I had discovered that now, and in Latin America, to practice religion was to make revolution ... Also in Cuba I had seen that socialism made it possible to live the Gospel in society. Earlier it had been possible to worship only individually, or in the bosom of convents and monasteries. Fidel had reconciled us with communism.⁶²⁵

On his return to Nicaragua and the Solentiname community, Cardenal was eager to share his experiences of Cuba. The discussions recorded in the “Gospel in Solentiname” reveal the degree to which Cardenal and others came to look upon Cuba both as an ideal revolutionary model and as a partial realisation of the values and principles of the kingdom of God. It is highly probable that much of the Solentiname community’s knowledge about Cuba came directly from Cardenal’s accounts. Indeed, at one point, a member of the Bible study group makes direct reference to Cardenal’s book *In Cuba*.⁶²⁶ Other BECs in Nicaragua did not record the contents of their community Bible studies. It is, therefore, difficult to judge whether the Cuban revolution had as significant an impact on all the BECs in Nicaragua as it did upon the Solentiname community.

Throughout the four volumes of *The Gospel in Solentiname* positive references are made to post-revolutionary Cuba. The views of the study group generally echo those expressed by Cardenal’s book *In Cuba*.⁶²⁷ The young and the old are cared for in Cuba, the poor can learn a profession,⁶²⁸ diseases, common in other parts of the world, are being eradicated,⁶²⁹ there is support for widows, orphans and the

⁶²⁴ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 163.

⁶²⁵ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 324.

⁶²⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 234.

⁶²⁷ Randall’s interview with members of the Rigüero community suggests that “En Cuba” was read not just by the Solentiname group but more widely by Nicaraguan revolutionary Christians; Randall, *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution*, p. 167.

⁶²⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 57.

⁶²⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 86.

mentally ill.⁶³⁰ The qualities of life, after the revolution, are frequently associated with the qualities of the kingdom of God. The Cuban revolution acts as a prefiguration of the Final Judgement in which roles are reversed and the hidden is made known.⁶³¹ The redistribution of land and wealth envisaged during the year of the Jubilee is taking place in Cuba.⁶³² The parable of the wedding feast, in which “the poor, the crippled, the lame” receive an invitation to the feast, has become reality in Cuba.⁶³³ Cuba is “a country moving the way Jesus Christ wants”.⁶³⁴ The Cuban communist party is compared to the “yeast” of God’s kingdom.⁶³⁵ The study group notes that in Cuba the term “millionaire” applies to those who give most to society (by cutting a million “arrobas” of sugar cane) “and that’s the kind of capitalists and millionaires that Christ says we must be in the kingdom of heaven”.⁶³⁶ In Cuba, where there are no “merchants,” the temple has been purified.⁶³⁷ “Cuba is now a community united by the love that people have for each other. And Christ is there with them even though they don’t realise it”.⁶³⁸ To fulfil the Gospel “we must be like Cubans”.⁶³⁹

The Solentiname community, largely through Cardenal’s influence, came to see Cuba as a virtual manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. The vision of the Solentiname community was that a revolution in Nicaragua would lead to the establishment of a society which reflected the same kingdom values.

Several references to Castro occur within *The Gospel in Solentiname*, usually linked to references to the Cuban revolution and his leading role within it.⁶⁴⁰ Cardenal also quotes Castro on several occasions in *In Cuba* in order to support the argument that Christians have a legitimate role to play within the revolutionary struggle. Cardenal recounts the story that when Castro had opened the Camilo

⁶³⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 96.

⁶³¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 50.

⁶³² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 130.

⁶³³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 133.

⁶³⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 80.

⁶³⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 60.

⁶³⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 43. See also vol. III, pp. 127-8.

⁶³⁷ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 259-60.

⁶³⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 157.

⁶³⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 157.

⁶⁴⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 78, 127, 224, vol. IV, pp. 44, 185 and 192.

Torres School in Cuba he had declared that “in the Latin American revolution Marxists would fight side by side with Christians” and that “every Christian ought to be by definition a revolutionary”.⁶⁴¹ In his personal conversation with Castro, Cardenal records Castro as saying: “You can be a communist without ceasing to be a Christian. Why not?”⁶⁴²

Cardenal sought to demonstrate the legitimacy of Christian participation in revolutionary struggle by these references to Castro’s words. Berryman notes that Luis Carrión, the FSLN leader and former member of the Rigüero community, quotes Castro with a similar purpose in mind. Carrión refers to Castro’s phrase “strategic alliance” (between Christians and Marxists), first used by Castro in his talks to revolutionary Christians in Chile in 1971. Carrión argues that, in the Nicaraguan context the relationship between revolutionary Marxists and revolutionary Christians should now be taken beyond the stage of an alliance to become “one huge Sandinista unity”.⁶⁴³

The influence of the Cuban revolution upon the development of Nicaraguan revolutionary Christianity is central. Firstly, it provided a contemporary Latin American model for successful revolutionary change. Secondly, Ernesto Cardenal and other Christians used the example of Cuba to argue that socialist society had much in common with the Christian society envisaged through the building of the kingdom of God. Finally, certain sayings of Castro were used to demonstrate his support for the participation of Christians in the revolutionary struggle, thereby consolidating the view that Christians had a legitimate revolutionary role to play.

5.2.8 *Che Guevara*

There is evidence that the personality and the ideas of Guevara had an influence upon revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua in general, but most notably upon Ernesto Cardenal and members of his community in Solentiname.

⁶⁴¹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 94.

⁶⁴² Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 327. See also Randall, *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution*, p. 118.

⁶⁴³ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 232.

Many of Cardenal's references to Guevara highlight his ascetic, almost monastic lifestyle. Throughout *In Cuba* he records stories about his personal discipline, his insistence on absolute equality and fairness,⁶⁴⁴ his refusal to accept any of the privileges of high office,⁶⁴⁵ his lack of interest in money and clothes,⁶⁴⁶ his care for the sick and wounded during the guerrilla war.⁶⁴⁷ Cardenal quotes one letter from Guevara, published in the newspaper *La Revolución*, in which he publicly apologises for having to use a luxurious house formerly belonging to a Batista supporter, while recovering from an illness.

Cardenal not only records stories of Guevara's personal qualities, he also includes references to many of his views, ideas and theories about revolution and revolutionaries. Guevara's emphasis on a revolutionary's sensitivity to injustice is picked up by Cardenal and he refers, on more than one occasion, to Guevara's farewell letter to his children in which he urges them to "be capable always of feeling to the depths any injustice committed against anyone in any part of the world".⁶⁴⁸ Cardenal also notes the importance which Guevara attached to the ideas of sacrifice and love as key elements of a revolutionary life.⁶⁴⁹ At several points in the book *In Cuba* Cardenal refers to Guevara's belief that, in a post-revolutionary, socialist society, the moral incentive, rather than the material incentive, should be the motivating factor for the worker.⁶⁵⁰ Linked to his commentary on Guevara's moral incentive, Cardenal also notes the importance which Guevara puts on voluntary work within a socialist society, as a means of developing a new, revolutionary consciousness.⁶⁵¹ Finally, Cardenal makes frequent reference to Guevara's concept of the "new man" during the course of the book. Cardenal understands Guevara's "new man" to be one of his key concepts: "Che was interested not in the production of consumer goods but in the production of the new man".⁶⁵² The "new man" was the finished product of the revolution, the one

⁶⁴⁴ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 35-6.

⁶⁴⁵ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 194 and 290-1.

⁶⁴⁶ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 116 and 194.

⁶⁴⁷ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 66 and 156-8.

⁶⁴⁸ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 66, 160 and 301.

⁶⁴⁹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 66 and 117.

⁶⁵⁰ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 117 and 166-9.

⁶⁵¹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 35 and 168.

⁶⁵² Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 167.

who embodied all the finest qualities of the socialist and communist era. We shall see in the next section, that Cardenal's knowledge of Guevara's use of the term shapes the way in which Cardenal himself uses the term in his writings on revolutionary Christianity.

Guevara's influence upon the Solentiname community is clear. On frequent occasions the personal qualities and characteristics of Guevara are identified with those of Jesus. This linking of Guevara with the person of Jesus encourages the community to reread the Gospels and reflect upon their own Christian beliefs and practices from a more revolutionary perspective. When the community discuss Mark 3:31-35, in which Jesus describes his followers as his mother, brothers and sisters, a comparison is made with Guevara:

Jesus had a very revolutionary attitude here I believe, because every revolutionary has to break loose from his family. We have the example of Che. His family was living in Argentina and he was fighting in Cuba. Those people were his brothers too.⁶⁵³

Guevara's death is compared to the sacrificial death of Jesus.⁶⁵⁴ Just as Christ worked as a healer of the sick, so did Guevara.⁶⁵⁵ When Guevara speaks of hatred he does so in the same way as Jesus; their hatred is not of people but of injustice.⁶⁵⁶ Jesus drove the money changers from the temple, Guevara "like Christ" is now "purifying the temple of the traders and exploiters".⁶⁵⁷ "Just as Che left his ministry in Cuba to carry the revolution somewhere else, Christ left that heavenly society to come to preach here on earth".⁶⁵⁸ Guevara "carried out the teachings that Christ came to preach".⁶⁵⁹ Finally, Guevara, like Christ is resurrected after death:

⁶⁵³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 160.

⁶⁵⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 78.

⁶⁵⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 165 and vol. III, p. 269.

⁶⁵⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 110-1.

⁶⁵⁷ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 269.

⁶⁵⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 64.

⁶⁵⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 172.

They didn't leave a single trace of Che, and they sent his head, we're told, to the United States and his hands and feet they sent somewhere else, but it's clear that Che, just like Christ, has been resurrected in the hearts of everybody who wants a new world.⁶⁶⁰

On occasions, Guevara is not directly identified with the person of Jesus but rather similarities are drawn between his words and actions and the message of Jesus. In a discussion about Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek," Guevara's treatment of "the enemy without any ill feeling" is understood as a contemporary fulfilment of Jesus' command.⁶⁶¹ In one discussion, Cardenal himself identifies Jesus' use of the term "kingdom of God" with Guevara's phrase "kingdom of freedom".⁶⁶² We are also told that "Sandino and Che ... believed in the same communism as Jesus".⁶⁶³

Guevara lives a "model" Christian life. He is the one who embodies the words of Jesus "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."⁶⁶⁴ Guevara gives revolutionary Christians an example of "love of God and neighbour".⁶⁶⁵ He "could be an angel,"⁶⁶⁶ he was "like a priest,"⁶⁶⁷ "a chosen one of Christ".⁶⁶⁸ One member of the Solentiname group comments that "when Ernesto put some politics in the Gospel" they came to realise that Guevara was "better than a priest, better than a bishop, better than the Pope".⁶⁶⁹

The term "new man" is used on occasions within the discussions of the community.⁶⁷⁰ The use of this term may, again, suggest the influence of Guevara's writings within the community. It is probable that the Solentiname community's knowledge of Guevara's thinking and revolutionary theory came directly from Cardenal. Other BECs in Nicaragua were not likely to have access to the detailed

⁶⁶⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 249.

⁶⁶¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 115.

⁶⁶² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 177-8.

⁶⁶³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 84.

⁶⁶⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 245.

⁶⁶⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 100-1.

⁶⁶⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 148.

⁶⁶⁷ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 177.

⁶⁶⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 183.

⁶⁶⁹ Randall, *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution*, p. 72.

⁶⁷⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 25 and 245.

knowledge of Guevara's thought which Cardenal provided. However, there is some evidence that the term "new man" was used more widely amongst revolutionary Christian groups in Nicaragua than just the Solentiname community. Berryman outlines the conclusions of a conference of Delegates of the Word⁶⁷¹ held 1980 in which the concept of the "new man" was a central idea:

One group worked on delineating the qualities of the "new man" (sic):⁶⁷² "orientated to service, honest, responsible, community-oriented, Christian, generous, committed" ... All presented their conclusions not simply in words but in songs, skits, and drawings; one contrasted the "old man" (with liquor, money, a bloodstained dead dove, and a black cross) and the "new man" (young, with machete and hammer of reconstruction, the literacy workbook, a large sun and the cross painted red, a symbol of liberty).⁶⁷³

A radical Christian folk song, *El Credo Nicaragüense*, written in the early 1980s also uses the phrase "new man".⁶⁷⁴ The use of this term within Christian revolutionary groups does not necessarily imply the influence of Guevara. The phrase may have entered into the language of radical Christianity in Nicaragua by various routes. The term was already available to Christians through their reading of the Bible. It may have come via revolutionary Christians' contact with the FSLN for whom the term "new man" was an important concept.⁶⁷⁵ However, there is, in turn, evidence of Guevara's influence on the use of the term within the FSLN. Girardi cites part of a FSLN guerrilla fighter's journal in which the fighter describes at length the influence of "Che's new man" upon him.⁶⁷⁶ Finally, Ernesto Cardenal was a key figure in the emergence of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua. Knowledge amongst the BECs of his use of the term "new man" may have encouraged its wider use. But, again, we have noted that Cardenal's use of the term was strongly influenced by Guevara.

⁶⁷¹ "Delegates of the Word" was a lay organisation of the Nicaraguan Church. The "Delegates" were trained to act as lay leaders, especially within the poorer communities.

⁶⁷² Berryman's brackets.

⁶⁷³ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 246.

⁶⁷⁴ In *Cancionero Abierto* (ed. Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos; Buenos Aires: ISEDET, 1993), p. 120.

⁶⁷⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 161.

⁶⁷⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 96-7, n. 11.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that Guevara had an influence upon the formation of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua. He provided inspiration as a revolutionary icon, a contemporary “Christ-figure” who legitimised the participation of Christians in the revolutionary struggle. His influence is most evident in the writings of Ernesto Cardenal. In particular, Cardenal takes up Guevara’s concept of the “new man” and seeks to reconcile it with the “new being” of Christianity.

5.2.9 Influences: Conclusion

We have noted some influences that were specific to the development of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua; the influence of Sandino, the development of BECs and the Bible study undertaken within those groups. Many of the other influences which shaped revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua also had a significant impact upon the other Latin American revolutionary Christian groups and individuals we have studied. Once more, the different context has altered the focus of these influences. In Nicaragua radical Christians turned to the documents of the Roman Catholic church not only to claim support for their critique of capitalism and their dialogue with non-Christians, as the CPS and the MSTM had done, but also to justify their participation in politics. The focus of Torres’ influence in Nicaragua, unlike in Argentina and Chile, lies principally in his concept of “efficacious love” which can only truly emerge in a post-revolutionary setting. Cuba is not only an inspiration for revolutionary struggle, as with Torres, the MSTM and the CPS, but also the society being built in Cuba is compared, especially by Ernesto Cardenal, with Christian aspirations for the kingdom of God. Finally, Guevara is not only influential as a revolutionary icon, as he was with the CPS and the MSTM, but in addition, his concept of the “new man” is taken up, again by Cardenal, and fused with the “new being in Christ” in a way that was never fully attempted by the other revolutionary Christians we have studied.

5.3 Aims

5.3.1 *National liberation and anti-imperialism*

The FSLN's very name identifies one of its key aims as that of national liberation. This struggle for national liberation was understood to be both against the rule of the national oligarchy, headed by Somoza, and against international imperialism, particularly that of the United States. Fernando Cardenal, like other revolutionary Christians, describes his participation in the revolution in the years leading up to the final victory more in terms of a struggle against Somoza than a struggle against international imperialism.⁶⁷⁷ In his interview with Cabestrero, he explains that it was only after the victory of the revolution that the further implications of their battle for national liberation became apparent; the battle became one against national (and later international) capitalism and imperialism:

Once Somoza, along with his army fell, and the Sandinista Front began to run the government with great moderation and started putting into practice the reforms that were needed to really transform the country so that it favoured the masses of the poor, then these changes, these reforms, started to hit the rich in their pockets ... And this was when the rich started opposing the Sandinista revolution, claiming that it had "betrayed the programme."⁶⁷⁸

Girardi offers an explanation as to why the objective of national liberation can be so closely identified with the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. He argues that the revolutionary struggle for "national liberation" before the fall of Somoza, was not led or inspired by the bourgeoisie in Nicaragua, but rather by the "people". In this way the national struggle took on the dynamics of international class struggle: "The people ... occupy in Sandinista Marxism the place of the proletariat in the Marxism of Marx".⁶⁷⁹ Thus "the popular liberation signifies at the same time national liberation from imperialism and social liberation from the oligarchy and the bourgeoisie."⁶⁸⁰ Girardi goes on to argue that "the objective of national sovereignty appears inseparable from a project to create socialist society"

⁶⁷⁷ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, pp. 61-64.

⁶⁷⁸ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 65.

⁶⁷⁹ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 118.

⁶⁸⁰ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 118.

so that “the principle enemy is no longer the national bourgeoisie but the imperialism of the United States”.⁶⁸¹

Thus, national liberation, for revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua, begins as a struggle to overthrow a national dictator and ends as a struggle against international imperialism, whose representatives in Nicaragua are seen as the national bourgeoisie. Indeed, the literature from post-revolutionary Nicaragua frames the struggle for national liberation far more in terms of a confrontation with US imperialism, particularly in the light of the US trade embargo and support for the counter-revolutionary *Contras*.⁶⁸²

Whilst the anti-imperialist language bears many similarities to that of Guevara, there is far less emphasis in the writings of revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua on the need for economic independence, a central theme in Guevara’s thinking. The criticism of the US is principally directed at its overt attempts to overthrow the Sandinista government rather than its role as the dominant force of global capitalism and the economic dependence of poor countries upon the US which that global domination created.

5.3.2 *Communist society*

The revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua and the FSLN sought more from the revolution than merely the overthrow of Somoza. As with the Cuban revolution, the final objective was a radical change of social, economic and political structures. Fernando Cardenal, reflecting upon the moment of revolutionary triumph notes that “the tyrant and the National Guard had been overthrown - but reconstruction and the transformation in depth of the whole system and its structures had yet to begin”.⁶⁸³

If radical structural change was being sought, what was the final aim of this structural change in social, economic and political terms? The bishops’ pastoral

⁶⁸¹ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 118.

⁶⁸² Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, pp. 42, 71-2, 117 and 125.

⁶⁸³ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 63.

letter of 1979 speaks positively about the potential benefits of socialism, and envisages the Nicaraguan society of the future to be “neither capitalistic, nor dependent, nor totalitarian”.⁶⁸⁴ Ironically, as Berryman notes, the Sandinista government largely avoided the term “socialism” for fear of alienating much needed allies amongst the national bourgeoisie.⁶⁸⁵ Indeed, as the Sandinista’s economic programme emerged after the revolution, it became clear that they were seeking to introduce a mixed economy rather than implementing wholesale socialist reforms.

Girardi argues that the Sandinista government wanted “the logic of the majorities” to shape economic policy. The objective was greater popular participation in economic decision making rather than popular economic ownership of the means of production. Girardi claims that the development of a new culture and consciousness in which the popular masses take economic responsibility is the essential precursor to any radical transfer of the ownership of the means of production:

The effective exercise of this power, and its economic efficiency, cannot be the result of an administrative decision, but rather it presupposes a maturing process, a building up of the people as subject. That is to say: the formation of a new attitude to the economy, a new consciousness; the questioning of an old attitude of passivity and waiting; the elaboration of a new economic culture; the liberation, on this level, of capacities for invention and creation. In a word; the people do not become economic subjects, unless they become cultural subjects.⁶⁸⁶

As we have noted, Guevara argues that the opposite is true: that a new culture and consciousness, rather than leading to the transfer of the means of production to the popular classes, is a product of such a change.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 235.

⁶⁸⁵ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, pp. 238.

⁶⁸⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 193.

⁶⁸⁷ See pp. 25-7.

The influence we have noted of Marxist theory upon the FSLN suggests that the ultimate objective of the Sandinista government may have been the introduction of a fully socialist and then communist society. However, the practical realities of power led to a far less radical programme. The programme envisaged by the Solentiname Community and Ernesto Cardenal, albeit prior to the success of the revolution, is considerably more radical and, as we have seen, rooted in their revolutionary reading of the gospels. Cardenal, clearly influenced by his experiences in Cuba, envisages “a perfect socialist society” in which “it would not be necessary to ‘flee the world’ in order to live the Gospel”.⁶⁸⁸ A member of the Solentiname community suggests that “socialist society, where everybody lives equal” is the fulfilment of the scriptural prophesy that “every gully shall be filled, every hill and hillock shall be levelled”.⁶⁸⁹ Another community member tells us that John the Baptist was preaching socialism,⁶⁹⁰ and on frequent occasions the gospel itself is equated with “perfect communism”.⁶⁹¹ According to Cardenal, “the goal of the gospel is the perfect communist society, as Marx defined it ‘from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs’”.⁶⁹² A discussion of the Beatitudes leads to a linking of the goals of the gospels and those of communism:

Julio said: “The communists have preached what the Gospel preached, that people should be equal and that they should all live as brothers and sisters. Laureano is speaking of the communism of Jesus Christ.”

And Pancho, still angry: “The fact is that not even Laureano can explain to me what communism is ...”

I [Cardenal] said to Pancho:” ... the communists try to achieve a perfect society where each one contributes his labour and receives according to his needs. Laureano finds that in the Gospels they were already teaching that. You can refuse to accept communist ideology but you do have to accept what you have here in the Gospels. And you might be satisfied with this communism of the Gospels.”

Pancho: “Excuse me, but do you mean that if we are guided by the word of God we are communists?”

⁶⁸⁸ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 276.

⁶⁸⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 103.

⁶⁹⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 107.

⁶⁹¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 178, vol. II, p.25, vol. III, pp. 57 and 297, vol. IV, p. 52.

⁶⁹² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 214.

I: “In that sense, yes, because we seek the same perfect society. And also because we are against exploitation, against capitalism.”⁶⁹³

Cardenal believes that the final era of “perfect communism” will emerge as the inevitable result of the evolutionary process which will take the world through the economic epochs described by Marx. This perspective shapes Cardenal’s understanding of certain passages from the gospels discussed by the Solentiname community. When the group discusses Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-50) Cardenal provides an explanation for why Jesus did not call upon the angels to save him:

The Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin says that the reason there is grief in the world is evolution, that God couldn’t have created a universe without suffering and without death, since he chose to make it by means of evolution. Marx has also said that humanity was forced to pass through various stages of oppression in its evolution (slavery, feudalism, capitalism). And now I see that Christ is saying the same thing. The angels could have come at the beginning, as Felipe says, but then the Scriptures wouldn’t have been fulfilled, which in today’s language is equivalent to saying that the laws of evolution and of history wouldn’t have been fulfilled.⁶⁹⁴

The future communist era is identified directly with the kingdom of God. Just as the coming communist era is the inevitable end product of human evolution, so the second coming of Jesus to establish the kingdom of God is the inevitable end product of the salvation plan of God. They are two different descriptions of the same process, one rooted in Marxist and Darwinian analysis of human history and development, the other rooted in Biblical analysis of human history and development. At times, Cardenal merges the two together in his thinking, as in the discussion of the parable of the leavened bread in Matthew 13:33:

I also said that on the eve of the French Revolution, when the first signs of popular uprising were beginning to be seen, the revolutionaries in Paris were saying: “The bread is rising” ... We can still say that the bread is rising wherever people are rising. It’s the whole universe that

⁶⁹³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 179. For the community’s identification of the eucharist with communism see vol. II, p. 157, vol. III, pp. 57, 65, vol. IV, p. 128.

⁶⁹⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 199.

is rising impelled by evolution and revolution, until it reaches its perfection, which is the kingdom of heaven, as Saint Matthew says, or the Kingdom of God, as the other evangelists say, or the kingdom of love.⁶⁹⁵

The revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua share, with Guevara, a vision of a communist society as the final “perfect” stage of human society. The reality of power led to a more pragmatic set of social and economic objectives for some, especially those who were members of the Sandinista government. Ernesto Cardenal, however, retains his vision of the kingdom of God established on earth, a kingdom of God which would bear the characteristics of a communist society. On at least one occasion he identifies this kingdom of God with Guevara’s “kingdom of freedom”:

It’s not that the kingdom of God has already been established, which is the “kingdom of freedom” that Che yearned for. That will come when there is no longer any selfishness. But one day a society without selfishness will come into existence, as all revolutionaries know who fight for it even though they are not Christians. And we Christians know it too if we believe in the gospel. Here in this parable [of the growing seed, Mark 4:26-29] we are told that, no matter what happens, that kingdom is going to be established, because the seed was sown and the earth produces all by itself.⁶⁹⁶

5.3.3 *The “New Man”*

As we have noted the term “new man” came to be used by revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua partly as a result of their contact with the FSLN.⁶⁹⁷ The term is frequently used within the Sandinista literature⁶⁹⁸ and both Guevara and Sandino are seen as key role models for the “new man”.⁶⁹⁹ The term also comes to the revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua via the Bible. The literature refers both to the Pauline concept of the “new being in Christ” and the Johannine concept of being “born again”.⁷⁰⁰ Finally, Ernesto Cardenal’s frequent use of the term,

⁶⁹⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 58. See also vol. II, pp. 61-2 and vol. IV, p. 58.

⁶⁹⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 177-8.

⁶⁹⁷ See p. 173.

⁶⁹⁸ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 96, 167 and 295.

⁶⁹⁹ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 96 and 161.

⁷⁰⁰ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 251 and Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 14-30.

inspired in turn by Guevara's usage, shaped the way it was used and understood more widely within revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua. It is, therefore, no surprise that the term "new man" is understood in a variety of different ways within the literature.

At times, the term is used in the context of inner spiritual conversion: "being born in the spirit ... is the same as making ourselves new people. That's the only way we can create a new society".⁷⁰¹ Understood in this more traditionally Christian way, the birth of the "new person" can precede and is not conditional on a change of economic structures and relations. Rather, the "new person" may become the one who advocates structural change. At other times the term refers not to religious conversion but to the generation of a new consciousness. Girardi, speaks of the "new man" in the context of a post-revolutionary development of a new consciousness, but, unlike Guevara, he does not automatically link the emergence of this new consciousness to a change in economic relations:

If the objective of the revolution is not only new structures, but also the new man, its objective is therefore also a new consciousness and a new culture, which do not automatically spring up from these new structures, but have to be an area of specific action.⁷⁰²

When we turn to Ernesto Cardenal a greater similarity with Guevara's usage can be detected. Cardenal had become familiar with Guevara's concept of the "new man" during his visit to Cuba. In his book *In Cuba* he includes various references to the term which he came across whilst in Cuba and which demonstrate Cardenal's familiarity with Guevara's concept of the "new man". He quotes a passage from the editorial of the *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Cuban government, which describes the creation of the "new man" in Cuba and which closely reflects Guevara's understanding of the process:

If we settle for the easy way and use material interests as the driving lever for socialist construction, if merchandise is kept as the economic cell, if the presence of money continues to be omnipotent within the

⁷⁰¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 17.

⁷⁰² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 131.

new society, then egotism and individualism will continue to predominate in the conscience of men and we shall not succeed in creating a new man.⁷⁰³

Cardenal also meets Guevara's former pilot, José Luis. Cardenal records José Luis' recollection of Guevara's teaching about the "new man":

The most important thing was the creation of the new man ... This new man was the man of solidarity, devoted to others. In capitalist society the people disintegrated, then scattered in all directions like fragments of a grenade. The formation of a new conscience in man was for him more important than production. A merely economic socialism, without this new conscious, did not interest him, he said. Markets, money, material interests, these were the categories of the old society. The psychological incentives for production should not be material stimuli but moral stimuli. Labour should not be sold like merchandise but offered as a gift to the community ... Che was the prototype of this new man.⁷⁰⁴

Guevara's phrase (borrowed from the poet León Felipe) "cutting cane with love and grace" is used as the title of one of the chapters in Cardenal's book *In Cuba*. Cardenal recounts how, for Guevara, one of the qualities of the "new man" under socialism would be that he or she were no longer alienated from their work but could "cut cane with love and grace".⁷⁰⁵ As Cardenal notes, for Guevara, it was the moral incentive which should motivate the worker under socialism, not the material incentive of higher wages. This moral incentive would not only motivate the "new man" in his regular, paid work, but would also prompt him or her to undertake unpaid, voluntary work out of a spirit of sacrifice and a feeling of responsibility and commitment to the community.

With socialism, said Che, people once again face work with the old joy: the joy of fulfilling a duty, of producing useful goods that will be distributed fairly among the whole population. Work, for each Cuban, will be converted into a vital necessity, as an expression of human creation.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 15.

⁷⁰⁴ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 117.

⁷⁰⁵ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 168-9.

⁷⁰⁶ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 169.

In Cuba demonstrates that Cardenal had a clear understanding of Guevara's concept of the "new man." In particular he acknowledges Guevara's view that the "new man" is a product of the economic changes effected by socialism rather than a phenomenon which could occur either prior to or separate from economic change.

The influence of Guevara's thinking about the "new man" upon Cardenal is clearly discernible in some of his comments within the Solentiname community Bible studies. In one passage Cardenal suggests that the Christian who is born again only becomes a fully "new person" when the new society of the future has emerged. Cardenal, of course, understands that society of the future to be a socialist society:

The politics of the Bible is the communion of all, with all things in common, and for that we need this new birth. We must cast off the old (the people of the old society), says Saint Paul, and clothe ourselves in the new, with no distinction between Jew and Greek, masters and slaves. Che also used to talk a lot about this new person, the one for others; the one of the society of the future. He will have very different characteristics, he says, he's already being born, but his image isn't finished yet, and it can't be. And Che himself in his life clothed himself quite a bit in this new image.⁷⁰⁷

In Cardenal's thought there is a convergence between the "new man" of Christianity and the "new man" of Guevara. "Living the gospel" and the "kingdom of God" are terms which can be directly equated with socialist or communist life and society. This society will generate people who could be described either in Pauline terms as "new beings in Christ" or in Guevara's language as the "new man" of socialism:

It seems to me that with the change in the system of production one is able to achieve living the Gospel, one is able to create the "new man".⁷⁰⁸

The qualities of the Christian "new man" and the socialist "new man" are identical, as are the ultimate goals of Christianity and communism:

⁷⁰⁷ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 25.

⁷⁰⁸ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 351.

The new man of Fidel or Che is the same as the one of the Epistle to the Colossians 3:9-11 ... The “new man” and the “new society”: that is where Christianity and communism could agree most fully.⁷⁰⁹

In the quest for the “new man” Cardenal sees Guevara as the role model both for Christians and for Marxists:

They [the Cubans] say that the best example of the “new man” is Che Guevara and they present him as a model for Cuban children. In reality, Che Guevara was a man completely freed from selfishness. In my book about Cuba I tell several anecdotes about Che, about this saintliness of Che. The new man of Cuba is the Christian new man.⁷¹⁰

5.4 Objectives

5.4.1 *Participation in the revolution*

A key objective of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua was to encourage the participation of the popular Christian masses in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Somoza regime. They sought to present the revolutionary struggle, within the Nicaraguan context, as entirely consistent with the values and goals of Christianity.

This radical new message was directed principally to Roman Catholics who had become accustomed to the politically conservative position long held by their church authorities.⁷¹¹ With the exception of a brief period directly before and after the success of the revolution, the Roman Catholic church hierarchy preached what Girardi describes as “the primacy of the spiritual”.⁷¹² Christians should be concerned, first and foremost, with matters spiritual, rather than matters earthly,

⁷⁰⁹ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, p. 251.

⁷¹⁰ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 351.

⁷¹¹ For the diverse responses of the minority Protestant churches to the revolutionary struggle, see D. Haslam, *Faith in the Struggle; The Protestant Churches in Nicaragua and their Response to the Revolution* (London: Epworth Press, 1987).

⁷¹² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 309-19.

such as politics and economics.⁷¹³ Furthermore, the church argued that Marxism, an atheist ideology, was opposed to Christianity.⁷¹⁴ The focus of Christianity should focus on unity, unlike the Marxists, whose concept of class struggle was considered to encourage division and hatred.⁷¹⁵

The opposing view of revolutionary Christians is summed up by the popular slogan of the time: “between Christianity and revolution, there is no contradiction”.⁷¹⁶ It was important for the priests who had also become members of the Sandinista government to underline this compatibility between Christianity and revolution in the face of demands by their church leaders that they should resign and return to their “pastoral duties”. Miguel d’Escoto describes his participation in the revolution as “something altogether compatible and consistent with my vocation ... a most profound religious experience”.⁷¹⁷ Fernando Cardenal justifies his continuing participation in the revolution by arguing that the “Christian character” of the revolution needs to be maintained.⁷¹⁸ He further states that he has never encountered “the least obstacle” to his faith or his morals during his involvement with the FSLN.⁷¹⁹ Indeed, his participation in the revolution was a “powerful stimulus to be a better Christian” and “to live the real values of the gospel”.⁷²⁰ The Capuchin priest Father Solano notes the common ground shared by the revolution and by Christianity:

In the Nicaraguan Revolution as I have experienced it, I can embrace that slogan [between Christianity and revolution there is no contradiction]. Many of the fundamental principles of the Revolution coincide with Gospel principles. Others not only coincide, but have been inspired by Christian principles. Those which are cited as contradictory - for example, hate and class struggle - I perceive as being social and historical facts to be evangelised rather than premises of the Nicaraguan Revolution.⁷²¹

⁷¹³ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 313.

⁷¹⁴ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 312. See also p. 306 for evidence of Pope John Paul II support for this view.

⁷¹⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 314.

⁷¹⁶ Randall, *Christians in the Revolution*, pp. 22-3.

⁷¹⁷ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 112.

⁷¹⁸ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 64.

⁷¹⁹ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 83.

⁷²⁰ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 83.

⁷²¹ Zwerling, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 26.

Cardenal argues that participation in the revolution is nothing more than an expression of practical, “efficacious” Christian love. In this way, he seeks not only to justify his personal involvement in the revolution, but also to encourage other Christians to join him. As we have already noted, the Good Samaritan parable is used to demonstrate that effective, loving action is more important to God than fulfilling religious and cultic duties. A “spiritual” love of God is meaningless, argue the revolutionary Christians, if it is not expressed practically through love of one’s neighbour. Girardi, writing during the period of the Sandinista government, describes the process by which many Christians in Nicaragua arrived at the “option” of revolutionary struggle:

The structure of this option ... appeared in the testimony of many militants. Christian love cannot exist separately from love of man. It is a love which, in order to be authentic, cannot remain as something purely spiritual, but must identify itself with the whole of human reality, feeling the needs of humanity as its own ... So, from the moment when one discovers that national and international structures of society are the roots of poverty and marginalisation, the option for the poor converts itself into a project of transformation and elimination of the social roots of poverty; love discovers that it cannot disassociate itself from the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed.⁷²²

The Solentiname community highlights the love of one’s neighbour and the building of a “community of love”⁷²³ as central to the teaching of Jesus. The “kingdom of love,” synonymous with the kingdom of God,⁷²⁴ is to be made real on earth through the social, economic and cultural changes brought about by the revolution.⁷²⁵ Commenting on the Last Judgement parable of Matthew 25, a member of the community claims that it is “an announcement of the definitive triumph of love, of justice, of the new society and the defeat of capitalism”.⁷²⁶

The emphasis on practical “efficacious” love, rooted in the real world challenged the “primacy of the spiritual” argument. It also provided a response to the

⁷²² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 339-40.

⁷²³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, p. 16.

⁷²⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 63 and 142.

⁷²⁵ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 2.

⁷²⁶ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 52.

argument that atheist communists were the “natural” enemies of Christianity because of their rejection of belief in God. Ernesto Cardenal and Girardi argue that to love one’s neighbour was to love God and do the will of God even if those who did the loving did not recognise the existence of God. Revolutionary Christians and atheistic communists thus become allies because of their common love for humanity. Indeed, Girardi (and Cardenal) claim that the love of God is subordinate to the love of neighbour within New Testament teaching:

When Jesus and the apostles want to summarise the law and the prophets in one commandment they speak of brotherly love: “Since the whole law - Saint Paul will explain - reaches its completion in this one aspect: love your neighbour as yourself” (Gal. 5:14). “He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8-10) ... This is to say that the love of God, presupposes, in order to be authentic, brotherly love. By contrast, brotherly love does not necessarily presuppose, in order to be authentic, the love of God: the blessed of the father in the final judgement, are those who have loved their brothers in an effective way, even though they may not have known Jesus.⁷²⁷

This same idea is expressed within the Solentiname group. Citing Cuba as a community acting as Jesus would wish, a group member declares: “many people [in Cuba] say they don’t believe in God. There’s no need to believe in God! The name of God doesn’t save, religion doesn’t save, what saves is love”.⁷²⁸ Ernesto Cardenal argues that “Marxist atheists”, who believe in a better society for the future, “even though they don’t believe in God, have that faith that Jesus talks about”.⁷²⁹ Sharing this perspective another member of the group claims that “to fight to change the world is to believe in Christ”.⁷³⁰

As we have noted, shortly after the Sandinistas’ victory in November 1979 the Roman Catholic church produced a document the tone of which was so radical that it was used by revolutionary Christians in their later arguments with the church authorities. Many of the document’s phrases echoed the thinking of the

⁷²⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 345-6. See also Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 101-2.

⁷²⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 80-1.

⁷²⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. II, pp. 85 and 184.

⁷³⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 27.

revolutionary Christians. The coming of an earthly kingdom of God is affirmed as central to the teaching of Jesus. The document declares that the kingdom implies liberation and justice for all and every Christian should participate in the construction of the kingdom.⁷³¹ Echoing the language of revolutionary Christianity, the document states that faith only becomes real in the context of loving action: "There is no life of faith without witness and this is given in works ... In commitment to the poor and against social injustice our faith is made real ... It is acting as Christians that we become Christians".⁷³²

However, in a matter of months, after the issue of this pastoral letter, the church authorities began to express reservations about the direction in which the revolution was moving. Berryman argues that the attitude of the church leadership corresponds closely to that of the national bourgeoisie whose interests they were consciously or unconsciously supporting. Whilst the bourgeoisie supported the overthrow of Batista, they were not happy to see the government which replaced him begin to introduce a socialist programme.⁷³³ Williams notes that, after the revolution, conservative clergy increasingly called on the hierarchy to define the church's role not as that of a participant in the revolution but rather as "the moral conscience of the revolution". In time this would develop into what Williams describes as "active opposition" on the part of the Archbishop, Cardinal Obando y Bravo.⁷³⁴

In the following year the FSLN produced its own statement on religion which affirmed the importance of Christian participation in the revolution. The document lists the names of some of the Christians who were killed during the revolutionary struggle, it notes the key role that church members and church communities played in supporting the revolution and it foresees a greater role for Christians in future revolutions:

⁷³¹ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 352.

⁷³² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 352-3.

⁷³³ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 243. See also Bradstock, *Saints and Sandinistas*, p. 34.

⁷³⁴ P. Williams, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Nicaragua and Costa Rica*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1989), pp. 65-6.

Christians have thus been an integral part of our revolutionary history to a degree without precedent in any other revolutionary movement of Latin America and, possibly, the world. This fact opens new and interesting possibilities for the participation of Christians in revolutions in other areas, not only at the stage of the struggle for power, but also afterwards, at the stage of the construction of a new society.⁷³⁵

Although the FSLN is frequently categorised as a Marxist-Leninist party, especially by its opponents, its statement on religion breaks with one of the basic tenets of orthodox Marxism. The document rejects the notion that religion is necessarily “a mechanism of alienation which serves to justify the exploitation of one class over another”.⁷³⁶

The Sandinistas affirm that our experience demonstrates that when Christians, supported by their faith, are able to respond to the needs of the people and of history, those very beliefs propel them towards revolutionary militancy. Our experience has shown us that one can be a believer and, at the same time, a revolutionary, and that there is no insoluble contradiction between the two.⁷³⁷

Again, the FSLN statement on religion breaks with the practice of other Marxist parties by declaring its willingness to accept Christians as party members. The statement refers to the three Catholic priests on the Sandinista National Assembly as evidence of its willingness to admit practising Christians.⁷³⁸ However, as Bradstock notes, it is not religious belief in itself which interests the FSLN, but rather the political commitment which may be generated by religious belief.⁷³⁹ As the statement declares, the FSLN will be “good friends” with revolutionary Christians, but not with counter-revolutionary Christians.⁷⁴⁰

The record of the Bible studies at the Solentiname community demonstrates how the gospels were being re-read as revolutionary texts which legitimised Christian

⁷³⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 289.

⁷³⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 290.

⁷³⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 290-1.

⁷³⁸ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 291.

⁷³⁹ Bradstock, *Saints and Sandinistas*, p. 58.

⁷⁴⁰ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 293.

participation in the revolutionary struggle. Jesus is seen as the one who brings in the revolution: "believing in him meant believing that God has sent him ... that the revolution he was bringing in was the will of God".⁷⁴¹ We read that "Jesus has come to bring a change, that is, a Revolution, he wasn't coming to bring peace but war".⁷⁴² The revolution is equated with building the kingdom of God on earth, as in this interpretation of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem which Ernesto Cardenal shares with the group:

Young people had burst out on to the streets of Jerusalem, when Jesus entered, shouting "Hurray for the revolution!" That means exactly the same as the Gospel sentence: "Blessed be the kingdom to come!" The word "kingdom" on the lips of Jesus meant the same as the word "revolution" now means.⁷⁴³

Ernesto Cardenal, whose input into the discussion of this theme is considerable, argues that the Bible, as a whole, is a revolutionary document:

The Bible always insists on the *new*, because the Bible is revolutionary: we hear of a new person, new skies, and a new earth, a new Jerusalem, a new canticle, a God that will make everything new, a new alliance, a new wine. All this means change, revolution, or, as we also say now, a new order.⁷⁴⁴

Guevara had predicted that if the Christians of Latin America committed themselves wholeheartedly to the revolutionary cause then that cause would become "unstoppable." Ernesto Cardenal refers directly to these words of Guevara⁷⁴⁵ and revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua as a whole appears to have shared Guevara's vision of what could be achieved.

⁷⁴¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 56.

⁷⁴² Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 262. See also, vol. I, pp. 90, 121 and 165.

⁷⁴³ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 266. See also vol. II, p. 143, vol. III, p. 129, vol. IV, pp. 31 and 255.

⁷⁴⁴ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 133.

⁷⁴⁵ Cardenal refers to Guevara's words in his introduction to H. Assman, *Practical Theology of Liberation* (London: Search Press, 1975).

5.4.2 *Armed struggle*

The figures of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were both important to the Cardenal brothers and Miguel d'Escoto in their Christian formation. Ernesto Cardenal sent a biography of Gandhi to the FSLN commander, Carlos Fonseca, in order to explain his reservations concerning his personal participation in the armed struggle.⁷⁴⁶ Fernando Cardenal, inspired by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, sought to initiate a non-violent movement in Nicaragua in support of the Sandinistas, through hunger strikes and demonstrations.⁷⁴⁷ D'Escoto states that, prior to his participation in the revolution, "the person who had most impact on my life at that time, by his way of living, his Christianity, was Martin Luther King".⁷⁴⁸

However, all three came to believe that the reality of pre-revolutionary Nicaragua left no other option than the armed struggle. D'Escoto explains that Nicaraguans were forced to take up the armed struggle "because there was no other way out of the armed violence of the repressive Somoza dictatorship".⁷⁴⁹ Ernesto Cardenal turns to Gandhi for justification of the use of violence within the Nicaragua context:

Gandhi had said that in certain circumstances his doctrine of non-violence couldn't be put into practice - in Hitler's Germany it could not have been put into practice, and it was the same in Somoza's Nicaragua.⁷⁵⁰

Sister Mary Hartman expresses the view that the increasing high levels of violent oppression, over a prolonged period, led many Christians to opt for armed struggle. Explaining that half the young people in her barrio had either been assassinated or had disappeared in the time prior to the "insurrection" she states that "the corruption and violence of the whole system made people determined that they had to do something to change it".⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 241.

⁷⁴⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 244, Zwerling, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, pp. 74-5.

⁷⁴⁸ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 109.

⁷⁴⁹ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 112.

⁷⁵⁰ Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, p. 27.

⁷⁵¹ Zwerling, *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution*, p. 142.

The Spanish priest Gaspar García Laviana joined the FSLN as a fighter, rose to the rank of commander and was killed in action in 1978. García Laviana argued that the levels of violence and repression in Nicaragua placed the Sandinista revolution in the category of a “just war”:

I have decided to join this war as the humblest soldier of the Sandinista Front, because it is a just war, a war that the Holy Gospels consider good, and which in my conscience as a Christian is good because it is a struggle against a situation that is hateful to the Lord, our Lord.⁷⁵²

We have noted the increasingly radical perspective of the Roman Catholic church authorities in the period leading up to the final victory of the revolution. This included their attitude to the use of violence. Berryman notes that, in early 1978, archbishop Obando made public his view that in situations of prolonged oppression, armed struggle was justified as a final option.⁷⁵³ Berryman also cites part of a letter written by archbishop Obando, soon after the revolution had succeeded, in which he underlines the support which he had given to the Sandinistas during the period of armed struggle:

We incited rebellion, we justified armed struggle, and the only thing we did not do was take up a rifle and kill National Guardsmen. Doing that would have meant breaking with the gospel.⁷⁵⁴

The church authorities’ recognition of the legitimacy of armed struggle, under certain conditions, went hand in hand with a recognition that a change of power through democratic elections was not viable in the Nicaraguan context, due to the people’s total lack of confidence in the electoral system.⁷⁵⁵ The FSLN and revolutionary Christianity agreed and went further, arguing that true democracy was impossible, not just in Nicaragua at that time, but for all dependent nations within a capitalist system.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵² Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 76.

⁷⁵³ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 80.

⁷⁵⁴ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 231.

⁷⁵⁵ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 83.

⁷⁵⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 409-10.

A distinction is frequently made within the revolutionary Christian literature between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor - the “institutional violence” to which the Medellín document refers. Responding to the argument employed by John Paul II, that it is morally wrong to overcome violence by means of violence, Girardi explains that revolutionary Christians reject the idea that all expressions of violence are morally indistinguishable. He contrasts “the oppressive violence of dominant groups with the liberative violence of the people” and the “violence unleashed by small terrorist groups” with the “struggle which springs up from the protest of the great masses”.⁷⁵⁷

When the Solentiname community discuss the issue of violence one of the participants makes the distinction between the “violence of people” and the “force of the establishment”:

We could ... say that violence is a kind of force that wants to change an unjust situation, while force is a kind of violence that doesn't want an unjust situation to change. The first represents the renewers, and a contemporary figure is Fidel Castro; it's constructive, positive violence, and the violence of justice, that exists only because of the existence of the force that is the violence of injustice.⁷⁵⁸

In one of the last Solentiname discussions recorded, Cardenal suggests that Jesus rejected the use of swords in the garden of Gethsemane because “at that time, with swords you couldn't establish socialism or communism. There didn't yet exist what Marxism calls the objective conditions”.⁷⁵⁹ But the death of Jesus, according to Cardenal, has heralded in the era when armed struggle now has the capacity to succeed.

And his death changed history, and from then on came all the revolutions. All the changes that humanity has had have been due to his message. That has changed the objective conditions and the subjective conditions, and now two swords can accomplish something.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁷ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 177.

⁷⁵⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, p. 224.

⁷⁵⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 185.

⁷⁶⁰ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 185.

Cardenal, thus seems to suggest that Jesus rejected the use of violence more on tactical, rather than moral, grounds.⁷⁶¹

The use of violence did not generate the same level of debate amongst revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua as it did in Argentina. There was widespread agreement, even with the Roman Catholic church authorities, for a brief period, that the conditions of pre-revolutionary Nicaragua morally justified the use of violence. Ernesto Cardenal, at times, comes closest to Guevara's position of seeing the use of violence from purely a tactical rather than a moral perspective. However, unlike Torres or Gaspar García Liviana, Cardenal believes that, as a priest, he personally should not take a life.⁷⁶²

5.4.3 Conscientisation

As with the MSTM and the CPS, the literature of Nicaraguan revolutionary Christianity reveals different perceptions of the process of conscientisation.

Bradstock refers to the influence of the base communities' Bible studies upon the process of conscientisation in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua.⁷⁶³ Clearly, here, conscientisation is understood in the Freirean sense of a pre-revolutionary process whereby the poor and oppressed become increasingly conscious of the social, economic and political causes of their poverty, often by means of Marxist social analysis. The record of the Solentiname Bible studies demonstrates how these discussions helped to raise the awareness of the poor about the realities of their lives and the possibilities for social, economic and political change. Berryman notes that the courses led by the Capuchins in the Zelaya province were designed to achieve a similar end.⁷⁶⁴ Girardi states that, not only in the Solentiname community, but also in the Rigüero community "and many other communities the reading of the Bible performed a role of conscientisation".⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, pp. 184-5.

⁷⁶² Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 241.

⁷⁶³ Bradstock, *Saints and Sandinistas*, pp. 13 and 15.

⁷⁶⁴ Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, p. 70.

⁷⁶⁵ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, pp. 328-9.

When writing about the post revolutionary period Girardi views conscientisation as a process only loosely linked to a change in economic relations. More important than an immediate change in economic relations, for Girardi, is that the Nicaraguan people should recover ownership of the “national identity”. This recovery of the national identity will be a significant factor in the development of a “new consciousness and culture, which does not spring automatically from new structures”.⁷⁶⁶

It may be that Girardi’s emphasis on the possibility of developing a new consciousness separately from a radical change in economic relationships can be linked to the economic realities of post-revolutionary Nicaragua. The Sandinista government did not introduce a Cuban-style, intensive socialist programme, but rather introduced relatively moderate economic reforms. Girardi wants to argue that the development of a radical new consciousness is not dependent on a widespread transfer of the means of production to the workers precisely because this change had not occurred at an extensive level in post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Rather, he hopes that the development of a new consciousness among the people, independent from economic change, will, nevertheless, lead to further economic change. Guevara, by contrast, writing in post-revolutionary Cuba, after radical economic change throughout the country, argues that a new consciousness is inseparably linked to that economic change and is a product of that change.⁷⁶⁷

Within the literature of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua there are times when Guevara’s understanding of the conscientisation process is echoed. In one of the Solentiname discussions the visiting poet Antidio Cabal argues that, for the majority of the common people, a new consciousness will develop in them only after the radical changes brought about by revolution. He cites Cuba as a country where this has occurred. However, Cabal gives a different reason to Guevara for why this post revolutionary change in consciousness occurs. Guevara understands it as a change which is directly linked to the new order of economic relations.

⁷⁶⁶ Girardi, *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo*, p. 131.

⁷⁶⁷ See pp. 25-7.

Cabal argues that, because of the benefits of the revolution, the poor will escape from the daily struggle for survival and thus have more time to reflect on the realities of life.⁷⁶⁸

In the section on the “new man” we have noted that it is with the thinking of Ernesto Cardenal that Nicaraguan revolutionary Christianity comes closest to Guevara’s view that the new consciousness (of the “new man”) is shaped by economic change rather than being an autonomous development or even a necessary precursor to economic change. In a passage from the Solentiname Bible Studies Cardenal places the debate about the development of a new consciousness in a religious, rather than an economic context. However, the passage makes it clear that Cardenal, like Guevara, expects a new consciousness to develop only after radical social change, rather than before it:

It’s often said also in the Church that before society is changed we must seek to change the heart of man. Christ says that first comes the kingdom and its justice, or the kingdom of justice, which is the same thing. He doesn’t say that first we must seek religious conversion and all the rest shall be given in addition. Because it is proven that religious conversions do not put an end to a system of exploitation. On the contrary, religion can be used for more exploitation.⁷⁶⁹

Within revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua there is evidence for a number of different views on the conscientisation process. For some, to develop a new consciousness is to become increasingly aware of the realities of oppression in a capitalist, pre-revolutionary setting. For others, like Girardi, in a post-revolutionary setting, a new consciousness is developed more by the people’s ownership of the national identity, recovered from the pre-revolutionary ruling oligarchy, rather than by the people’s ownership of the means of production. For others, like Cardenal, the new consciousness is forged by a change in economic relations.

⁷⁶⁸ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. III, pp. 234-5.

⁷⁶⁹ Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. I, p. 237.

5.5 Aims and objectives: Conclusion

The revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua share many of their key aims and objectives with Guevara although often demonstrating a different emphasis. National liberation was an important goal for radical Christians in Nicaragua, but they did not tie it as closely as Guevara to the struggle for economic independence. They share with Guevara the vision of the future communist society, with Ernesto Cardenal linking it closely to the coming kingdom of God. Participation in the revolution is strongly encouraged as being entirely compatible with Christian faith and giving to the revolution what Guevara predicted would be an “unstoppable” momentum. There is strong support for armed struggle, with many revolutionary Christians actively participating in the revolution. Conscientisation is highlighted as a significant factor in the process of revolutionary change but, as with the MSTM and the CPS we find different perceptions of how the conscientisation process takes place.

Finally, the term “new man” appears in the literature. Again, we have noted the different ways in which this term was understood, but in the writings of Ernesto Cardenal we have seen how he seeks to fuse together Guevara’s “new man” with Christianity’s “new being in Christ”. Cardenal’s close identification of Guevara’s “new man” with the “new being” of Christianity leaves some questions unanswered. What is the status of Christian conversion in a pre-socialist society? Does such conversion create a “new being” with a new consciousness, or is this generated only after a change in economic relations, as Guevara would argue? Are those qualities of the “new being in Christ,” which equate with the qualities of Guevara’s “new man,” such as sacrifice, “efficacious” love, generosity, selflessness only attainable for a Christian under socialist economic relations? Or, can the “new being” of Christianity be formed even under capitalist economic relations? Cardenal, quoting Merton, suggests that this might be possible for those who lead a monastic lifestyle.⁷⁷⁰ In the final chapter we shall examine how these questions might be addressed in the context of the UK in the 21st century.

⁷⁷⁰ Cardenal, *In Cuba*, pp. 163-4.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION:

GUEVARA'S "NEW MAN" AND THE "NEW CREATION IN CHRIST"

6.1 Introduction

This study has examined the relationship between Che Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America in three connected areas: (1) the influence of Guevara on Latin American revolutionary Christianity, (2) the shared aims of Guevara and revolutionary Christianity and (3) the shared objectives of Guevara and revolutionary Christianity. In this concluding chapter I will highlight the key findings from each area of study. I will leave to the end a more detailed analysis of Guevara's "new man" which stands out as one of the significant influences upon revolutionary Christianity in Latin America and, in my view, the concept which most warrants further examination and study. We have noted that the "new man" has also emerged as a shared aim of Guevara and revolutionary Christianity, although often understood in different ways. An examination of the Christian concept of the "new being" or "new creation in Christ" alongside Guevara's "new man" will help us to advance some answers to the questions raised at the end of the last chapter concerning the nature of the Christian "new being".

6.2 The influence of Guevara on revolutionary Christianity in Latin America

6.2.1 *Revolutionary icon*

The literature studied indicates that the life story of Guevara provided inspiration for many Latin American Christians to participate in revolutionary struggle. In an interview I conducted with Jose Miguez Bonino he described Guevara as a "symbol of commitment, of the offering up of one's life without holding onto power, of sacrifice without recompense". The story of Guevara's life and death resonated with the qualities of genuine Christian discipleship for many radical Latin American Christians of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the notion of the sacrificial death offered for the benefit of others. Guevara is seen to live out the Christian

paradigm of living and dying for others. He provides for radical Christianity in Latin America a source of inspiration and a source of challenge: to make their revolutionary Christianity as committed, as sacrificial and as practical as his revolutionary atheism.⁷⁷¹

We have also noted that Torres, writing before Guevara's death, never portrays Guevara as a revolutionary icon. It is Fidel Castro, rather than Guevara, who is perceived as the Latin American revolutionary leader.⁷⁷² Indeed, Torres reveals no interest in the personal writings of Guevara. It appears, therefore, that it is the death of Guevara which transforms him into an icon for revolutionary Christianity. His "sacrificial" death kindles an interest in his ideas and thinking and it is only at this point that revolutionary Christians begin to make connections between his aims and objectives and their own.

6.2.2 Legitimisation of Christian participation in revolutionary struggle

The revolutionary Christians of Latin America were engaged in an ideological struggle on two fronts. They needed to persuade the popular Christian masses that there was no intrinsic contradiction between revolution and Christianity, that to espouse socialism or communism did not require a rejection of Christian belief and the embracing of atheistic Marxism. But, at the same time, they needed to persuade the Marxists (and, to a degree, themselves) that they were legitimate allies in the revolutionary struggle. Orthodox Marxists would regard the church and religious belief in general as products of capitalist alienation. Christians were part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

The radical Christians of Latin America recognised the difficulties which this created for those of their number who wanted to participate in revolutionary struggle; they needed to justify their presence and establish their role. Perhaps surprisingly, the revolutionary Christians found they could turn to Guevara for a source of legitimisation. The testimony of Guevara was one which the Latin

⁷⁷¹ See pp. 90, 128 and 169-72.

⁷⁷² See p. 46.

American Marxist revolutionaries would find it hard to ignore. We have noted how the CPS in particular, but also the MSTM in Argentina and revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua, all employed Guevara's famous saying which claimed that the revolution in Latin America would become "unstoppable" once the Christians of the continent dared to become involved.⁷⁷³ This view of Guevara was given even stronger support when Fidel Castro later began to talk about the need for a "strategic alliance" with revolutionary Christians.⁷⁷⁴

The words of Guevara about the participation of Christians in the revolution were influential in the story of the emergence of revolutionary Christianity in Latin America because they helped to give those Christians their revolutionary credentials. Guevara's influence in this area, however, must be set in the context of other sources of legitimacy for revolutionary activity which radical Christians found within their own tradition. We have noted how the Second Vatican Council, the Medellín Conference and other Roman Catholic Church documents of the period were felt to provide official church support for a critique of oppressive social and economic structures, and a call for radical change. In particular, the rejection in *Populorum Progressio* of "revolutionary insurrection ... except in the case of evident and prolonged tyranny" was taken by many revolutionary Christians as a phrase which legitimised their participation in revolutionary struggle.⁷⁷⁵ We have also noted how the revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua, through their contextual re-reading of the Bible, found further inspiration for revolutionary participation. The phrase from John 13:13 that "no-one has greater love than this; to lay down one's life for one's friends" held special significance for Christians in the context of revolutionary struggle.⁷⁷⁶ Assmann and Bonino see in this "dying for others" the possibility of a specifically Christian contribution to revolutionary practice.⁷⁷⁷ We

⁷⁷³ See pp. 90, 127 and 190.

⁷⁷⁴ See pp. 125-6 and 169.

⁷⁷⁵ See pp. 78-82, 116-8 and 149-152.

⁷⁷⁶ See p. 153. Both the Final Judgement parable in Matthew 25 and the Good Samaritan parable are also used to justify direct, practical action on the part of Christians, see pp. 153-6.

⁷⁷⁷ H. Assmann, *Practical Theology of Liberation* (London: Search Press, 1975), p. 144: "I do not believe that [Marxism] can really answer the question of the human sense of laying down one's life for others - so deeply relevant to revolutionary practice - nor that it has really tried to see the importance of the problem. I believe that the Christian formula "love=death-life", kept on a historical and existential plane, can become the key to the series of radical conundrums that impose themselves daily on those who live entirely for others. Perhaps this is the best way to understand the specifically

have also noted how both Camilo Torres in Colombia and García Laviana in Nicaragua turn to the Christian concept of the “just war” to legitimise their participation in revolutionary armed struggle.⁷⁷⁸ Finally, Assmann, identifies a legitimate revolutionary role for Christians in the context of the deeply “Christianised” Latin American culture. This role he describes as “breaching the superstructure.” Assmann argues that many of the obstacles to revolutionary change lie at the superstructural level of society in values, ideas and attitudes shaped by conservative Christianity. Radical Christians, therefore, have an important role in the revolutionary process which is to challenge the “*petit-bourgeois* values and the tendency to acquiesce in the passivity of the populace [which] undoubtedly owe much to pseudo-Christian traditions and values both in origin and maintenance.”⁷⁷⁹ We have noted, in this context, how the revolutionary Christians of Chile embraced the role of dismantling the religious legitimacy given to capitalism by the Chilean church over many years.⁷⁸⁰

Guevara’s phrase about Christians “daring to give a revolutionary testimony” was used to conclude the report of the international “Christians for Socialism” conference in Chile in 1972,⁷⁸¹ a conference which drew together revolutionary Christians from all over Latin America. Clearly Guevara’s words were felt to give approval and support for Christian participation in the revolutionary process. However, radical Christians could also turn to resources within their own tradition to provide legitimacy for their participation in revolutionary struggle.

6.2.3 Guevara’s revolutionary theory

The following sections on aims and objectives will argue that Guevara and revolutionary Christianity in Latin America shared several of the same aims and

Christian contribution to liberation”. J. M. Bonino, *Towards a Christian Political Ethics* (London: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 112: “It is important to notice the importance that this radical motivation of love and the motif of “laying down one’s life” ... has played and continues to play in liberation language in Latin America ... Perhaps it is a testimony to the Christian presence within such movements; perhaps it is the age-old Christian tradition asserting itself - in a diffused way - even among non-Christians.”

⁷⁷⁸ See pp. 67 and 192.

⁷⁷⁹ Assmann, *Practical Theology*, p. 140.

⁷⁸⁰ See pp. 142-4.

⁷⁸¹ Secretariado, *Cristianos por el socialismo*, p. 302.

objectives. It is more difficult to establish the *direct* influence of Guevara upon the development of those aims and objectives within revolutionary Christianity. Guevara's advocacy of armed struggle as the only viable option for revolutionary change in Latin America may have encouraged some Christians to support the armed struggle, especially within the Nicaraguan context.⁷⁸² However, in Argentina and Chile, the revolutionary Christians principally turned to official church documents to justify a conditional support for armed struggle.⁷⁸³ Guevara's particular brand of Marxist-Leninism may have had some direct impact, although radical Christians encountered Marxist thought through various channels, in particular through their exposure to the European Christian/Marxist dialogue, as well as to a similar dialogue taking place in many of the universities of Latin America.⁷⁸⁴ Guevara's anti-imperialism may have had a direct influence upon revolutionary Christians in their condemnation of international imperialism but other influences are also evident, not least the popular nationalist causes emerging in many Latin American countries, such as Peronism in Argentina and the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua.⁷⁸⁵

In a less ambiguous way the influence of Guevara's ideas and theories can be identified within the context of revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua. We have noted references in the Nicaraguan literature to Guevara's emphasis on the importance of voluntary work, the pre-eminence of the "moral incentive" over the "material incentive", and his linking of the development of a new consciousness to economic relationships.⁷⁸⁶ However, all these ideas are embraced within the one key concept of the "new man". We have noted the evidence for the direct influence of Guevara on the use of this term within the writings of revolutionary Christianity, not only in Nicaragua,⁷⁸⁷ but also in Argentina⁷⁸⁸ and Chile⁷⁸⁹ and it is to this term that we shall return for a closer analysis in the concluding section of this chapter.

⁷⁸² See p. 171.

⁷⁸³ See pp. 108-9 and 117.

⁷⁸⁴ See pp. 40-42, 85-7, 119-21 and 162-4.

⁷⁸⁵ See pp. 87-9 and 146-9.

⁷⁸⁶ See pp. 170 and 181-2.

⁷⁸⁷ See pp. 170, 172-4 and 180-4.

⁷⁸⁸ See pp. 92-4.

⁷⁸⁹ See pp. 128-9.

6.3 The shared aims of Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity.

6.3.1 *The socialist/communist society*

The literature of the revolutionary Christian groups that I have studied indicates that the majority of those groups shared Guevara's aim of establishing a socialist and then communist society. "The church has a very important mission in these times in Latin America, I believe that its first responsibility is to preach communism," says Ernesto Cardenal in his preface to Hugo Assmann's *Practical Theology of Liberation*.⁷⁹⁰ Camilo Torres, despite his attempts to present a politically neutral "United Front", acknowledged that the economic changes he proposed were socialist in nature.⁷⁹¹ The very name of the Chilean "Christians for Socialism" identifies the economic order it sought. We have noted that the MSTM, likewise, foresaw a "new order" which would take the economic shape of socialism.⁷⁹²

In this pursuit of socialist society the revolutionary Christians stand united with Guevara. It is only when they describe the communist society of the future that the language of Guevara and the revolutionary Christians begins to differ. The revolutionary Christians frequently use the language of the "kingdom of God" to describe the nature of that future society.⁷⁹³ Notably in the writings of Ernesto Cardenal and his recorded conversations with the Solentiname community, the "perfect society" is equated both with communist society and also with the kingdom of God.⁷⁹⁴ Guevara also identifies the final "perfect society" with communist society but, as a Marxist atheist, on no occasion does he employ the terminology of the kingdom of God, although he does once describe that future society as the "kingdom of freedom".⁷⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Guevara and the revolutionary Christians agree that the economic relations which would exist in the "perfect society" of the future would be based on the principle of common

⁷⁹⁰ Assmann, *Practical Theology*, p. 1.

⁷⁹¹ See pp. 47 and 60.

⁷⁹² See pp. 97-100.

⁷⁹³ See pp. 49-51, 99-100 and 130-1.

⁷⁹⁴ See pp. 178-80 and 183.

⁷⁹⁵ Guevara, *Escritos esenciales*, p. 195.

ownership. It is also important to note that the term “kingdom of God” is not exclusively confined to discussion about the “perfect society” of the final, eschatological age within the writings of revolutionary Christianity. The kingdom of God will also find anticipatory expression within the present order. Torres speaks not only of finally “establishing” the kingdom but also of presently “extending” it.⁷⁹⁶ Gera of the MSTM writes of the “Kingdom [which] presses and disturbs”.⁷⁹⁷ We will further examine this anticipatory nature of the kingdom of God in our discussion of the Christian concept of the “new creation in Christ” in the final section.

6.3.2 *National liberation*

Guevara argued that the struggle for economic, social and political change was inextricably linked to the struggle for national independence. A country could never be truly free and independent if it was economically tied to another country. The poor countries of Latin America were seen by Guevara as part of the global proletariat seeking liberation from the control of the global bourgeoisie, identified as the western nations, led by the USA. The revolutionary Christians made the same connection. Camilo Torres describes Colombia as a “beggar state ... dependent on the crumbs that the Americans feel like giving”.⁷⁹⁸ His manifesto for the United Front links the common goals of “socio-economic development” with that of “national independence”.⁷⁹⁹ Within the MSTM literature the link is made between national liberation and socialist revolution. It was largely this emphasis upon the need for national independence as a prerequisite for radical structural change which led the MSTM to increasingly identify itself with the cause of Peronism.⁸⁰⁰ In Chile the CPS condemned “dependency capitalism” which, they argued, inhibited the genuine development of the country. They called for liberation from the dominant control of the USA, which was seen as the great imperialist power.⁸⁰¹ In Nicaragua, the revolutionary struggle is perceived as a struggle for national liberation; firstly

⁷⁹⁶ See p. 49.

⁷⁹⁷ See p. 99.

⁷⁹⁸ See p. 53.

⁷⁹⁹ See p. 53.

⁸⁰⁰ See pp. 87-8.

⁸⁰¹ See pp. 132-5.

liberation from a national dictator and later liberation from international imperialism.⁸⁰²

The struggle for national liberation emerges as a key aim shared by Guevara and revolutionary Christianity and is understood by both as an essential component in the transformation of a nation's social, political and economic structures.

6.3.3 *The "New Man"*

We have noted that some revolutionary Christian writers of the groups studied were aware of Guevara's "new man" concept and were influenced in their own use and understanding of the term by Guevara, most notably Ernesto Cardenal.⁸⁰³ Gutiérrez also, who identifies the creation of the "new man" as a key goal,⁸⁰⁴ demonstrates his knowledge of Guevara's use of the term.⁸⁰⁵ It is thus possible that Guevara's earlier emphasis on the aim of forging the "new man" led to a similar emphasis on this same aim within Latin American revolutionary Christianity of the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, we have noted other influences upon revolutionary Christians which could have led to the "new man" emerging as a key aim. Not only was the biblical concept of the "new being" readily available to them, but the term "new man" is also given emphasis in *Gaudium et Spes*, in the document produced by the Medellín conference and in the writings of Gutiérrez, Freire and Cámara.⁸⁰⁶ What has also emerged from our study of the term within revolutionary Christianity is that it was understood in different ways by different writers and that no systematic attempt was made to analyse Guevara's concept of the "new man" alongside the Christian concept of the "new being" or "new creation in Christ". In the concluding section of this final chapter we shall therefore seek to examine

⁸⁰² See pp. 175-6.

⁸⁰³ See pp. 181-4. See also pp. 104-5 for Rubén Dri's description of Guevara's use of the term.

⁸⁰⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 146: "It is important to keep in mind that beyond - or rather - through - the struggle against misery, injustice, and exploitation the goal is the *creation of the new man*" (Gutiérrez' italics).

⁸⁰⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 91: "The liberation of our continent means more than overcoming economic, social, and political dependence ... It is to seek the building up of *a new man*. Ernesto Che Guevara wrote, 'We revolutionaries often lack the knowledge and the intellectual audacity to face the task of the development of a new human being by methods different from the conventional ones, and the conventional ones suffer from the influence of the society which created them.'"

⁸⁰⁶ See pp. 92-4.

together both Guevara's and Christianity's use of the term in order to identify themes which might be helpful in the future development of revolutionary Christianity.

6.4 The shared objectives of Guevara and Latin American revolutionary Christianity.

6.4.1 *Revolutionary unity*

Both Guevara and many of the revolutionary Christians of Latin America recognised that the formation of a united front amongst disparate revolutionary groups and organisations was essential if the final aims of revolutionary struggle were to be achieved. A key priority for the CPS was the forging of unity between the coalition of left wing political groups within Allende's government and the revolutionary sectors within the Christian church in Chile. We have noted that they were encouraged in this task by the words of Allende himself, Castro's references to "strategic alliances" with Christians and Guevara's claim that the revolution would become "unstoppable" in Latin America once the Christians had united with revolutionary forces.⁸⁰⁷ Torres formed the "United Front" expressly to draw together a wide coalition of those opposed to the Colombian ruling elite in the hope that such a coalition would have the political force capable of effecting radical change. He wanted the United Front to draw people together around the "common points of revolution without entering into religious or party differences".⁸⁰⁸ The revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua sought to legitimise revolutionary unity between the Sandinistas and ordinary Nicaraguan Christians. We have noted several ways in which revolutionary Christianity in Nicaragua sought to forge this unity: the use of the slogan "between Christianity and revolution there is no contradiction", the emphasis upon "efficacious" love and the common love of humanity which drew Marxists and Christians together, and the re-reading of the Bible as a document which promotes Christian participation in revolutionary struggle alongside non-Christian allies.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ See pp. 118 and 125-7.

⁸⁰⁸ See pp. 56-63.

⁸⁰⁹ See pp. 184-90.

This quest for revolutionary unity resonates with the thinking of Guevara and Castro and thus emerges as an important shared objective, although we have noted that whilst Guevara recognised the importance of achieving revolutionary unity at the national level, his greater focus is upon the unity of revolutionary forces at the international level.⁸¹⁰

6.4.2 *Taking power*

The taking of political power in order to implement a revolutionary programme was a key objective both for revolutionary Christians in Latin America and for Guevara. The validity of the democratic processes in Latin American countries was questioned both by Guevara and many of the revolutionary Christian groups and this led to intense debate over the legitimacy of the use of violence in order to take power. The debate ranged most fiercely within the MSTM in Argentina. The movement itself never felt able to formally condone the use of violence but it refused to condemn those who did resort to armed struggle in the face of “institutionalised violence”.⁸¹¹ Within the Chilean context the confidence in the democratic processes of the country, the “Chilean Way”, and the success of the Allende coalition at the polls meant that the use of violence as a means of taking power was rarely debated, although we have noted, in the writings of the CPS, a recognition that, in the face of “reactionary violence,” “revolutionary violence” was justified.⁸¹² Camilo Torres moved gradually towards the position of accepting the need for armed struggle within his own Colombian context. In forming the United Front Torres initially hoped that massive, peaceful opposition to the ruling elite would lead to a non-violent transfer of power to the people. In later writings he gives support to the idea of the “just war”. Finally, he argues that armed struggle is “the only remaining way open”.⁸¹³ A similar process towards the justification of armed struggle has been noted within the Nicaraguan context. The Cardenal brothers and d’Escoto both acknowledge the influence of Gandhi and Luther King upon their early attitudes towards the use of violence.⁸¹⁴ We then note a movement,

⁸¹⁰ See pp. 27-9.

⁸¹¹ See pp. 107-10.

⁸¹² See pp. 138.

⁸¹³ See pp. 66-8.

⁸¹⁴ See p. 191.

similar to that of Torres, towards the justification of armed struggle. The distinction is again made between “institutional” or “oppressive” violence and the “liberative violence of the people”.⁸¹⁵ Ernesto Cardenal even argues that Jesus only rejected the use of violence to bring about change because the “objective conditions” necessary for successful armed struggle did not exist in his time.⁸¹⁶ We have noted that Guevara was in favour of armed struggle to achieve political power when those objective conditions necessary for its success were in place.⁸¹⁷

Guevara and revolutionary Christianity shared the common objective of taking political power as an essential prerequisite for the establishment of a socialist society. We have noted a range of attitudes towards the use of violence as a means of taking power. The Christian revolutionary groups generally viewed the use of arms as a moral issue. Guevara’s writings suggest that he viewed the use of arms, primarily, as a tactical issue.

6.4.3 *Conscientisation*

The importance of conscientisation for both Guevara and for the revolutionary Christians of Latin America has emerged as another shared objective. Within the literature of revolutionary Christianity the conscientisation process is understood in a number of different ways, but mainly as a pre-revolutionary task. The MSTM in Argentina understand conscientisation as an educational exercise or awareness-raising process in which the “false consciousness” of capitalism is replaced by a consciousness of the economic, social and political causes of poverty, thereby increasing support for revolutionary struggle amongst the masses.⁸¹⁸ The CPS in Chile relate the concept more closely to their task of overcoming the negative attitudes towards Marxism and communism instilled into to the Christian masses of Chile through years of exposure to conservative Christian thought.⁸¹⁹ Similarly Torres, writing in a pre-revolutionary context, normally regards conscientisation as an awareness raising exercise for the oppressed rural masses, a process whereby

⁸¹⁵ See p. 193.

⁸¹⁶ See pp. 193-4.

⁸¹⁷ See pp. 20-2.

⁸¹⁸ See pp. 110-2.

⁸¹⁹ See pp. 142-4.

class consciousness is developed which will lead to ever greater demands for radical structural change.⁸²⁰ The revolutionary Christians of Nicaragua, likewise, generally understand conscientisation as an educational or awareness-raising exercise which is a necessary precursor to radical change in society.⁸²¹ However, we have also noted that there are occasions when Ernesto Cardenal, like Guevara, understands the new consciousness to be a product, rather than a precursor, of radical structural change.⁸²²

Guevara links the process of conscientisation closely with the emergence of the “new man” after the revolution.⁸²³ The new consciousness emerges in the “new man” after the change in relationship to the means of production and, amongst the vanguard, during the course of revolutionary struggle itself. However, Guevara’s experience in post-revolutionary Cuba made him aware that, even after a change in economic relations, a considerable amount of educational work was needed to enable people to break away from the former, now redundant, consciousness of capitalism.⁸²⁴ We shall look in more detail at this post-revolutionary educational work in the final section as we examine Guevara’s hopes for the emergence of the “new man” under communism.

Marcuse identifies forces working against the emergence of a new or “true” consciousness. He argues that technological progress, and the promise of further progress which technology offers, tends to pacify calls for radical socio-economic change. The promised future benefits of technology generate an overriding desire to preserve the status quo which thus unites the immediate interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Society’s ability both to “deliver the goods” through technological advance and to meet artificially created “needs” suppresses the emergence of “true consciousness.”⁸²⁵ Marcuse acknowledges that his analysis

⁸²⁰ See pp. 69-71.

⁸²¹ See pp. 194-5.

⁸²² See p. 196.

⁸²³ See pp. 15-16 and 25-7.

⁸²⁴ See p. 26.

⁸²⁵ H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Abacus, 1972), p. 12: “The distinction between true and false consciousness, real and immediate interest, is still meaningful. But this distinction itself must be validated. Men must come to see it and find their way from false to true consciousness, from their immediate to their real interest. They can do so only if they live in need of changing their way of life

relates most directly to highly industrialised societies but argues that the same “tendencies” may ultimately prevail in less industrial societies too. However, Guevara and the revolutionary Christians of Latin America were still writing from the context of a largely pre-industrial society in the 1960s and 1970s. Only a small proportion of Latin American society at the time could have hoped to benefit directly from technological progress. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the process which Marcuse describes would have significantly influenced the development of the popular consciousness at the time. Certainly neither Guevara, nor revolutionary Christianity recognise in their writings the forces which Marcuse describes and which he believes would suppress the emergence of a new consciousness.

The process of conscientisation was important both for Guevara and for revolutionary Christianity in Latin America. However, the evidence suggests that the term was generally understood and employed in different ways. Guevara follows Marx’s view that “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life”⁸²⁶ and therefore sees conscientisation as a process which follows radical structural change. Within revolutionary Christianity conscientisation is more often understood in the Freirean sense of social, political and economic awareness-raising prior to revolutionary change.

6.5 Guevara’s “new man” and the “new creation in Christ”

In this final section we will analyse the process which, according to Guevara, will lead to the emergence of the “new man” and set this alongside the concept of the “new being” or “new creation in Christ” found within the New Testament. We will also summarise the key qualities and characteristics of both Guevara’s “new man” and the “new creation in Christ” in order to establish whether we have two entirely separate figures or whether the common ground between the two figures might lead to creative possibilities for the development of revolutionary Christianity.

... It is precisely this need which the established society manages to repress to the degree to which it is capable of “delivering the goods” on an increasingly large scale, and using the scientific conquest of nature for the scientific conquest of man.”

⁸²⁶ McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 159.

6.5.1 Guevara's "new man"

A number a key features have emerged in our study of Guevara's "new man":

i) The development of the "new man" is conditional upon a change in economic relationships. Guevara understands the transformation which leads to the creation of the "new man" not as a subjective, isolated, internal process which takes place within the individual irrespective of external factors, but rather as one which is inextricably linked to the economic relationships in which the individual is set. He argues that the process in which the "new man" is forged "advances parallel to the development of new economic forms."⁸²⁷ Only after the revolution is it possible to "embark upon the task of creating the new conscience because we are witnessing new types of production relationships."⁸²⁸ Guevara accepts Marx's theory that "man's thinking is generated by the environment in which he lives, and that this environment is determined by production relationships".⁸²⁹ However, it is important to note that although the emergence of the "new man" is not possible, for Guevara, under capitalism because the existing economic relations do not allow it, nevertheless, in a post-revolutionary, socialist setting, "the change in consciousness does not come about automatically."⁸³⁰ Whilst the existence of socialist (and finally communist) production relations is an essential precondition for the emergence of the "new man," it does not follow, for Guevara, that, once those production relations are in place, the "new man" will inevitably emerge in a purely deterministic manner. Rather, as the next section makes clear, he identifies a need for education amongst the population at large.

ii) The appearance of the "new man" requires a post-revolutionary educational process. Only through such a process will the masses be able to gradually shake off the "old mentality" of capitalism and develop the new mentality or consciousness of the "new man."⁸³¹

⁸²⁷ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 392.

⁸²⁸ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 302.

⁸²⁹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 245.

⁸³⁰ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 394.

⁸³¹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 215.

Guevara expresses frustration that “the means of production have passed into the power of the people, but the people keep acting like that same people who yesterday moaned at the boss and loathed their work.”⁸³² Even when the correct economic conditions are in place for the creation of the “new man,” the former mindset, shaped under capitalism, has its hold on the people. For this reason Guevara understands that a gradual, post-revolutionary, awareness raising process will be required in order that, finally, the worker no longer sees his work as “an unfortunate necessity,”⁸³³ but rather a “pleasing social duty.”⁸³⁴ Guevara speaks of the “transformations in the minds of the people” which will ultimately lead to a wholly new motivation for work based on a sense of moral duty towards the wider society rather than the individualistic desire for material gain which still lingers on because of the influence of the “old society,” built on capitalist production relations:⁸³⁵

Material incentives will not play a part in the new society being created; they will die out as we advance. We must establish the conditions under which this type of motivation that is operative today will increasingly lose its importance and be replaced by non-material incentives such as the sense of duty and the new revolutionary way of thinking.⁸³⁶

Guevara partly blames the enduring presence of the “old mentality” on the fact that some elements of capitalism still remain intact in post-revolutionary Cuba. He argues that until all elements of capitalism are fully eradicated from society they will continue to have an influence upon the consciousness of the people.⁸³⁷

However, as we have noted, even when the economic transition to socialism is

⁸³² Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 231.

⁸³³ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 215.

⁸³⁴ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 155.

⁸³⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 242: “Material incentives are made necessary by our having emerged from a society that thought only of material incentives, and we are creating a new society on the foundation of that old society through a series of transformations in the minds of the people of that old society. On the other hand we still do not have enough to give each individual what he needs. For these reasons, interest in material things will be with us for a time during the process of creating a socialist society.”

⁸³⁶ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 243.

⁸³⁷ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 390: “The commodity is the economic cell of capitalist society: as long as it exists, its effects will make themselves felt in the organisation of production and therefore in man’s consciousness.”

complete Guevara recognises that the emergence of the “new man” is not automatic. An educational process is still necessary which will lead to a progressive transformation of the consciousness.

The new consciousness appropriate to the new socialist society would be forged not only through the direct educational system of the state in schools and colleges⁸³⁸ but also through what Guevara describes as “indirect education.”⁸³⁹ The Party⁸⁴⁰ was to take a key role in this indirect educational process. In particular Guevara believed that the personal example of Party members would create a sense of “moral compulsion”⁸⁴¹ in others. The Party is to be the “living example.” The cadres of the Party are to be “full professors of assiduity and sacrifice” who, through their actions will raise the consciousness of the masses.⁸⁴² In his speech “On Party Militancy” Guevara highlights two fundamental roles for the Party. One is the pursuit of increased production in the workplace, the other is “intensification of awareness.”⁸⁴³ The Party cadres “must work on people’s way of thinking by hammering away at their minds and demonstrating what we are capable of doing.”⁸⁴⁴

However, it is participation in voluntary work which Guevara sees as the key educational tool in shaping a new consciousness because such work drives home, in the mind of the worker, the new moral incentive for work (appropriate for the new socialist economic relationships). This incentive will gradually replace the old

⁸³⁸ Bonachea and Valdés, *Che: Selected Work*, p. 160: “Direct education acquires much greater importance. Explanations are convincing because they are true; there is no need for subterfuge. It is carried out through the state’s educational apparatus in the form of general, technical, and ideological culture ... Education takes among the masses, and the new attitude that is patronised becomes a habit; the masses incorporate the attitude as their own and exert pressure on those who still have not become educated”.

⁸³⁹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 392.

⁸⁴⁰ The pre-revolutionary Popular Socialist Party was replaced by the United Party of the Socialist revolution in 1962 which remained until 1965 when the new Cuban Communist Party came into being.

⁸⁴¹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 246.

⁸⁴² Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 397. See also “The Cadre, Backbone of the Revolution,” in Gerassi, *Venceremos*, pp. 204-8, for Guevara’s views on the educational role which party cadres should adopt.

⁸⁴³ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 245.

⁸⁴⁴ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 247. See also Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 316: “It remains for us to stress the educational role the party must play in the transformation of the work centre into the collective expression of the aspirations of the workers and their concerns - into the place where their desire to serve society is forged.”

material incentive of capitalism. Voluntary work was important because Guevara believed it helped to break the link between work and financial reward. Following Marx he argued that “man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity.”⁸⁴⁵ In the socialist and communist society of the future no longer would work be done for financial reward because all the needs of the worker would be provided by the communist society itself. Work would thus cease to act as a source of alienation for the worker but rather become “man’s greatest dignity ... a social duty as well as a true human pleasure and the maximum act of creation.”⁸⁴⁶ Voluntary work was, therefore, “a creative school of conscience.”⁸⁴⁷ Although the productive value of voluntary work was of some importance to the economy, Guevara insisted that its greatest significance was in its power to shape the consciousness; its “educational value” as he describes it.⁸⁴⁸

Thus we see that whilst the development of a new consciousness and the “new man” is made *viable* by the new post-revolutionary production relations, it is made *real* by means of a wide-ranging educational process involving not just the tools of formal education but also the work of the Party, the personal example of Party cadres and, most notably, participation in voluntary work.

iii) The “new man” will possess qualities appropriate to the new economic relationships. Guevara looks forward to not only “a transformation in the minds of the people” but also a new set of qualities and characteristics which would mark out the “new man” from others. A brief summary of these distinguishing qualities will enable us to set them alongside the qualities of the “new creation in Christ” as we seek to establish the degree to which the two concepts share common ground and have the potential to impact upon each other.

⁸⁴⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 394.

⁸⁴⁶ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 214.

⁸⁴⁷ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 342. See also Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 345: “Our greatest necessity is to increase voluntary work for its educational value.”

⁸⁴⁸ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 345. See also p. 337.

Members of the revolutionary vanguard, who seek to prefigure the “new man” of the future, are to be “guided by strong feelings of love” and “they must struggle every day so that their love of living humanity is transformed into concrete deeds.”⁸⁴⁹ Love is to be the motivation of the “new man” at the workplace. It was already possible, Guevara claimed, to go into the Cuban cane fields and see men and women “cutting cane with love and grace.”⁸⁵⁰ In the future Guevara foresees that he and other “new men” would begin to “forget a little of ourselves, forget our own circle and rather work to offer more to others.”⁸⁵¹ The “new man” would thus cease to be motivated by selfishness and self interest and instead develop a strong sense of concern for others and responsibility for the wider community.⁸⁵² Injustice done to any other person would be felt like a strike on one’s own face.⁸⁵³ A new spirit of sacrifice would emerge within the “new man” enabling him or her to subsume their individual needs to needs of the wider community. Guevara uses the rather impersonal image of the cog in the machine to describe the sacrificial function which each person must play for the sake of the wider community.⁸⁵⁴ Indeed, this attitude of self-sacrifice was to become so natural in a Party cadre that it would no longer be felt as unusual.⁸⁵⁵ Originally, this new sacrificial attitude was to be worked out in the life of the guerrilla fighter,⁸⁵⁶ but in the period after the armed struggle this same sacrificial spirit was to be demonstrated in the workplace. Guevara describes the workplace as the new “trench” where revolutionary struggle was to continue.⁸⁵⁷ This attitude of sacrifice in the workplace would help to accelerate the transition to communism.⁸⁵⁸ In addition, those who study are to

⁸⁴⁹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 398.

⁸⁵⁰ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 337.

⁸⁵¹ Martí, *Pensamiento pedagógico*, p. 16.

⁸⁵² Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 119. See also Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 115: “In the future individualism ought to be the efficient utilisation of the whole individual for the absolute benefit of a collectivity.”

⁸⁵³ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 204 and vol. II, p. 218.

⁸⁵⁴ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 105: “We have got to try to consider ourselves, the individuals, the least important, the least important cogs in the machinery, but with the requirement that each cog functions well ... you have got to be ready to sacrifice any individual benefit for the common good.”

⁸⁵⁵ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 243: “The new party member must also be a man who feels the new truths in his bones and feels naturally that what is a sacrifice for ordinary people is, for him, simply a daily occurrence - something that must be done and is the natural thing to do.”

⁸⁵⁶ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 388. See also *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 61 and 274,

⁸⁵⁷ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 124 and 223-4.

⁸⁵⁸ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 231: “We must rapidly change the consciousness so that the new character of work is understood, the new character of sacrifice ... We must create this consciousness which will allow us to accelerate enormously our capacity to move towards communism.”

embrace this spirit of sacrifice in their commitment to their study.⁸⁵⁹ Finally, the sacrificial spirit is embodied in those who commit themselves to voluntary work.⁸⁶⁰

In summary Guevara's "new man" does not appear by means of an isolated, inner transformation of the person unconnected to external factors. Rather, the emergence of the "new man" is dependent on a change in economic relationships. In this sense the "new man" cannot appear under capitalism. But even under socialism the "new man" does not appear automatically. An educational process is required which will allow the new consciousness, appropriate to the new economic context, to develop. This new consciousness generates a new set of attitudes and personal qualities. The "new man" is thus guided by feelings of love, selflessness, solidarity and sacrifice. These new qualities resonate with the new economic relations based on co-operation in a way that would have been impossible under capitalist economic relations.

6.5.2 "The new creation in Christ"

We have noted the frequent references to the "new man" within the writings of the revolutionary Christians we have studied. However, we have found no evidence of a detailed analysis of the Christian use of the term in the light of Guevara's usage. Dri of the MSTM and Ernesto Cardenal in Nicaragua make the connection between Christianity's and Guevara's use of the term but only with passing references.⁸⁶¹ A brief overview of the Christian concept of the "new creation in Christ" will help us to identify where links might be made with Guevara's "new man" and whether any correspondence in usage points to possible applications for contemporary revolutionary Christianity.

The key passages referring to the "new creation" or the "new self" are found in the

⁸⁵⁹ Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 210: "You, my friends [Young communists], must be ... the first to make the sacrifices the Revolution demands, no matter what these sacrifices entail; the first in study; the first in the defence of the nation."

⁸⁶⁰ Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, pp. 223-4.

⁸⁶¹ See pp. 104-5 and 183-4.

Pauline literature: 2 Corinthians 5:17,⁸⁶² Galatians 6:15,⁸⁶³ Ephesians 2:15⁸⁶⁴ and 4:22-24⁸⁶⁵ and Colossians 3:9-10.⁸⁶⁶ A number of common features emerge from these passages some of which appear to coincide with features of Guevara's "new man":

i) **The appearance of the "new creation in Christ" is conditional upon Christ's redemptive work.** We have noted that Guevara's "new man" is not purely the result of a subjective transformation of the individual detached from external factors. The same can be said for the "new creation" of the Pauline literature. The "new creation" is not, first and foremost, to be identified with the individual but rather with that "new creation" brought into existence through Jesus' death and resurrection. The individual who "puts on" Christ or is "in Christ" may share in this "new creation" which is both inaugurated by Christ and embodied in Christ. It follows, as Ridderbos argues, that the transformation which takes place in the individual is conditional upon the prior action of Christ:

This transition has been effected in their life because they have been incorporated into the body of Christ by baptism, and they may thus apply to themselves in faith that which has taken place in Christ. They have put off the old man, as crucified and buried in Christ (Col. 2:11), and have put on the new man, the new creation of God that has come to light in Christ's resurrection.⁸⁶⁷

The determining external factor and precondition for the emergence of Guevara's "new man" is the revolution which transforms economic relationships; for the "new

⁸⁶² "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation." (Translations are from the New Revised Standard Version.)

⁸⁶³ "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything."

⁸⁶⁴ "He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two."

⁸⁶⁵ "You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to cloth yourselves with the new self."

⁸⁶⁶ "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."

⁸⁶⁷ H. Ridderbos, *Paul, An Outline of his Theology* (London: SPCK, 1977), pp. 63-4. See also J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: A. and C. Black, 1993), p. 343 (commenting on Galatians 6:15): "With Christ's death the exclusive rule of sin and death has already been broken; with Christ's resurrection the new age/creation has already begun ... In so far as believers are identified with Christ in his death ... and have begun to share in the last Adam ... they have begun to share in that new creation."

being” of Christianity the essential factor is the death and resurrection of Christ which inaugurates the new creation and the new age.

ii) The “new creation in Christ” has a corporate dimension. The corporate character of the Christian “new being” is indicated through his or her common identification with Christ and Christ’s work of inaugurating the “new creation” through his death and resurrection. Only when a person is “in Christ” does the “new creation” manifest itself within them. As Muddiman emphasises, with reference to Ephesians 4:22-3, “it is not that each individual has an “old person” inside them which is to be replaced by his or her new character as a Christian, but that the old shared human nature ... is to be laid aside in favour of the corporate new humanity, Christ.”⁸⁶⁸

The corporate nature of the “new creation in Christ” overcomes the previous divisions between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, slave and free (Gal. 6:15, Eph. 2:15-16, Col. 3:10-11). In Ephesians the two former “humanities” (of the circumcised and uncircumcised) are said to become one new humanity “in one body” - that of Christ.

This concept of unity “in one body” is further developed in Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. At times in these passages, Paul uses the image of the body with reference to Christ; Christians are “one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5) or are “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27). Those who are “in Christ”, despite their differences, share a common identity. They also become one as the “body of Christ,” which in 1

⁸⁶⁸ J. Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 219. Guevara does not speak of the “old shared human nature” but rather the old shared “mentality” generated by the period of capitalism which is to be laid aside in favour of the “new man” of socialism. For example, Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 392: “We can see the new man begin to emerge in this period of building socialism. His image is as yet unfinished. In fact it will never be finished, since the process advances parallel to the development of new economic forms.”

Corinthians 12 is identified with the church (vv. 27-8).⁸⁶⁹ In this sense the emphasis is more on their unity with Christ rather than their unity with each other.⁸⁷⁰

However, both in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Paul also uses the image of the body, not in relation to Christ's body, but simply as a metaphor for the harmonious working of Christians within the church who use their individual gifts and ministries for the common good of the whole community (Rom. 12:4 and 1 Cor. 12:12). In this further sense, therefore, the "new being in Christ" does not exist as an isolated, subjective individual but rather participates in the mutual building up of the wider Christian community, employing their particular individual gifts to create a greater corporate whole.

This same emphasis on individuals bringing together their distinctive gifts or functions for the good of the wider community is also found within Guevara's writings. However, as we have noted he prefers the more impersonal image of the cog in the machine rather than the member of the body.⁸⁷¹ The "new man" is "happy to feel himself a cog in the wheel, a cog which has its own characteristics and is necessary although not indispensable."⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ This unity of the "body of Christ" or the one "body in Christ" is an essential feature of the life of the "new being." As Barrett puts it, commenting on Romans 12:5, "to fall out of unity, out of the one body, is to fall back into the old world of sin and death." See C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: A. and C. Black, 1991), p. 218.

⁸⁷⁰ Ridderbos, *Paul, An Outline*, p. 375: "The designation of the church as the body of Christ does not intend in the first place to qualify its mutual unity and diversity, but to denote its unity in and with Christ."

⁸⁷¹ See p. 215, note 854.

⁸⁷² Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 337. Guevara was very conscious of the criticism that under communism the distinctiveness of each individual's contribution is lost. He argued that "the revolution does not, as some claim, standardise the collective will and the collective initiative. On the contrary, it liberates man's individual talent," Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 114. Guevara defines, "individualism" as "the efficient utilisation of the whole individual for the absolute benefit of a collectivity," Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 114. Indeed, one of Guevara's most famous essays, "Man and Socialism in Cuba," is an attempt to underline the importance of each individual in the building up of a collective future. In the essay he speaks of a "solid bulk of individualities moving toward a common aim," Gerassi, *Venceremos*, p. 399.

Guevara's very focus on the "new man" highlights the importance of the individual for him. McLellan identifies in Cuban communism "a greater emphasis on consciousness and the subjective element than any other communist movement." D. McLellan, *Marxism After Marx* (London: MacMillan Press, 1980), p. 243.

In one other respect it is possible to identify a link with Paul's use of the image of the body in relation to the Christian community and Guevara's own language about the importance of solidarity. Paul notes that, in the body, if one member suffers, then all the other members of the body experience the same suffering (1 Cor. 12:26). On many occasions Guevara, quoting the words of the Cuban national hero, José Martí, declares that every true revolutionary "should feel on his own cheek the blow struck on the cheek of another man."⁸⁷³ Through a common use of the body metaphor both Paul and Guevara emphasise the importance of the individual identifying with the suffering of the wider community.

iii) The "new creation in Christ" appears through a process of renewal. Both the Pauline "new creation" and Guevara's "new man" emerge in a gradual, progressive way rather than automatically as the final, finished product as soon as the conditions for their appearance are in place (for Guevara the revolution, for Paul the death and resurrection of Jesus). We have noted that Guevara envisages a post-revolutionary educational process which will gradually shake off the "old mentality" of capitalism so that the "new man" might emerge. The Pauline literature concerning the "new creation" or the "new self" describes a process of renewal. Colossians 3:10-11, in particular, speaks of the "new self" which is "being renewed."⁸⁷⁴ Romans 12:2 describes a process of transformation which involves the "renewing of your minds" (cf. Guevara's "transformations of the mind"⁸⁷⁵), rather than an immediate and automatic change from the old self/age to the new self/age. Ephesians 4:23 also refers to a renewal "in the spirit of your minds." The Christian is to "put away" or "lay on one side" the former way of life and "clothe" him or herself "with the new self," but this is a renewal process which has not yet reached its final conclusion in the individual.⁸⁷⁶ Thus it is possible to draw a distinction

⁸⁷³ For example Guevara, *Obras completas*, vol. I, p. 204 and vol. II, p. 82.

⁸⁷⁴ Yates, with reference to Colossians 3:10 and following Moule argues that this verse describes a process in which "the new humanity, already existing in Christ, is progressively actualised in the Christian Church, until this process culminates in full recognition, in which one is *brought to know God* (Yates' italics)." R. Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Epworth Press, 1993), p. 76.

⁸⁷⁵ See p. 212.

⁸⁷⁶ Muddiman, commenting on Ephesians 4:22-4, notes the continuing tension between the old and the new nature: "It is not possible yet for Christians to disrobe themselves entirely of their old nature inherited from Adam, for they are still inevitably subject to mortality ... ; but they can consciously

between the decisive and immediately transformative action of Christ on the cross, through which the dominion of the old age was ended and the new age or new creation begun, and the gradual transformation of the individual Christian which follows on from that fact. This transformation of the individual cannot be achieved without the earlier action of Christ but it does not take place as an automatic consequence. The “new creation” is progressively made real in the individual according to the degree to which he or she “puts on” Christ.

Guevara and the Pauline writings both recognise a decisive and determinative event on which the emergence of the “new being” depends. As we have already noted, for Guevara that decisive event is the transformation of economic relationships. Within the Pauline writings it is the redemptive, transformative action of Christ in his death and resurrection. But both recognise that the decisive event does not automatically produce a transformation in the individual. Guevara foresees the need for an educational process which will lead to raised consciousness. The Pauline writings call for a “renewing of the mind” within the individual Christian who has “put on” Christ.

iv) The “new creation” possesses qualities appropriate to one who is “in Christ.” Whilst the determinative factors which lead to the emergence of the “new man” or “new being” are different in Guevara and in the Pauline writings, nevertheless, the same qualities which we have noted as typical of Guevara’s “new man” also emerge as qualities of the one who has “put on” Christ. Love,⁸⁷⁷ unselfishness,⁸⁷⁸ a sacrificial spirit (identifying with the sacrifice of Christ⁸⁷⁹), a concern for the interests and the suffering of others⁸⁸⁰ and a sense of solidarity with others (developed through the image of the “one body”⁸⁸¹) are all qualities which the “new being in Christ” shares with Guevara’s “new man.” However, in the Pauline writings, these qualities are almost always to be worked out and expressed

resolve to “lay it on one side” and reject the influence that it has over their behaviour.” Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 218.

⁸⁷⁷ For example, 1 Cor. 13, Rom. 12:9 and Col. 3:14.

⁸⁷⁸ For example Gal. 5:13 and 24-6, Phil. 2:3.

⁸⁷⁹ For example Eph. 5:2 and Rom. 12:1.

⁸⁸⁰ For example 1 Cor. 12:26, 2 Cor. 1:7 and Col. 3:12 (“compassion”).

⁸⁸¹ Rom. 12: 4-6 and 1 Cor. 12:12-27. See also Phil. 2:4.

within the inner life of the church community. The qualities of the “new being” will help to build up the life of the Christian community rather than make a significant impact upon the wider social and economic relationships in which those Christians were set. For Guevara, however, the qualities of the “new man” are those human qualities which resonate best within the wider social and economic relationships of the new socialist society.

v) Transformation into the “new creation in Christ” includes a transformation of social and economic relationships. At first sight, the Pauline “new being in Christ” does not appear to radically challenge or question the social and economic relationships in which he or she is set. In fact, we actually see a call not to undermine any of those existing social relationships. Wives are to remain subject to their husbands,⁸⁸² slaves are to obey their masters⁸⁸³ and the governing authorities are to be respected.⁸⁸⁴ However, in contrast, Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 suggest a breaking down of the divisions between slave and free, male and female, etc., for those who have “clothed themselves in Christ.” Rowland argues that this ambiguity about attitudes towards social and economic relationships is caused by the tension between Paul’s earlier “eschatological enthusiasm” and his later realism about the need for the Christian community to continue operating within the present order. Rowland sees in Paul’s writings a “struggle between idealism and pragmatism, between the utopian spirit and the need for caution in attempting to realise the eschatological glory in the present.”⁸⁸⁵ Indeed, Paul’s emphasis in his letters on accepting and respecting the existing social order might be explained as a reaction to the questioning of the validity of those social relationships which his own earlier teaching had caused. It seems that Paul gradually moved away from his view that the present social and economic relationships of the “new being in Christ” would be determined by the norms and principles of the new age and increasingly

⁸⁸² Eph. 5:22-24 and Col. 3:18.

⁸⁸³ Eph. 6:5-7, 1 Cor. 7:24 and Col. 3:22-4.

⁸⁸⁴ Rom. 13:1-7.

⁸⁸⁵ C. Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 282.

towards a view that the “new being” would have to accommodate him or herself within the existing relationships of the old order.⁸⁸⁶

Despite what appears to have been an increasing accommodation with the present social and economic order within the Pauline churches, Rowland notes that “there was a significant strand within early Christian practice which reaffirmed the importance of an alternative ideal.”⁸⁸⁷ This was the practice of the community of goods (Acts 2:44-5, Acts 4:32-5:11). Although this practice appears to have been more characteristic of the early Palestinian churches,⁸⁸⁸ there is evidence of its continuing use as late as the third century.⁸⁸⁹ Hoornaert notes that support for the practice is to be found both in the Didache⁸⁹⁰ and in the writings of Justin.⁸⁹¹ Miranda also surveys the negative attitudes to private possessions expressed in the later writings of John Chrysostom,⁸⁹² Jerome⁸⁹³ and Ambrose.⁸⁹⁴ Indeed, it can be argued that the Christian ideal of the community of goods has been sustained within the monastic tradition until the present day.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸⁶ Rowland, *Christian Origins*, p. 278: “The fact is that the church began to come to terms with the old order and found itself playing down those aspects of its message, which might seem to threaten the world as it was.”

⁸⁸⁷ Rowland, *Christian Origins*, p. 274.

⁸⁸⁸ Hoornaert argues that abandoning one’s wealth was a pre-condition for becoming a member of the Christian church in Jerusalem. See E. Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1986), p. 221. See also R. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987). Cassidy argues that the evidence from Acts suggests that “a ‘community of goods’ under the auspices of the apostles was widespread within the Jerusalem community” (p. 27).

⁸⁸⁹ Rowland notes Tertullian’s description of the practice. See Rowland, *Christian Origins*, p. 274.

⁸⁹⁰ “The good disciple ... places all things in common with his brother, since if we enter into communion in immortal goods, so much the more do we in respect of goods that are perishable” (Didache 5:2), quoted in Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, p. 222.

⁸⁹¹ “Before all else we sought money and goods of all kinds. Today we share what we have and we distribute it to the poor.” Quoted in Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, p. 223.

⁸⁹² “Tell me, how is it that you are rich? From whom did you receive your wealth? And he, whom did he receive it from? ... By climbing this genealogical tree you are able to show the justice of this possession? Of course you cannot; rather *its beginning and root have necessarily come out of injustice*” (Miranda’s italics). Quoted in J. Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1977), p.15.

⁸⁹³ “*All riches come from injustice* (Miranda’s italics). Unless one has lost, another cannot find. Therefore I believe the popular proverb is very true: ‘the rich person is either an unjust person or the heir of one.’” Quoted in Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p.15.

⁸⁹⁴ “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. *You are handing over to him what is his* (Miranda’s italics).” Quoted in Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p.16.

⁸⁹⁵ “From its very beginning in the deserts of Egypt and the solitary protests of Christian ascetics against contemporary society to the rule of saint Benedict in the sixth century, we find the same Christian idealism which flourished in the first decades of the Christian movement in Palestine.” Rowland, *Christian Origins*, p. 275.

Evidence for the practice of the community of goods suggests that, for some early Christian communities, becoming a “new being in Christ” implied a radical transformation of all one’s relationships. The qualities manifested in the “new being” such as love, sacrifice and solidarity were to find relevant expression not only within the “inner” life of the church, in its meetings and worship etc., which is where the Pauline writings place their greatest emphasis, but also in the “outer” life of those Christians, particularly in the way they related to each other economically. It is clear that some Christian communities felt the need for their economic lives to reflect their “new life in Christ.” We have noted that the moral character and qualities of Guevara’s “new man” were understood to resonate with his or her new economic setting. It appears that those Christian communities who practised the community of goods were seeking to establish that same resonance between their Christian faith and their economic setting. Being “one body in Christ” did not merely to refer to their personal and spiritual solidarity with fellow Christians but also to their economic relationships to one another. The “new creation” or the “new age,” inaugurated by Christ through his death and resurrection, was made real in the present moment not only within the individual who was a “new being in Christ” but also within the shared spiritual, social and economic life of those individuals. It was the community of goods which, on the economic level, seemed to correspond most closely with the new pattern of life modelled on the values and norms of the new eschatological age, in which individual Christians now had a share by virtue of being “in Christ”. Thus, within those early Christian communities predominantly influenced by the Palestinian church model, the eschatological age (the “new creation”) is anticipated and experienced in a variety of ways. Firstly, it is experienced in the life of the individual in whom the “new creation” is made real through his or her identification with Christ. Secondly, it is experienced in the fellowship and worship of the Christian community, perhaps most notably in the sharing of bread and wine in the Eucharist. Rowland highlights the “eschatological dimension of the eucharistic meal.” He notes how the eschatological expectations inherent within the celebration of the Jewish Passover are carried over into early eucharistic prayers, particularly in the eucharistic liturgy recorded in the

Didache.⁸⁹⁶ Thirdly, the new age is anticipated through the practice of the community of goods. The “koinonia” of God’s coming kingdom is made real not only in the sharing of bread and wine, but also in the sharing of material possessions.⁸⁹⁷ In Acts 4:32-4 the practice is directly linked with “giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,” which in turn, as Rowland emphasises, was understood by the early Christians as a fundamental “firstfruit” of the new age.⁸⁹⁸

However, it was the Pauline tradition which set the dominant pattern for later Christianity’s more conservative attitude towards social and economic relationships.⁸⁹⁹ The integration of every element of life - personal, social and economic - into Christian discipleship was increasingly lost, as the focus turned more to the inner, spiritual journey of the individual. As Bonino puts it:

The ardent expectation of the total transformation of the world and the advent of the Kingdom of God was soon replaced in Christianity by a spiritualised and individualistic hope for immortal, celestial life.⁹⁰⁰

Bonino goes on to describe the development of the concept of the “two worlds” or the “two kingdoms” - “this present, temporal, earthly one, which had a preparatory, contingent and even at points, negligible value, and the eternal one which is the true realm of life, fulfilment and happiness.”⁹⁰¹ Balasuriya notes that in Acts 2:42-47 the eucharistic practice of breaking bread was closely linked to the practice of the community of goods and that, in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, Paul “rebukes those who

⁸⁹⁶ Rowland, *Christian Origins*, pp. 241-2. In a more recent context reference is made to the eschatological dimensions of the Eucharist in the discussions of the Solentiname community. For example, “I believe the logical consequence of the Eucharist is that people have everything in common. Until they live in communion they can’t celebrate the true Eucharist that Christ began ... Camilo Torres said that is why he stopped saying mass,” Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, vol. IV, p. 128. See also vol. III, p. 65.

⁸⁹⁷ Gutiérrez notes that, according to Congar, *koinonia* embraces “three realities”: “First it signifies the common ownership of goods necessary for earthly existence ... Second [it] designates the union of the faithful with Christ through the Eucharist ... Third [it] means union of Christians with the Father,” Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 264-5.

⁸⁹⁸ Rowland, *Christian Origins*, pp. 187-9.

⁸⁹⁹ Rowland, *Christian Origins*, p. 274: “For whatever reason Paul chose to turn his back on community of goods, it is certain that he laid the foundations for the frameworks of the Christian attitudes and responses to society in the decades to come.”

⁹⁰⁰ Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, pp. 132-3.

⁹⁰¹ Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, p. 133.

partake in the Eucharist but do not share their meals.”⁹⁰² He then traces the gradual process of “privatization and clericalization of the Eucharist” through the centuries which has led, in the recent past, to a “mechanical ceremony under the control of priests without much impact on the relationships of persons:”

Rich and poor, exploiter and exploited, colonizer and colonized, good and bad were all present at the same Eucharist and received Communion without challenging or questioning their relative positions.⁹⁰³

Bonhoeffer also notes the progressive “spiritualising” of the concrete demands of Christian discipleship as post-Reformation Christianity established itself outside the monasteries and within the secular world.⁹⁰⁴

Through this process the concept of the “new being in Christ” has been largely separated from the social and economic relationships in which the Christian is set. But this is a false separation. The kingdom of God, announced and anticipated by Jesus cannot be reduced to a purely inner, spiritual and other worldly concept: Jesus proclaimed the recovery of sight to the blind as a sign of the kingdom, he is then recorded as restoring physical sight to the physically blind. Thus, as Moltmann and others argue, the kingdom of God is to be anticipated in human history and human experience⁹⁰⁵ and will find expression in those essential social, economic and political elements of all human life. The argument that the “new being” can exist at the inner, spiritual level, without reference to external social, economic and political factors cannot be sustained because this requires the “new being” to be isolated from his or her integral relationship to the kingdom of God which finds anticipatory expression in those social, economic and political relationships of the real world. The “new creation/age” is anticipated both within the individual *and* within the external, material world. As Bonhoeffer repeatedly affirms, abstract theological concepts which focus on the inner, spiritual life, detached from concrete

⁹⁰² T. Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 24.

⁹⁰³ Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation*, p. 36.

⁹⁰⁴ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 35-47.

⁹⁰⁵ J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977), pp. 189-196.

See also H. Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 135-66 for a survey of theologians who propose a this-worldly eschatology.

human experience, find no biblical support: "the Bible does not recognise our distinction between the outward and the inward. Why should it? It is always concerned with *anthropos teleios, the whole man*".⁹⁰⁶ Likewise Rahner places great emphasis on the basic unity of the person:

Every attempt by a dimension⁹⁰⁷ to make itself independent and self-sufficient, even merely in its own realm, contradicts the fact that man ... is first and last, originally and by destination, *one person* (Rahner's italics). Hence, for instance, economics, or even economic legislation, does not enjoy a "pure" autonomy from the laws of the spiritual person.⁹⁰⁸

I would argue that the tentative attempts of some revolutionary Christians in Latin America to establish a link between Guevara's "new man" and Christianity's "new being" point to a possible reintegration, advocated by Bonhoeffer, Rahner and others, of the artificially separated "spiritual" and the "material" realms of the one Christian life.

Guevara argues that the "new man," who is guided by principles of love, sacrifice, unselfishness, solidarity etc., can only begin to emerge under socialism, when the means of production are held in common by the workers. Christianity, however, testifies to a "new being" who is guided by the same principles, and yet emerges regardless of the economic conditions in place. It thus appears that in the "new being" of Christianity we do indeed find a dramatic exception to Guevara's rule, but crucially Christians who have experienced such a radical, spiritual transformation into "new beings in Christ" now, under capitalist economic relations, are living in a permanent state of dissonance; the consciousness, values and human qualities of the "new being in Christ" do not resonate with those economic relationships in which they must presently live and work. The "new being" of Christianity has emerged outside its appropriate economic context and will only "find its home" under those economic relationships which Guevara argues

⁹⁰⁶ D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1971), p. 346. See also Bonhoeffer, pp. 280-1, 286 and 369.

⁹⁰⁷ Rahner identifies four "existential dimensions" of humanity: the "corporeal-material," the "spiritual-personal", the "religious God-centered" and the "Christ-centered," G. McCool, *A Rahner Reader* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), p. 266.

⁹⁰⁸ McCool, *A Rahner Reader*, p. 266.

are the correct ones for the emergence of the “new being,” namely socialist or communist economic relationships.

The Christian practice of the community of goods can be seen as a pre-socialist, pre-capitalist attempt to overcome this sense of dissonance between a Christian’s status as a “new being in Christ” and his or her economic practice and relationships. In the contemporary setting of capitalist economic relationships, Guevara, through his concept of the “new man,” indicates a way forward for Christians who seek to overcome this sense of dissonance in their lives. Guevara points the contemporary Christian “new being” beyond the common ownership of goods, as practised by some within the early church, to the common ownership of the means of production. The Christian who enters into economic activity as a co-owner of the means of production is finally able to integrate their “new being” status with their wider social and economic relationships.

6.5.3 Possibilities for a contemporary application

What realistic opportunities exist for a contemporary Christian to transform the economic relationships in which they are set in order to achieve this resonance between their status as “new beings in Christ” and their economic context? The confidence of the late 60s and early 70s in creating socialist or communist society, expressed, for example, in the book *What Kind of Revolution?: A Christian-Communist Dialogue*,⁹⁰⁹ has long since disappeared. The global dominance of the capitalist economic order, along with the collapse of experiments in state socialism, has led to a greater realism about the possibilities for radical economic and political change at the national level. A socialist state cannot hope to survive long in a sea of globalised capitalism. Furthermore, as Northcott has noted, the nationalisation of large industries under the Labour government of the late 60s failed to generate significant social change amongst the workers and the wider society because it did

⁹⁰⁹ J. Klugmann and P. Oestreicher (eds.), *What Kind of Revolution?: A Christian-Communist Dialogue* (London: Panther Books, 1968).

not introduced genuine democratic participation of the workers in the decision making process.⁹¹⁰

In my view, the socialist and communist goal of the common ownership of the means of production still has relevance in the UK context today. However, the emphasis should no longer be on *national* ownership of the means of production but on *worker* ownership of the means of production. Furthermore, this worker ownership will only ever be felt as genuine if it is combined with the policy of downsizing industry proposed by Daley and Cobb in *For the Common Good*,⁹¹¹ Duchrow in *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*,⁹¹² Latona in *A New World Order*⁹¹³ and originally Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful*.⁹¹⁴ The small-scale, worker-owned co-operative provides the most appropriate economic setting for the development of the fully integrated Christian “new being.”

Some examples of small scale Christian co-operatives already exist. Further research could examine the degree to which Christian workers within such co-operatives feel that a sense of dissonance between their Christian faith and economic activity has been overcome.

The Daily Bread Co-operative, which packages and distribute wholemeal food, stands out as the clearest example, in the UK context, of the kind of local economic Christian community I am proposing. The co-operative developed from a Christian house communion group who became concerned with “how to take the Gospel of sharing and mutual support into the work place via the formation of a simple co-

⁹¹⁰ M. Northcott, “Christian Futures, Postmodernity and the State of Britain” in U. King (ed.), *Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age* (London: Cassell, 1998), p. 191. As a result of this failure Northcott argues that European socialists are now focusing not on ownership of the means of production but rather on “the extension of democratic governance as the means for achieving a more just and egalitarian society, through increasing participation by the people in every area of economic and social practice”, p. 191.

⁹¹¹ H.E. Daly and J.B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

⁹¹² U. Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism* (Utrecht: International Books, 1995).

⁹¹³ B. Latona, *A New World Order: Economics for a Peaceful Planet* (London: Minerva Press, 2000).

⁹¹⁴ E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, (London: Vintage, 1993).

operative owned and controlled by the workers”.⁹¹⁵ The Co-operative argues that its decision to pay themselves according to need rather than job responsibility “goes some way to the practice of the early church ‘... and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need’”.⁹¹⁶ The co-operative states that “its inspiration comes from Jesus Christ,” that the “co-operative business structure is a Christian one” and hopes that “it is a model for much of our society in the future - a seed which may enable more people to participate in a co-operative business”.⁹¹⁷ Worship is an integral element of the working day and is led by the members on a rota basis. The co-operative explains that “decisions about work and people often spring directly from [the worship].”⁹¹⁸ The co-operative also believes that remaining small-scale is important: “Experience shows that with a working group of not more than 20, no further administrative structure is needed [beyond a weekly meeting] and an efficient working fellowship is attained. Further growth will be through other, independent co-ops. ‘Small is Beautiful’”.⁹¹⁹

Schumacher, in his book *Small is Beautiful*, gives the example of the Scott Bader Co. Ltd. This company, again inspired by Christian faith, reformed itself on the basis of common ownership of the means of production. Ernest Bader describes the experience as an “effort to establish the Christian way of life in our business”.⁹²⁰ Schumacher notes the opportunity which the new economic relationships provide for the worker to raise him or herself to “a higher level of humanity, not by pursuing, privately and individualistically, certain aims of self-transcendence which have nothing to do with the aims of the firm ... but by, as it were, freely and cheerfully gearing in with the aims of the organisation itself.” In this way the “Commonwealth”, as the new business structure was called, “has served to give ... members a social consciousness and awareness rarely found in any business organisation of the conventional kind.”⁹²¹

⁹¹⁵ The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction to the Daily Bread Co-operative* [online]. Available from <http://www.dailybread.co.uk/north/social.htm> [Accessed 26th January 2001].

⁹¹⁶ The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction* [online]. [Accessed 26th January 2001].

⁹¹⁷ The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction* [online]. [Accessed 26th January 2001].

⁹¹⁸ The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction* [online]. [Accessed 26th January 2001].

⁹¹⁹ The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction* [online]. [Accessed 26th January 2001].

⁹²⁰ Scumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, p. 239.

⁹²¹ Scumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, p. 238.

In his book *Alternatives to Global Capitalism* Ulrich Duchrow gives examples of other Christian communities based upon co-operative principles. He describes in detail the “La Poudrière” community, inspired by Abbé Pierre, whose economic productivity is derived from the repairing and recycling of a wide range of goods. The five goals of the community are “presence, friendship, justice, utopia and hope, and self-discipline”. Duchrow quotes from the community’s newsletter:

Those who left the community called the others “utopian”, dreamers ... and so our Utopia (believing in the whole person) became a programme ... We discovered that we had to change ourselves to change society and others.⁹²²

The Bruderhof movement, which runs the Plough Publishing House, provides another example of an economically productive Christian community based along co-operative lines:

There is no particular individual who gives orders to others; that would amount to a division between employer and employee. We don’t have that ... That would divide us into groups, one superior to the other. Every remnant of division of class, caste, or rank is thoroughly rooted out ... The only superior authority is this unanimity, this full accord of all believing and loving members.⁹²³

Arnold sees the Bruderhof community life offering the possibility of integrating work and faith: “there should be harmony between the work a person does and his or her inner calling”.⁹²⁴ Such community life anticipates the kingdom of God, “His plan for the Kingdom of God must be given well-defined practical expression in the household of the Church”.⁹²⁵

From an environmentalist perspective Daly and Cobb argue for the development of small scale economic enterprises, preferably based on worker ownership,⁹²⁶ which

⁹²² Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, pp. 246-7.

⁹²³ E. Arnold, *God’s Revolution: Justice, Community and the Coming Kingdom* (Farmington: Plough Publishing House, 1997), p. 98.

⁹²⁴ Arnold, *God’s Revolution*, p. 38.

⁹²⁵ Arnold, *God’s Revolution* p. 21.

⁹²⁶ Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good*, pp. 303-4.

acknowledge the finite “carrying capacity” of the ecosystem⁹²⁷: “The goal of the changes proposed in this book [*For the Common Good*] is a bottom-up society, a community of communities that are local and relatively small”.⁹²⁸ Daly and Cobb give examples of such local economic communities and conclude that it is only the religious consciousness (I would argue the consciousness of the “new being”) that will provide the motivation for effecting the changes they propose: “the *real* possibility for change depends on an awakening of the religious depths in a world whose secularity has gone quite stale”.⁹²⁹

Duchrow claims that the effective networking of these small scale local economic communities and organisations, Christian or otherwise, will enable them not merely to provide lived alternatives to the economic model of global capitalism but also to mount a political challenge to the macro-economic order.⁹³⁰ A change in economic relations takes place on the ground within these local economies, and this not only prefigures but also precipitates the final and revolutionary change in the world economic order.

Guevara’s concept of the “new man” radicalises the traditional Christian concept of the “new being in Christ”. It is now seen that the “new being” of Christianity only finds his or her “true home” when their economic activity, crucial to all human existence, takes place within the appropriate set of economic relationships, namely those economic relationships proposed by Guevara for the creation of his “new man”. Guevara sought to create this change in economic relationships by means of national and then global revolution. The 21st century context means that the revolutionary Christian, whilst campaigning for economic change at the international level, can immediately begin to transform economic relationships at the local level, creating “focuses” of an alternative economic model. The struggle for economic change at the *national* level, so important for Guevara and the revolutionary Christians of Latin America in the 1960s to 1980s, is now seen to be

⁹²⁷ Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good*, pp. 141-6.

⁹²⁸ Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good*, pp. 366-7.

⁹²⁹ Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good*, pp. 379-80.

⁹³⁰ Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, p. 277.

inappropriate within the 21st century context. Instead, local, economic Christian communities will not only forge within them the “new being” but also, allied to a global network of local economies, will advance the radical transformation of the world economic order.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

* Photocopied at the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos in Buenos Aires and not readily available in other libraries.

Abbott, W.M.(ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1967).

Anderson, J.L., *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Bantam Press, 1997).

*Anon, *La izquierda Cristiana* (Santiago: Organización de la izquierda Cristiana, 1976).

Arnold, E., *God's Revolution: Justice, Community and the Coming Kingdom* (Farmington: Plough Publishing House, 1997).

Assmann, H., *Practical Theology of Liberation* (London: Search Press, 1975).

Balasuriya, T., *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1979).

Barrett, C.K., *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: A. and C. Black, 1991).

Bauckham R., *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

Berryman, P., *The Religious Roots of Rebellion, Christians in the Central American Revolutions* (London: SCM Press, 1984).

Bonachea, R. E. and Valdés, N. P. (eds.), *Che: Selected works of Ernesto Guevara* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

Boff, L., *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (London: Collins, 1986).

Bonhoeffer, D., *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

Bonhoeffer, D., *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1959).

Bonino, J. M., *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age* (London: SPCK, 1975).

Bonino, J. M., *Towards a Christian Political Ethics* (London: Fortress Press, 1983).

Bradstock, A., *A Christian Contribution to Revolutionary Praxis? An Examination of the Significance of Religious Belief for the Political Philosophies of Gerard Winstanley and Camilo Torres* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Kent at Canterbury, 1989).

- Bradstock, A., *Saints and Sandinistas, The Catholic Church in Nicaragua and its Responses to the Revolution* (London: Epworth Press, 1987).
- Broderick, W.J., *A Biography of the Priest-Guerillero* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).
- Cabestrero, T., *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983).
- Cámara, H., *Revolution through Peace* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1972).
- Cámara, H., *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971).
- Cancionero Abierto* (ed. Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos; Buenos Aires: ISEDET, 1993).
- Cardenal, E., *El evangelio en Solentiname*, vols. I-IV (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1979).
- Cardenal, E., *In Cuba* (New York: New Directions Books, 1974).
- Cardenal, E., *The Gospel in Solentiname Vols. I-IV*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1982).
- Cassidy, R., *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).
- Castro, F., *Fidel in Chile* (Santiago: Quimantu Ltda., 1972).
- Clark, D., *The Liberation of the Church* (Birmingham: The National Centre for Christian Communities and Networks, 1984).
- Concatti R. and Bresci, D., *Sacerdotes para el tercer mundo - crónica, documentos, reflexión* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones del Movimiento Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo, 1972).
- Cone, J.H., *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975).
- Costas, O., *Theology at the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976).
- **Cristianismo y revolución*, nos. 4,5, 24,25,26 and 28 (Buenos Aires: Cristianismo y revolución, 1967-71).
- Cupull A. and González, F., *Che: entre la multitud* (Habana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1995).
- Daly H.E. and Cobb, J.B., *For the Common Good* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

- Devoto A. and Cámara, H., *Manifiesto de obispos del tercer mundo: respuesta al clamor de los pobres* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1968).
- Dodson, M., "The Christian Left in Latin American Politics" in *Church and Politics in Latin America*, (ed. D. Levine; London: Sage Publications, 1980).
- Dri, R., *La utopía de Jesús* (Buenos Aires: Impresiones Sud America, 1987).
- Dunn, J., *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: A. and C. Black, 1993).
- Dussel, E., *A History of the Church in Latin America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).
- Dussel, E.(ed.), *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1992).
- Duchrow, U., *Alternatives to Global Capitalism* (Utrecht: International Books, 1995).
- Eagleson, J. (ed.), *Christians and Socialism: The Christians for Socialism Movement in Chile* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975).
- Freire, P., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986).
- Gambini, H., *El Che Guevara: la biografía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1996).
- Gerassi, J. (ed.), *Revolutionary Priest: The Complete Writings and Message of Camilo Torres*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971).
- Gerassi, J. (ed.), *Venceremos: The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto Che Guevara* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1968).
- Gheerbrant, A., *The Rebel Church in Latin America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).
- Girardi, G., *Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo: la confluencia* (Managua: Centro Ecueménico Antonio Valdivieso, 1987).
- Guevara, E., *Educación y hombre nuevo* (Habana: Editora Política, 1993).
- Guevara, E., *Guerrilla Warfare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
- Guevara, E., *Obras completas*, vols. 1-III (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1995).
- Guevara, E., *La revolución: escritos esenciales* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 1996).
- Guevara, E., *The African Dream* (London: The Harvill Press, 2000).
- Guzman, G., *Camilo Torres* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969).
- Gutierrez, G., *A Theology of Liberation*, (London: SCM Press, 1974).

- Haslam, D., *Faith in the Struggle; The Protestant Churches in Nicaragua and their Response to the Revolution* (London: Epworth Press, 1987).
- Henelly, A.T.(ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (New York: Orbis, 1990).
- Hinton, J., *Walking in the Same Direction, a New Way of Being Church* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1995).
- Hodges, D.C., *The Legacy of Che Guevara: A Documentary Study* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977).
- Holman, B., *Towards Equality* (London: SPCK, 1997).
- Hoornaert, E., *The Memory of the Christian People* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1986).
- Kee, A., *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (SCM Press: London, 1990).
- Latona, B., *A New World Order: Economics for a Peaceful Planet* (London: Minerva Press, 2000).
- Leech, K., *The Sky is Red* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997).
- Klugmann, J. and Oestreicher, P. (eds.), *What Kind of Revolution?: A Christian-Communist Dialogue* (London: Panther Books, 1968).
- Lenin, V.I., *What is to be Done?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989).
- Lockley, A., *Christian Communes* (London: SCM Press, 1976).
- Madeley, J., *Hungry for Trade* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2000).
- McCool, G., *A Rahner Reader* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975).
- McLellan, D., *Marxism After Marx* (London: MacMillan Press, 1980).
- McLellan, D., *The Thought of Karl Marx*, (London: Papermac, 1995).
- Marcuse, H., *One Dimensional Man* (London: Abacus, 1972).
- Maritain, J., *What is Man?* [online]. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame. Available from: <http://www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/jm502.htm> [Accessed 14th March 1999].
- Maritain, J., *Christianity and Democracy*. [online]. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame. Available from: <http://www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/jm604a.htm> [Accessed 14th March 1999].

- Martí, L., *Del pensamiento pedagógico de Ernesto Che Guevara* (Habana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1999).
- Martín, J.P., *Movimiento de sacerdotes para el tercer mundo: un debate Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Guadalupe, 1992).
- Mayol, A., Habegger, N. and Armada, A., *Los católicos posconciliares en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galera, 1970).
- Miranda, J., *Marx and the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1977).
- Molloy, D. and Harper, T. (eds.), *The Aisling Magazine*, nos. 1-29 (Inis Mór: The Aisling Magazine, 1991).
- Moltmann, J., *Jesus Christ for Today's World* (London: SCM Press, 1995).
- Moltmann, J., *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977).
- Mo Sung, J., *La idolatría del capital y la muerte de los pobres* (San José: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1991).
- Muddiman, J., *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001).
- Northcott, M., "Christian Futures, Postmodernity and the State of Britain" in U. King (ed.), *Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age* (London: Cassell, 1998).
- Northcott, M., *Life After Debt* (London: SPCK, 1999).
- Ogletree, T., (ed.) *Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue* (London: Abingdon Press, 1968).
- *Organisation of the Christian Left, *The Christian Left: Significance and Role* (Santiago: Organisation of the Christian Left, 1974).
- One World Week, *As If People and the Earth Matter* (Reading: One World Week, 2000).
- Ponce de León, J. (ed.), *Our Word is our Weapon: Selected Writings, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).
- Pontoriero, G., *Sacerdotes para el tercer mundo; "el fermento en la masa"* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1991).
- Randall, M., *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983).
- Ridderbos, H., *Paul, An Outline of his Theology* (London: SPCK, 1977).
- Rowland, C., *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985).

- Schwarz, H., *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
- Scumacher, E.F., *Small is Beautiful*, (London: Vintage, 1993).
- Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*, vol. II, (Washington: Division for Latin America - USCC, 1973).
- Secretariado de Cristianos por el Socialismo (ed.), *Cristianos por el socialismo; primer encuentro latinoamericano* (Santiago: Mundo Nuevo Limitada, 1973).
- Segundo, J., (ed), *Iglesia latinoamericana ¿protesta o profecía?* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Busqueda, 1969).
- Smith, R., *The Church and Politics in Chile: Challenges to Modern Catholicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
- Sobrino, J., *Christology at the Crossroads* (London: SCM Press, 1978).
- Sobrino, J., *The True Church and the Poor* (London: SCM Press, 1984).
- Tablada, C., *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the transition to Socialism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1998).
- The Daily Bread Co-operative. *An Introduction to the Daily Bread Co-operative* [online]. Available from <http://www.dailybread.co.uk/north/social.htm> [Accessed 26th January 2001].
- The Methodist Church and NCH Action for Children, *The Cities: A Methodist Report* (London: NCH Action for Children, 1997).
- Jubilee 2000, *The World Will Never be the Same Again* (London: Jubilee 2000/World Vision, 2000).
- Tillich, P., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Welwyn: James Nisbet and Company Limited, 1957).
- Wallis, J., *The Call to Conversion* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1986).
- Wheaton, P.E. (ed.), *Christians for Socialism: Highlights from Chile's Religious Revolution* (Washington: Ecumenical Programme for Inter-American Communication and Action, 1973).
- Williams, P., *The Catholic Church and Politics in Nicaragua and Costa Rica*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1989).
- Yates, R., *The Epistle to the Colossians*. (London: Epworth Press, 1993).

Zwerling, P. and Martin, C., *Nicaragua: a New Kind of Revolution* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1985).