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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SEARCHING FOR DEMOCRATIZATION OF  
COMMUNICATION IN LATIN AMERICA

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how the Catholic Church in Latin America has, over the past two decades, proposed to democratize communication as its main contribution to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Based specifically on the Latin American Church documents on the issue, as well as interviews and observations in the field and secondary literature, the study takes the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as a point of departure to analyze the Church's thinking on communication, and examines the Latin American Church's decisions related to communication --*Medellin* and *Puebla*. It further analyzes the major documents regarding the Church and NWICO --*Quito Document* and *Embu (S.Paulo) Document* which recommend two ways to establish a process of democratization of communication in Latin America: first, implementation of the national communication policies, and second, development of alternative communication as a process and as use of the media. Two case studies --Basic Christian Communities in Brazil and the Popular Centre of S.Miguel (S.Paulo)-- demonstrate how alternative communication was carried out to develop a horizontal pattern of communication that includes the participatory process and the use of alternative media.

Although the entire Church in Latin America adopted the decisions and documents of the Latin American Bishops

Conference, this study limits its analysis to the progressive side of the Church and argues that the practical efforts for democratization of communication were mainly carried out by the Catholic organizations for communication, UNDA-AL, UCLAP, SAL-OCIC. This study further argues that within the framework of liberation theology, alternative communications are being implemented particularly among lower-class groups called *comunicación popular*. These practices by the Church are both philosophical and theological, and are based on the principle that its evangelization must be a liberation process which allows people to become free of the constraints which maintain them at the margins of society, excluding them from a participatory process. This study concludes that the efforts of the Church for the democratization of communication have increased the demand for a similar democratization of internal communication also at various levels of the institution of the Church itself.

To all people who are struggling for the  
democratization of communication in Latin America.



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## INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, many Third World countries called for a restructuring of international communication patterns in order to establish relations of equality between developed and developing countries. Founded on democratic principles, they sought to achieve a more equitable exchange in information, and to preserve self-determination in communication and culture. The name eventually given to their call was the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO).

Centred in Unesco, the increasing controversy over their call led to the establishment of an international commission. Approved by the Unesco XX General Conference in 1980, the Commission Report, known for its Chairman, MacBride, gave support to the NWICO debate. The report recognized the imbalance of information flows, calling for new guiding principles for a New World Information and Communication Order, and indicating actions which could serve as a basis for realizing the new order.

The most innovative part of the MacBride Report echoed the fundamental premise of NWICO, namely, the issue of democratization of communication. The MacBride Report recognized the necessity of breaking through barriers which impede democracy in communication, basing its call on the "right to communicate." In order to achieve this, the Report recommended establishing new national communication policies.

It also presented a new conception of horizontal and alternative communication, which included access and participation to allow individuals to be active agents, rather than passive objects of communication.

In Latin America, the call for NWICO ran concurrently with several other developments. While several prominent researchers had called for the establishment of national communications policies, other organizations, most notably the Catholic Church, had been involved in establishing alternative communication or *comunicación popular*. This thesis examines the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America to this process of building democratization of communication in the last three decades, by implementing alternative communication particularly among lower-class groups.

From a communication approach, this thesis takes a Latin American perspective and bases its understanding of alternative communication as a participatory process on the idea of the Chilean theorist, *Fernando Reyes Matta*, who has developed extensive and systematic studies of the subject. From an ecclesiastical point of view, this thesis develops its understanding within the prevailing intellectual direction of the Church's activities in Latin America --liberation theology-- according to the documents of the second and third Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), known as Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979).

### **Why focus on the Church and alternative communication?**

My pursuit of an inquiry into the Latin American Catholic Church and its contribution to the process of democratization of communication are related to my Latin American background and my Christian commitment to the "people", specifically to those at the margins of society. This motive became a driving force in my research in communication, underlying and giving rise to three subsets of reasons which I outline below:

a) There is an enormous number of books, articles and studies on the Church in Latin America in general, focusing on the social and political aspects and especially on the controversial theology which inspires and shapes the Church's pastoral activities: liberation theology.

In the field of communication, however, although all the National Bishops' Conferences, and even the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), have a Department of Communication, such departments produce material shaped according to the progressive or the conservative mainstream of each Conference's thought. In the field of communication, the literature at large reveals that the relationship between the Church and communication is based mostly on the relation between the *Church* and *technological instruments* of communication rather than between the Church and communication as a social process.

Literature on the Church and communication has been collected and briefly commented on by Benito Spoletini, and

will be discussed in Chapter III. CELAM also has made available some works which focus on well-defined dimensions of communication, touching on NWICO, alternative communication, and so forth, but dealing with such subjects separately. However, there is no systematic study establishing any links between NWICO and its proposal for democratization of communication, with the Catholic Church, and its liberation theology which orients pastoral activities, and its approach to the grassroot groups. Throughout the literature, the reader may find all these themes dealt with in one way or another; for instance, in the way that the Church has contributed to the creation of democratic space. But my further exploration is on the links between all of the elements mentioned above in the grassroot communication.

b) The second reason is based on my concern to offer a contribution to the Church by drawing on the Church's own conceptions of communication. In other words, I wish to make available a reflection which might motivate the Church at large to think about communication, preferably in terms of a participatory democratic process. It is my belief that if the Church trains itself in the exercise of participatory process, developing democratization of communication internally as well as in its pastoral work, the Church will also be able to contribute to the democratization of communication in other areas. This might mean, for instance, becoming more active and participating in the discussions to build up democratization of communication also through national communication policies.



c) The final reason is that alternative communication, as a participatory process implemented by the Church in Latin America, has already made a major long term contribution to the process of democratization of communication. For instance, the implementation of "group communication" and the promotion of *comunicación popular* in Latin America. What is needed, however is documentation of the successes that already exist. It is from this perspective that the NWICO debate has become a people's movement, as Robert White points out, and as I deal with it in Chapter III.<sup>1</sup>

## **Methodological approach**

### **Terms and parameters**

In this thesis, I use the term "Church" in Latin America very specifically. I will be limiting my focus to the side of the institution which carries out, in practice, the documents of Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979), under liberation theology, and which is known as the progressive side of the Church. My restriction of treatment to the progressive side of the Church is *selective*, not *reductive*. It is selective because in order to conduct this inquiry into the contribution of the Church to the democratization of communication in Latin

1 Robert White, "The Church and Communication in Latin America - Thirty years to search for patterns," Communication Socialis Yearbook 1981-1982, and "NWICO has become a people's movement," Media Development (WACC, London, 1988) N.1, pp. 20-25.

America it has been necessary to delineate which side of the Church is, indeed, carrying on such a proposal among the people. This selective approach is justified, due to the fact that the Church is one of the most complex institutions in the world and it would be impossible to apply the present analysis to the other segments of the Church, moderate or conservative.

The choice of this particular segment of the Church, however, does not mean that the activities of the other side of the Church are overlooked. In this sense, the analysis is not reductive, because it does not rule out elements from the Church at large. In fact, my selective part of this analysis is placed in the broader context of the Church and draws upon the documents and the studies issued by the Church in its recommendations for practice by the whole Church. I am always conscious of the fact that the progressive side of the Church is in regular interaction with the other sides, which constantly influence it.

In this thesis I use the term "Latin America" to refer to all countries that are members of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), and it includes the countries of South America, Central America and Mexico. This may be seen as a methodological parameter that is too broad. This argument is reasonable if, in fact, one considers the enormous diversity existing in the Church in different Latin American countries. I am aware of the complexity of Latin America's countries and regions and their respective progressive or conservative versions of the Church. However, my choice of parameters is

based on three reasons. First, all Latin American orientation in the Church derives from the same body, the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM). As the documents (Medellin and Puebla) were agreed upon and signed by all of the bishops in Latin America when the meetings took place in 1968 and 1979, they are supposed to be applied in all countries of Latin America. Therefore, there is a sole point of departure or, in other words, a common denominator inspiring the Church's activities on the continent. The variety of results of such application do not depend on the documents issued by CELAM, but on the interpretation of such documents by each bishop or National Conference.

Secondly, the progressive side of the Church exists all over Latin America and uses the same philosophy, regardless of region or country. While again, the results of practices may vary widely, according to the restrictions or restraints imposed by the National Conference in each country, or to the local historical or socio-politico situation, the quality of the activities (I will not deal with the quantitative aspects), is similar in all countries. These two common points give me confidence to take Latin America at large, and not one particular country on the continent, for the development of this thesis. Thirdly, this choice is confirmed by the intense interaction between institutions and interests from this side of the Church across national boundaries in Latin America.

## Procedures

The present work focuses on communication as process rather than as media, and thus is more concerned with democratization of communication as a participatory process. Defining the subject in this way, I use three methodological approaches. First of all, I provide an analysis of the most significant documents of the official Church and the Church in Latin America on communication issues. Beginning with documents fifty years before the Second Vatican Council, it also includes the two most important documents on communication issued by Rome, one from the Vatican II (*Inter Mirifica* - 1963), and one later in 1971 (*Communio et Progressio*). This thesis continues by analyzing the Latin American documents from the Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) Conferences on communication issues, as well as the documents of Quito (1982) and Embu (1982) regarding the Catholic Church and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). However, to understand the broad dimension of the mentioned documents, this thesis looks at them from three angles. First, to understand the relation between the Church and new communication technologies. Second, to explain the Church's change and new directions in the evangelizing activities in Latin America. Third, to link the documents with participatory practices of the Latin American Church within the framework of liberation theology.

The second approach was a literature search. This study draws upon works on the historical, social, political and

cultural situation in Latin America to provide a broader context for an understanding of alternative communication. However, while there is abundant literature on communications and a number of important theoretical studies being carried out by outstanding researchers in Latin America, the bulk of it is mainly on popular culture, not on *comunicación popular*. Therefore, I relied primarily on the MacBride Report, on the work of Fernando Reyes Matta and also Robert White to frame my writing on participatory process of communication.

Finally, I conducted interviews with important communication researchers and liberation theologians and bishops in Brazil, Ecuador and Chile, as well as with individuals familiar with the two case studies in Brazil. These interviews provided an important illumination of the written materials, and contributed to the exploration of different views of alternative communication and the social and political dimension of faith claimed by liberation theology. The two case studies on Basic Christian Communities in Brazil (CEBs), and the Centre for Popular Communication and Education of S. Miguel (CEMI) in S. Paulo were chosen in order to illustrate the participatory process developed in grassroot communities and the forms (alternative media) produced by such groups. For both case studies I was also a participant-observer. Particularly in the case of the CEBs in Brazil, my journalistic work has provided me with contacts with those groups for more than ten years in different regions of the country.

## Chapter outline

Chapter I, "The relationship between the Catholic Church and communication technologies", describes the historical and theoretical development of communication at different stages of the Church's history. Although this thesis deals with the Church in Latin America, it is necessary to point out that the Church in Latin America does not stand by itself, but is part of the Roman Catholic Church, centred in the Vatican in Rome. Therefore, the Church in Latin America follows the doctrine, principles, orientation, and teachings from the Vatican. The documents of the Church affect the Church's orientation on all continents, providing instruction for a "unity" of thinking, and of facing realities in the world, and of determining the Church's activities (evangelization).

It is in this context that this chapter examines the evolution of the Vatican's communication concepts. To accomplish this analysis, this chapter takes the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as a point of departure and major inspiration for the discussions throughout this thesis. However, in order to obtain a more complete outlook on the evolution of the Church's thinking on communication, the chapter begins fifty years before Vatican II, and examines documents such as *Vigilanti Cura* (1936) on cinema, and *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) on motion pictures, radio and television, the first major assertion by the Church on communication.

This chapter also includes the examination of the document *Inter Mirifica* (1963) in which the Church officially

accepted and recommended media communication be used in its pastoral work. To complete the review on the evolution of the official Church's thinking on communication, Chapter I examines the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) which is the application of Vatican II regarding communication, and which reveals great progress by the institution in approaching this issue.

The examination of these documents reveals the evolution of the Church's understanding from a very cautious stance to one of acceptance of the mass media as important tools to be used in Church activities. Particularly, *Communio et Progressio* provides evidence of a major progression by the institution in dealing with communication. However, the analysis will show that the document falls into an instrumentalist discourse pervaded by idealism. The document's understanding of the economic and political aspects of the media is very weak. It also fails to point out the sociological dimensions that presently drive the media in society. Nevertheless, this thinking of the Church on communication, expressed by *Communio et Progressio*, is still the major point of reference and orientation for the entire Church up to today.

Chapter II, "Liberation theology - a new way to evangelize", lays out how the Latin American Church has developed its own way of conceiving communication within the framework of the Vatican's documents. The evolution of the relationship between the Church and communication in Latin

America, particularly in the past three decades, reveals some concern for providing people with the necessary basis with which to comprehend their realities within a liberation framework. As the beliefs and ideas of liberation theology underscore the work of the bishops at Medellin and Puebla, and is the main orientation to inspire the Church's activities in Latin America, this chapter provides an explanation of this controversial issue. Providing a historical view of liberation theology and also the interpretation of the term *liberation*, this chapter sets up the leading ecclesiastical framework underlying all further discussions in this thesis.

Chapter III, "The Catholic Church and communication in Latin America", deals specifically with the Church and communication in Latin America. The documents of Medellin and Puebla are the landmarks that gave the Church direction concerning communication issues. The analysis of the Medellin document on communication reveals a naive attitude and an enchantment with the new communication technologies. The importance of this document, however, is in its conclusions which influenced a new mentality in the Church and, in turn, in its relations to communication issues.

Puebla (1979) demonstrates an advancement from the Medellin position, as it not only recognized that social communication is conditioned by the socio-cultural reality, but also denounced the control and ideological manipulation exercised through the media by political and economic power groups. The significant contribution of the Puebla document,



however, is that the Church, without rejecting the mass media, emphasized popular communication as an alternative process of communication, taking into account a dialogical and participatory process of communication. To complete the outlook of the Church's thinking and practice in Latin America, this chapter also provides a historical, socio-cultural account of changes in Latin America which have contributed to the Church changing its direction concerning communication, and to placing this direction within a liberation perspective.

Chapter IV, "The Catholic Church and the New World Information and Communication Order", analyzes the Church's position in relation to the NWICO movement and the struggle to establish a new order of communication. This chapter begins by considering whether or not the NWICO debate is over and showing how the debate has moved to a new stage with the common people as the new social actor in the establishment of NWICO. It also shows which organizations of the Church became involved in the movement to carry on the debate. The two most significant documents of the Church on NWICO, *Quito* (1982) and *Embu* (1982), are analyzed and, in an attempt to introduce a new pattern of communication, the documents are shown to emphasize the implementation of *alternative communication* (*comunicación popular*) as the more efficient way to develop access and participation, as recommended by the MacBride Report. Through its discussion on the *Quito* and *Embu*

documents, this chapter also demonstrates that the Church also needs a "mini NWICO" within itself.

Chapter III looked at how alternative communication, also known as popular communication, is one of the major practices used by the Church in Latin America to create a process of democratization in the communication field. Chapter V, "The concept of democratizing communication", reviews some of these same issues from a more theoretical standpoint. The chapter reviews the contributions of MacBride Report and of the major Latin American theorists in this area. It centres on the work of Fernando Reyes Matta to provide a fundamental understanding of alternative communication as a participatory process of communication, and alternative media as forms which embody the participatory process of communication .

Chapter VI, "Alternative Communication and alternative media in practice (two case studies in Brazil)", develops these ideas, illustrating how alternative communication is meant as a participatory process of communication. The two case studies --Basic Christian Communities in Brazil (CEBs) and the Centre for Popular Communication and Education of S. Miguel in S. Paulo (CEMI)-- focus on horizontal and participatory communication as a process, and on the forms of communication which are the result or product of the participatory process experienced in these grassroot communities.

Chapter VII, "Democratization of Communication - Challenge in the Church of Latin America", is the conclusion

of this dissertation. This thesis concludes that the Church in Latin America has contributed in two ways to the building of democratization of communication within a liberation theology framework: by engaging in the NWICO debate, and carrying out the recommendation by Unesco to develop alternative and horizontal communication. This chapter, therefore, identifies three major aspects related to democratization of communication drawn from the discussion of this thesis. First, that liberation theology has had a great influence on alternative communication. In the "liberating" perspective, the word participation is a key word in all activities inspired by liberation theology. This thesis concludes that liberation theology has an effect of an ideological character in the development of alternative communication; it helps people to become, through a participatory process, agents of transformation. In this sense, communication assumes a "liberating" role in the creation of a democratic space to develop the potential and mobilization of the popular sectors to work for social transformation.

The second conclusion is that the communication practice of the Church in the grassroot groups, implementing communication as an interactive process and overcoming a linear and one-way model of communication, is contributing to the building of a new concept of communication. This process, in turn, will have its effects in the long term process of communication in Latin America.

The third conclusion is that democratization of communication, viewed as a process, is required within the Church itself. This perception is not new, and it has been noticed already throughout the development of the Church's practice in the grassroot communities. My conclusion relates to the increasing obstacles within the Church as an institution in creating space for participation within it. This chapter, however, concludes that despite opposition from the traditional hierarchy, the popular Church, inspired by liberation theology, continues its practice with people, based on democratic activities. It is in this sense that the popular Church represents a challenge to the Church as institution. However, the process of participation has been launched in the Basic Christian Communities. The tendency of such a process appears to be irreversible because the CEBs have already a historical power. In other words, they survived during the military regime in Latin America and they have been legitimated by the Church in the Medellin and Puebla documents. Even though today they may suffer a deceleration, they will continue their participatory process of communication, "teaching" the Church how to deal with other pastoral sectors in a participatory way.

## CHAPTER I

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

This chapter describes the historical and theoretical development of communication in different stages of the Church's history, focussing on the evolution of communication concepts in the Official Church as represented by the successive leaderships of the Vatican. This will provide the context for the following chapters which deal with the Church and communication in Latin America. Following a brief description of the Church and communication in past centuries, I will go on to examine the most important documents of the Church on communication in the early years of the twentieth century. The study explores the evolution in understanding and its initial caution in relation to communication. This chapter also considers the most remarkable event of the Church in this century, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council represented a major advance by the institution in its acceptance of the mass media as indispensable instruments to develop pastoral activities (evangelization). The review concludes with an analysis of the application of Vatican II regarding communication, the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*.

### 1.1. Linkup with the past

A brief survey of the beginnings of the Church demonstrates that its understanding of communication was centered on community. The community, made up of the first Christian believers, was itself an instrument of communication. The community believed that through its testimony of fraternity among members of community, faith could be spread out to others. This kind of living would differentiate them as a Christian community in the Roman world. Therefore, the community was a means to expand its faith and beliefs, and shows, as the theologian Leonardo Boff points out, that: "... another model [of Church] was proposed in the beginning, a more fraternal and circular model in which everyone shared equally."<sup>1</sup>

However, with the expansion of Christianity, the Church embraced a new model of community based on the hierarchical order of functions in the Church. According to Ignatius of Antioch, it started to function around a bishop-priest-deacon triad. Boff argues that such a model of the Church was adopted, not only because of theological reasons, but above all because "it could more easily be adopted to the authoritarian forms of power in the ancient and later feudal worlds."<sup>2</sup> On this triad, the Church would develop a new

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1. Leonardo Boff, Church: Charisma and Power, Crossroad (New York, 1986) p. 156.

2 Ibid., p. 156.

concept of functioning in communities, i.e., a model which presupposes a division among the members in terms of priority.

This concept of authority is crucial to an understanding of the Church's historical relationship to communication.<sup>3</sup> The "authority" of the Church in this context is synonymous with hierarchy, understood here as the centralization of decision-making within the Church, dictating norms and establishing patterns of behavior for the believers.<sup>4</sup> In the 1500 years that separate the apostolic epoch of the Church (the beginnings) from the era of Gutenberg, Enrico Baragli

3 Ismar O. Soares, Do Santo Ofício à Libertação (Ed. Paulinas, S. Paulo, 1988) pp. 29-30.

4 The use of "authority" here is not intended as an introduction to a theological discussion on the issue. However, according to theologian Leonardo Boff, ecclesial authority was incarnated in many different ways in the primitive Church. For instance, "in the Pauline communities (Corinth) there was a charismatic structure; in the community at Jerusalem, a synagogal (council of priests) structure." In other communities, the authority was centered around the apostolic delegates, and the authority really meant "service." However, authority became a centralized form of power. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) emphasized a practice of authority in the Church centered on the idea of collegiality not only on the episcopal level but throughout the entire Church.

According to Boff, when one speaks of the Church as institution, one does not refer to the community of believers, but refers to the organization of this community "with its hierarchy, sacred powers, dogmas, rites, canons, and traditions." Therefore, the institutional organization of the community responds to the needs for stability, for identity, the spreading of the gospel, internal assistance, government, and so on." Consequently, no community can exist without some institutionalization that lends it unity, coherency, and identity." According to Boff, there is no denial of the authority in the Church as institution. What he calls attention to is the risk that the Church (as institution) runs to becoming autocratic, a system of power or domination. (Leonardo Boff, Church: Charisma and Power, op. cit., pp. 45, 48)

mentions 87 official documents.<sup>5</sup> These documents aimed at dictating norms to emperors, kings, bishops and believers to instruct them in how to deal with writings, books, and theaters.<sup>6</sup>

The Church's attention shifted to the printing media after the introduction of the Gutenberg press. In 1487, Innocence VIII published *Inter Multiplices*, in which he defined the Church's thought about the printing media and how to deal with it. The Pope was concerned with the spiritual life of Catholics and saw in the advent of the press a new technology which could threaten the ecclesiastical control of the cultural production at that time. It was also in this period that the Church established a rigorous control and examination of books suspected of heresy (opposed to the Church's teachings). The Inquisition --the name given to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction dealing with the punishment of all persons guilty of offenses against Catholic orthodoxy-- retained the right of prohibiting books which it judged to be pernicious. People who refused to change their beliefs were

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5 The documents of the Church stand with different names according to their purposes. For instance, "encyclical" is a letter by a Pope addressed to the entire community of believers. The "decrees" are documents with practical significance. They differ from "constitutions", which are documents expressive of broad theological views. "Declarations" are statements of particular principles. T. Burke "Communications", The Documents of Vatican II (N. York Association Press, 1966) p. 137.

6 Enrico Baragli, Comunicazione, Comunione e Chiesa (Studio Romano della Comunicazione Sociale, Roma, 1973) pp. 54-113.



sentenced to die by burning. Suspected books were also destroyed in the fire. In XVI century (1559) Pope Paul IV published an *Index* of authors and books that should not be published or read. This *Index* was approved by Pius IV, carried out by the Trent Council and only became obsolete in 1966, during the papacy of Pope Paul VI.

Ismar Soares suggests that the Church's attitude to communication was based on moral principles and defensive attitudes, and remained one of suspicion, until the late nineteenth century. However, this began to change with the succession of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). In the history of the Church, this was an age of great development, marked by a new stage of ecclesiastical life directed towards the world.

Romeu Dale points out that the importance of this period was not in the content of the documents published by the Church, which were, after all, in line with the previous ones. The significance of this period, however, was in the opening up of attitudes to the press. For instance, the first collective audience granted by a Pope to journalists was in February 1879. Although Leo XIII took the pattern of his predecessors in his teachings,<sup>7</sup> he moved forward in terms of seeking dialogue. However, what characterized Leo XIII was his approach which went beyond the official regretting of the past. He emphasized that it was necessary to oppose "writing

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7 Encyclicals *Immortale Dei* (November 1885), in E. Baragli Comunicazione, Comunione e Chiesa, 1973, pp. 308-311, and *Officiarum ac Munerum* (February 1897) in R. Dale, Igreja Comunicação Social, 1972, pp. 77-81.

with writing", "publication with publication", and often spoke of this issue with bishops from many different countries.

In this way, the Catholic Church started to proclaim Christian faith through the means at its disposal, as an alternative means of spreading its mission.<sup>8</sup> The ecclesiastical attitude was to use the mass communication technologies as a "battleground." The Church reasoned that if the society was employing the mass media to spread evil, then the Church itself must use those resources to spread good messages in order to combat the evil.<sup>9</sup>

This position was countermanded during the succession of Pius X, who, in *Pieni d'Animo* (1906) and in *Pascendi* (1907) expressed a more conservative view concerning the press. The encyclical *Pieni d'Animo*, for instance, forbids seminarians to read newspapers and reminds priests that they cannot write for magazines or newspapers without permission, even about purely technical issues. Wanting to prevent the development of "modernist ideas like evolutionism and positivism", Pius X introduced the *imprimatur* and the *nihil obstat*. In other words, all dioceses should set up a department of censorship to preview and approve all works for publication.

While the cautious approach of Pius X followed the pattern of earlier Popes, the introduction of new

8 J. Marques de Melo, "Igreja e Comunicação", Comunicação, Igreja e Estado na América Latina, ed. Ismar O. Soares and Joana Puntel (Ed. Paulinas/UCBC, 1985) p. 62.

9 Benito Spoletini, A missão num mundo em mudança (Ed. Paulinas, S. Paulo, 1983) p. 144.

communication technologies had astonished the clergy in their capacity to influence "public opinion". They saw that the new technologies of cinema, radio and television, could increase relations among social groups. Ismar Soares points out:

The Catholic Church has reduced its appreciation of the new communication technologies to the judgement made under the vision of morality. Furthermore: the clergy has assumed, as its mission, to interfere in the process [of public opinion], imposing moral control on the public opinion.<sup>10</sup>

The Church had serious difficulties recognizing positive values in the means of communication and in conceiving of their possibilities to operate as instruments to defend the dignity of human beings.

However, despite its strong negative attitude, the Church began, slowly and gradually, to realize the usefulness of the electronic means of communication in sending out the Church's message and to rely upon them. During the period from 1878 to 1939, the Church showed some flexibility towards the press and the new communication technologies, particularly motion picture and radio,<sup>11</sup> but it still acted cautiously. The advance of cinema in the early twentieth century impressed Pius XI who became personally interested in the new invention, and this new communication technology prompted the Pope to create the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC), in 1928. His encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* (1936)

10 Ismar O. Soares, Do Santo Ofício... *op. cit.*, p. 72. This and other translations are my own.

11 For instance, Vatican Radio was established in February 1931 under Pius XI.

mentioned the power and potential of the new communication technology, but was more concerned about the psychological and moral impact it could have on individuals and society.<sup>12</sup> Actually, some progress had been made concerning the Church's defensive attitude, but there was no complete trust in the new media, nor even an attempt to look at them in a different and more positive manner.<sup>13</sup>

It took several years and much struggle to change the Church's perceptions on the media as simply a means of spreading negative and "evil" messages. It was with Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) that the Church increased and deepened its reflections on social relations in a democratic society and on the role of information in building public opinion. In fact, the theme of public opinion has been presented in most of Pius XII's addresses to professional communicators. Convinced by the great significance and influence of the mass media, Pius XII wrote the prominent encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) on the communications field, stressing motion pictures, radio and television. The Church's interest in cinema was demonstrated during Pius XII's pontificate by 46 different interventions on cinema, interventions which showed the increased interest of the Church in the role of social sciences, specifically

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12 Prior to his official statement in *Vigilanti Cura*, Pius XI had referred to cinema on several occasions, especially in his encyclicals *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) and *Casti Conubii* (1930).

13 Benito Spoleitini, *A missão . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

sociology and psychology, in the interpretation of cinematographic phenomena.<sup>14</sup>

### **1.2 *Vigilanti Cura* - to support the *Legion of Decency* on cinema**

The encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* by Pius XI (29.06.1936) was addressed to the bishops of the United States and concerned the *Legion of Decency*. The *Legion* was a national crusade to pressure producers of films, and to boycott films and theaters considered immoral. The crusade was carried out by both priests (Jesuits) and lay people, with members of Protestant denominations and Jews, under the guidance of the bishops of the United States. They began the boycott because of what they considered to be the failure of the directors of the American cinematographic industry to comply with the agreement made by in March 1930 (*Hays Code*) "to safeguard in the future the moral welfare of patrons of the motion pictures."<sup>15</sup> The *Vigilanti Cura* states:

It is promised in this agreement that no film which lowers the moral standard of spectators, which casts discredit on natural or human laws, or arouses sympathy for their violation, will be produced. Nevertheless, in spite of this wise and spontaneously taken decision,

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14 E. Baragli, Comunicazione, Comunione e Chiesa, *op. cit.*, p. 572. Further comments by Ismar O. Soares, Do Santo Ofício à Libertação, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

15 *Vigilanti Cura* has been translated into English as "Improper Motion Pictures." The references to this document will be used in this section as VC and have been taken from The Paulist Press, New York.

those responsible showed themselves incapable of carrying it into effect. It appeared operators were not disposed to stand by principles to which they obligated themselves. (VC p.7)

In this encyclical, Pius XI urges the bishops to continue the film crusade. He points out that due to the bishop's vigilance and because of the pressure of public opinion "the motion picture has shown improvement from the moral standpoint" (VC p.9). With regard to this "improvement", he emphasizes that crime and vice are portrayed less frequently. The Pope also stresses that the *Legion of Decency* has contributed to advancing the cinema "on the road to noble artistic significance by directing it towards the production of classic masterpieces" (VC p.9).

The power of the motion picture is recognized by Pius XI who admits that it has achieved a position of great and universal importance "among modern means of diversion" (VC p.11). The document states:

...At the same time there exists today no means of influencing the masses more potent than the cinema. (...) The power of the motion picture consists in this: that it speaks by means of vivid and concrete imagery, which the mind takes in with enjoyment and without fatigue...The cinema is in reality an object lesson which, for good or for evil, teaches the majority of men more effectively than abstract reasoning... (VC p.12).

The document *Vigilanti Cura* ends with an appeal to all Catholic bishops in the world to follow the example of the American bishops, recommending people "to stay away from motion picture plays which are offensive to truth and Christian morality" (VC p.19). In fact, as this encyclical represents an "order" rather than a doctrine of the Church on

cinema,<sup>16</sup> Pius XI urges all bishops to set up a permanent national reviewing office capable of promoting good motion pictures and classifying others. He also advises that such agency should be entrusted to the "central organization of Catholic Action which is dependent on the bishops" (VC p.21). Therefore, in the long run, the encyclical is nothing more than the passing on of the American experience of the movie crusade by the *Legion of Decency* to the rest of the Church in other countries. In other words, the encyclical reveals a confrontation between a secular art and the effort to contain it as an issue of morality.<sup>17</sup>

However, the significance of this document is that, for the first time, the entire Catholic hierarchy was interested in motion pictures as a problem, and the solution presented was to use the experience of the United States. Also, it was the first time one single technology of communication was addressed, taking into account its quantitative and qualitative characteristics as means of communication. The impact of the image through cinema made communication worldwide in both time and space. And *Vigilanti Cura* affirms that "all was not vanity in the spectacles; behind physiognomies is life, history" (VC p.12). Further, even though the document denounces evil, and the dangers of motion pictures, and recommends caution, the Church does not show a pessimistic

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16 Ismar O. Soares, Do Santo Ofício... op. cit., p. 80.

17 Ibid., p. 80.

view of cinema in *Vigilanti Cura*. On the contrary, it emphasizes the necessity of developing alternative action to oppose what would be considered negative or evil. Finally, the document presents the first framework and criteria to be followed by the national offices to promote good films, to classify others, and to bring this judgment to the attention of the "priests and the faithful" (VC p.21).<sup>18</sup>

### **1.3 *Miranda Prorsus* - the first major assertion on communication**

The encyclical *Miranda Prorsus*, by Pius XII issued on September 8 1957, represents the first major synthesis of the Church's assertions on communication. The significant characteristic of *Miranda Prorsus* is that it deals with motion pictures, radio and television under the heading of "communication."<sup>19</sup> The document is divided into four sections and expresses the Pope's concerns:

We decided to lay before you, Venerable Brethren, our thoughts and anxieties, which you of course also share, concerning the great dangers which could beset Christian

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18 E. Baragli, Comunicazione e Pastorale (Studio Romano della Comunicazione Sociale, Roma, 1974) p. 112-113. Baragli also points out that at the time of *Vigilanti Cura*, the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC) already existed. It was founded during the International Catholic Congress of Cinema in Holland, in 1928, to contribute to the development of cinema as an artistic expression and cultural means of communication; and to promote human and spiritual development of professionals of cinema and spectators. (E. Baragli, Comunione e Pastorale, *op. cit.*, p. 226)

19 *Ibid.*, p. 114.



faith and morals if the powerful inventions of motion pictures, radio, and television were perverted by men to evil uses. We have not, however, passed over the benefits and advantages which these modern instruments can bring. (MP n.171)<sup>20</sup>

The initial position of the Church in this document demonstrates its recognition of the technical advances of cinema as a result of human talent, but finds they are gifts from God:

Our generation takes great pride in the remarkable products of its technology, but even though advances are the result of human talent and toil, they are gifts of God. (MP n.1)

For the first time, the Church welcomes these means of communication, despite its expressions of general uneasiness towards the new technologies. Emphasis is given to the Church's mission to guard people from every danger and to announce the good news of the Gospel, as Pius XII affirms:

The Church welcomed these technological advances as soon as they came into use, but (...) she was also disposed to guard her children from every danger as they entered upon this age of progress. This vigilant care derives from the mission which the Church received from the Divine Redeemer, for these new means of communication clearly have a great influence on the way individuals and human society as a whole think and act. (MP n.3,4)

In this context, *Miranda Prorsus* attempts to explain the rules which must both guide and regulate the activities of the directors of motion pictures, radio and television, and also the actions of those who use such means of communication. In this regard, for instance, Pius XII warns about "erroneous

20 MP is used as abbreviation of *Miranda Prorsus*. The references are taken from "*Miranda Prorsus*," The Papal Encyclicals, 1939-1958, ed. Claudia Carlen (A Consortium Book, McGrath Publishing Company, Raleigh, 1981).

attitudes", recalling that Christian doctrine and the spiritual ends of the techniques of diffusion are opposed to the use of communication media "to advance and advertise political matters or to further their economic purposes" (MP n.30). In other words, for a "simple commercial business" (MP n.31).

Recognizing that, from the new means of communication "there arise many benefits and many evils and dangers, depending upon the use men make of them" (MP n.68), the Church felt the need to supervise the spiritual advantages stemming from these new technologies, but also to protect the integrity of Christian morals in every country:

... we desire that, in every country, if the offices referred to do not already exist, they be established without delay. They are to be entrusted to men skilled in these fields, with a priest, chosen by the bishops, as their adviser. (...) ... it will certainly be very useful if the national offices of each country unite in an international association... (MP n.71,73)

According to Pius XII, the national offices<sup>21</sup> should contribute to instruct and advise people, especially about motion pictures, helping them to exercise Christian responsibility in producing and distributing films, and preparing lists to indicate which contents are in accordance with Catholic morals (MP n.88). At the same time, the Church

21 The international associations referred to by the Pope are the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC), International Catholic Organization for Press (UCIP) and International Catholic Organization for Audiovisual (UNDA). These organizations aim to contribute, promote and coordinate works in the development of new communication technologies, according to their respective sectors, and under the Church's teaching on the matter.

exercised its power by extending its advice to the radio and television fields, and advising on the dangers of mass media and on the precautions that should be taken against the new forms of communication.

Characterized as a pastoral warning, the encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* presents two premises. First, the document recalls and reinforces the Church's past teachings about communication. The Pope stresses that new communication technologies are gifts from God and that they "should be directed to this end: that they might spread the teachings of God" (MP n.24). The second premise is that it is the responsibility of human beings to use these new communication technologies as "precious gifts of God" (MP n.26).

Although the Church was concerned about the development of human beings in their socio-cultural-spiritual aspects, at the time of this encyclical the Pope continued to stress the moral aspects of the means of communication. The general tone of the encyclical, as with the *Vigilanti Cura*, is cautious and protective. Pius XII stresses the potentially corrupting influences of the media. In this regard, civil as well as ecclesiastic authorities were urged to exercise censorship, and national offices were advised to act in a watch-dog capacity. Thus, at least initially, the offices --an extensive network of Roman Catholic organizations concerned with the media-- were set up primarily for negative or defensive

reasons rather than positive ones, i.e., for apostolic purposes.<sup>22</sup>

Although the document addresses motion pictures, radio and television under the heading of communication, it deals with those issues separately. The section on cinema reduces the discussion to a moral argument. In fact, Pius XII urges the national offices, set up by the bishops, to classify films according to moral principles.<sup>23</sup> The Pope also warns actors, directors, producers and distributors of films of their responsibility in dealing with such matters (MP n.104).

With regard to radio, Pius XII emphasized three tasks which should be followed by Catholics who listen to the radio. A careful and intelligent choice of programs must be taken into account: The Catholic listeners are "forbidden by divine law to listen to radio programs (...) dangerous to their faith or morals" (n.15,127). Another duty stresses that listeners should "make known to the directors of the programs their wishes and justifiable criticism" (n.129). The third duty raised by Pius XII relates to the obligation of the Catholics to "encourage reputable programs" (n.133).

Pius XII also recognized the "special power of television." He points out that television,

22 John O. Mills, "God, man and media: on a problem arising when theologians speak of the modern world," Sociology and Theology - alliance and conflict, ed. D. Martin, John O. Mills and W.S.F. Pichering (St. Martin's Press, N. York, 1980) p. 141.

23 This issue was already mentioned in *Vigilanti Cura*. Pius XII reinforces the idea expressed by his predecessor Pius XI.

besides the common element which it shares with the other two means of spreading information about which we have already spoken, has a power and efficacy of its own. (MP n.152)

In this section, The Pope once again asserted his concern about the "dangers" of television and put forward the necessary precautions about this new means of communication. He was worried about the ethical, psychological and even the technical aspects in the preparation of various shows, and that they not be broadcast simply to fill the allotted time. For this reason he calls on "Catholics qualified by their learning, sound doctrine, and knowledge of the arts" to take into consideration this "new art" and to offer their "active cooperation" to make television a means that really contributes to the "mind's development" (n.161).

The novelty of this document, is that it condemns using communication solely for political or economic purposes. According to *Miranda Prorsus*, the Church could not agree to "treat this noble cause as it were solely a business venture" (n.31). Instead the Church encouraged the invention of the new communication technologies to favour and to develop human cultural and spiritual values in society. However, as the document warns, it is always very difficult to say when the ends of new communication technologies are mixed up with, or aimed solely, to "advance and advertise political matters or to further economic purposes" (n.31).

This thesis is based on the understanding that all new communication technologies must aim, implicitly or explicitly,

at contributing to developing human and cultural values, such as through programs related to education. On the other hand, the means of communication have also become the means of production. Communication has been transformed from a social phenomenon into a vast new industry. As the MacBride Report points out, communication "is today an important industry which bulks large in the economy of any nation."<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, in terms of novelty, *Miranda Prorsus* emphasizes the critical formation of spectators, the first time that such an issue is dealt with extensively and in detail by the Church.

#### **1.4 Second Vatican Council - a point of departure**

The Second Vatican Council constituted the most important event of the Catholic Church in this century. It was a solemn gathering of the bishops of the whole world, convoked by Pope John XXIII to deliberate on common important questions.<sup>25</sup> Held in Rome in three important sessions from October 1962 to December 1965, it was the twenty-first Ecumenical Council

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24 Sean MacBride, Many Voices, One World (Unesco, Paris, 1980) p. 96.

25 John XXIII used the Italian term *aggiornamento* (updating, modernization or adaptation) to express his own program for the coming council. According to John XXIII, the Catholic Church needed an *aggiornamento*. In other words, the Church "should not allow itself to become a museum piece. It must not become a relic of the Middle Ages or any past period, but rather a vital part of the modern world as it presses forward into God's future" (Avery Dulles, 1988, p.21).

after a gap of 92 years from Vatican I in 1870. The significant character given to this event as an assembly of ecclesiastical government in deliberating on matters of doctrine and the Church's work in the world, is the main reason I am using the Second Vatican Council as a point of reference for my analysis of the Church's views on communication.

At this stage, it is relevant to define the mission of the Church in the world, and a clear explanation on the matter is given by an American Catholic theologian, Avery Dulles:

The Church's mission is not primarily to gain new recruits for its own ranks, but rather to be of help to all men wherever they are. [According to Dulles and based on the Church's document *Gaudium et Spes*] the special competence of the Church is to keep alive the hope and aspiration of men for the kingdom of God and its values. In the light of this hope, the Church is able to discern the signs of the times and offer guidance and prophetic criticism.<sup>26</sup>

Dulles argues that the Church had been far too long turned in upon itself, increasingly concerned with its own internal affairs. Turning in upon itself it became more and more alienated from modern civilization. According to Dulles, this fact "has brought about in the Church a loss of members, a loss of vitality and a loss of influence."<sup>27</sup> The author points out also that the Church did not keep pace with the

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26 Avery Dulles, Models of the Church: a critical assessment of the Church in all its aspects (Garden City, New York, 1974) p. 91.

27 Ibid., p. 91.

development of human culture regarding its own language and structures.

Therefore, Vatican II<sup>28</sup> was noteworthy in the Catholic Church's attempt to recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings and its often dramatic characteristics. According to an important document issued by Vatican II:

Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence, we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well. (GS n.4)<sup>29</sup>

The principle of *aggiornamento* mentioned previously was applied by Vatican II specifically through the *Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World* and on the Church. The council declared its great respect for the truth and goodness that had been brought into the world through modernization (GS n.42). It stressed that the faithful (the Catholic person) must "live in close union with their contemporaries" (GS n.62). Catholics must, moreover, "blend modern science and its theories and the understanding of the most recent discoveries

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28 In this section I will use both ways to refer to the same Council: Second Vatican Council or Vatican II.

29 GS is the abbreviation for "The Church in the modern world" (*Gaudium et Spes* - GS), document by the Second Vatican Council. References to this document are taken from "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world," Documents of Vatican II, ed. W. Abbot (Guild Press, N.York, 1966).



with Christian morality and doctrine" (GS n.62). In accordance with the document, it is in this way that the Church will be able to keep pace with the times and enter fully into the current events in the present age (GS n.62).

Approaching the subject of the Church itself, Vatican II depicted the Church in terms of the biblical image of the *People of God*. The document on the Church itself (*Lumen Gentium*) states that "holding sinners in its embrace, the Church is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified."<sup>30</sup> The great significance of such an assertion is that it opposes the commonly-held belief in recent centuries that the Church is only a divine institution without blemish or wrinkle.

With regard to the social mission of the Church, it is worth mentioning that since the Reformation,<sup>31</sup> the Catholic

30 Ibid., p. 22. "Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n.8) quoted in A. Dulles.

31 The Reformation was a religious movement of the 1500s that gave birth to Protestantism. The causes of Reformation were religious, an attempt to reform the structures of the Church, which was much involved with temporal power and had neglected its spiritual leadership. Cultural causes also contributed to the Reformation, for instance, the Renaissance movement, returning to classical studies. The interest in ancient civilizations encouraged by the Renaissance affected religion specifically in the study of languages (Hebrew and Greek), enabling scholars to read the Scriptures in their originals. Printed books (in the late 1400s) also spread learning and increased education during the Renaissance and Reformation. In political terms, during the Middle Ages, the Pope, as the Holy Roman Emperor, claimed to be the secular head of Christianity. However, kings increased their power over their own people, opposing Papal control and influence in their countries. In the economic aspect, Europe started to change from an agricultural economy under the control of local lords and prince-bishops to an urban economy with merchants trading

Church has been inclined to describe its mission "as an exclusively religious one", aiming at preparing individuals to attain eternal life by developing faith, worship and right behavior. However, as Dulles adds, there was a gradual movement in the Church, introduced by the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, to assume responsibility "to teach the principles of a just social order." Such a just social order, however, was taken "in terms of conformity to the natural law rather than as an implementation of the Gospel."

With John XXIII and Vatican II the focus shifted. Social justice and peace came to be seen "as a requirement of the Church's mission to carry on the work of Christ, as he had compassion for the poor and the oppressed." This change of attitude was fully elaborated in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, and gained attention all over the world. In fact, this new stance of the Church was reflected in the encyclical by Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), and more clearly in the synod document, *Justice in the World* (1971). In the latter document, the

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wool, cloth, and other manufactured goods. Cities started to grow wealthy and independent. As a result of the Reformation, Europe was divided between Catholic countries of the south and the Protestant countries of the north. The Reformation also stimulated many reforms within the Catholic Church during the late 1500s and the 1600s called Counter Reformation. In political and social aspects, the Reformation contributed to the growth of nationalism, the increase of industry and commerce. Literacy was promoted and also educational curriculum was provided based on Greek and Roman literature. Protestants and Catholics both contributed to great scientific achievements, including the discoveries of Galileo and Sir Isaac Newton. Quoted in Lewis W. Spitz, The World Book Encyclopedia, (Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago/London/Paris, 1974) Vol.16, pp. 186-189.

Church depicts the struggle for justice and the transformation of society as a required dimension of evangelization. In this regard, Popes and episcopal conferences have given attention to the matter according to different situations throughout the world. It is in this context of the Church's special solidarity with the poor and oppressed that one should comprehend the choice of a "preferential option" for the poor by the Church in Latin America.<sup>32</sup>

Like most other councils in the Church, Vatican II addressed a variety of issues ranging from questions about the theology of revelation to questions on marriage and family life. While the majority of Catholics were pleased with the results of the council, Vatican II has also become controversial. The conservatives censured Vatican II for ecumenical and modernist tendencies, as they insist on continuity with the past. For them, the primary emphasis should have been on Catholic doctrines, including the primacy of the Pope and his infallibility. On the other hand, the progressives complained that while the council had made some progress, it had failed to deal with the Church's hierarchical structures.<sup>33</sup> The progressives argue that the real meaning of

32 Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism (Harper & Row, Cambridge, N. York, 1988) p. 32. The theology of poverty and development is further explored by John Paul II in his 1987 encyclical Concern for the Social Order (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).

33 Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20. In this chapter, I refer to conservative and progressive side of the Church in general, as I am dealing with events by the official Church from Vatican. However, the

the council is to be found in its innovations, applauding the Vatican II decision to break with the juridicism, clericalism and triumphalism of recent epochs. For them it signifies the beginnings of a "more liberal and healthier Catholicism."<sup>34</sup>

From 1965 to the present the Catholic Church stands under the aegis of Vatican II. To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the conclusions of Vatican II, John Paul II announced an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held at the end of 1985 (November 25 to December 8). Asserting that Vatican II is still the fundamental event in the life of the modern Church, the Pope emphasized the necessity to exchange and examine experiences about the application of the council in different parts of the world, and also to promote further study of how to incorporate Vatican II into the ongoing life of the Church. Reports from 95 out of the 136 episcopal conferences requested gave to the Synod an informative appraisal of the state of the Catholic Church all over the world. In fact, according to A. Melloni "the bishops' replies are paradoxically the most enduring fruit of the Synod."<sup>35</sup> Melloni's statement is based on the fact that the two documents issued by the Synod<sup>36</sup> do not

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terms "conservative" and "progressive" are applied also in the following chapters, in relation to liberation theology. See Introduction and Chapter II.

34 Ibid., p. 19.

35 Alberto Melloni quoted in Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

36 The two Synod documents are Message to the People of God and the Final Report.

convey the content of the Synod's meetings and the working papers.

In comparison with Vatican II, Dulles and most other commentators have noted an almost total absence of the theme of the Church as "People of God." While the Council had described it as the dominant image of the Church, the term hardly appears except in the title of the Synod message. Although some of the Synod material was favorable to the image of the Church as "People of God", a number of criticisms were voiced. Therefore, some caution was taken about this theme, and it led the official reporter of the Synod, Cardinal Danneels, to note in his Initial Report that

Above all, the concept of the Church as People of God has been defined in an ideological manner and detached from complementary concepts in the council: body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Although a theological matter, the Synod's emphasis on the Church as "mystery", and its avoidance of the image of the "People of God" in the documents has great significance for this dissertation. Undoubtedly, the Synod demonstrated a fear of the tendency to create opposition between the hierarchical Church and a "people's church." It also explains the absence of most evaluation of the council by the Bishops Conference Reports in the Synod documents. Although Pope John Paul II stated that Vatican II remains the fundamental event in the life of the modern Church, the appraisal of the council by

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37 Quoted in Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism, op. cit., p. 190.

different countries revealed a diversity of opinions. The reports from Third World countries such as Brazil<sup>38</sup> and the Philippines showed a great satisfaction with the innovations introduced by Vatican II. Countries such as Scandinavia, England, Wales, Canada and the United States depicted a moderate optimism and a desire to follow the liberalizing reform of Vatican II. However, reports from continental Europe reflected a pessimistic view. The latter registered a feeling that the Church had been (at least for some decades) in decline.

Depicting the Church's tendencies today is of fundamental importance, as future pastoral work will follow from them. Two major schools of thought, each with prominent leaders<sup>39</sup> emerged during the Synod of bishops (1985). The first school of thought, the conservative side, who are against modernist tendencies, was led by German Cardinals Ratzinger and Hoeffner. This school had a "supernaturalistic" point of view, depicting the Church as "an island of grace in a world given over to sin." Without opposing Vatican II, these bishops suggested that the council was somewhat naive. For they believed it would be a mistake to continue in the

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38 Ibid., p. 185.

39 The following analysis is based on Hermann-Joseph Pottmeyer, "The Church as Mysterium and as Institution," Synod 1985 - An evaluation (ed. Alberigo and Provost) pp.99-109, and quoted in Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism, op. cit., pp. 190-193.

structural reform and modernization attempted after Vatican II.

The world is falling into misery, division, and violence. It is manifestly under the power of the evil one. Catholics who seek friendship with the world easily fall into materialism, consumerism, and religious indifference. Striving for openness to the world, the Church, in the postconciliar period, allowed itself to be contaminated...<sup>40</sup>

The second major school of thought was led by Cardinal Hume of England and many others, among them Bishops James Malone and Bernard Hubert --presidents of the United States and Canadian bishops' conferences at that time. This school took its inspiration from John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, the followers of this school held humanistic and communitarian views. Those bishops represented the progressive side of the Church and were convinced about the progress made as a result of the council. They stressed that any existing disappointment among people today, has not been caused by the attention given to structural reform. Rather, it is because the needed reforms "have been resisted and partly blocked."

The Catholic Church has not yet succeeded in giving its laity an adequate sense of participation in and corresponsibility for the mission of the Church. The urgent need today is for a further development of collegial and synodal structures so that the Church may become a free and progressive society, a sign of unity in diversity, at home in every nation and sociological group.<sup>41</sup>

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40 Avery Dulles, The Reshaping of Catholicism, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

As mentioned previously, these two schools of thought imply very different programs for the future work in the Church. Putting the accent on "worship and holiness", the first school desires a Church "more separate from the world." The second school --the communitarian one-- wants the Church "to become more internally diversified" and also "more involved in the promotion of peace, justice, and reconciliation."<sup>42</sup> These two schools of thought, although referring to the Catholic bishops participating in the Synod (1985), can be considered as a continuation of the two tendencies --conservative and progressive-- identified previously, and related to Vatican II.

### **1.5 *Inter Mirifica* - the official Church's acceptance of means of communication to develop a pastoral work**

The decree *Inter Mirifica* is the second of sixteen documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. It was approved on December 4 1963, and marks the first time that a general council of the Church addressed itself to the problem of communication. In fact, this document has great

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 192. Dulles also remarks that at the Synod (1985) not all bishops could fit into the two sides of the Church (conservative and progressive ) considered in this chapter. For instance, bishops of liberation theology wanted a Church more politically involved. However, in dealing with the Latin American Church in the following chapters, this thesis takes the progressive Church as the one which follows liberation theology in practice, according to clarifications provided in the Introduction and Chapter II of this dissertation.



significance, far more for its form than for its content. For the first time, a general document of the Church asserts the *obligation* and *right* of the Church to use the instruments of social communication. Therefore, *Inter Mirifica* also marks the first general mandate of the Church to the clergy and laity on the use of mass media communication. Now there is an official position of the Roman Catholic Church on that subject:

The Catholic Church has been commissioned by the Lord Christ to bring salvation to every man, and is consequently bound to proclaim the Gospel. Hence she judges it part of her duty to preach the news of redemption with the aid of the instruments of social communication, and to instruct mankind as well in their use and possession of all instruments of this kind which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for every activity undertaken on behalf of man's salvation. (IM n.3)<sup>43</sup>

The document refers to the instruments of communication such as the press, the cinema, radio, television and similar media which can be properly classified as instruments of social communication (IM n.1). In listing media, however, the decree shows its concerns with what had been commonly classified as the mass media until that period. No significant attention is given directly in the document to the forces that articulate the mass media --for instance, advertising, marketing, public relations, and propaganda.<sup>44</sup>

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43 IM is the abbreviation for *Inter Mirifica* in this section, and the references are taken from The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott (Guild Press, N.York, 1966) pp. 319-331.

44 Thomas Burke, "Communications", The Documents of Vatican II, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

The decree *Inter Mirifica* was prepared in advance of the first session of the Second Vatican Council by the Preparatory Secretariat for the Press and Spectacle (November 1960 to May 1962).<sup>45</sup> The draft of the document was approved by the Central Preparatory Commission of the Council. Further, in November 1962, the document was debated in the first session of the council and the schema was approved, but the text was considered too extensive. The drastic reduction of the text from 114 paragraphs to 24 was accomplished during the first period of the council and was submitted again to the assembly in November 1963. The results of ballots reached 1,598 "Yes" and 503 "No". *Inter Mirifica* was the document of Vatican II approved with the highest number of opposition ballots.

Baragli suggests the high level of opposition was due to the simultaneous publication of several critiques of the document by journalists in influential European and North-American newspapers. There were three sets of critiques: French, American and German. The French critique was started by a French bishop, Msgr. P. Schmitt, opposing the schema of the decree during the assembly of bishops.<sup>46</sup> His criticisms found echo immediately by R. Laurentin in *Le Figaro*; H.

45 The following historical analysis of *Inter Mirifica* is based on E. Baragli, L'Inter Mirifica (Studio Romano della Comunicazione Sociale, Roma, 1969). Baragli was a member of the Preparatory Commission for the document.

46 Msgr. P. Schmitt was bishop of Metz (France) and addressed his critique on the schema of the decree during a French Bishops' Assembly in S. Louis, November 13 1963. (E. Baragli, L'Inter Mirifica, op. cit., p. 144)

Fesquet, in *Le Monde*; and A. Wenger and N. Copin, in *La Croix*. The latter launched the slogan: "The schema lacks in theological content, philosophical depth and sociological ground."

The second group, the Americans, began to show their positions at the United Bishop's Press panel session, November 14 1963. At that session, the Jesuit father Gustave Weigel said the decree "does not strike me as being very remarkable." Stating that the document would not produce great changes, he claimed that the decree "does not contain novel positions." In Weigel's view, *Inter Mirifica* assembles and officially states "a number of points previously stated and thought on a less official level."

American journalists reacted to Article 12 of the decree which related to freedom of the press. The article stresses that whereas professionals were listed as having the chief moral duties in respect to the proper use of these instruments, the civic authority is said to have special duties in terms of the common good.

In consonance with the right of information averred earlier in the document, Art. 12 places as the first duty of civic authority to foster and protect a true and just availability of information, since the progress of modern society depends on it.<sup>47</sup>

In order to prevent the document's approval, American journalists circulated hand-outs stressing that the decree's approach to communication was vague and moralist, speaking of

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47 Thomas Burke, "Communications" in The documents of Vatican II, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

a type of press that did not exist and should be seen as a mere pastoral exhortation. The journalists also claimed that the decree was trying to coerce the activities of lay journalists, and that the decree granted to the state rights that were considered unconstitutional in the American Constitution. They wrote that the document "seems to give the state (*auctoritas civilis*) an authority over mass media which in some countries like the United States is prescribed by constitutional law."<sup>48</sup> Lastly, the journalists pointed out that the decree, "as it now stands", may one day be cited as a classic example of how the Second Vatican Council failed to come to grips with the world around it.<sup>49</sup>

The German group demonstrated its opposition by sending a letter to the Tenth Council Commission, who were responsible for the document, proposing a new study and another schema on the issue. Although the letter was signed by 97 Fathers from different nations, the Tenth Council Commission could not take action in as much as it would surpass its powers. The German group then circulated a hand-out addressed to the Bishops, and delivered at St. Peter Square right before the council session on November 25 1963, calling for a *non placet* vote (it does not please, or negative vote) on the Communications scheme. The short note declared that the document was hardly fitting

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48 American journalists' message handed out at the St. Peter Square on November 16 1963, quoted in E. Baragli, L'Inter Mirifica, *op. cit.*, p. 618.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 618-619.



concept of technology which did not just refer to the techniques and/or diffusion of techniques, but included the human acts involved, which is, after all, the Church's main concern in its pastoral work. Also, the phrase "Social communication" was preferred to "mass communication" and "mass media" due to the possible ambiguity with "massification." The Church wanted to assume a more optimistic view of communication in "social matters." In other words, it wanted to embrace not only the technical factor, but also the human aspect, i.e., the agent who operates the techniques as well as the instruments of communication.

In the opening paragraphs of the first chapter, *Inter Mirifica* asserts, for the first time in a general document of the Church, the *obligation* and *right* of the Church to use the instruments of social communication.

The Catholic Church has been commissioned by the Lord Christ to bring salvation... to proclaim the gospel. Hence she judges it is part of her duty to preach the news of redemption with the aid of the instruments of social communication... Therefore, the Church claims as a birthright the use and possession of all instruments of this kind which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for every activity undertaken on behalf of man's salvation. (IM n.3)

Critics such as J. Vieujean<sup>52</sup> were surprised that a council document started by affirming the Church's rights of the use of "instruments of communication." Baragli suggests that, because the first chapter deals with premises of the

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52 Quoted in E. Baragli, L'Inter Mirifica, op. cit., p. 313.

teaching of the Church, it was the only place in the document to make such affirmation. He argues that it was a logical demand imposed by the structure of the decree. According to Baragli, the emphasis should be put on the "birthright" (*nativum*). Therefore, it should not be understood as right of possession, but as part of the Church's mission to educate and to contribute to the development of humankind. The last, but not the least, reason for such assertion was the fact that the Church's birthright to the use and possession of all technologies of communication was denied in several countries under totalitarian regimes.

The major contribution of *Inter Mirifica*, however, was its assertion about the right to information:

Hence there exists within human society a right to information about affairs which affect men individually or collectively, and according to the circumstances of each. (IM n.5)

Considered probably the most important statement of the document, this paragraph demonstrates that the right to information was seen by the Church not as a matter of commercial interests, but as a social good. Seventeen years after *Inter Mirifica*, the MacBride Report *Many voices, One World - communication and society today and tomorrow* (Unesco - 1980) would advance the notion of "right to information" to the "right to communicate."

Communication, nowadays, is a matter of human rights. But it is increasingly interpreted as the right to communicate, going beyond the right to receive

communication or to be given information.  
(MacBride:172)<sup>53</sup>

The first chapter of *Inter Mirifica* also deals with themes such as public opinion, considered previously by Pope Pius XII. It also addresses people who are not only actively engaged with the means of communication, but also receivers of the messages.

Article 12 was one of the most polemical. It discusses the duty of civil authority to foster and protect a true and just availability of information. This article, as mentioned previously, has been interpreted, especially by some American journalists, as being against the freedom of the press. Actually, *Inter Mirifica* justifies the official censure by the State in order to protect youth from "literature and shows which could be injurious to them at their age" (IM n.12).

On the other hand, article 12 is not very clear even in its original (Latin) because the decree asserts *civilis auctoritas* (civil authority) in one place, and further, *publica potestas* (public authority). The decree uses both terms with the same meaning, but translations into different languages have frequently taken both terms under the heading of "civil society." Nevertheless, attributing rights and duties to the civil society is not the same as ascribing them to public authorities. It is very clear in article 12 that the Church should have done more research on such issues and

53 It is worth mentioning also that the MacBride approach to the right to communicate is a call for democratization of communication, which will be considered further in the present dissertation.



countered with the assessment of experts in the field, even in the Catholic area, in order to offer more adequate solutions as a proposal of *aggiornamento*.<sup>54</sup>

The second chapter of *Inter Mirifica* deals with the pastoral activity of the Church regarding the instruments of social communication. In this pastoral section of the decree, both clergy and laity are exhorted to apply themselves to the use of the media in the Church's pastoral work. A number of general directives are given regarding Catholic education, the Catholic press, and the establishment of offices of social communications at the diocesan, national and international levels of Church governance (IM n.19-21). Provision is also made for devoting a day each year to instructing people in their duties on communication subjects (World Communications Day). Likewise, provision for the issuance of a pastoral instruction on communications was to be drawn up after the council under the supervision of the proposed office for the means of social communication which was to be set up at the Holy See (IM n.23).

Although Pope Paul VI asserted that *Inter Mirifica* was "not of small value", commentators agree that if such decree had been discussed later in the council, after the many sessions devoted to the Church in the modern world and to religious freedom, the text of *Inter Mirifica* might have been somewhat richer.

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54 Ismar O. Soares, Do Santo Ofício ..., op. cit., p. 103.

As it now stands, it seems somewhat ironic that the Church, which is basically concerned with communicating truth and life to the world, and has shown, especially in the period of the council, an awareness of the importance of mass means of communication, issued the slightest document of the council on the media of social communication.<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately the decree looks backward, rather than forward, inward rather than outward. It does not draw on the creative achievements of the secular mass communication profession and practice. On the contrary, it deals with "outdated catholic misconceptions" and "deals primarily with one Church rather than with Christianity at large."<sup>56</sup>

Despite the limitations pointed out thus far, positive aspects of *Inter Mirifica* should be emphasized. To sum up, *Inter Mirifica* can be considered as a starting point in dealing with media, rather than an end in itself. It was the first time that an ecumenical council of the Church addressed the problem of communication, and was therefore a watershed in the discussion of the Church. The decree was an advancement on other documents in terms of recognizing the right to information (n.5), and the freedom of personal choice, rather than prohibition, among the various media (IM n.9). Beyond stressing the duty to form and to voice worthy views on public affairs (public opinion), the decree assumes the media as indispensable instruments for the Church's activities.

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55 Thomas Burke, "Communications", *op. cit.*, p. 317.

56 Stanley I. Stuber, "A Response", The Documents of Vatican II, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

Finally, *Inter Mirifica* introduced World Communication Day, the only one established by a council of the Church.

### **1.6 *Communio et Progressio* - to carry out Vatican II**

The Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* was promulgated by Paul VI on May 23 1971 and represents, thus far, the foremost document of the Church on communications. As a pastoral response to the decree *Inter Mirifica* (1963) of Vatican II, the Instruction *Communio et Progressio* is signed by the bishops Martin O'Connor (president of the Commission), Augustin Ferrari Toniolo (pro-president), and Msgr. Andre Deskur (secretary).<sup>57</sup> The instruction encompasses 187 articles and distinguishes itself from the decree *Inter Mirifica* particularly by its style of writing.

Marked by the openness which characterized the documents of the council and the movement of mentalities in the following years, *Communio et Progressio* is relevant for its tone and for its development of the ways socio-pastoral work might use the means of communication: hope and optimism are present and the moralizing character has disappeared. The

<sup>57</sup> *Communio et Progressio* constitutes a pastoral document of the Church. It does not have a dogmatic character, nor is it an encyclical written by a Pope, nor a document of the Church's council as is *Inter Mirifica*. *Communio et Progressio* was written by a Pontifical Commission. However, it is an official document which received its approval and promulgation by Pope Paul VI. In fact, the complete title of the Instruction is "Pastoral Instruction for the application of the Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on the Means of Social Communication."

text takes up again the great convictions of *Inter Mirifica* regarding the media, but completes and presents them in a more coherent and current way. Another characteristic of the document is the fact that it considers contemporary society, raising questions about the presence of communication technologies in the evolving world: "...the Church needs to know contemporary reactions to ideas and events, whether they be catholic or not" (CP n.122).<sup>58</sup>

A third characteristic, is that the document takes into account the specificity of the different means of communication, including theater. It considers the social situation of the users to build up projects of communication in the Church by "proper pastoral structures" (CP n.162) and calling upon "trained personnel" (CP n.164). Finally, *Communio et Progressio* asserts that social communication is an element which articulates any Church's activities (pastoral work), recognizing the legitimacy of the formation of public opinion within the Church.

Since the development of public opinion within the Church is essential, individual Catholics have the right to all the information they need to play their active role in the life of the Church. In practice this means that communications media must be available for the task. (CP n.119)

The first part of *Communio et Progressio* is based on doctrine. Entitled "The Christian view of the means of social

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58 The abbreviation CP refers to *Communio et Progressio* in this section, and quotations are from Pastoral Instruction for the application...on the Means of Social Communication, (St. Paul Editions, Boston).

communication: basic points of doctrine", the instruction brings up elements of doctrine which did not appear in the preceding text, and exposes the conceptual framework with which the media are comprehended. In other words, it deals with the theological aspect in order to justify the right and the duty of the Church to utilize the means of communication. The primary principle announced is that "these technical advances have the high purpose of bringing men into closer contact with one another" (CP n.6). Also "the unity and advancement of men living in society" are considered "the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses" (CP n.1). The Church sees in the development of media a response to the "divine command to 'possess and master the world'" (CP n.7). Therefore, in the Church's view it would be an "act of cooperation" in the "creation and conservation" of the world.

The second part of the instruction, "The contribution of the communications media to human progress", recalls the roles of communications in society. Then it indicates the best conditions for highlighting the means of communication corresponding to the aim expressed in the first doctrinal part. According to the instruction, the role of the means of communication is to operate in order to bring about unity, and to "tear down the barriers that time and space have erected between men" (CP n.20). To pursue this aim, the Church points to the importance of *public opinion*: "The means of communication are a public forum where every man may exchange

ideas" (CP n.24). The document also points out the right to be informed and to inform (CP n.33), and that the means of communication should be instruments for education, culture and leisure (CP n.48-53). As part of the best conditions for the proper functioning of the media in society, the instruction emphasizes *training* for communicators and recipients; cooperation between citizens and the civil authorities.

"The commitment of Catholics in the media", the third part of the document, deals with "the specifically Christian and Catholic contribution to human advancement" (CP n.101). This part is concerned with the role of the media in the lives of Catholics, and it deals mainly with the contribution of Catholics to social communication. However, the document recognizes that no contribution can be made if there is no attention to sufficient and timely training.

It is also in this section that themes such as public opinion, and dialogue in the Church appear: the Church "needs public opinion in order to sustain a giving and taking between her members" (CP n.115). Furthermore, the document points out the necessity of dialogue between the Church and the world. It "does not speak and listen to her own members alone; her dialogue is with the whole world" (CP n.22). And lastly, the third part of *Communio et Progressio* proposes adequate pastoral structure and formation of organizations to develop specific work with media, in as much as the Church considers such a task part of its mission. In this regard, the Church

reaffirms that "the latest media of social communication are indispensable means for evangelization" (CP n.163).

In the conclusion, *Communio et Progressio* admits that the document only lays some guidelines after considering the general situation that prevails in social communication. It states: "As things stand at present, it would not be reasonable to try to be more precise and detailed" (CP n.183). Therefore, the instruction preferred to base its consideration on "certain immutable principles" founded on the gospel's good news and upon the dignity of man (CP n.183).

However, while *Communio et Progressio* demonstrated a positive advancement, the document showed some ambiguities as well. On the one hand, it moved beyond *Inter Mirifica*, showing a remarkable switch of emphasis: the media are no longer viewed primarily as potential menaces but as beneficial forces. It also freed itself from a moralistic discourse, reducing the dogmatic manner to address the media, and creating conditions and space to take into consideration the different tendencies of modern society. For instance, the document asserts:

It is obvious that there has been a decline in moral standards in many areas of life today... It is easy to find evidence of this decline in all the means of social communication. But how far these means must be blamed for the decline is open to question (...) It is however impossible to put the means of social communication into a quite separate category from that of the every-day life and attitudes of the people. (CP n.22)

On the other hand, the document praises the idea of technological progress pervaded by idealism. The text deals

with the media designed to be put into practice in a society in which there is no internal clash. Despite the seven years it took to prepare this document, the commission failed to come to grips with the political aspect of the media. In fact, the document deals with communication without referring to its political and economic dimension at all. In this regard, one may question how the Church can attribute a social function to the media to bring about "communion" and "progress" without discussing the fact that the media are part of, led by, and often completely controlled and dominated by an economic and political system. Since the document lacks in dealing with the political and economic dimension of the mass media, the instruction makes claim for a sense of equality that does not exist.

The modern media of social communication offer man of today a great round table.(...) The torrent of information and opinion pouring through these channels makes every man a partner in the business of the human race. This interchange creates the proper conditions for that mutual and sympathetic understanding which leads to universal progress. (CP n.19)

Ironically, the instruction does not keep pace with the contemporary world in terms of society, contradicting, therefore, the Vatican II document on the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*), and the instruction itself, when it states that the Church "needs to know contemporary reactions to ideas and events, whether they be Catholic or not" (CP n.122).

Unfortunately, the instruction remains at the ideal level applying ethical rules which are practically impossible to



adhere to in social life. For instance, the document n.30 appeals for the correct use of the advertising techniques:

Any propaganda that deliberately misrepresents the real situation, or that distorts men's minds with half-truths, selective reporting or serious omissions, that diminishes man's legitimate freedom of decision, this propaganda should be rejected. (CP n.30)

In this context of "idealism", the document also neglects the ideological function that mass media may have. For instance, contemporary critics have suggested that the mass media are instruments of ideological domination on behalf of the ruling classes: in this view, the media distort relevant information, enabling the manipulation of the people's consciousness, or shaping the framework of common sense in a manner that reinforces social relations of domination.<sup>59</sup>

Lastly, John O. Mills raises a critique concerning the Church's claim for the "unifying" effect of the media in society. The critique concerns the function of the mass media in society. Mills questions the foundation in sociological research for such a statement: that the media promote social cohesion, and this greater cohesion is automatically beneficial.<sup>60</sup>

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59 Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect'," Mass Communication and society, ed. James Curran et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1977).

60 *Communio et Progressio* states that the media "unite men in brotherhood" (n.2); they are "indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern society" (n.6); they "can contribute a great deal to human unity" (n.9); they are, in short, "powerful instruments for progress" (n.21).

The media are certainly important technologies to carry out the Church's mission, as was expressed by *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio*, but the nature and extent of their importance can only be reliably assessed within the context of society as a whole (Curran, 1977). There is growing consensus among media sociologists, for instance, that "modes of communication... are determined by the structure of social relations" (Murdock and Golding, 1977), and more attention is being given by researchers to examining the role of media organizations (Elliot, 1972), and the utilization of the media by economically dominant interests (Burns, 1977).<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, Mills concludes that

It is doubtful that according to acceptable sociological criteria the media can be seen as an independent formative influence that can be employed *directly* to transform society ... They are important because means of disseminating communications on such a scale, means rightly or wrongly feared or bought by such a range of dominant power groups, cannot fail to be important in a society of our type. But it cannot hereby be assumed that the instantaneous reception of identical messages... by a great number and variety of people... is likely to have a *cohesive* effect on those people. It may uniformize the society, but not necessarily increase unity...<sup>62</sup>

In this regard, the fundamental premise of *Communio et Progressio* --the "unifying" effect of the media-- lacks a sociological analysis of the media because it fails to consider the whole society. It is expected that in the following documents of the Church on communication, the media

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61 All authors are quoted in John O. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

62 John O. Mills, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

will be treated in all their dimensions if the Church wants to keep pace with, and dialogue with the modern world.<sup>63</sup>

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63 Since 1967, the Church has celebrated *World Communication Day*, established by Vatican II. For the occasion there is a special theme chosen by the Vatican. The Pope usually gives a brief message on mass communication in relation to the specific theme. In general, the Pope's address carries statements already pointed out by the Church in previous periods. In May 1989, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications issued a brief document "Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: a Pastoral Response". The "Pastoral Response" deals with the effects of pornography and violence; cause of the problem and responses to the problem, and constitutes a reminder of the moral principles. It does not introduce any new views or considerations regarding mass media.

## CHAPTER II

### LIBERATION THEOLOGY - A NEW WAY TO EVANGELIZE

Communication has been an important part of the traditional practice of the Church since the Latin American countries were colonized by Spain and Portugal. Throughout the various epochs of Latin American history, the Catholic Church has applied a number of different ways of using communication to carry out its mission of evangelization. In the evolution of this relationship, between the Church and communication in Latin America, there has been a continuing concern to provide Latin Americans with the necessary basis to comprehend their realities. There have been failures, especially in the past, when the Church stood allied to the power groups.

However, with the introduction of modernization, and the loss of its prestige among ruling classes, the Church began to turn itself to the marginalized, redefining its mission among those who now constitute the core of the Church's evangelization programme. In the last three decades, much of the source of inspiration for the Church's evangelizing activities has been that of liberation theology.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The concept of *evangelization* used in this dissertation is based on the Church's document On Evangelization in the modern world by Pope Paul VI on December 8, 1975 (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*). "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity" (n.18). "Strata of humanity which are transformed: for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power

In order to provide the necessary theoretical and pastoral framework to explain the changes in the Church's thought and activities in Latin America, specifically in communication matters, this chapter first discusses this new theology born in Latin America in the 1960s. A major inspiration for liberation theology was Vatican II (1962-1965) and the ensuing encyclicals, and they are again our point of departure. The chapter then provides a historical view of liberation theology, the significance of developing a new way of practicing theology, and the interpretation of the term *liberation* according to the liberation theologians. Since liberation theology is still a controversial issue both inside and outside the Church, this concludes with an overview of the main critiques of liberation theology.

## 2.1 Historical perspective

Liberation theology traces its origin to the early 1960s, when the official Church began to reevaluate its traditional role in society. This new trend was reflected in the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and

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of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (n.19). Therefore, the Gospel has to be proclaimed in an actual situation, with attention to its implications for the reordering of society. In this regard, faith is not a mere matter of words or concepts, but it implies also the social implications of the Gospel (A. Dulles, "The meaning of faith considered in relationship to justice," The faith that does justice, ed. John Haughey (Paulist Press, New York, 1977)).

*Pacem in Terris* (1963), which emphasized the need for structural changes, the human right to a decent standard of living, and to education and political participation. John XXIII stressed that the Church is a community of equals and that it should commit itself to development, understood as changes in society.

In the encyclicals mentioned, the Pope emphasized teachings about workers and unions, matters which had been considered by preceding Popes. For example, in *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Leo XIII rejected class struggle and pictured the socioeconomic situation as one in which a "very few rich have inordinate power over all the rest."<sup>2</sup> However, Pope John XXIII spoke also about the international order which was changing dramatically, and he discussed just wages and strikes, and economic aid as well. Actually, John XIII opened up a new topic: he warned against colonialism and new forms of imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

From 1962 to 1965, the Church held the Second Vatican Council,<sup>4</sup> where the Catholic bishops called on the Church to dialogue with the world, to confront it, to live within it, and to influence it. The council was particularly significant in the new concepts of the Church, society and the

2 Edward Cleary, Crisis and Change - the Church in Latin America today, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1985) p. 56.

3 Ibid., p. 59.

4 The importance of the Second Vatican Council for the Church is discussed in Chapter I.

relationship between the two. These were new concepts because, in earlier Catholic thinking, the Church confined itself to spiritual matters. Rethinking its nature in this world, the Church defined itself as a "Pilgrim People of God", a living, changing community of the faithful making its way through history. In this regard, Vatican II issued a most influential document *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* with special emphasis on historical process and change and on a more active role for the Church in society. In other words, in that document, Vatican II links Christians "with grief and anxieties unique to contemporary people, especially with those who are poor or afflicted" (G.Spes, 1965).

In this context, the Church, at Vatican II, began to develop a general interest in sociological analysis, especially on theories of modernization and development. The council encouraged the Church to enter into a dialogue "with the world." However, if the "world" was viewed optimistically from Europe as the one of rapid technological and social change, a Third World angle of vision revealed a world of vast poverty. The interest and concern of the Church about social analysis was soon expanded in Latin America where the Church posed such questions as: what does it mean to proclaim the good news (Gospel) to the poor in a Christian world where the majority of people are illiterate, politically powerless, and subject to repressive military dictatorship?<sup>5</sup>

5 Irene Geniat, Gustavo Gutierrez and social change, (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Unpublished paper presented

Using the Second Vatican Council as theoretical framework, liberation theology had its first public presence at the Chimbote Conference when Gustavo Gutierrez<sup>6</sup> presented a major statement of Latin American thought in July 1968, immediately preceding the Medellin conference. The nucleus of Gutierrez's presentation was that

it was not development that Latin America needed but liberation. He saw development as an idea that was promoted by non-Latin Americans (...) and was not the response called for after meditating on the situation in the light of sacred scripture and tradition, especially the social justice tradition of the Church.<sup>7</sup>

Gutierrez's presentation was the result of earlier work and discussions by Latin American theologians, starting in 1964. Along with an analysis of economic and cultural dependency, the Latin American theologians discovered that *theology* on the continent was also dependent on other European theologies --for instance, "secular theology", "theology of revolution", "theology of development" and "political theology". They came to the conclusion that such "theologies" were too limited and reduced to a narrow national perspective.

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at the International Conference on Liberation Theology, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, 1986.

6 Gustavo Gutierrez, widely known as the father of liberation theology, is under two-year-old investigation by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Although the investigation has been transferred to Peru, Gutierrez was asked to revise all his work and to show his works before they are published to the archbishop Augusto V. Alzamorra, archbishop of Lima. (Catholic New Times. Toronto, November, 1990. Vol 14, N.20).

7 Edward Cleary, Crisis and change, *op. cit.*, p.78.



Therefore, they concluded, "the injustices of international imperialism continue unperceived and unexposed."<sup>8</sup>

In other words, it was necessary to think about faith *within* the existing realities, realities which differed from the developed countries.<sup>9</sup> There was a need to articulate a theology for the Latin American socioeconomic and political context --an oppressed reality which needed liberation. The major interacting tasks, therefore were, first of all, a realistic analysis and delineation of the human and religious situation in Latin America, and second, a theological reinterpretation, the creation of a Latin American theology in the light of Vatican II.

At the same time, the Church in Latin America was concerned with how to put the *aggiornamento*<sup>10</sup> recommended by John XXIII into practice. To do this, the bishops met in Medellin, Colombia in 1968,<sup>11</sup> with Pope Paul VI in attendance

8 Enrique Dussel, A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981).

9 For a fuller account of different interpretation of faith, see Avery Dulles, The meaning of faith.... *op. cit.*

10 Reference to this term is made in Chapter I.

11 Some authors as Renato Poblete ("From Medellin to Puebla," Churches and Politics in Latin America, 1980) argue that the social action of the Latin American Church started prior to Medellin. They mention pre-Medellin documents as the Conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* as a great contribution to the enlightenment of the doctrinal reflection and action for the Church in Latin America. Documents issued by diverse bishops on justice, for instance, have introduced a new mentality of considering life and justice. "The mentality which looked to 'charity' and 'resignation' as a solution for social injustice

for the beginning of the conference. There, they noted that Latin America is a region marked by "change and by institutionalized violence", suffering from "two massive evils: external dominance and internal colonialism."<sup>12</sup> The bishops argued that many kinds of violence exist. Thus,

violence cannot be identified with only individual or even collective acts of aggression, but must be recognized as well in the day-to-day operations of unequal, unjust, and oppressive social structures. This was defined as "institutionalized violence". The distinction of "institutionalized violence" from more overt forms of aggression was a major step, for it opened the way to justifying counter-violence --violent acts intended to undo the inherent, institutionalized violence of the established order, replacing it with a more just society.<sup>13</sup>

While supporting efforts at social change, Pope Paul VI put the Medellin discussion of violence into perspective. During his visit to Colombia he condemned violence as antievangelical and unchristian, thus ruling out violence as a legitimate tool of social transformation. The bishops'

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is finally overcome" (Poblete, *op. cit.*, p. 42). Examples are found in the documents of the Chilean Conference, The Church and Chilean Peasant issued in 1962, and The Social and Political Duties of Catholics in the present time (1964). On the Latin American level, CELAM (Conference of Latin American Bishops) prepared in 1966 The Church and Latin American Integration at Mar del Plata. Hence, many national churches have supported the creation of movements of Christian inspiration such as cooperatives, trade unions, and projects for human promotion. Medellin, then, marked the beginning of a reevaluation of the Church's social doctrine.

12 "Conclusions of Medellin" quoted in Edward Cleary, Crisis and change... *op. cit.*, p. 42.

13 Daniel Levine, "Religion and Politics, Politics and Religion," Churches and Politics in Latin America, ed Daniel Levine (Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1980) p. 24.

assessment of violence was placed in a broader context of religious belief, equating violence with sin. Usually considered to refer to personal situations and individual morality, they extended the concept of sin to include entire social systems, suggesting that injustice, oppression, and institutionalized violence are sinful, because they impose social conditions which make life morally impossible to live. Once they had made this connection, the bishops argued that if oppressive social, economic, and political structures are sinful, preventing the full realization of human beings, "then religious liberation, which involves freedom from sin, is in some measure tied to change in these structures."<sup>14</sup>

From the standpoint of faith and with the moral authority belonging to the Church, the Medellin conference denounced the existing injustices and gave legitimacy to the Latin American episcopates to take part in the process of change and renew their commitment to evangelizing and promoting justice and peace in Latin America. Thus, the bishops in Medellin adopted liberation theology as part of the Church's pastoral activities, to respond to the urgent needs of a predominantly impoverished society. The word "liberation" is very frequently used in the Medellin texts to indicate the process of helping human beings free themselves from the oppressiveness in which the majority of Latin Americans find themselves.

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14 Ibid., p.. 24.

Our peoples desire their liberation and growth in humanness ... they are filled with longing for total emancipation, liberation from all slavery, for personal maturity, and collective integration (Justice, 1,4,)(...) Because all liberation is an anticipation of the complete redemption of Christ, the Church in Latin America is particularly in favor of all educational efforts which tend to free our people... A deafening cry pours from the throats of millions of men, asking their pastors for a liberation that reaches them from nowhere else (n.4.14)

It is also worth mentioning that the principles emphasized in the Medellin document include *concientización*. This means the awakening of the people to consciousness, so that through their participation in the realization of change and in the common effort to create a new society, they may become the true agents of their own liberation. Actually, it is a process of making people socially and politically conscious and, in fact, enabling them to assume their responsibilities in civic and political life. "*Conscientización* is (...) a means of achieving liberation."<sup>15</sup> And Medellin further states:

We wish to affirm that it is indispensable to form a social conscience and a realistic perception of the problems of the community and of social structures. We must awaken the social conscience and communal customs in all strata of society and professional groups (...) This task of *conscientización* and social education ought to be integrated into joint Pastoral Action at various levels. (Medellin, Justice, N.17)

*Participation* is another key concept emphasized in the document. It states, for instance, that "man is not an object,

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15 Renato Poblete, "From Medellin to Puebla", *op. cit.*, p. 46.

but an agent of his own history" (Medellin, Peace, N.14a), and also that

justice, and therefore peace, conquer by means of a dynamic action of the awakening (*conscientización*) and organization of the popular sectors, which are capable of pressing public officials who are often impotent in their social projects without popular support. (Medellin, Peace, N.18)

The reforms proposed by the Medellin document, however, reject approval of violent revolution, which, in turn, engenders a spiral of more violence, repressive violence, kidnapping, torture and terrorism. The central idea which permeates all the documents is the concept of "the liberation of man from all servitude and the denunciation of established violence in structures of sin."<sup>16</sup>

Considering the situation of "institutionalized injustice" in Latin America, the bishops at the Medellin conference agreed that the Church had to choose sides. And they chose the side of the poor and oppressed. According to the bishops, it was a gospel imperative. Certainly, the Church has long paid considerable attention to the poor. However, in social terms, most of the Church's concerns were expressed in welfare programs, or aid to the poor. Poverty was seen as a result of individual failings, and charity and job training were emphasized. With the new orientation of Medellin, poverty could be seen in a new light, as a structural, and not an

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16 Ibid., p. 46.

individual problem. Hence, it was felt that the structures which cause poverty must be changed.

Eleven years after Medellin, the Latin American bishops gathered again for their third conference in Puebla (Mexico - 1979), and found that, despite the conflicts of viewpoints, the period between Medellin and Puebla was filled with major achievements for the Latin American Church. However, as E. Cleary emphasizes, these achievements should not be allowed to mask the fact that large sections of the Church changed only very gradually.<sup>17</sup> In Puebla, the bishops also came to the conclusion that the Latin American situation was just as grim as it had been in 1968. For instance, they could see that the poor were getting poorer and new injustices in the form of infringements of human rights had multiplied.

Puebla reaffirmed the direction taken at Medellin. Indeed, the bishops at Puebla went further. They more clearly and fully committed the Church to the service of the poor and spoke of its preferential option for the poor and oppressed. The bishops also took a more explicit stand for human rights, because of the practices imposed by the military government in several countries of Latin America. Puebla also represented a major shift from a hierarchical to a communal Church, as the bishops in Puebla approved the widespread movement of grassroot Christian communities. In this regard, the issue of "participation" lay at the heart of Puebla signifying that the

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17 Edward Cleary, Crisis and change . . . ., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Church's activities (evangelization) should be shared in community, with people as active participants in the process of evangelization, not merely as receivers of the Christian message.

## 2.2 Liberation theology - as critical reflection

Gustavo Gutierrez has asserted that theological reflection is the "understanding of the faith."<sup>18</sup> This understanding of Catholic theology has evolved historically. In the early centuries of the Church, for instance, spiritual life constituted the centering of attention on theology. Although such spiritual function of theology is still a permanent dimension of theology, from the twelfth century on, theology begins to appear as rational knowledge. For St. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, theology is "an intellectual discipline, born of the meeting of faith and reason."<sup>19</sup> Based on this Thomistic idea, Gutierrez remarks that today *reason* has many other manifestations rather than philosophical ones. Therefore,

the understanding of the faith is also following along with new paths in our day: the social, psychological, and biological sciences. The social sciences, for example, are extremely important for theological reflection in Latin America. Theological thought not characterized by

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18 Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1973) p.3.

19 Ibid., p. 5.

such a rationality and disinterestedness would not be truly faithful to an understanding of the faith.<sup>20</sup>

Gutierrez observes that although both spirituality and rational knowledge are permanent and indispensable functions of all theological thinking, in recent years, the function of theology as *critical reflection* on praxis has gradually become more clearly defined. For instance, today there is a greater sensitivity to the anthropological aspects of revelation,<sup>21</sup> and "theology must be man's critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles."<sup>22</sup> However, this critical reflection, according to Gutierrez, refers also to a critical attitude with regard to economic and social-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. In his understanding, theological reflection necessarily implies a criticism of society and the Church "insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God."<sup>23</sup> Theological reflection must be, therefore, worked out in the light of faith and inspired by a practical purpose related to historical praxis. In the words of a well-known theologian, Ives Congar,

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20 Ibid., p. 5.

21 Revelation is a broad term which involves several related ideas. According to the Second Vatican Council, revelation is a manifestation by God, primarily of himself; secondarily, of his will and intentions granted to particular men at particular time. In "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation", n.2, The Documents of Vatican II, ed. W. Abbot, (Guild Press, N.York, 1966).

22 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

23 Ibid., p. 11.



If the Church wishes to deal with the real questions of the modern world and to attempt to respond to them,... it must open as it were a new chapter of theologico-pastoral epistemology. Instead of using only revelation and tradition as starting points, as classical theology has generally done, it must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history.<sup>24</sup>

In this view, theological reflection must involve "sinking roots where the pulse of history is beating at this moment and illuminating history with the Word of the Lord..."<sup>25</sup> It is within this approach that liberation theologians want to be understood. It is a "new way to do theology" which draws on "historical praxis and aims at the liberating transformation of the history of mankind in order to build "a new, just, and fraternal society."<sup>26</sup>

The idea of a "new way to do theology" is also shared by the Brazilian theologian, Leonardo Boff, who presents liberation theology as

the thinking of the faith under the formality of a leaven of historical transformation... and the social or political dimension of faith is the new aspect (not the only aspect) of the faith that is emphasized by the theology of liberation.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, liberation theology is a new way to think about faith. Prior to liberation theology, everything was concentrated on preaching, for instance. This new way of doing theology interprets the Gospel in the light of the social

24 Ives Congar quoted in G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

25 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

27 Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, Liberation Theology from confrontation to dialogue, (Herper & Publishers, Cambridge, London, Washington, 1986) p. 13.

environment --social Gospel background. It means working with people and contributing to their liberation from any kind of oppression or dependence, be it economic, cultural or religious.

According to the Chilean theologian Ronaldo Munhoz, liberation theology did not originate in seminaries, theology faculties or in other academic environments. It emerged as a "new way to live the faith and Christian involvement within a Christian community of poor people in our countries." According to Munhoz, it is, first, "an expression of faith, of love, of fraternity, and of solidarity vis-a-vis problems of the every day life of people." And speaking about the theologians who adopted liberation theology, he adds:

Their goal was to accompany the evolution of this collective popular faith, by trying to aid the people in being more lucid (...) to understand their social condition, the evangelical and biblical roots of their spiritual thoughts (...)<sup>28</sup>

This conception of Christianity expressed by Munhoz is sometimes seen as revolutionary religion. The Canadian theologian Gregory Baum argues that Christianity from the start "had radical implications on the level of action on an ethical level and, therefore, it really was radical at that point in time." Baum believes that in Latin America, Christians "have rediscovered such radicalism in Jesus' gospel." He also adds that

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28 Ronaldo Munhoz in Two Thirds, a journal of underdevelopment studies - Issue on Liberation Theology, Simon Fraser University, 1986, Vol.7, N.1, p.4.

sometimes Canadians view liberation theology as a political phenomenon and I would say that, having studied the documents, it is not primarily as political stance (...) it is a manner of following Jesus (...) but there is an ethical and political dimension involved as well.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3 Liberation theology - interpreting terms

According to liberation theologians, and more specifically Gutierrez, the term *liberation* can be interpreted on three levels, which interdependently deal with a single process.

The first approach to the meaning of liberation is the signification of the term as an expression of aspiration for liberation by oppressed people, "emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes."<sup>30</sup> Basically, liberation involves freedom from bondage of all types, such as ignorance, alienation, poverty, and oppression.

To understand this approach, I briefly outline the socioeconomic reality of Latin America in the late 1950's and early 1960's, as the context within which liberation theology was born. It was a period of rapid social, political, cultural and economic change. It was also a period of great optimism, for the expectation was that "self-sustained economic

29 Gregory Baum in Two Thirds, a journal of underdevelopment studies - Issue on Liberation Theology, Simon Fraser University, 1986, Vol.7, N.1, p.4.

30 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, op. cit., p. 36.

development," would be achieved in Latin America, arising in broad social benefits for all. Development was seen as a non-revolutionary path to progress through economic growth and industrialization in a capitalist framework<sup>31</sup> in Latin America.

This era of developmentalism had been introduced through national governments<sup>32</sup>, international development agencies, the United States program of the "Alliance for Progress" (1963),<sup>33</sup> and the World Bank, the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the

31 According to Rogers, the theory of modernization stands for the updating of structures considered "archaic". Briefly, the functions of modernization theory are based on the principle of opposing concepts, encompassing the broadest application of the dualist anthropological and sociological traditions of establishing a mechanism of change through cultural diffusion. In Latin America's case, such theory attempted to promote development viewed in opposition to underdevelopment, the welfare of the community through the introduction of technological innovation and foreign patterns of industrialization. "Inquiry in Development Communication," Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication, ed. M. Asante and W. Gudykunst (Sajo, New Delhi, 1989).

32 In this regard, the government of Ecuador, UNESCO and the Central University of Ecuador created CIESPAL (International Centre for Advanced Communication Studies for Latin America) in 1959, which was the first academic centre in Latin America to provide journalistic and communication degrees at an advanced level. In the 60's the centre brought U.S. scholars such as Rogers, Berlo, and Nixon. The teachings of these Americans on the region constituted the predominant scholarly influence during these years (Gomes-Palacio and Jara, 1989).

33 At this stage, the presence of the United States in Latin American countries was strongly felt. Obsessed with the influence of communism through the region, which gained ascendancy after the Chilean revolution, the North feared the development of leftist movements in Latin America, and fears and obsessions were counterbalanced with large development campaigns (Schwarz and Jaramillo - 1986, and McAnany - 1989).

Agency for International Development (AID). Their "modernization" model<sup>34</sup> was drawn from the more developed countries, and centred on a belief that the underdeveloped countries had to overcome archaic political structures and the "backwardness" of their traditional societies, if they were to repeat the historical change experienced by the "developed" countries. To do this, the countries of Latin America needed to invest in capital intensive industries, based on energy-driven imported technologies.<sup>35</sup>

However, after a decade, these policies did not yield the expected results. Felipe Herrera, an earlier proponent of developmentalism, came to believe that

after more than half of the decade of the 60s has passed, the gap between the two worlds is growing bigger, rather than slowly decreasing as was expected ... While from 1960 to 1970 the developed nations will have increased their wealth by 50 per cent, the developing countries, two-thirds of the world's population, will continue to struggle in poverty and frustration.<sup>36</sup>

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34 T. Jacobson, Old and New Approaches to Participatory Communication for Development. Paper presented at the Seminar *Participation: a Key Concept in Communication for Change and Development*, University of Poona, Poona, 1989. E. Rathgebher, Wid, Wad, Gad: Trends in Research and Practice, IDRC, Ottawa, 1989.

35 Quoted in Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication, ed. M. Asante and W. Gudykunst (Sajo, New Delhi, 1989).

36 Felipe Herrera, "Viabilidad de una comunidad latinoamericana," Estudios Internacionales, (Santiago de Chile, 1967, N.1), quoted in G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p. 83. This consideration is also shared by another important economist during the decade of development, Raul Prebisch, Hacia una dinamica del desarrollo latinoamericano, (Fondo de Cultura Economica, Mexico D.F, 1963). See also ECLA's Economic Study of Latin America, 1966. See also Celso Furtado, Obstacles to Development in Latin America, (Anchor Books, Garden City, N.York, 1970).

By the 1960s, a pessimistic diagnosis of economic, social and political realities began to replace the preceding optimism. It was at this time that a new school of social criticism developed, to take into account these realities. Known as the dependency school, they began to study underdevelopment from a historical perspective, i.e., in relationship to the development and expansion of the developed countries, with the underdevelopment of the poor countries as by-product.<sup>37</sup> They realized that there was no possibility to repeat or evolve to levels achieved earlier by existing societies, as "historical time is not unilinear" and peoples move "concurrently and in a parallel fashion towards a new society."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, stresses Gutierrez, "they are realizing that their own development will come about only with a struggle to break the domination of the rich countries."<sup>39</sup>

This notion of *dependence*, then, emerged as a key element. Fernando Henrique Cardoso defines it thus:

The relationships of dependence presuppose the insertion of specifically unequal structures. The growth of the world market created relationships of dependence (and domination) among nations.<sup>40</sup>

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37 The historical genesis of the underdevelopment of the poor countries as a by-product of the development of other countries has been studied by Osvaldo Sunkel in El marco historico del proceso de desarrollo y subdesarrollo, ILPES, Santiago de Chile, 1967. This studied has been republished in 1970, El subdesarrollo latinoamericano y la teoria del desarrollo, (Siglo Veintiuno, Mexico D.F.).

38 Teotonio dos Santos, "Crisis", Economic Study of Latin America, (ECLA, 1966) pp. 164-166.

39 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

However, it is not just the external domination from one country to another that counts in the dependency reality in Latin America. There is also an "internalization of dependence."<sup>41</sup> Cardoso and Faletto refer to it as "the internationalization of the market." In other words, the external structure is experienced as internal. The authors remark that the old forms of imperialistic presence still exist by new forms of prolongations of the central economies, i.e., foreign investment gravitating towards the modern sector of the economy, binding native industries more closely to international capitalism.<sup>42</sup>

This is a new form of dependence and Gutierrez argues that Latin American social scientists should study the problem from the point of view of the dominated countries, which will allow them to deepen the theory of dependence. In this regard, Cardoso maintains that

a systematic analysis of the forms dependence has taken in Latin America is still to be made. An analysis which will have to consider, on the one hand, the connection among the particular ways in which Latin American economies are tied to the world market, and on the other, the political structures of domination, both internal and external. Without this analysis and without specifying the kinds of dependence, the use of the term can camouflage new equivocations. For one can have recourse to the idea of dependence as a way of "explaining"

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40 Fernando Henrique Cardoso quoted in G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, op. cit., p. 85.

41 Jose Nun, Misión Rockefeller: ¿Porque y para qué?, mimeo, 1970, p. 3, quoted in G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, op. cit., p. 85.

42 Fernando H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and development in Latin America, (University of California Press, Berkeley/London, 1979) pp. 149-171.

internal processes of the dependent societies by a purely "external" variable --not readily identifiable but omnipresent-- which is regarded as a cause. The importance of analyzing the problems of the peripheral countries in terms of dependence, as we understand it, requires an effort to avoid new reifications, which transforms concepts into real factors without any precise identification of their real nature.<sup>43</sup>

The second and deeper level of the meaning of liberation refers to an "understanding of history." In this approach, humans are seen as beings who become conscious and assume responsibility for their own destiny throughout history, desiring social change. Gutierrez believes that "the gradual conquest of true freedom leads to the creation of a new man and a qualitatively different society."<sup>44</sup> This concept implies the process of *conscientización*, mentioned previously, as an important role for conscious, self-aware action to broaden horizons and transform society. At this point, it is worth mentioning the influence of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's ideas (1968-1974) on Latin American Catholicism.

Although Freire was exiled and so never worked extensively with the Church in Brazil, his methods became very influential among the popular classes and were incorporated by the progressive Church. Such endorsement occurred because, "central to Freire's politics and pedagogy is a philosophical vision of a liberated humanity."<sup>45</sup> As Henry Giroux remarks,

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43 F. Cardoso quoted in G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

44 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

45 Henry Giroux, "Liberation Theology and the Language of Possibility", The Politics of Education by Paulo Freire, (Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Massachusetts, 1985), p. xvii.



Freire's ideas are rooted in a respect for life and the acknowledgement that hope of the future is not meant to provide a paternalistic approach to the oppressed, but promote forms of critique and struggle against forces of oppression.

Combining the discourses of critique and possibility, Freire joins history and theology in order to develop a radical pedagogy that joins hope and collective struggle.<sup>46</sup> Born in Recife (Brazil), Freire started his thinking about popular education in the late 1950s at the University there. In the early 1960s, he introduced new adult literacy programs, and was invited by the Joao Goulart government to become the Director of the National Literacy Programme. Freire treated literacy as more than a mechanical problem, by linking literacy to critical consciousness. This was seen as a threat to the political monopoly enjoyed by the few, and after the 1964 military coup d'etat in Brazil, Freire was forced into exile. To understand the fear by the military and also upper and middle classes in the country, one must take into account that under Brazil's constitution, illiterates were forbidden

46 *Conscientización* is one of the principles emphasized in the document of Medellin (1968) as a mean of achieving liberation. It demonstrated that Freire's ideas were accepted by the Latin American Church as a whole. Reaction came later from the conservative bishops, for instance in Brazil, who tried to restrict the political and social involvement by the Grassroot Movement for Education (MEB), considered further in Chapter III. Later, in an essay on ecclesiological tendencies in Latin America, in the 1970, the former secretary of CELAM and currently cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, in Rome, blamed Freire and his method of *conscientization* for using the idea of the poor as an oppressed "social class". Quoted in Arthur McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.York, 1989), p. 48.

to vote. The extension of literacy would help people to grow towards democratization of the country. As Freire was an influential and a "dangerous figure" he was arrested, expelled from his university post, jailed for seventy-five days, and encouraged to leave the country.<sup>47</sup>

Freire maintains that education must do more than impart skills, but must allow students to take an active role in creating their own awareness of the surrounding world. *Conscientización* is a process in which each person develops a critical awareness of society as a human, and, therefore, changeable product.

To Freire, the first and most basic step in change is liberating people from the oppressor they have internalized, for he argues that the dominated absorb the dominators' vision of them. Thus, the poor believe themselves to be "lazy" and "stupid". Only where the social order is demythologized, through the development of critical consciousness, can people proceed to liberate themselves.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, the process of liberation sought by Latin Americans and expressed by the liberation theologians means more than overcoming economic, social and political dependence. It means "to see the becoming of mankind as a process of the emancipation of man in history."<sup>49</sup>

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47 In the exile, Freire worked in Chile, at Harvard University (1970) as visiting professor, in Geneva, Peru, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau. In 1979, Freire was granted amnesty and returned to Brazil. He is currently Secretary for Education of the city of S. Paulo.

48 Daniel Levine, Religion and Politics, Politics and Religion, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

49 G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

In the theologians' mind, such process of emancipation has to be undertaken by the oppressed people themselves and must stem from the values proper to these people. Therefore, there is a transfer from a "naive awareness", which does not deal with the problems and accepts mythical explanations, to a "critical awareness", which deals with problems, replaces magical explanations and attempts to dialogue. In this process of *conscientización*, people, by themselves, become less dependent and freer as they commit themselves to the transformation and building up of society.<sup>50</sup> However, the critical awareness is not a static state reached once and for all. It implies a historical dimension, and a constant effort of each person to situate oneself in time and space, to develop creative potential and to assume responsibilities.

The third and final meaning of liberation implied by liberation theology was an approach that led back to the Biblical sources which inspire the presence and action of humans in history. Gutierrez explains that in the Bible, Christ is presented "as the one who brings us liberation." He liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all injustice and oppression. In this regard, the Church started to reread the Bible and discovered that the root of spirituality and theology of liberation exists in the living experience of poverty and oppression. In other words, there

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50 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Oppressed, (Herder and Herder, New York, 1970), and La Educación como practica de la libertad, (Tierra Nova, Montevideo, 1969).

was an attempt to read the Bible and key Christian doctrines with the eyes of the poor.<sup>51</sup> In this way, people found their own experience reflected. For instance, the people in basic communities<sup>52</sup> "look at the Bible as in a mirror to see their own reality," reinterpreting that experience in terms of biblical symbols.<sup>53</sup>

#### 2.4 Liberation theology and critique

The "popular church" represented by liberation theology represents a challenge to the official Church, and the institution has responded in several ways. One set of critics has objected to the term "popular church" or "people's church" emphasizing that the Church is born of the Holy Spirit and not out of any particular social class. In fact, the phrase "popular church" was a shortened form of a slogan used at the 1975 meeting in Brazil: "A Church born of the people through the Spirit of God."<sup>54</sup>

Although "Pope John Paul II has written us in 1980 a wonderful letter about Basic Communities,"<sup>55</sup> the official

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51 G. Gutierrez, A theology of liberation, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 37.

52 Basic communities are considered in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

53 Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1987) p. 60.

54 Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, *op. cit.*, 1987.

Catholic Church also fears the rise of a separate parallel Church. This fear stems from the fact that in the "people's Church", decision-making and authority are decentralized, and oppose therefore, the institutional (hierarchical) model of the Catholic Church. While proponents of the grassroot model insist on their loyalty to the Church, and have no intention of breaking away, "many Church hierarchy view this model as a direct challenge to their authority and as an attempt to form a breakaway Church."<sup>56</sup>

Another kind of response was to bar Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff from lecturing and writing on theology from April 1985 to March 1986. The Vatican declared that his book *Church, Charisma and Power* (1981) contained views that "endanger the sound doctrine of the faith." It was a year of "obsequious silence", but the implicit reason for the reprimand was that Boff criticized the Church's monopolization of power and its misuse through a hierarchical structure.<sup>57</sup>

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55 Leonardo Boff quoted in Werner Levi, The Politics of Liberation Theology in Latin America, *op. cit.*, 1986.

56 Philip J. Williams, The Catholic Church and Politics in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989) p.3.

57 The Vatican is threatening again to punish Leonardo Boff. It is upset with Boff's criticisms of what he considers the centralization of power in the church.. The head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has sent a letter to the Franciscan superior general in Rome, Father John Vaughn, questioning three articles by Boff. One of the articles is entitled "Project for Latin America", published in December 1989 in Vozes (a monthly magazine published by the Franciscans). In the article, Boff criticizes the predominance of bishops' appointments among "conservatives" and describes the Vatican's desire eventually

In his book, Boff proposes a change of the traditional paradigm (God, Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and Community) to a new paradigm (an interrelation between God, Community, Priests, Bishops, Cardinals, Pope - the Church, as institution, is, then, a mediation to the Kingdom of God).

Boff writes:

In the beginning the Christian people participated in the power of the Church, in the decisions, in the election of her ministers; later, they began to be consulted only, and, finally, in terms of power, they were marginalized and expropriated of a faculty they had. Inasmuch as there was a social division of labour, an ecclesiastic division of religious work was also introduced. A body of officers and experts was created in charge of attending the religious interest of all through the exclusive production of symbolic goods to be consumed by the people now expropriated.<sup>58</sup>

Actually, the "people's Church" clearly satisfies a religious need that the official Church had not satisfied and, according to Werner Levi "has so far made little attempt to satisfy in the future."<sup>59</sup> Williams observed that even when the Church speaks a more progressive language and in general tends to show more interest in social issues, "the Church's primary objectives remain unchanged." It demonstrates that

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to reduce the power of bishops' conferences. (Catholic New Times, Toronto, 23 September, 1990).

58 Quoted in Juan Diaz Bordenave, Participative Communication as a part of the building of a participative society. Paper presented at the Seminar "Participation - a key concept in communication for change and development", University of Poona, Poona, 1989.

59 Werner Levi, The Politics of Liberation Theology..., op. cit., 1986, p.14.

changes have not penetrated the structures of the institutional Church.<sup>60</sup>

The other concern of the Vatican about liberation theology is the association with Marxism. This concern has been presented by the Head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger. This Cardinal reproaches liberation theologians for confusing the people and for throwing confusion into the battle for justice within the class struggle. The Vatican fears that liberation theology adopts Marxism uncritically, i.e., that it allows its theology to become captive to Marxist ideology. The problem here, according to the Vatican's point of view, is that liberation theology makes Marxist analysis the guiding force of "praxis" and the sole criterion of truth. The fear of Marxist influence is that accepting Marxist class struggle would lead to hatred and to "systematic and deliberate recourse to blind violence."<sup>61</sup>

However, the Chilean liberation theologian Ronaldo Munhoz asserts that:

the struggle for justice cannot be reduced to simply a class struggle... We must not promote class struggle, but we must also not ignore its historical reality. We must confront it in an evangelical manner.<sup>62</sup>

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60 Philip J. Williams, The Catholic Church and Politics..., *op. cit.*, 1989, p.3.

61 Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation (1984), quoted in Arthur McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

62 Two Thirds, a Journal of underdevelopment studies, *op. cit.*, p.6.

He suggests that certain Catholic Church's documents on Latin America recognize this by looking at society from the point of view of the poor.

It is interesting to note that Pope John Paul II also reveals a Marxist influence in his encyclical on work. According to Gregory Baum, that Pope is the first one to "talk about alienation in the work place (...) about the importance of work in relation to capital. Therefore, these are all positions which are truly Catholic, but which are arrived at through a dialogue with Marxism."<sup>63</sup>

However, at the core of the Vatican's concern is a fear that all protests or denunciations of injustices tend to:

play into the hands of the Communist powers, which is portrayed as the great enemy, the great menace, not only for the Church, but for man... We don't share this black versus white vision of the world reality as it relates to our continent and our countries.<sup>64</sup>

Arthur McGovern, in his more recent book *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (1989),<sup>65</sup> points out the most important points argued by the militant critics<sup>66</sup> such as *Reducing faith to politics; The uncritical use of Marxist and Socialist issues; Creating a separate Church*. McGovern remarks

63 Ibid., p.6. Also, Arthur McGovern, Liberation Theology and its Critics, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989) p. 14.

64 Ronaldo Munhoz quoted in Two Thirds...., *op. cit.*, P.7.

65 Arthur F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics, *op. cit.*

66 Critics such as Cardinal Ratzinger, Lopez Trujillo, Thomas Senders, McCann, Michael Novak, Schubert Ogden.



that some critics of liberation theology do not base their criticisms on an objective reading of a given theologian. Instead, their critiques are "based on what the critic sees implied in the text rather than what it actually states", even when specific references are cited. As an example of such lack of objectivity, McGovern comments that in one issue of *Tierra Nueva* (1988),<sup>67</sup> Enrique Colom Casta offers a critique of Gutierrez's *The Power of the Poor in History* showing why Gutierrez's theology is a type of theology condemned by the 1984 Vatican instruction.

The author presents a series of "theses" that he attributes to Gutierrez, and in each case he offers quotations from Gutierrez to illustrate the thesis. The first of the theses Casta puts forward does indeed correspond to the quotations assumed under it: that Latin America requires social revolution, not reform. But subsequent theses state positions that go far beyond what the quotations from Gutierrez actually say. Gutierrez rejects bourgeois analysis and defends the usefulness of Marxist analysis; Casta translates this to mean Marxism represents the social analysis needed. Gutierrez cites Marx's famous thesis "the point is to change the world"; for Casta this means that Gutierrez accepts Marx's whole epistemology. Gutierrez states that the poor must struggle as a social class; Casta presents him as saying that class struggle is "the structure of reality itself and the motor of history." Gutierrez says that Jesus died as a consequence of his defense of the poor; Casta translates this into Jesus died "as a revolutionary."<sup>68</sup>

Yet, according to McGovern, a significant change has occurred in liberation theology. While Princeton scholar Paul Sigmund presents two distinct trends in liberation theology,

67 Enrique Colom Casta, Entre la opción por los pobres y el marxismo, (Tierra Nueva, Bogota, 1988) N. 64.

68 Arthur F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and its critics, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

portraying two different phases in its development (an earlier Marxist phase and, now, the focus on Christian Basic Communities), McGovern has a different judgement. He states that "references to Marxism did appear with much greater frequency in the formative years of liberation theology. But Gutierrez and others held nuanced views even in this period." McGovern adds that liberation theology cannot be simply identified with activist groups such as the Christians for Socialism. He argues, for instance, that Gutierrez resisted forming a CFS group in Peru because he rejected "baptizing" any political movement with the name "Christian." Regarding the second or more recent phase, McGovern emphasizes that liberation theology has become "more pronouncedly theological with many fewer inclusions of radical analysis." However, liberation theologians remain "fundamentally anticapitalist and still convinced that Latin America suffers from a dependency on a world-capitalist economic system."<sup>69</sup>

Although liberation theology is still a controversial issue, in the last three decades much of the source of inspiration for the Church's activities in Latin America has been that of liberation theology. This new way of thinking faith in the light of the social environment has also influenced the Church's activities in the field of communication. The evolution of this relationship is the subject of the next chapter.

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69 Ibid., p. 133.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND COMMUNICATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The last chapter dealt with liberation theology and its relationship to the Catholic Church in Latin America. This chapter will focus more specifically on the role of communication in the Latin American Church within a historical and socio-cultural analysis. The analysis includes a closer reading of the Medellin and Puebla documents<sup>1</sup> and other related Church documents, as they constitute the Church's landmarks for changes in direction, orientation and methodology. The analysis will demonstrate the Church's efforts to introduce and contribute to a more horizontal form of communication, implementing participatory communication processes.

#### 3.1 Church and communication from the beginning

Before the period of rapid modernization that started with World War II, and especially before the foundation of CELAM (Latin American Bishops' Conference) in 1955, the model of the Church in many Latin American countries was based on

<sup>1</sup> Medellin and Puebla documents correspond to the Second and Third Latin American Bishops' Conference in 1968 and 1979 and are the main documents which lead the Catholic Church in Latin America.

the Spanish colonial past, and can be labeled the "traditional Church."<sup>2</sup> In terms of communication, the Church used printing to spread faith by catechistic formulas, and formal education through schools constituted the "model of religious communication." In this context, the socialization of religion and communication were

around instruction in Catholic schools, careful catechistic preparation for receiving sacraments and the instructional sermon in the Sunday mass. In Latin America, this pattern of communication may have been found among Catholics of the better-educated elites in the major urban centres and provincial towns. The schools of the teaching congregations were increasingly important in 20th century Latin America. But the vast majority of the rural peasantry and working class, "servant population" did not have access to these schools.<sup>3</sup>

If the modernization of religion was built around schools, religious communication was carried out within an annual cycle of "celebrations" in the families and in the local communities. The "celebrations" were the Holy Week, and the fiesta of the patron of the rural community or urban barrio. Day of the Souls, and Christmas, for instance, were also part of special observances celebrated by the community.

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2 The first part of the following presentation on the Church before Medellin and Puebla is based on "The Church and Communication in Latin America - Thirty years to search for patterns" by Robert A. White, and published in Communication Socialis Yearbook 1981-82. The article has also been published in Spanish "La Iglesia y la Comunicacion en America Latina: Treinta anos en busca de modelos," Teoria y Praxis de la Iglesia Latinoamericana en Comunicaciones sociales, (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano - DECOS, Bogota, 1988).

3 Ibid., p. 94.

Birth was celebrated in baptism and death in a series of wakes. Another type of religious expression was to seek the patronage of a saint as the only recourse to solve a person's problems.

As Gilberto Gimenez<sup>4</sup> well noted, those celebrations were not an individual relation with God in prayer, and neither were they a personal moral matter. They were social events which renewed social bonds. For instance, the meaning of baptism, sociologically speaking, was an occasion to strengthen and establish the ritual of *compadrazgo*<sup>5</sup> relations. The feast of the patron was a demonstration of the community solidarity to celebrate the protection of the patron saint over the community. In addition to those celebrations, once a year the state Mass also gathered the diplomatic corps, and the archbishop, and expressed the religio-civic solidarity of the country.

The medium of religious and cultural expression used in these celebrations was *drama*. Every member of the family or community had a specific role to play "in the processions of

4 Quoted in Robert White, *Ibid.*, p. 95.

5 *Compadrazgo* is defined as fictive kingship which maintains a relationship of reciprocal exchange, and presupposes a certain degree of familiarity (social proximity), opportunity (physical proximity), and compatibility of needs (economic proximity). *Compadrazgo* can be used in an extended family network in rural areas or in urban contexts to support networks of social and economic exchange, or for political practices as well. (Larissa Lomnitz, "Mechanisms of Articulation between Shantytown Settlers and the Urban Systems," Urban Anthropology, (Institute for the Study of Man, Inc., 1978) Vol. 7 - 2).

Holy Week, in the annual saint's fiesta, in the pilgrimage to a local shrine, in the wakes at the time of a death, in special devotions to the Virgin Mary or to the Sacred Heart, etc."<sup>6</sup> The celebrations were a ritual of festive enjoyment, and the religious aspect was present with prayers, hymns, and speeches. For the celebrations in the communities, the rituals were carried out with statues, special costumes and garments, banners, religious symbols and a range of forms. However, as White points out, the real *communicators* in those celebrations were lay people. A priest might have a role in the rituals, but the planners and leaders were made up of the laity. Nevertheless, the Church and the clergy have always been close to the "centre of community and national decision-making (...) or provincial elites, at least informally through family and friends", according to White.

This pattern of "traditional" communication in the Church, started to change in the 1940s. With the independence from Spain around 1820 (Brazil from Portugal, 1822), and the liberal anticlerical governments in the later 19th century, secularizing tendencies threatened the roots of Catholicism in Latin America. In addition to this, World War II intensified the channels of communication between Latin America and the U.S. and contributed to a great extent in introducing "secularization" and "urbanization." There began to be less

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<sup>6</sup> Robert White, The Church and Communication..., *op. cit.*, p. 95.

emphasis on the "sacred" and more on "secular science and technology".

World views shifted from a cyclical, ritualistic emphasis to progress and economic planning. Personal relations began to be less based on family and *compadrazgo* and more on purely economic, market values. As the protection of sacred patrons was seen as less essential to community and national well-being, the religio-civic celebratory events became folklore to many, and church leaders as patrons of the sacred became marginal in decision-making and communication networks. In many countries the Church began to lose contact with the modernizing, secularizing middle and upper classes.<sup>7</sup>

The social change described above also affected the manner in which the Church developed its communication. In the colonial period, power was concentrated in a hierarchical model. A small interlinked group of political, economic and religious elite was at the top controlling, while being, at the same time, the communication centre of the city or country. Information, therefore, used "to flow through the hierarchy of dependent provincial and local intermediaries from the capital to the remote small towns and communities."<sup>8</sup>

In fact, during the colonial period, and the period after independence from Spain, the Church relied on political force to protect its cultural and religious influence. This relation served the Church while political elites shared the interests of the Church. On the other hand, it also signified the

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7 Ibid., p. 96.

8 Ibid., p. 96.

commitment of the Church to the existing hierarchical social structure and the political control of the ruling elites.

As mentioned previously, the causes for such disintegration can be posited on the process of modernization and secularization of the urban-technical sector that weakened religious values. Secondly, a more pluralistic and differentiated society, with the presence of other religions, and governments "ceased to support the Catholic Church as the sole religious and ideological influence."<sup>9</sup> Finding less support from ruling elites, and secularized middle classes, the Church turned to those whose religious faith was strongest. In other words, the Church turned to the peasants and the urban working class, most of them immigrants who had maintained both their faith and their peasant background.

One of the most significant approaches to mass communication that the Church used during this period was called "popular missions". Especially in the 1950s many teams of "missionaries" travelled from country to country preaching the mission to a region encompassing several cities or even whole countries. Individual conversion and confession, permanent reform of life, validation of marriages and more participation in the sacraments were the goals of the popular mission. While they aimed at all social sectors, they were most effective among the peasantry and, to some extent, among the urban working class.

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9 Robert White, "Comunicación popular: language of liberation," Media Development (WACC, 1980) p. 6.



As the Church moved towards the peasants, it intensified the structure of religious organization in rural parishes, emphasizing religious education, and training lay people as religious leaders to fill in for the lack of clergy. In this period, the Church also supported Christian organizations such as the Christian trade unions, farmers' organizations, political parties, cooperatives, and youth organizations. Robert White points out that this interaction between clergy and articulated leadership brought clergy and peasants together to confront the increasing poverty and deprivation of semi-subsistence farmers. The new programmes of agricultural credit, technical assistance and marketing had followed the hierarchical lines and largely benefited only the large commercial farmers. The isolated communities of peasants were left without adequate education, health and agricultural extension, and were increasingly exploited as cheap labour for the economic expansion of the larger farmers.

Religious leaders in the rural areas, perceiving the neglect and exploitation of the peasants, began to supply the lack of government services. The Church committed itself to a variety of initiatives such as adult education (radio schools, for instance); credit, marketing and production cooperatives; health clinics, etc. This fact led many priests and religious into a closer relation with leaders and also to study in depth the roots of the social, economic and political problems of the peasants.<sup>10</sup>

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### 3.1.1 Educational radio

Within the system of rural parish organization, the Church started to develop a new dimension of communication, the "school radio", in the 1950s and 1960s. The leading example of educational radio was started by Fr. Jose Joaquim Salcedo in Colombia in 1947 with *Acción Cultural Popular-Radio Sutatenza* (ACPO). It reached hundreds of families and communities isolated in mountainous areas without postal services and telephones. Religious leaders, most of them semi-literate themselves, gathered people together for classes, distributed simple teaching materials and helped the listeners to follow the radio instructions.

The method involved broadcasting educational material to small organized listening groups. White points out that, although the doctrinal focus was emphasized in the beginning, Salcedo and his team also stressed "integral basic education:" literacy, health, agriculture, community development, and peasant leadership. A central training institute was set up in order to train peasant farmers as the radio school "monitors". The monitor's role was to distribute the teaching material at the beginning of a five to eight-month course, provide a locale for monthly monitor meetings to check on the effects of the radio schools, and send the exam results to be corrected in the regional or national office.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, the model of Radio Sutatenza was spread all over Latin American. This model, however, has now been decentralized, adapted and modified according to regional differences, language differences (especially Indian languages) and the problems of broadcasting in mountainous regions.

### 3.1.2 MEB - experience with radio schools

In Brazil, the *Movimento de Educação de Base* (MEB - Movement for Grassroot Education) was the largest comparable program in Brazil. It began "as a national program which grew out of the experience of the radio schools pioneered by Dom Eugenio Sales in Natal (Brazil), beginning in 1958."<sup>11</sup> Based on the Radio Sutatenza (Colombia) model, the radio schools established in Northeast Brazil went beyond the Colombian experience. While the latter were concerned with literacy and catechism, and not strong on the political dimension, the MEB functioned not only with literacy training, but with the social mobilization of *concientización*:

In Natal (...) the program differed from the Colombian model, by adopting the orientation of basic education, that is, integral education of the rural populations, seeking more than mere alphabetization, politicizing the consciousness of the rural man, giving him notions of his rights and how to achieve them, introducing notions of

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Bruneau, The Political transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church, (Cambridge University Press, 1974) p. 80.

hygiene and health, more rational agricultural techniques, etc.<sup>12</sup>

The radio schools in Natal were a successful experiment. Therefore, the Bishops' Conference of Brazil (CNBB) expanded the system of radio schools in rural underdeveloped areas of the country --North, Northeast, Centerwest and northern Minas Gerais. The Federal Government financed the radio schools under the direction of the CNBB for five years. The system then spread rapidly and by 1963 there were 59 systems operating, using 25 radio transmitters and reaching some 7,353 schools in 57 dioceses in 15 states. By 1966, over 400,000 students had completed one or more courses.<sup>13</sup> At the national level, MEB was supervised by the *Conselho Diretor* (CDN) made up of nine bishops. However, the movement was organized and administered entirely by lay people.

Although the MEB was progressing and expanding successfully, not all Brazilian bishops appreciated the process of *concientización*. Some of them wanted the movement for the prestige it brought, others wanted it for catechism, and there were some who liked the movement because of its health and agricultural aspects. In developing a process of *concientización* and standing for the full participation of the peasants and urban workers in all the matters concerning them, the MEB "posed a threat to the *status quo* and to those who

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12 Camargo, quoted in Thomas Bruneau, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

13 Thomas Bruneau, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

profited from the archaic structures."<sup>14</sup> Accusing them of preparing communist textbooks, in 1964 Carlos Lacerda, the governor of Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro), authorized the confiscation of copies of MEB's new primer *Viver é lutar* ("To live is to fight"). The text generally described in a more or less objective way the unfortunate social situation in Brazil. It was felt therefore that some sections in the primer might have inspired class struggle. However, as Bruneau remarks, "this primer was but one of four texts which were to be used only in preparing the radio programs and were not for general distribution."<sup>15</sup>

The Governor used the police and, without warning the MEB through other sectors of the Church, demoralized the movement confiscating materials, and forcing a number of MEB officials to make statements to the police as if they were common criminals. Later, and after the military coup in Brazil (1964), the MEB confronted more serious problems. Today, the MEB continues its programs in many dioceses through the systems of radio schools, following the principles of the Second Vatican Council, of the social encyclicals and especially the principles of the conferences of Latin American Bishops' held in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979).<sup>16</sup>

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14 Ibid., p. 81.

15 Ibid., p. 82.

16 The Basic Christian Communities which represent the keystone in the Church's communication will have particular consideration in this dissertation in Chapter VI.

### 3.2 Medellin and Puebla

Since its foundation in 1955, the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) has considered mass media communication as an instrument to develop its activities of evangelization.<sup>17</sup> Although the Latin American Church had recognized the importance of the media within a context of modernization and development of communication technologies, the Church's concerns had been focused on "propaganda" of the Catholic doctrine. As time went by, the Church set up a specific department, the Social Communication Department (DECOS) of CELAM, to articulate services and pastoral activities in the field of communication to the National Bishops' Conference in each country of the continent. In the ecclesial context of Latin America, the application of Vatican II in communication (the decree *Inter Mirifica* and the instruction *Communio et Progressio*) has been carried out since the 1960s decade under the auspices of DECOS (CELAM) and such organizations as UNDA-AL (Latin American Catholic Association for Radio and Television), SAL-OCIC (Latin American Secretariat of the International Catholic Cinema Organization), UCLAP-AL (Latin American Catholic Press), and National Bishops' Commission on Social Communication.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See the meaning of *evangelization* in Chapter II, Note 1.

<sup>18</sup> In Brazil's case, UCBC (Brazilian Christian Communication Union), as an ecumenical organization is developing its work

UNDA, OCIC and UCLAP<sup>19</sup> have accomplished an important role in organizing Christian "communicators" on the continent. According to the secretary of DECOS, Pedro Brisenó, the accomplishment of such organizations in the field of communications has been to encourage the implementation of popular and group communication (*comunicaciones grupales y populares*) stressing the necessity of developing a democratic and participatory model of communication which in the long term would contribute to social and cultural change.<sup>20</sup> The three organizations mentioned have their headquarters in Quito and since 1987 carry on their activities under a sole secretariat (*Secretariado Conjunto*) respecting the proper

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on communication united with the Catholic Church and other denominations as well, within a context of liberation perspective.

19 These three Catholic organizations for Latin America are part of international Catholic organizations respectively the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC), Holland, 1928; the International Catholic Press Union (UCIP), Belgium, 1927-1928; and the International Catholic Organization for Audiovisual (UNDA), Germany, 1928. (E. Baragli, *Comunicazione e Pastorale*, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 225, 227).

20 Pedro Briseño, "Hacia un inventario de recursos comunicacionales de la Iglesia Latinoamericana," *Teoría y Praxis de la Iglesia Latinoamericana en comunicaciones sociales*, (CELAM, Bogotá, 1988) p. 182. Underlying further Brisenó's commentary about the tendencies of UNDA, OCIC, UCLAP in their activities in the field of communication, there is a criticism about the ecumenical character achieved by those organizations "leaving aside the specific action of Catholic identity" (pp.182-183). However, such a criticism reveals a loss of ecumenical dimension achieved by the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council and implemented by the Church afterwards.

characteristics and functions on activities regarding audiovisual, radio and press.<sup>21</sup>

Four models of pastoral practice have been developed in the Latin American context. According to Valerio Fuenzalida,<sup>22</sup> the first model was characterized by establishing organizations of media. The strategy consisted in founding organizations such as publishing houses, magazines, newspapers, radios, etc. The idea of setting up "foundations" stemmed from the *Inter Mirifica* statement (n.3) where "the Church claims as a birthright the use and possession of all instruments."<sup>23</sup> Such a model, although considered valid, has undergone some crisis due to the increasing demands of owning and updating equipment.

This has led to a second strategy identified by Fuenzalida as the "presence of the Church in the media". The aim of this model is not to buy or to own media property, but to be present in the media environment in general. This strategy was based on the assumption that media in Latin America would be flexible or receptive to the presence of the Church. However, once the Church had become critical of

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21 In terms of democratization of communication in Latin American UNDA, OCIC, UCLAP have played a significant role related to NWICO. This subject is considered in Chapter IV.

22 Chilean researcher Valerio Fuenzalida in Estrategias de comunicación de la Iglesia en America Latina, quoted in Pedro Briseño, "Hacia un inventario de recursos...", *op. cit.*, p. 192.

23 This matter is discussed in the decree *Inter Mirifica*, Chapter I.



society, with the critique including the media,<sup>24</sup> there were limits on the space provided for the Church.

The third strategy pointed out by Fuenzalida is media-group and group communication, reinforced and assumed by the Bishops' Conference in Puebla (1979): "Without neglecting the necessary and urgent presence of the mass-oriented media, it is urgent that we intensify our use of the media of group communication" (Puebla, n.1090). And lastly, the fourth model in terms of pastoral strategy is called "Alternatives from NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order). Fuenzalida emphasizes that from this perspective, the media are conceived as a "new participation of public in the media."<sup>25</sup>

Actually, the diverse models mentioned above coexist in the Church in Latin America presently, and demonstrate a sequence of a process of research-planning-evaluation. In Fuenzalida's view, it represents important stages of the Church in relation to communication, and the strategies would be of great significance in terms of Church-communication if well understood and developed properly.

On the other hand, in terms of historical perspective, but involving socio-cultural analysis as well, the application of Inter Mirifica (Vatican II) in Latin America has been the

24 This is an obvious consequence of the pastoral options undertaken by the Latin American Catholic Church, based on liberation theology.

25 See Chapter IV for a full discussion on Church and NWICO in Latin America.

result of an interaction of work by CELAM and UNDA-AL, SAL-OCIC, UCLAP and other Catholic or ecumenical organizations concerned about communications in several Latin American countries, such as UCBC in Brazil.

Analyses of the Church's documents related to communication in Latin America bring out four important phases in which the Church developed its reflection on communication varying according to the socio-cultural and political context.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3 Social Communication and changes - 1960-1969

#### - Mass media to promote development -

Chapter II discussed the process of social, political, cultural, and economic change in this period, and their relationship to liberation theology, under the heading of modernization and development. In the ecclesiastical context, and prompted by Vatican II, the Church also intervened in the process of development. It was inspired by the ideas of the French sociologist Father Lebreton who placed economic problems

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26 The categorization of the four phases and the following ideas on the development of Church-communication in Latin America in analyzing documents are based on Benito Spoletini's research published in Comunicacion e Iglesia Latinoamericana, (Ediciones Paulinas, OCIC, UNDA, UCLAP, WACC, Buenos Aires, 1985). However, the development of the division mentioned is the result also of my own research based on several authors cited in the following work. The analysis of these four phases of Church-communication are based on Latin American Church's documents.

within a global plan of human growth.<sup>27</sup> In this context, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967)<sup>28</sup> which defines "integral development" as "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" (n.21), from poverty and exploitation, through humanizing conditions, to overcome poverty and grow in knowledge and culture with others.<sup>29</sup>

As discussed above, liberation theology arises within this context as a new way of doing theology in the Latin American reality of the poverty and misery of the majority of its people. It is a theology which questions the causes of poverty and oppression, and it was taken up by the Medellin Conference (1968).

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27 Louis Joseph Lebret was a French Dominican Priest who founded the Center for Economy and Humanism in Montevideo and later IEPAL (Institute of Political Studies for Latin America) in Buenos Aires. North American Dominican, loosely following Lebret's lead, founded IBEAS (Bolivian Institute for Social Study and action) in La Paz. These centers (and other institutes as the Jesuits' CIAS --Center for Social Investigation and Action) were established to delineate and analyze social conditions in Latin America. Fr. Lebret's contribution was important particularly in offering reflections with a completely open mind on issues related to socio-politico and economic situation of the world. Such issues focused on population increase, development and coordinated development. (E. Clearly, Crisis and Change..., *op. cit.*, p. 29; A. McGovern, Liberation theology and its critics, *op. cit.*, p. 6; L. J. Lebret, The Last revolution, Sheed and Ward:New York, 1965)

28 *Populorum Progressio* (Progress of Peoples) published by Paul VI in 1967. Contrary to his predecessors, whose documents on Catholic "social teaching" reflected European preoccupations, Paul VI focused on Third World development issues. The encyclical hinted at a strong critique of the existing international economic order.

29 Philip Berryman, Liberation Theology, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

However, the Church's most outstanding documents in this period were also influenced by the theory of modernization. Three are the documents issued by meetings sponsored by CELAM:

- \* *First Seminar of people in charge of social communication* (Santa Ines, Lima, 1966);
- \* *Three regional seminars in Montevideo, Lima and San Jose - Costa Rica*, (1968); and the
- \* *Document on Social Media Communication in Medellin, Colombia* (1968).

The text of the three documents underlines the position of Vatican II, specifically *Inter Mirifica*, on communications. Emphasis was put on the role of "communicators", attributing great power to them. There was a belief as well that the media are virtually almighty, and, therefore, since they are seen as the proper tools to promote social change, they should be used to evangelize. The analysis of "content", however, fell apart and the real situation of poverty, marginalization and underdevelopment of Latin American people, particularly the peasants, was put aside.

This trend can also be seen in the *Medellin* document. Its 24 articles on communication emphasize that media are "essential to sensitize public opinion in a changing process" (n.5). It also stressed the "providential help" to the "human and Christian promotion in the continent" (n.4) provided by media.

In his critique, Marques de Melo<sup>30</sup> suggests that the bishops in Medellín, revealed a naive attitude and an enchantment for the new communication technologies, as they saw the mass media as superpowerful, as the means to compel development and to drive development planning toward the common good.

However, if the Medellín document in communication was considered lacking in its considerations of the socio-cultural context of Latin America, the approach of the document *Conclusions of Medellín* (Justice, Peace, for instance) was remarkable. Spoletini remarks that the conclusions of Medellín started a new mentality in the Church and, consequently, in its relation to communication.

### 3.4 Social Communication and liberation: 1970-1974

#### - The significance of the "small media" -

By the early 1970s, the economic and social development philosophy of "modernization" had been questioned by the failure of most of the "Alliance for Progress" projects. As noted in Chapter II, the dependency theorists had begun to analyze and explain the presence of social inequalities in Latin America as the product, instead, of international economic relations sustaining an imperialistic power, socio-

30 José Marques de Melo, Comunicação e libertação, (Vozes, Petrópolis, 1981) p. 11.

economic dependency and unequal economic distribution. As a logical consequence of this kind of analysis, *liberation* was identified as the solution to the problems of Latin American countries, and liberation theology was born, having as its framework the Biblical message which presents the work of Christ as a liberation.

At the political level, the fragile democracies started to disappear, replaced by civic-military or simply military dictatorships, in several countries of the continent. The free election in Chile in 1970 of the Unidad Popular government, made up of socialists and other leftist parties and groups, marked the beginning of an important stage in Latin American history. It was the first attempt to exchange the capitalist system for a socialist-Marxist alternative through democratic means.<sup>31</sup> Another landmark of the period was the comeback of *Peronism* (also a labour and political movement) in Argentina in 1973, after eighteen years of military dominance. However, three years later it would be replaced by a new military dictatorship, which, like Chile's, severely punished any open criticism of the system.

At the cultural level, specifically in the field of communication, such outstanding researchers as Antonio Pasquali, Venezuela (Information), Eliseo Veron, Argentina (Semiology), Ramiro Beltran, Bolivia (Communication Policies),

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31 E. Gonzales and L.R. Einaudi, "New patterns of leadership," Beyond Cuba Latin America takes charge of its future, ed. L.R. Einaudi, Crane, Russak, (N. York, 1974).

contributed to the development of a scholarly approach, specifically tailored to Latin America.<sup>32</sup> Beginning in Brazil, and continuing in Chile, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's methodology of *concientización* provoked the development of a critical approach to communication. All of these researchers based their work on an understanding of cultural imperialism that viewed "the mass media in Latin America (as) dominated by advertising interests and the cheapest imported U.S. programming, (...) destroying the best cultural values of the people."<sup>33</sup>

This work also had impact at the level of ecclesial discourse on communication. The Official Church published *Octogesima Advenians* (1971) to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII), and in 1971, issued *Communio et Progressio*, a landmark document on communication. At the Latin American Church level, it was a period marked by the search for alternative models of communication. Influenced by the discussions on "cultural imperialism", emphasis was put on the development of an indigenous cultural process of communication, implementing or introducing, for instance,

32 The researchers mentioned, began their work as significant pioneers in the beginnings of an indigenous tradition going back to the 1960s. However, this tradition in research and publication achieved a much broader base in the 1970s. (Emile McAnany, "Seminal Ideas in Latin American critical Communication research: an agenda for the North," Communication and Latin American society - trends in critical research, 1960-1985, ed. Rita Atwood and E. McAnany, (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986) p. 29).

33 Robert White, "The Church and communication in Latin America...", *op. cit.*, p. 108.

dance, theater, and audiovisual media. This search for a new pattern of communication included the development of micro media ("small" media) or group communication, especially in the basic Christian community.

During this period, there were several meetings of the Latin American Church which produced documents on communication:

- \* *Melgar* (Colombia, 1970);
- \* *Seminar on Communication and Education* in Mexico (1971);
- \* Three regional Seminars on *Pastoral of Communication* in Antigua (Guatemala), San Miguel (Argentina), Cumbaya (Ecuador), 1972;
- \* *Interamerican meeting of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication* in Cumbaya (Ecuador, 1972): and
- \* *Social Communicator Perspectives* (1974) in preparation of the Bishops' Synod.

The meetings were sponsored by DECOS/CELAM and have greatly contributed to the understanding of the Latin American episcopate on communication.

According to Spoletini, the Melgar meeting was the most important step toward a critical analysis of communication using the liberation approach. The Melgar document criticizes the "novelty" of culture produced by the mass media, emphasizing the "clandestine" aspects such as consumerism and "massification" (n.3). Melgar uses the liberation approach, born at Medellin (1968), in order to condemn the wrong use of



the media, and to denounce particularly the "monopoly of information which repeats the vices of capitalism" (n.2). The document unveils the optimistic position of the ecclesiastic environment and denounces the "lack of understanding of the matter by the hierarchy" (n.2). In addition to these criticisms, the document points out four characteristics to be developed as an effective "Christian answer" to the problem analyzed: personalization, liberation, creativity, evangelization.

While the seminar held in Mexico was primarily on education matters, it recommended that the Church consider the global phenomenon of communication, and proposed taking it a step further, to study the future of communication in Latin America by satellites (n.46). Part of the recommendations include an appeal to the Church to have a "prophetic" presence in communication (n.32), denouncing the structures of domination and, becoming, according to its mission, the "voice of voiceless" (n. 32), contributing, therefore, to a liberated education (n.31,33).

The central theme of the Three Regional Seminars (1972) was on "public opinion". The document stresses the lack of public opinion first of all in the internal matters of the institution of the Church itself. Central discussion was also focused on the vertical process of communication and the necessity to adopt a type of communication based on a more participatory process.

The document *Perspective of Social Communicator* (1974), in preparation for the Bishops' Synod on Evangelization (Rome, 1974), criticized the mass media for their vertical and one-way process of communication. They considered mass media not qualified for evangelization, or for developing personal communication. Instead they praised the "small media" as the sole media able to carry out a true evangelization. The document made an important opening for group communication in the Church's pastoral work in Latin America.

On the other hand, the criticisms of mass media were negatively received in many environments, particularly by those running ecclesiastical organizations of communication, by the National Bishops Conferences and the Vatican. They claimed that such a document was not in accordance with the concepts postulated in *Communio et Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.5 Social communication and new situations: 1975-1979

#### - Communication from Puebla perspective -

The socio-cultural context of Latin America in the period between 1975 and 1979 was dominated by demographic explosion, economic crisis provoking unemployment in all countries, and massive migration of people to industrial cities looking for work. Military governments in several countries (Argentina,

34 Ernesto Baragli, Comunicación Social y comunión, (Ediciones Paulinas, Bogota, 1979) pp. 116-120.

Brazil, Chile and Uruguay) pretended they were fostering economic development through an autocratic state. For this purpose, they employed technocrats in increasingly close association with the transnational corporations, ignoring the political rights and the social and cultural needs of the majority.<sup>35</sup> The military dictatorships also introduced the National Security Ideology, and the systemic violation of human rights: Tortures, exile, and "*desaparecidos*" became an everyday fact.

In terms of communication, representatives of twenty Latin American and Caribbean governments met in San Jose (Costa Rica, 1976), sponsored by UNESCO to propose national communication policies.<sup>36</sup>

The documents issued between 1975 and 1977 did not introduce any new outlooks by the Church on communication, as they dealt with existing Church's thinking on the matter.<sup>37</sup> However, the keystone in the Church's communication in the late 1970s was the development of the basic Christian communities, considered further in this dissertation.

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35 Elizabeth Fox, "Media policies in Latin America: an overview," Media and Politics in Latin America, ed. Elizabeth Fox, (Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1988) p. 25.

36 For further information on San Jose Conference and its proposals, see Elizabeth Fox, Media and Politics in Latin America, *op. cit.*, 1988.

37 Between 1975 and 1977, the documents issued by the Latin American Church on communication are: *Evangelization and social media communication* (Bogota, 1975); *Audiovisual and evangelization* (Lima, 1977); Regional meetings in Buenos Aires and in San Jose, Costa Rica (1977).

In 1978 and in order to prepare the Third Latin American Bishops Conference in Puebla (1979), the Communication Department (DECOS) drew up *Evangelization and Social Communication in Latin America*. Coordinated by Washington Uranga, former executive secretary of DECOS, the document had the input of eighteen countries, and commentaries by Latin American and foreign experts in pastoral work and communication. The great significance of this document is that it constituted the first synthesis of the Latin American Church's thought on communication. Divided into three parts, it analyzes, in its first section, the positive and negative aspects of social media communication within a Latin American situation. Contrary to some apocalyptic conclusions arrived at in the past, the assessment is developed in a clear and objective way. Alongside the recognition of the importance of the media for literacy and *conscientización*, especially for rural and urban communities, it vigorously denounced consumerism, and the manipulation and misuse by those who utilize and transform media into tools of power and oppression. The document also stresses the lack of understanding of the "global phenomenon" of Communication by the Church (bishops, priests, for instance). Such an attitude by the Church, it felt, prevented an effective pastoral development on the communication field.

The second section reflected on the theological-pastoral aspect of communication and its implications for the activities of evangelization by the Church within the existing

socio-cultural context of injustice, domination, and poverty of the majority of population. The first part is made up of pastoral proposals: the training of people at diverse levels, the presence of the Church in the mass media (whether or not owned by the Church), freedom of expression (opinions) in the Church, introduction of audiovisual resources in the liturgy, and spirituality of communicators.

And last, but not least, the Document of Puebla (1979) takes up 32 articles (1063-1095) of the entire document with communication issues. However, prior to analyzing Puebla on communication, it is important to assess the significance of Puebla for the Latin American continent, as the Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops. It was held in Puebla (Mexico, 1979) to mark the tenth anniversary of Medellin. Just as the previous conference applied Vatican II to Latin America, the Puebla meeting was to apply Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (which came out of the 1974 Roman Synod of Bishops) on evangelization, in the context of Latin America. Therefore, *Evangelization in the present and the future of Latin America* was the chosen title for the Puebla meeting. Speaking of poverty, the bishops reaffirmed Medellin's option expressing preference for and with the poor. They also stated:

We see the growing gap between rich and poor as a scandal and a contradiction to Christian existence. The luxury of a few becomes an insult to the wretched poverty of the vast masses... [The bishops spoke of this as a] situation of social sinfulness... (n.28)  
Analyzing this situation more deeply, we discover that this poverty is not a passing phase. Instead, it is the

product of economic, social, and political situations and structures, though there are also other causes for the state of misery. (n.30)

The Puebla meeting represented a clash between three mind-sets among the bishops. At one extreme, the conservatives stressed hierarchical authority, doctrinal orthodoxy and the need to combat liberation theology. At the other extreme, was a group called liberationists, whose emphasis was on basic Christian communities. They also not only denounced abuses such as poverty, but the structures that caused them. In the middle was the largest group, which might be called centrist and was most concerned with Church unity. The centrist group played a leading role in dealing with conservatives and liberationists. Under such circumstances, the final document emerged with an overall developmentalist tone. For instance, the bishops frequently called for greater "participation and communion" in Church and society. Such words were clearly part of a new kind of Church discourse aimed at replacing liberation terminology. "Preferential option for the poor", for instance, was probably the most positive element for the liberationist side. Therefore, each of the three tendencies could find positive elements.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of communication, Puebla demonstrates an advancement from Medellin. In Medellin, the bishops showed an enchantment with new communication technologies, and a naive

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38 Philip Berryman, Liberation Theology, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

understanding of them. In Puebla, by "the preferential option for the poor", and by the activity of liberationists in the basic Christian communities, the Church made clear that it was not taking a conciliatory attitude towards the dominant classes of society, which have the power to put down or suffocate initiatives of resistance by the lower classes. Instead, Puebla proposal was to use its own means of communication to be the "voice of the voiceless".

Knowing the situation of poverty, marginalization, and injustice in which large masses of Latin Americans are immersed, and also being aware of the violations of human rights, and its use of its own media the Church must more and more each day become the voice of the dispossessed, even at the risk entailed. (n.1094)

In recognizing that social communication is conditioned by the socio-cultural reality of Latin American countries, and in turn, that it is one of the determining factors in maintaining that reality (n. 1064), Puebla also advanced the Church's thinking. In *Medellin*, the bishops recognized that mass media were owned by economic, and sometimes conservative power groups. However, in *Puebla*, such conclusions stemmed from a more complete understanding of the interrelation between the media of social communication and socio-cultural reality. As Marques de Melo argues

such reality [socio-cultural] is understood as the result of articulation of infrastructure and superstructure within society.<sup>39</sup> Acting as apparatuses of the ideological superstructure<sup>39</sup> within society, the media of social

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39 This understanding of the media as ideological apparatuses, stems from Althusser's use of the term in relation to institutions such as the media, the family and religious organizations. Althusser's contention was that it is at the level of ideology that the reproduction of the entire system

communication, at the same time they function as the result of social action of the power by those who hold the property of media production, they [media of social communication] legitimate and sustain the current social order. In other words, they are cause and effect of the socio-cultural reality.<sup>40</sup>

Although the Puebla document denounced the control and ideological manipulation exercised by political and economic power groups through the media (n.1071), there was also an agreement with other documents<sup>41</sup> of the Church in stating that "evangelization cannot prescind from the media of communication" (n.1064). However, aware of the phenomenon of social communication and its implications for evangelization, the document proposes:

It is urgently necessary that the hierarchy and pastoral agents in general, all of us, become acquainted with the phenomenon of social communication, understand it, and gain a deeper experiential contact with it. In this way we can adapt our pastoral responses to this new reality and integrate communications into our overall, coordinated pastoral effort. (Puebla n.1083)

If on the one hand such a statement was evidence of the need to keep pace with the reality of communication, on the other hand the document showed that an awareness of the

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of the relations of production characterizing the capitalist mode of production is secured. Understood not as an intellectual abstraction, ideology for Althusser was then, a concrete social process embodied in the material signifying practices of collectivity of "ideological apparatuses" --the family, school, churches and the media. (L. Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays, New Left Books, London, 1971).

40 José Marques de Melo, "Meios de Comunicação e realidade sociocultural," Puebla/Brazil: Comunicação, um estudo crítico, (Ed. Loyola, S. Paulo, 1981) p. 168.

41 See, for instance, *Communio et Progressio* n.1 and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n.45.



importance of communication in the Latin American Church had been achieved.

The most important and original aspect of the *Puebla* document, however, is that the Church, without rejecting the mass media, emphasized the use of popular communication or group communication as an alternative which took into account a dialogical and participatory process of communication. The document recognized that such experiences had been developed since Medellin, and stated:

Here we must mention two very positive phenomena: the rapid growth of the Media of Group Communication (MCG), and of small media producing an increasing amount of material for evangelization. Pastoral agents are employing these media more and more every day, thus fostering greater capacity for dialogue and contact in this area (n.1078).

Without neglecting the necessary and urgent presence of the mass-oriented media, it is urgent that we intensify our use of the Media of Group Communication (MCG) (n.1090).

For greater efficacy in transmitting the divine message, the Church should utilize a language that is up-to-date, concrete, direct, clear, and at the same time judicious. This language must be close to the reality that confronts the people, their outlook... To this end, we must consider the systems and resources of audiovisual language that are peculiar to people today (n.1091).

Such statements indicate a change in the approach to the Church's pastoral work. As mentioned previously (n.1090), the point was not to refute or neglect the mass media, but to implement and develop a new process of communication which is possible through and by smaller groups. The process would focus on the socio-cultural reality of lower classes, the

poor, and the marginalized, to whom the Latin American Church committed itself.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.6 Social Communication - challenges for the 1980s

The documents on communication in the 1980s constituted a response to the orientations and pastoral proposals by the Puebla Conference. In this regard the Latin American Church through DECOS/CELAM issued five significant documents, that, according to Spoletini's classification, stand as Servicio Informativo Latioamericano (SIAL - Latin American Informative Service), Bogota 1980.

To put into practice the recommendations of Puebla (n.1092) which urged the Church "to have its own channels of information and news that will ensure intercommunication and dialogue with the world"<sup>43</sup>, representatives of the National Bishops' Conferences in Latin America and experts in communication met in Bogota, 1980. Information and news was the subject and the result was the birth of SIAL, an intercommunication system, integrated by the Press and Publishing Office of CELAM and by the National Offices

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42 José Marques de Melo, "Meios de Comunicação e realidade sociocultural", *op. cit.*, p. 169.

43 This recommendation by the Church was taken in face of the fact that "monopolistic control over information, either on the part of government or private interests, permits the arbitrary use of the information media... It allows for the manipulation of messages on the basis of factional interests" (Puebla n.1071).

indicated by the National Conferences. The aims of SIAL were to contribute to an increasing interrelation in terms of information between CELAM and the Episcopate Conferences; to present a "real image" of the Church and its thoughts on the mass media in general; and to offer orientation and clarification on the Church's position, when requested to do so by society. However, if this initiative represented an advancement by the Church, it also showed the Church's concern with its own mission. In other words, the Church wanted to assure that its "message" --evangelization-- would reach people without any twisting or misinterpretation by the media.<sup>44</sup>

The main document of this period was on Church and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), Embu, Brazil, 1982 which is the subject of Chapter IV in this dissertation.

### 3.7 Group Communication

Reinforced by Medellin and Puebla, *group communication* has become the primary communication activity of the Church in Latin America.<sup>45</sup> It stemmed from the use of audiovisual media

44 *Training of religious on communication* (Bogota, 1980), *For a theology of communication in Latin America* (Bogota, 1983), *Pastoral Team and Ecclesial organizations of communications* (Lima, 1984) are also documents issued in the 1980s.

45 The discussion of the *group communication* and *popular communication* (*comunicación popular*) in the present section has a historical purpose once the conceptual view is

to achieve the aims of evangelization and *concientización* for social change. Within a religious context, for instance, in catechistic instruction, there was an increasing search for a more flexible methodology to express personal and communitary faith. Therefore, the audio-cassette or set of slides is not only a practical way of communicating its message, but also a helpful teaching aid for illiterate or semi-literate groups.

According to Manuel Oliveira,<sup>46</sup> the great significance of this process of communication is that the audio-cassete, chart, slides or other medium enables the "teacher" to avoid direct instruction and to become an animator of a completely free, open process of deepening of faith. In this process, neither the animator nor the means are passing on information, but are the occasion for a process of personal discovery. Developing such practice, group communication became the major means of socialization into the basic Christian communities, for instance, but in a way that prompted the members of the group to assume complete conscious responsibility for their convictions and actions.

This process differs from situations of group communication without a liberation purpose. Any teaching process, for instance, may be two-way communication but can end up strengthening a relation of domination --dependency

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considered in Chapter V. The basic discussion of this section is based on the mentioned work by Robert White, "The Church and Communication in Latin America - thirty years to search for patterns," *op. cit.*, pp. 106-112.

46 Manuel Oliveira, "Los medios grupales" Boletín Radiodienst, (UNDA-AL, 1977) N. 73.

between teacher and student. This is not the case when group communication carries liberation proposals. The latter case, in the Church's view, happens mainly among marginalized populations or lower classes, who search for opportunities of group communication that allow new types of human relations and increased levels of consciousness. In such experiences, the essential purpose is interpersonal relations in the context of the group. In other words, dialogue and reflection on their praxis is the essential aspect.<sup>47</sup>

Another important aspect of group communication in Latin America is that it represents a very conscious effort to counter the traditional authoritarian vertical tradition of education and communication, which reflects the hierarchical and elite-controlled social structure. White points out that the involvement of peasants in the leadership of popular organizations, and as monitors in radio schools, introduced a more horizontal communication. As already discussed, this methodology follows from Paulo Freire's systematic critique of the "banking" method of education and the passive, rote memorization of classical information that reflected an elite view of reality. In fact, as White stresses, "the Freirian methodology is essentially a small group discussion method of education and communication."

Diffusion of group communication has been wide and rapid in Latin America due to its consistent support from UNDA-AL,

47 José Martínez Terrero, Comunicación grupal liberadora, (Ediciones Paulinas, OCIC-AL / UNDA-AL / UCLAP / WACC, 1986).

OCIC, UCLAP, CLAR (The Confederation of Latin American Religious), DECOS, SERPAL (The Latin American Radiophonic Service), and other organizations of the Latin American Church. SERPAL began producing for radio and has now turned toward group communication and has an efficient system for distributing a continuous stream of audio cassettes to catechistic offices and other centres in every country of Latin America. According to White, there is at least one major centre in each Latin American country for promoting group communication, training both supervisors and group animators, and producing group media.

### 3.8 People's communication - *comunicación popular*

People's communication or *comunicación popular*, as it is called, refers to a new type of grassroots communication in Latin America, and is another important dimension of the Catholic Church in relation to communication. In his extensive study on the subject, White explains that

*Comunicación popular* in its inception is not any one kind of media such as group media, local radio or published materials. Nor is it the instruction of religious, community development of agricultural specialists speaking to peasants in a simpler language. It arises within a lower-status movement and is peasant or worker groups speaking among themselves or to other similar groups.<sup>48</sup>

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48 Robert White, "*Comunicación popular: language of liberation*" Media Development, (WACC, 1980) N. 3, p. 4.

Regarding the means of communication, *comunicacion popular* may produce very simple mimeographed newspaper, popular theater, posters, simple slide projects, and puppets, etc. In this context, the "Audiovisual Project" by the Production and Training Centre of Bahia and now Teresina (Brazil), illustrates how *comunicación popular* is a part of its practice.<sup>49</sup> This particular project works with peasants, fishermen and in some cases with aboriginal communities. They produce video not for the communities but *with* the communities and people in the community participate in the production process, choosing *what* to produce, *how* to produce it, and *where* to show the video production. The *comunicación popular* approach reinforces the view that audiovisuals, video or other media be locally produced and representative of the ideas of the community involved.<sup>50</sup>

It was in this context of practicing *comunicacion popular*, and demonstrated in this chapter, that the reading of the *Medellin* and *Puebla* documents and other related Church's documents has been influential in introducing and contributing

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49 The Centre was designed to work with popular movements, and to develop the pastoral work of the National Bishops' Conference of Brazil (CNBB). The experience is based on an interview with Alfredo Alves, popular communicator, published in *Comunicación América Latina*, (OCIC, UCLAP, UNDA-AL, WACC-AL/C, 1987) N.17, pp. 11-13.

50 Presently, several centres and associations throughout Latin America have networked under the coordination of CELADEC (Evangelical Latin American Commission of Christian Communication), in Lima (Peru), which plays an ecumenical role in the process of *comunicacion popular*.

to a more horizontal form of communication which implements participatory processes.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER

The Catholic Church has supported the New World Information and Communication Order, although this has never been very explicit at the official or hierarchical level. Although Pope John Paul II recommended that a new world information and communication order be established, the hierarchy in the Vatican did not present the theme for discussion in any of its international meetings on communication. Instead, the endorsement of NWICO<sup>1</sup> has been taken on by the Catholic organizations for communication, namely the International Catholic Press Union (UCIP), the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television (UNDA), and the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC).<sup>2</sup> These organizations have set up seminars to discuss the issue and to find strategies to develop a process of democratization of communication.

This chapter begins by considering whether or not the NWICO debate is over, and showing how the debate has moved to

1 NWICO is the abbreviation of New World Information and Communication Order adopted in this dissertation. For full account of the NWICO debate, see Appendix I in this dissertation.

2 In Latin America, these organizations stand as UCLAP - Latin American Catholic Press Union. UNDA-AL - Latin American Catholic Association for Radio and Television. SAL-OCIC - Latin American Secretariat of the International Catholic Cinema Organization.

a new stage with the common people as the new social actor in the establishment of the NWICO. It then analyzes the relation between the Church and NWICO in Latin America, and how the above Catholic organizations --UNDA-AL, UCLAP and SAL-OCIC-- have taken on the task of developing the process of democratization of communication on the continent. This chapter includes an analysis of the most important Church conference texts regarding NWICO, the *Quito* and *Embu* documents. One of the most significant contributions of these texts are their discussion of *alternative communication, access* and *participation*. The analysis of the texts concludes with an assessment of the Church's own internal process of democratization of communication, suggesting that a "mini-NWICO" is needed, starting "at home." Instead, the chapter notes some disturbing counter trends, a tendency within some parts of the Latin American Church hierarchy to step backwards from NWICO.

#### **4.1 Is the NWICO debate over?**

After fifteen years of NWICO discussion, many people, even among those who supported the movement think that the debate is now over. There are two ways to explain this. In the first place, the withdrawal of the United States from Unesco signified a breakdown in the ideological differences between the United States and NWICO movement. The developing countries argued for development of their communication infrastructure

and for broader participation in the international flow of information. On the other hand, the argument of the leading industrial countries was focused on press freedom and the free flow of information. The free flow concept, or, more specifically, the way it is being applied, is seen by the developing countries as one source of their dependency. The developing countries realized that "between a strong and a weak partner, freedom can easily lead to suppression while regulation helps to liberate."<sup>3</sup> However, the Western countries argued that freedom of information is a precondition for communication development. The ideological positions soon dominated the international discussion on information issues, leaving other problems behind. As W. Kleinwachter points out, "this structure of the argument blocked any consensus. It became a chicken-and-egg problem."<sup>4</sup>

In this arena of confrontation, the stronger party decided to close the debate, that is to say, the failure to resolve differences of opinion in the ideological debate culminated in the United States' withdrawal from Unesco in 1985. Consequently, NWICO as a political issue was supposed to be dead. However, if NWICO was a dead issue, what is the explanation for President Reagan's attacks against NWICO in the UN General Assembly?<sup>5</sup>

3 Wolfgang Kleinwachter, "Practical challenges for the 21st century", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) N.3, p. 31.

4 Ibid., p. 31.

5 See Appendix I in this dissertation.

The second fundamental reason contributing to the impression that the NWICO debate is over is the new position of Unesco on that issue. As described in Appendix I, the new director general of Unesco, Federico Mayor, has endorsed the "free flow of information", making clear in his statements, while touring the United States, that plans for NWICO "no longer exist at Unesco."<sup>6</sup> Indeed discussions of NWICO have tended to be paralyzed at Unesco. One example is the decision to no longer print the English version of the MacBride Report, and another, the threat "to take legal action to prevent the publication of another book dealing with the US history with Unesco. It was said that the book would "open up old wounds."<sup>7</sup>

Although the positions described above constitute strong reasons to believe that NWICO did not achieve its stated purpose, I would like to contest this idea on several grounds. First, NWICO is still meaningful inasmuch as the imbalances of the world information order have not disappeared over the past years of debate. Therefore, the problems which were the reasons for the development of NWICO concept are still

6 *Washington Post*, 25 February 1989.

7 Colleen Roach, "The movement for a New World Information and Communication Order: a second wave?", *op. cit.*, p. 289. The book, which had been commissioned by the M'Bow administration from the New York-based Institute for Media Analysis (IMS), was originally intended to come out as a co-publication with Unesco. However, the Mayor administration has objected, not only to the release of the book, but to its publication outside Unesco. Faced with legal charges of copyright violation (1989), IMS went public with the Unesco threats and within one week the lawsuit was dropped. (Quoted in Colleen Roach, *op. cit.*, p. 289)

unsolved. The majority of the developing countries are still confronted with under-development in the field of mass communication.<sup>8</sup>

In the words of Herbert Schiller in 1990, the movement for a new world information order is "currently in eclipse", but the issues addressed by NWICO debate "are more pressing than ever." And he adds that "reform and renewal of the international information condition cannot fail to reappear on future global agendas with or without the endorsement of Unesco."<sup>9</sup>

The Second MacBride Round Table of non-governmental organizations, meeting in Prague, September 1990, and attended by 30 communication professionals and academics from 20 countries also stated that the MacBride Report's principles and major recommendations, "are as valid today as they were ten years ago. They are as relevant for developing countries as for developed, even those entering the so-called post-industrial era" (*Prague Statement*, 1990). The Second MacBride Round Table also recommended that public opinion should continue to be mobilized on the principles and recommendations of the MacBride Report, and the ideas of NWICO should be

8 Colleen Roach, Wolfgang Kleinwachter, Rafael Roncagliolo, Herbert Schiller, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Cees Hamelink, Karol Jakubowicz, Slavo Splichal, The Manila Declaration (1989), The Harare Statement (First MacBride Round Table, 1989), The Prague Statement (Second MacBride Round Table, 1990). (Quoted in Media Development, WACC, London, 1990, (Pos-Congress Issue), N.3, 4.)

9 Herbert Schiller, "Forgetful and short-sighted --what hope for the future?", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) N.3, p. 27.

contextualized in the various regions, including organizing seminars and studies to implement NWICO values.

Secondly, NWICO must be considered and defined more as a process than a set of conditions and practices. Obviously, aspects of the process are going to change, however, but what will remain are its goals: "more justice, more equity, more reciprocity in information exchange, less dependence in communication flows" (Sean MacBride, "Preface", *MacBride Report*, 1980). Based on the fact that a New World Information and Communication Order is a concept and not an event, the idea of NWICO continues to be relevant and must be supported and propagated, although changes in the scenery of communication will come about.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, what some authors such as Elizabeth Fox (1988) and Raquel Salinas Bascur (1988, 1989) have considered a "failure" in terms of national communication policies should not be interpreted as a failure of NWICO. What Bascur stresses as a "failure" is the application of NWICO strategy in some aspects, as in the national communication policies. This has been expressed in the title of her report *Forget the NWICO and begin all over again*.<sup>11</sup>

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10 "NWICO - Where do we go from here?", Post-Congress Seminar Report (WACC's Congress in Manila, 1989), Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) Post-Congress Issue, p. 25.

11 Raquel Salinas Bascur, Forget the NWICO and begin all over again, A Report of the Collaborative Project on Information Overload and Information Underuse, submitted to the United Nations University Global Learning Division and The Gamma Institute. Santiago, revised version, August 1986.

It is also fair to say that the NWICO movement has to reconsider some of the flaws in its own analysis and actions. For instance, it should incorporate analysis of the issue of class and gender. Colleen Roach argues that Marxist principles of social analysis such as imperialism, core and periphery, constituted part of the conceptual work behind NWICO, but the movement never sufficiently developed a class analysis, nor dealt with the national elites issue. In this regard, NWICO movement has to realize that one of the biggest class problems of the movement is that of "the Third World national elites."<sup>12</sup> However, failure in the application of NWICO strategies does not necessarily mean that it is dead. What is needed is a revision of the process to apply the concept.

Moreover, the fact that Unesco has become more concerned with operational activities and training communication professionals than in discussions on NWICO does not in itself mean that NWICO is dead. Rafael Roncagliolo calls attention to the fact that the aspiration of a new order in communication did not stem from any conference or declaration by Unesco. The aspiration and actions for a NWICO were initiatives of governments of the Third World and academics and professional organizations. In this regard, for instance, in Latin America, the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP) emerged, as well as the Latin American Association of Communication

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12 Colleen Roach, "The movement for a New World...", *op. cit.*, p. 297.

Researcher (ALAIC) and the Latin American Federation of Faculty of Social Communication (FELAFACS).<sup>13</sup>

Presently, supporters for NWICO have gained new strength to carry the debate to meetings and round tables. The Federation of Journalists and non-governmental organizations have held a series of ongoing meetings in various places around the world. Of particular relevance are the MacBride Round Table on Communication in Harare (October 1989), whose statement from that meeting makes clear that a search for a NWICO is now much more compelling. Also the Second MacBride Round Table of non-governmental organizations in Prague (September 1990) provided support for the NWICO and stated that

the debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) has thus returned to where it started. It is now in the arena of professional organizations, of communication researchers and, most importantly, in the arena of grassroot movements, representing ordinary men, women and children who are directly affected by our current cultural and communication environment.

#### **4.2 People - new social actor in NWICO considerations**

Although the NWICO debate has faded in the political arena due to the United States and Unesco positions described in Appendix I, there is another political and social actor to be taken into consideration --the people.<sup>14</sup> This dissertation

13 Rafael Roncagliolo, "Tejiendo un nuevo 'nuevo orden'", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) N.3, p. 34.

14 The word *people* here is related to Third World communities, more specifically to the "*popular*", or grassroot movements which are determined to struggle to free themselves from political or socio-cultural constraints of the power



seeks to prove that the NWICO ideals are still alive and the debate to establish a new order of information and communication is not over, it has just taken another form. The new direction can be summed up in the phrase of Robert White: NWICO "has become a people's movement."<sup>15</sup> As important as the various NWICO documents and their presentation of projects and idealistic policy recommendations have been, NWICO does not entirely consist of a few international declarations. It is primarily a process and a movement involving people outside governmental policy-making circles. It involves many other social, political and cultural actors who have important roles in developing the communication patterns and media of a country, such as professional organizations, communication researchers, non-governmental organizations and, most importantly, the grassroot movements.

Some skeptics may question the idea that *people* can be a real alternative to the power of the state, or as Roach emphasizes, "a genuine force for liberation",<sup>16</sup> but even policy-makers in the United States have begun to recognize the

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structures. In other words, *people* are those who are conscious of being powerless and want to gain control of their own lives and circumstances. A full explanation of "people" from a Latin American perspective is discussed in Chapter V of this dissertation.

15 Robert White, "NWICO has become a people's movement", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1988) N.1, p. 20.

16 Herbert Schiller also defended the idea of people's movement, not media, as the key to liberation, in his talk to the WACC Congress on Communication held in Manila in October 1989. Quoted in Media Development - Post-Congress Issue, WACC, London, April 1990, p. 31-33.

importance of the practice of grassroots' groups in the Third World.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, the Fall 1989 issue of *Foreign Policy* lays out the dimensions of what is considered a new political phenomenon:

Today Third World self-help organizations probably number in the hundreds of thousands, their combined memberships totalling more than 100 million. At the local level people in the developing world are better organized in 1989 than they have been since European colonialism... Community activism in the Third World is bringing new actors to international affairs... a new generation of grassroot groups have been steadily, albeit unevenly, rising up since mid-century, with particularly impressive growth in the last two decades.<sup>18</sup>

As this dissertation outlines in the following chapters, these new social actors are elaborating new forms of alternative media through the increased grassroot struggles in the Third World and elsewhere. For instance, in Latin America, experience in popular communication using radio, newspaper, bulletins, and, more recently, video is increasingly common.<sup>19</sup> As discussed further in Chapter V and VI, in Brazil, group communication, where video has a fundamental role, is considered an effective means of resisting and even replying to the massifying structure of the mass media, especially

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17 Colleen Roach, "The movement for a New World...", *op. cit.*, p. 302-303.

18 A.B. Durning, "People Power and Development", *Foreign Policy* 76, 1989, Fall. This journal is one of the most important issues for Washington elites. Quoted in C. Roach, "The movement for a New World...", *op. cit.*, p. 303.

19 Institutions in Latin America such as UNDA, ALER and CIESPAL for radio, OCIC, SERTAL and ALATU for audio-visual media; UCLAP and IPAL for publishing and the press, have already systemized the experiences of popular communication.

television. The popular video movement provides an example of a battle for cultural identity, for democracy without discrimination, alienation or institutionalized authority, and demonstrates how policy can be made from "below."

Video has been present at the most important events for the Brazilian working class since 1983. It has been used several ways -- from straightforward recording to feature programmes on events such as the general strike in 1983; the founding of the CUT (*Central Unica dos Trabalhadores*, the Association of Trade Unions) in S.Bernardo do Campo; the Congress of the Working Classes; the camp-out in S.Paulo of the unemployed; at rallies in favour of direct elections all over the country and to record speeches of grassroots movements' leaders. "These events are not included in television archives, or are limited to a few shots to illustrate news reports,"<sup>20</sup> but they are a vital part of the struggle of people for their own cultural identity.

Brazil is presently going through political and social transformation, and its economic crisis and external debts are generating opposing movements to reclaim certain rights. Their activities are only partially and superficially covered by the dominant media. Instead video groups, who now act freely, without oppression, occupy a space left by the television companies. The number of active groups in video exceeds a

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20 Regina Festa and Luiz F. Santoro, "Policies from below - alternative video in Brazil", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1987) N.1, p. 27-30.

hundred, in both rural and urban areas, and the latest catalogue published by the Brazilian Association of Video in the Grassroot Movements lists about 400 finished productions. Festa and Santoro point out that such groups are often linked to unions, neighborhood and cultural associations, to organizations that support the grassroot movements, or to the Church, while some are independent.<sup>21</sup>

Today, Brazil has a Workers' TV, born in the Metalworkers' Union (S. Bernardo and Diadema 1986), in the main industrialized area of Brazil. This is a pioneering project in the country and in Latin America, and grows with the broadening support and participation of the workers. As Festa and Santoro point out the importance of Workers' TV is directly related to the fact that the Metalworkers' Union of S. Bernardo is the main protagonist in obtaining workers' rights in contemporary Brazilian society.<sup>22</sup>

The practice of alternative media by grassroot movements in the Third World countries is becoming a significant phenomenon. And even before it became fashionable, the churches were one of the strongest group of supporters for the

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21 A number of the groups connected with the organized grassroots movements have been able to distribute their programmes quite successfully. For instance, the video *Opening the Package (Abrindo o Pacote)* about the economic measures taken by the government (February 1986) was produced by the Metalworkers' Union of S. Bernardo and Diadema, was copied and distributed in fifteen states, and it was seen by thousands of union leaders.

22 Regina Festa and Luiz F. Santoro, "Policies from below - alternative video in Brazil", *op. cit.*, pp. 27-30.

concept of democratization of communication, and for many of the proposals of NWICO. The most noteworthy groups which are continuing the battle and promoting "people's power" are The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the National Council of Churches and the Catholic organizations for communication. These are groups "much more in touch with Third World communities than the traditional elites which have backed the NWICO.<sup>23</sup> The importance of "people's power" (grassroot people's movement) was once again emphasized and singled out by the WACC in its international Congress in Manila (1989). Attended by 450 people from over 80 countries, representing many fields of communication --media professionals, grassroot activists, teachers and communication researchers--, it was an ecumenical movement, that united participants from diverse religious backgrounds. Committed to a vision of democratic communication, the Congress participants issued *The Manila Declaration*, in which they state:

[We] are anxious to enter into a new phase of dialogue with related organizations and all people of goodwill to achieve a common understanding of communication in the service of free, just and peaceful communities at the local and international levels. The growth of technology, the increase in the monopolization of the media and the vulgarization of content, make this task all the more urgent. The principles of communication envisaged should be based on the power of the people, going beyond the formal processes of party politics and seeking new ways of participation...<sup>24</sup>

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23 Colleen Roach, "The movement for a New World...", *op. cit.*, p. 303.

The awareness that NWICO must be backed by the people was also stressed at the Harare MacBride Round Table (1989), and the Prague MacBride Round Table (1990). The two meetings recognized that the time had come to move NWICO beyond Unesco and to spotlight what had been in eclipse thus far, in international debates --the people. In fact, as Roach noticed, the Medium Term Plan of Unesco in no way reflects the significant development of grassroot groups in the Third World and its practice in elaborating new forms of alternative media, nor does it take into account the evidence that grassroot people's movements are now a very important actor in world and domestic politics. Actually, assisting and publicizing media activities of such groups, Unesco could have an important role as a catalyst for new thinking on information issues. Instead, it turned to training communication professionals and developing facilities for a media education.<sup>25</sup>

Robert White has also pointed out another profound achievement of the NWICO movement, the change in the perception of what communication is and how it is to function in human and social development. He refers specifically to the strategies of grassroot groups: even if they are focused on the immediate problems of basic education, health, or rural

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24 "Communication and Community. The Manila Declaration", Media Development - Pos-Congress Issue, (WACC, London, 1989) p. 21-22.

25 Colleen Roach, "Limitations and new possibilities", *op. cit.*, p. 30.

development, the alternative forms of communication they are using have the clear purposes of developing a culture, values of participatory communication and of an infrastructure of innovative participatory forms of media. While these may only be at the level of local experiences, alternative media are demonstrating the feasibility of participatory forms of access to media, the possibility of participation in media production, and of participation in administration. White suggests that democratization of communication is "more likely to begin in the marginal sectors and work toward the centre."<sup>26</sup> This thinking is increasing amidst scholars and organizations committed to the people and is discussed further in Chapter V of this dissertation.

#### **4.3 The Church supports the equality of rights in information and communication**

There is not much evidence that the proposals for the NWICO have had much influence on the official Church's concerns in communication. The most recent Vatican document, *Communio et Progressio* (1971) was written at the very early stages of the NWICO debate. Although it stressed the right to be informed and to inform (n.33), the right of access to the various means of communication (n.34), and the importance of international agreements to guarantee a fair place without

26 Robert White, "NWICO has become a people's movement", *op. cit.*, p. 20-25.

selection or discrimination for all nations in the field of communications (n.91), other key points of the NWICO debate have rarely come up in the major Church-related conferences on communication. Considering the many issues of social justice implied in NWICO, this lack of explicit discussion by the general Church, is a surprising and regrettable omission .<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the NWICO principles of equality of rights and free development were defended by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* (1967). This encyclical has been the object of many studies of the Church in the following years, especially in issues related to the socio-economic field. Paul VI has frequently addressed the importance of achieving balanced economic development and has also demonstrated the Church's support for the development of a new order of communication. In his address to Unesco in June 1980, the Pope stated:

There exists a fundamental sovereignty in society manifested by a nation's culture... This sovereignty ... must remain ... the fundamental criterion in the treatment of the means of social communications (of the information which is linked to them, and also what is known as "mass culture"). Since these means of communication are 'social' they cannot be means by which others are dominated by agents of political powers or financial powers, who impose their own models and programmes ...<sup>28</sup>

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27 In May 1980, the National Sisters Communication Service (Los Angeles) organized a special meeting on "Liberation Media" at the National Religious Communication Conference in Nashville. The general objective of the seminar was to bring some of the perspectives of liberation theology to the Church's thinking on communication. In that seminar, the NWICO was the centre of talks. Quoted in Research Trends in Religious Communication, (CSCC, London, 1980), Vol.I, N.2.



The Church's explicit endorsement of NWICO ideas was also demonstrated by John Paul II in his address to the participants of the International Catholic Press Union (UCIP) congress, held in Rome in September 1980: "You are searching for a new world information and communication order. The Church must participate in this search."<sup>29</sup> In his message for the 17th World Communications Day, John Paul II, without referring explicitly to NWICO, also spoke of a right order of social communication and an equal participation in its benefits. He addressed the need for an order of communication that guarantees a correct, just and constructive use of information, free from oppressions and discriminations based on political, economic or ideological power.<sup>30</sup> The Vatican spokesman, Msgr. Angelo Felici, also stated in the Unesco Assembly in 1983:

The delegation of the Holy See wishes to manifest its appreciation for the considerable and innovative Unesco efforts in many aspects, in the very complex issue of NWICO, as well for the diverse initiatives to carrying out the program for a New World Information and Communication Order.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, John Paul II came out strongly in support of the ideals of NWICO in his encyclical on "Concern for the

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28 Ibid., Vol.I, N.2.

29 Quoted in Clarenco Neotti, A Nova Ordem Mundial da Informação e da Comunicação (NOMIC), (Vozes, Petrópolis - Brazil, 1986) p.56. Translation my own.

30 "Message of His Holiness John Paul II for the 17th World Communications Day", L'Osservatore Romano, (Vatican, April 25 1983).

31 Quoted in C. Neotti, A Nova Ordem Mundial..., *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Social Order" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*),<sup>32</sup> December 1987. The Pope endorsed the movement of Non-aligned countries' for "the right of every people to its own identity, independence and security, as well as the right to share, on a basis of equality and solidarity..." (n.21). He emphasized that

the developing countries, instead of becoming autonomous nations concerned with their own progress towards a just sharing in the goods and services meant for all, become parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel. This is often true also in the field of social communication, which, being run by centres mostly in the northern hemisphere, do not always give due consideration to the priorities and problems of such countries or respect their cultural make-up (n.22).

In Latin America, the Catholic Church did not make any official pronouncement on NWICO, except for some references at the Brazilian Bishops Conference.<sup>33</sup> Since the Church generally has been a part of the intellectual ferment and praxis in liberation movements of Latin America, one might expect a contribution to the NWICO discussions. However, this

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32 John Paul II, Concern for the Social Order - *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (Editions Paulines, Sherbrooke (QB), 1988). The encyclical of Pope John Paul II The Hundredth Year (1991) is not included in the research for this dissertation.

33 See, for instance, the opening conference of UCBC (Brazilian Christian Communication Union) in Piracicaba (S.Paulo - 1984) by the President of the Brazilian National Conference of Bishops (CNBB), D. Ivo Lorscheiter, and published in Comunicação, Igreja, e Estado na América Latina, ed. Ismar O. Soares and Joana Puntel (Ed. Paulinas/UCBC, S.Paulo, 1985). Also in 1984, the group of reflection on communication of CNBB issued a Carta aos Comunicadores (Letter to Communicators) to celebrate the *World Communications Day*. The text stresses the NWICO principles in the context of communication in Latin America. The letter was approved by several bishops who gave special promotion to the publication.

did not in fact happen. The support of the Church for NWICO occurred more indirectly, in three ways.

The first demonstration was in the documents of Church conferences. For example, the Puebla document, analyzed in Chapter III of this dissertation, recognized the potential of the media, and also the concentration of media power in the hands of "political and economic power-groups" (n.1069) The document also encompassed the principles of NWICO. Nevertheless the document failed to make a forthright statement on the structural conditions of dependence which characterize the media in Latin America. This was made much more clearly at the Medellin Conference in 1968. In fact, as noted earlier, it was Medellin that opened a new era to the Church in Latin America by considering the poor and those at the margins of society. It was Medellin that gave the first support to the popular education movements, the Basic Christian Communities, and to the creation of alternative communication groups within unions and neighborhood associations. All three of these forces of transformation of the 1960s and 1970s brought people from diverse religious denominations together, all over Latin America, to work together in ecumenical work.<sup>34</sup>

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34 For instance, in Venezuela, *Centro Pellin*, as a centre for research and action in social communication, has done some of the most explicit and notable work in Latin America relating the NWICO issues to the Church's mission. For the development of the popular centres of communication relating Latin American Church see Chapter III of this dissertation.

Secondly, and perhaps the strongest element of coincidence between New World Information and Communication Order and the Church in Latin America, is liberation theology. As discussed in Chapter II, this theology stands for the process of liberation to overcome economic, social and political dependence, and to emancipate the people, especially the oppressed and defenceless. The same people who attack liberation theology are the ones who fight against the NWICO movement. As Clarencio Neotti noted, a survey done in Brazil in August, September and October 1984 about the theologian Leonardo Boff revealed that 83.3% of the articles transmitted by the international news agencies were against liberation theology. Neotti remarked that this was not because of the theology per se, but because the issue dealt with the imbalance between rich and poor countries.<sup>35</sup>

However, the third and most expressive manifestation by the Catholic Church on the NWICO debate was taken up by the Catholic Church organizations for communication --UCIP, UCLAP, UNDA, OCIC. Since 1977, the congresses of UCIP have started to dedicate special attention to researching, studying, discussing and recommending a NWICO approach. In 1983, OCIC and UNDA adopted the central proposal of NWICO -- democratization of communication -- in their congress held in Nairobi.

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35 Clarencio Neotti, A Nova Ordem Mundial..., *op. cit.*, p. 28.

Thus the Catholic organizations for communication, supported by the encouragement of John Paul II, started to participate actively in the establishment of a new order of information and communication. They saw in the NWICO proposals a coincidence with the basic Christian orientation: "to work for the dignity of human beings in such a way that we can all see each other as brothers and sisters,"<sup>36</sup> in the search for justice and equality at all levels of society. The above organizations affirmed that the Church should defend communication based on principles of democratization: defending justice and human rights -- especially the right to communicate; respecting and promoting cultural identity; and using the new communication technologies, without being dominated by them.<sup>37</sup>

Taking their direction from Puebla, the organizations defined their principal subject (*sujeto*) of work, as the popular sectors, especially those at the margins of society, and all those who are committed to the emancipation of Latin American society. To carry out such a proposal, they developed a systematic liaison with the Department of Communication of the Latin American Bishops Conference (DECOS-CELAM), as well as an ecumenical and participative relation with the World

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36 Washington Uranga, "NWICO: New World Information and Communication Order", Communication for all, ed. Philip Lee (Orbis Book, Maryknoll NY, 1986) pp. 13-14.

37 Research Trends in Religious Communication, (CSCC, London, 1983) Vol.4, N.1.

Association for Christian Communication (WACC).<sup>38</sup> They assumed the proposals of NWICO for the democratization of communication as their main task in the Latin American context and organized two important seminars, in Quito (May 1982) and in Embu-S.Paulo (October 1982), to discuss and to apply the NWICO proposals.<sup>39</sup>

#### **4.4 The Quito Document - the right to participate and communicate; and alternative communication as an option for the new order**

UCLAP and Unesco organized the first seminar on "The New World Information and Communication Order and Human Rights", held in Cumbaya-Quito (Ecuador), from April 29 to May 2 1982.

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38 Attilio Hartmann, "Organizaciones Catolicas de Comunicacion: fermento en la masa", Teoría y Praxis de la Iglesia Latinoamericana en comunicaciones sociales, (DECOS-CELAM, Bogota, 1988) pp. 277-294. UNDA-AL, UCLAP, SAL-OCIC also work related to other organizations such as Radiophonic Service for Latin America (SERTAL); Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR); Communication Sector of Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI); Lutherans United in Communication (LUC); Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights (CEDHU); Latin American Association of Radio Education (ALER). The organizations also work with organisms of communication of public service and laity institutions such as Latin American y Caribbean Radio Broadcasting Union (ULCRA); the Regional Office of Communication of Unesco for Latin America; the International Centre for Advanced Communication Studies for Latin America (CIESPAL); the Institute for Latin America (IPAL); and also a number of national and regional organizations. (Quoted in A. Hartmann, "Organizaciones Católicas...", *op. cit.*)

39 In fact, UCLAP started to discuss the political, cultural and evangelizing aspects surrounding NWICO debate already in its VII Congress held in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) in May 1981.

The seminar was attended by journalists, mass media specialists and representatives of national and regional communication organizations in Latin America.

The main conclusions reached were centred on two significant issues: first, *the right to participate and to communicate*, as a matter of human rights. This was discussed in the MacBride Report and emphasized that the right to communicate goes "beyond the right to receive communication or to give information" (172-173). Second, they reached agreement on a proposal to consider alternative communication as the point of departure for a new order of communication.

#### 4.4.1 The right to participate and to communicate

The right to participate and to communicate, is conceived of as a human right, and

gives expression to the aspirations of the peoples of the Third World to build a more human society, linked by feelings of solidarity... (1.2)

If the New Communication Order is truly to be based on the rights of individuals to express themselves freely and to inform and be informed, it follows that this order must rest as much on the rights of the community to associate, participate, organize and take action. (1.3)

The search for a new order must be understood as an attempt to change existing systems of communication and as an expression of the desire to build a new society. (1.5)<sup>40</sup>

It is important to underline the meaning of these concepts -- the right to participate and to communicate --

40 Quito Document in On the road to NWICO... with Latin America. Booklet published by UNDA (International Association for Radio and Television), Brussels, 1982.

from a Latin American perspective. The *Quito* document is based on the broad discussion of the MacBride Report, and also talks of these concepts in terms of the aspiration for human rights. Within this context, as within many other Third World contexts, the right to communicate is not a "slogan of the dominant society". It is not, as Armand Mattelart has explained, the same as the "bourgeois" concept of *freedom of the press*, which is instead the freedom of property, a functional doctrine in the interests of the owners of the means of production, used to justify their domination of information. Instead, the participants at Quito were engaged in the process, described by Mattelart, as the only way to escape the domination "to explode it by elaborating a new concept of freedom of the press and expression."<sup>41</sup>

This new concept -- the right to participate and communicate -- required further elaboration. MacBride defined it this way:

Communication, nowadays, is a matter of human rights. But is increasingly interpreted as the right to communicate, going beyond the right to receive communication or to be given information. Communication is thus seen as a two-way process, in which the partners --individual and collective-- carry on a democratic and balanced dialogue (...) Today, the struggle still goes on for extending

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41 Armand Mattelart, "Communication Ideology and Class Practice", Communication and Mass Struggle - capitalism and imperialism, ed. A. Mattelart and S. Siegelaub (International General (New York) and International Mass Media Research Centre (France), 1978) pp.115-123.

A fuller account of the related concept of "free flow" and its use as an "economic and/or ideological tool by the communication rich to the detriment of those less well endowed" (MacBride Report: 141) is discussed in the previous chapter.



human rights in order to make the world of communication more democratic than it is today. But the present stage of the struggle introduces new aspects of the basic concept of freedom. The demands for a two-way flow, for free exchange, for access and participation, make a qualitatively, new addition to the freedom...(MacBride Report:172-173)

In the case of Latin America, the right to participate and to communicate, expressed in the *Quito Document*, has two separate aspects. First of all, their approach stems from an experience in many countries of military systems. They therefore aspire to freedom from restrictions, barriers and obstacles on information. They also focus on "human rights" because of the physical violence and intimidation, repressive legislation, censorship, blacklisting of journalists, banning of books, etc., undergone by many under the various military regimes.

Secondly, the right to participate and to communicate, was stressed because of monopolies of other elites, who often imposed political, economic and social constraints and pressures; affecting what could be published, what issues could be debated, and how news was defined. In this regard, the document points out:

The system prevailing in Latin America permits the concentration of power and imposes political conditions of a kind that, in practice, prevents the exercise of this right to communication by large sections of the population, while allowing a small minority to abuse it for their own profit. (*Quito Document* 1.8)<sup>42</sup>

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42 For a full account of the system prevailing in Latin America in the communication field, see Elizabeth Fox (ed.), Media and Politics in Latin America - the Struggle for Democracy, (Sage Publication, London, Beverly Hills, 1988).

Two examples illustrate this. In Brazil, during the military rule (1964-1986)<sup>43</sup> certain issues were designed as "forbidden areas" which, by regulation, journalists were not allowed to cover. Issues that were considered potentially disturbing to the system, to the leading elite, or the groups in power, were officially designed "forbidden." All articles had to be submitted to a censor for approval before publication was allowed. In the beginning, the censor was located in the capital (Brazilia) and many weekly magazines had to face delays in getting their publications out. For daily newspapers, a censor was present every day.

During this time the Brazilian people learned how to read between the lines, and Brazilian journalists became very creative. Often the approval for publication would arrive at the newspaper at the last moment, ordering several cuts. The journalists had no time to replace or rework the reports, and get the publication out on time. Even if they could, they wanted to show people that something had been censored. They developed a number of strategies, including inserting recipes for good cookies or a piece of a Camoes' poem (a Portuguese poet) in the middle of a news report. While the publications issues were being censored, Brazilians were, at the same moment, developing a critical awareness and rejection of the existing system of government. It is also important to remember that much of the process of defining "liberation

43 Since 1982, the Brazilian government's impositions on mass media were more relaxed in comparison to the previous period.

theology" occurred precisely during this more authoritarian period.

The other example relates to the obstacles and restrictions that arise from private monopolies and concentration of media ownership.<sup>44</sup> Concentration of ownership tends to lead to a standardization of reporting, editing and presentation that limits the news that reaches the public. In this regard, the MacBride Report states that, "...the financial, commercial or industrial concerns that are involved in corporate ownership may prevent the publication of facts that cast an unfavorable light on their activities" (140).

Among several cases which could illustrate this, I recall a recent one from the metalworkers strike in S.Bernardo (S.Paulo - Brazil). Hundreds of workers had been on strike for several days (1986). TV Globo,<sup>45</sup> had interviewed the president of the Union, who had explained the reasons for the strike, and their demands. Yet, on the National News they only broadcast the images of some workers throwing stones and smashing windows, an incident that had occurred just at the time TV Globo was present. The workers had been provoked by

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44 See Elizabeth Fox (ed.), Media and Politics in Latin America..., *op. cit.*

45 TV Globo is the largest television network in the world, and is part of a media conglomerate that includes seven fully owned stations, six partly owned stations, thirty-six affiliates, thirty radio stations, "O Globo" newspaper, a home video division and a record company. (Elizabeth Fox (ed.), Media and Politics in Latin America..., *op. cit.*, pp.29, 185)

the police and some of them had reacted by throwing rocks. The impression given was that the strike was an uprising to provoke disorder. After that broadcast, (80% audience) the strike was considered illegal and negotiations between owners and workers broke down. The owners of the factories considered such an event a victory, and the workers were defeated once again.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4.4.2 Alternative communication as an option for a new order**

The second major theme in the *Quito Document* was the proposal to consider *alternative communication* as the point of departure for new order of communication. This is the same idea more recently expressed at the Second MacBride Round Table held in Prague in September 1990. The Prague statement emphasized:

the debate on the New World Information and Communication (NWICO) has thus returned to where it started. It is now in the arena of professional organizations... and, most importantly, in the arena of grassroot movements...<sup>47</sup>

The proposal by the *Quito Document* is based on the fact that alternative communication changes the concept of communication. It encourages dialogue, and "becomes the instrument by means of which close community links and social

46 Fact related by Laurindo Leal Filho in an interview on his analysis of the mass media coverage on strikes in S.Paulo.

47 "Prague Statement: Second MacBride Round Table", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) N.4, pp. 44-45.

participative and democratic links are forged" (2.5.1). The seminar participants found in alternative communication the "foundations of what could be the new information and communication order in the making" (2.5). There was a strong belief that alternative communication "breaks the vertical model of communication" (2.5.1) and establishes a new communications model in which messages come from communities or organizations where the protagonists can enter into discussion with one another. This implied a dialogical or horizontal communication (2.5.1).<sup>48</sup>

In this context, the *Quito Document* raised some recommendations addressed specifically to the Church. Among them, the document pointed out the need for the Church in Latin America to consider and become fully conscious of the existing order of information and communication and to take a position on the proposal for a new order. The document recommended that DECOS-CELAM arrange a meeting at the Latin American level of the bishops and the Church's national communication coordinators. Several meetings on communication were organized by DECOS-CELAM. No meeting, however, was centred on NWICO debate, nor were all the bishops of Latin America included.<sup>49</sup>

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48 Alternative communication is discussed as a concept in Chapter V. The dialogical concept of communication is based on Paulo Freire's ideas. Horizontal concept of communication is also based on L. Ramiro Beltran, "Farewell to Aristotle: Horizontal communication", Communication 5, 1980. This issue is part of the discussion in Chapter VI.

The other main recommendations of *Quito* was that the Church's communication media --radio, newspaper, bulletins-- should be instruments of alternative communication. In other words, they should express the life of the people. To do this, the Church's media "should not just speak for the voiceless but also let the voiceless themselves speak" (2.4). In this regard, the first type of alternative communication which the Church has itself developed is the local cultural-educational radio service --school radios in the beginning, and later, popular radio.

#### **4.5 The *Embu Document* - democratization of communication.**

##### **A "mini-NWICO" within the Church itself**

It has already been pointed out that the international movement toward a NWICO embodies many of the ideals of Christian communicators for a more just and humane communication. As well, Christians, through their communication organizations, are joining forces with other leaders in communication policy to implement the NWICO proposals. Therefore, in October 1982, representatives of the Church's work in communications met with outstanding communication researchers and policy-makers of Latin America in Embu (state of S.Paulo, Brazil) to discuss the role and

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49 In 1983, DECOS-CELAM and IPAL organized a seminar on "Church, Communication and Advertising" held in Lima (Peru). It was an attempt to continue the discussion on NWICO, but the issue was centred on "advertising."

responsibility of the Christians, more specifically Catholics, in bringing about a new communication order.<sup>50</sup>

This was seen as the most important meeting held by the Church in Latin America regarding NWICO because of the participants' decision to participate actively in the implementation of NWICO (n.3). The seminar issued a document - *Embu Document* (or *S. Paulo Document*)--<sup>51</sup> which represents a landmark for the Latin American Church in the context of communication.

The *Embu Document* is made up of four parts. The first discussion focuses on the overall situation of communications in Latin America, characterized by the interest of the dominant elites. Recalling the document of Puebla (1979), the *Embu Document* stressed that the prevailing free-market economy

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50 The meeting was organized by UNDA-AL, SAL-OCIC, UCLAP, UCBC (Brazilian Christian Communication Union) under the auspices of Misereor, the French Catholic Development Committee (CCFD), Unesco, DECOS-CELAM, and the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB). The seminar was attended by Christian professionals in communications and associated disciplines, as well as religious, priests, bishops, representatives and observers of the organizations which convened and sponsored the meeting. Among the participants were representatives of the Association for Christian Communication (WACC), OCIC, UNDA, the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP), the Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR), the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIC), Development and Communication for Latin America and the Caribbean (DECOM), the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET), the Brazilian Association for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (INTERCOM) and the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture (CSCC-London).

51 The *Embu Document* was published in a booklet by UNDA (International Catholic Association for Radio and Television), On the Road to NWICO ... with Latin America, Brussels, 1982.

system, legitimated by liberal ideologies, "increases the gap between the rich and the poor by giving priority to capital over labor, economics over the social realm" (Puebla 47). Since Puebla, the situation had worsened because of the intensification of transnational capitalism "internationalizing its economics, financial, social and cultural systems" (n.9). This trend was confirmed by the Lima Declaration (November 1990), in its analysis of international communication since MacBride:

There are greater transnational conglomerates, both horizontal and vertical, between producers, senders and distributors, between programme makers and manufacturers of technology, and between proprietors of different media. Control of technology transfer and non-interactive markets have become even more widespread; dependency on foreign sources of messages has grown, establishing a pattern for the inexorable levelling of the rich and unrelinquishable diversity of cultures; the already insufficient priority given by developing countries to communication has been further reduced and is being exacerbated by poverty and debt; the larger international fora are unable to move *vis-a-vis* the enormous world problems of communication, which have only just started to become apparent...<sup>52</sup>

The *Embu Document* also showed how neocolonialism is reinforced by the so-called "doctrine of national security". This doctrine, in many instances "helped to intensify the

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52 "The Lima Declaration - towards a new communication", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1991) N.1, pp. 45-46, is the conclusions of the Lima meeting held in Peru (26-28 November 1990). The Lima meeting was attended by 22 communication researchers, from nine Latin American countries. The meeting was sponsored by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the Institute for Latin America (IPAL). They met to analyze the state of communication in the world, and more particularly in Latin America ten years after the Unesco (XX General Conference). The meeting approved a resolution which recognized the need to bring about a NWICO.



totalitarian or authoritarian character of governments based on the use of force, leading to the abuse of power" (Puebla 49), and preventing the development of the people's capacities for organization. On many occasions, the military systems had attempted "to justify their positions with a subjective profession of Christian faith" (Puebla 49 quoted in *Embu Document* n.8,9).

In terms of communication, the *Embu Document* highlighted the fact that "the mass media are not used for the good of society but for the commercial gain of a minority" (n.14). Undoubtedly, information and communication have a role in the strategy of domination. As discussed already, the international flow is concentrated within a few powerful nations. In Latin America, for instance, communication technologies are being introduced as technological modernization, and "false interpretations of the NWICO are being put forward" (n.15). However, the reality indicates that such communication technologies "are not destined to serve a better understanding between the nations nor the priorities and necessities of the people" (n.15). They are, in fact, benefiting the transnational corporations.<sup>53</sup>

53 A typical example of transnational corporations hindering national communication policies is the case study by the Chilean researcher, Raquel Salinas Bascur, "Technology choice and the Andean countries", Technology Transfer and Communication, ed. Alan Hancock (Unesco, Paris, 1984) pp. 123-167. A more recent example is demonstrated by Emile McAnany in "Brazil satellites and debt: who trades what to acquire new technologies?", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1989) N.1. The case study by McAnany demonstrated that the situation and strategies of communication in Latin America are still the

The second part of the *Embu Document* presents NWICO as a proposal for change, emphasizing the democratization of communication and information resources. This would include: the creation and strengthening of the necessary infrastructures, so that the Third World can participate on equal terms in international communications; the involvement in communication systems; the integral, autonomous and self-supporting development of peoples of the Third World; and, finally, the defence of cultural identity (*Embu Document* n.25).

In this second part of the document, *access participation*, and *alternative communication* are important subjects. It suggests that the central issue in NWICO is no longer simply a concern for a more balanced international flow, but rather the democratization of communication.<sup>54</sup> The *Embu Document* articulated its understanding of the democratization of communication by pointing out the necessary requirements to achieve such a process. First of all, the document stressed "that the individual, rather than being a simple target of communication, be an active element in the process" (n.29). The "dispossessed", particularly, have to be taken into account and have equality of opportunity for free access to communication media (n.29a). This requires social

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same as they were at the time of the *Embu Document* (1982). In other words, the promotion of social interests, like education, can be used to justify purchases which serve mainly commercial and economic development.

54 Alternative communication and the democratization of communication are discussed in Chapter V of this dissertation.

representation and participation, which includes taking part in the production and decision-making of communications policy and planning (n.29b). The process of democratization, mentioned above, also demands a training process "especially among dispossessed" in order to develop their capacity for communication, i.e., the ability to produce messages reflecting their values and responding to their own interests (n.29c).

The *Embu Document* speaks of alternative communication as the non-vertical forms of communication which guarantee participation by, and access for the oppressed. These non-vertical forms have been created because "the owners of the media refuse participation" (n.30). They include a variety of forms --"horizontal, group, people's, base, community or participatory communication" (n.30). The most important criteria is that they should have a liberating character, and represent the interests of the dispossessed and the fundamental aims of the people. The objectives of these popular liberating communication forms constitute part of the process of establishing a NWICO and are consistent with those of liberation theology.

In this regard, the Archbishop of Cuenca (Ecuador), Luiz Alberto Luna Tobar, has emphasized that, although the Catholic Church has a strong traditional background, it also reflects and speaks frequently about current realities. He acknowledged that the traditional forms of communication are bound with systems of dominance. Msgr. Luna Tobar also recognize that

many clergy are closely related to power-sources ("el poder" or "los poderes"). However, he said that the Church itself warns of the danger of such behavior, and in its main documents, it has assumed the new forms of popular communication.<sup>55</sup>

While admitting that in some areas of the Latin American Church the prevailing models of communication are the traditional ones, Msgr. Luna Tobar pointed out that the Latin American Church has committed itself to the poor and, therefore, it is the Church's task to develop "our own values. That is the fundamental reason for the alternative and popular forms of communication..." He also stressed that "it is in the communities that the poor find space to express themselves." According to Luna Tobar, this type of communication, in contrast with the vertical forms of communication, allows people to search for their own identity, to show their face as peasants, workers, children, women, and so on.

The third and last part of the *Embu Document* dealt specifically with the commitment of the Church to carry out the NWICO proposals, including recommendations addressed to the Church to be put into practice in its future pastoral work. Because of the interweaving of subjects, the third and fourth parts of the *Embu Document* are considered together in this dissertation. The document serves to remind the Church

55 Interview with the writer on July 1989. Translation my own.

that the struggle for a new order includes all the forces of society: the Church cannot remain outside, if it is to take on the "reality of Latin America, as it finds expression in that human being's hopes, achievements, and frustrations" (Puebla 15 quoted in *Embu Document* n.32).

#### **4.5.1 Embu and National Communication Policies**

An assessment of the document reveals two fundamental stances to be taken by the Church. The first focuses on the question of national communication policies "with a view to the Church's proposing alternatives for the democratization of the communication systems and of the new technologies" (n.49). The document makes clear what it means by such a statement:

This means fighting for a more just distribution of ownership of the media, for the breaking off of the monopoly of the State and of the economic groups in order to facilitate access and ownership by community, trade union and professional institutions to the mass media, especially the electronic media. (n.50)

This statement is based on the definition of communication policy drawn up by Unesco and presented in the first Conference to discuss national communication policies, held in San Jose (Costa Rica) in July 1986, and implemented by the MacBride Report. Communication policy, therefore, was defined as:

a set of principles and standards to govern that functioning and use of the communications and information media in the service of objectives democratically chosen

by national communities, in accordance with criteria specific to each country.<sup>56</sup>

Elizabeth Fox, in *Media and Politics in Latin America* (1988), and the Chilean researcher Raquel Salinas Bascur, have pointed out the failure of national communication policies in Latin America. Fox emphasized that Latin America is one of the few places in the world where "privately controlled, commercially operated mass media predominate over any other form of media organization."<sup>57</sup> Consequently, economic priorities are the goals of the privately-owned media, who have become strong by forming lucrative regional monopolies. In this context, the alliance between private media owners and the centralist governments created a favorable context for the commercial and transnational expansion of the mass media,<sup>58</sup> and the search for radical changes in Latin American private media and national communication policies collided with the national and transnational private media owners.<sup>59</sup>

For her part, Salinas Bascur has pointed out another aspect of the failures of communication policies in Latin America. After thirteen years working as a consultant for the regional meeting of Latin American governments on

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56 Unesco, Report of the meeting of Experts on Communication Policies and Planning.

57 Elizabeth Fox (ed.), Media and Politics in Latin America ..., *op. cit.*, p. VII.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

59 The case of the Brazilian TV Globo illustrates a "quasi-monopolistic" control of the market. See Elizabeth Fox, Media and Politics in Latin America..., *op. cit.*, p. 29.

communication issues, Salinas came to the conclusion that communication policies in Latin America have something fundamental preventing their application. Speaking in an interview in Chile (1989) Salinas said:

We must stop relying upon Information and Communication Ministers to represent developing interests in international fora. They are the least equipped to see the main points at stake. Every year we had new Information Ministers in our meetings. In thirteen years, we always had to start from the beginning all over again. I came to the conclusion that our governments in Latin America are not serious about communication and the Communication Ministers are taken as second class in comparison to other ministers --changing frequently, not informed and with no power as policy-makers.

This observation is leading me towards the conclusion that the concept of national policies has a flaw because it does not apply to States in the Third World, specifically in Latin America. I am evolving my thought according to my discoveries, and now we are in 1989. Thus, I realized that the concept of national communication policies was supposed to apply to States with a coherent body, an apparatus --as the great apparatus of the social order. Perhaps the concept of national communication policies is true in countries like Sweden where planning can be made 50 years ahead, but not in Latin America. We change so quickly and there is no continuation on the planning proposed.<sup>60</sup>

According to Salinas, new strategies have to be found to apply communication policies in Latin America. What is wrong is not the NWICO proposals, but the way in which the NWICO strategies have been applied in Latin American countries.

However, as Salinas Bascur and authors such as Clarenco Neotti and Guido Groscors have noted, the Church in Latin America has been timid and slow regarding the consideration of

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60 Interview with the writer in Santiago (Chile), June 1989. Translation my own.

national communication policies.<sup>61</sup> In fact *Embu* was the first time that they began such a discussion. Neotti asserted that "the Church has followed closely the evolution and revolution in the field of communication. But there is a gap between the Church's documents and its practice" (p. 39). As the Catholic Church has had an extremely influential position in Latin American society, it was expected that the institution would play a more central role regarding communication policies.

To speak and to take a position in favor of communication policies that demanded democratization required that communication change in the Church itself. If the Church was to speak credibly and give effective living witness to a new pattern of communication in Latin American society, such a process would have demanded many changes in the Church's structure, as the relation between the Church and communication has traditionally been at the level of mass media, that is to say, a relation between an institution and its tools. In this regard, Salinas Bascur noted, "the invitation to the Church to consider the theme of

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61 Raquel Salinas Bascur, Política y Comunicación: el eslabón que falta en la Iglesia - Document prepared for the General Assembly of UNDA-AL, Quito, August 1984. Clarenco Neotti, "Políticas de Comunicación e Igreja na América Latina" in Políticas de Comunicação: participação popular, ed. P. Gilberto Gomes and Marcia Piva, (UCBC/Ed. Paulinas, S. Paulo, 1988). Guido Groscors, "Iglesias y políticas de comunicación." Unpublished paper presented at the Seminar on "Iglesia y Desafíos de la Comunicación Contemporánea", Quito, November 1985.



communication policies is a new proposal to enrich this focus [Church-instruments] with a new perspective."<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.5.2 *Embu*: "A mini-NWICO within the Church"

This constituted the second fundamental stance of the *Embu Document*: the democratization of the Church "at home." It stated:

Faced with the NWICO proposal, the Church must, more than ever, consider two levels: her internal communications and communication with the world. (n.34)

The document stressed that the practice of evangelization cannot be an unilateral imposition, but should find ways to be more participatory and dialogical, showing respect for the cultural values of the peoples of Latin America. Authority in the Church should be exercised as service. Pastors should respect the liberty of the members of the People of God and recognize their right to participate in decisions as persons co-responsible for the mission of the Church. The liturgy, for instance, as the privileged moment of communion with God and communion within the family of the faithful, should be open to indigenous expressions of praise and adoration, and should provide contexts for an authentic celebration of faith, growth of community and liberation.

There was agreement that the Church could be most effective in bringing about a new communication order when it

<sup>62</sup> Raquel Salinas Bascur, Política y Comunicación . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 62.

gives practical witness to participatory communication in the way it runs its radio stations, newspapers, group media and in the way it teaches communication in its universities and other training centres. The document emphasized that the goal should be to train people --especially the poor and less powerful-- to produce and administer their own media so that the media of the Church can become truly the voice of the voiceless (n.32-66).

According to Robert White,<sup>63</sup> one of the participants at Embu, the discussion led the participants, particularly the Church leaders, to recognize that many of the problems of communication in the larger society could be found in the Church itself. White has written that the Church is a microcosm of Latin American society and has picked up many of the patterns of communication and ways of using media that are prevalent in the dominant system. Thus, at Embu, the suggestion came up very quickly: there should be a "mini-NWICO" within the Church itself. It came from communicators who had been involved with some form of alternative communication. They spoke from their experiences about the difficulties in developing a working model that would offer an alternative to the communications controlled by powerful elites.

Above all, the Embu conference challenged the traditional Church notions of communications. The new model challenged the

63 Robert White, Research Trends in Religious Communication, (CSCC, London, 1983) Vol.4, N.1.

older "instrumentalist" notions of media use, still prevalent in the Church, that is, the tendency to see the media as simply channels --big microphones-- through which to pass the content of the gospel message. They saw media technology as neutral instruments which must be used for the goals of Christianity. The desire to turn the media toward idealistic purposes is laudable, but the instrumentalist view forgets that technology never comes as a perfectly neutral package, but usually brings with it a pattern of communication that is vertical and authoritarian.<sup>64</sup>

Since the Embu conference, democratization of communication in the Church has not progressed a great deal.<sup>65</sup>

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64 For a fuller discussion of the neutrality of mass communication, see Cees Hamelink, "Is Information technology neutral?" in Communication and domination - essays to honor Herbert Schiller, (Ablex Publishing Corporation, New Jersey, 1986); Langdon Winner, Autonomous Technology - Technics out of Control as a Theme in Political Thought, (Mit Press, Cambridge/London, 1978); and "Do artifacts have politics?", The whale and the reactor, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 1986); and Raymond Williams, Television - Technology and Cultural Form, (Chocking Books, New York, 1975).

65 See examples quoted in Chapter II about the Vatican stances on Latin American theologians. More recently (February 5 1991), Pope John Paul II ordered closer Vatican controls over the Confederation of Latin American religious, including the power to choose its next president. From now on, the Confederation's publications must be approved by local bishops and by the new papal delegate. Instead of the normal election process that the organization was scheduled to hold in February, the Pope said the Vatican will choose new officers after considering the results of the voting. Last year, the Pope sharply criticized pastoral programs set up by some Latin American religious --they were too political!. The reasons for these measures by the Vatican in the above case are set to be "doctrinal." (Prairie Messenger, (Muenster, February 18 1991) Vol.68, N.31)

In fact, at the official level (or hierarchical level), the struggle for democratization of communication appears to be going backwards. This was demonstrated recently by the committee for communication in CELAM, elected in March 1987 for four years. First, the secretary of DECOS-CELAM has blamed "alternative communicators" for neglecting a consideration of the mass media. Ironically, no work at the official level of the Church has been made to develop communication policies, which would deal with the mass media.<sup>66</sup> While this dissertation has pointed to the unstoppable development of liberating communication in the grassroot groups (the bulletin *Arandu*<sup>67</sup> reports hundreds of experiences), there are other signs that the Church hierarchy may be moving in quite another direction.

One of these signs is the project "Lumen 2000". Founded in February 1983, it consists of a religious program, broadcast by satellite, twenty four hours a day. The program was designed and financed by a Catholic charismatic group in Holland, and aims to culminate a decade of evangelization in the year 2000, to coincide with the 500 years of evangelization of Latin America. This project has been

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66 Pedro Briseno Chaves, "Perception critica de la comunicacion masiva en America Latina, recuento y tareas pendientes", Teoría y Praxis ..., op. cit., Bogotá, 1988.

67 The bulletin *Arandu* (Boletín Informativo del Secretariado Conjunto de las Organizaciones Católicas de los Medios de Comunicación Social: SAL-OCIC, UCLAP, UNDA-AL) is published by SAL-OCIC, UCLAP, UNDA-AL, and reports most of the experiences and events related to alternative communication.

welcomed by the existing presidency of CELAM. The acceptance of this religious program, which has the potential to reach everyone, is a historic step in the evangelization of the continent. However, it represents a backward step in the "communion and participation" process highlighted by the document of Puebla, and preceded by the pastoral efforts of twenty years of work by clergy and laity. Instead of building a Church enmeshed in the socio-economic and historical reality of Latin America, "Lumen 2000" focuses on a spiritual vision of the world, placing social activities at the second level, rather than integrating both of them. Undoubtedly, this is a strategy that has the potential to annul the great steps made by liberation theology.<sup>68</sup>

The most recent evidence of a setback within the official Latin American Church is the minimum consideration given to the subject of communication in the working paper in preparation for the upcoming fourth Latin American Bishops Conference to be held in the Dominican Republic in 1992.<sup>69</sup> This document summarizes in only a few sentences what is being done in Latin America in terms of communication. It mentions the work of the Latin American Catholic organizations

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68 Clarencio Neotti, "Políticas de comunicação ...", *op. cit.*

69 Elementos para una reflexión en preparación de la IV Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, issued by the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM), 1990. Although this document represents only an outline, and the future presidency of CELAM (elected in April 1991) will decide about the working document in preparation for the IV Conference, it shows already the low consideration of the issue.

as an important contribution to the Church, but blames the autonomy of some of those organisms for preventing the development of pastoral work.<sup>70</sup> It is clear that there will be no great reflections, insights or advances by the Church regarding communication issues in the future, if they are to come from the analysis of this paper.

This chapter showed how alternative communication is understood by the Church in Latin America. The analysis of the *Quito* and *Embu* documents demonstrated that the implementation of alternative communication is one of the more efficient ways to develop access and participation, as recommended by the MacBride Report. Theoretical support to the understanding of democratization of communication, in the Latin American context, is the subject of the next chapter.

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70 A similar criticism was made by the secretary of DECOS-CELAM. See Note 20, Chapter III of this dissertation.

**CHAPTER V**  
**THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIZING COMMUNICATION**

Democratization of communication was the most innovative part of the MacBride Report. The call for democratization of communication was based on the assessment of the commission members who agreed that the explosive growth of science and technology, specifically in the field of computers and communications, required new understandings and renewed attempts to redefine and promulgate rights and freedoms.

According to the MacBride Report it is necessary to break through barriers which impede democracy in communication, such as undemocratic political systems; bureaucratic and administrative systems which exclude representation of the public in management and policy-making; and technology controlled or understood only by a few, which limits access to information sources. However, the "structure of vertical communication, where the flow runs from top to bottom" (MacBride Report:167), is considered by the Commission to be one of the strongest barriers to the progress of democratization within communication systems.

The call for democratization was based on the right to communicate implying access and participation, to allow individuals to be active agents, rather than object of communication. In this regard, the development of

communication policies, horizontal communication and alternative communication are recommended as important steps.

The initial part of this chapter deals with the right to communicate, based on the principle of human rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948. This chapter shows the reasons why Unesco introduced such a principle, and how, because of the deterioration of democratization during the last ten years, the MacBride Report is still crucial. The chapter also analyzes the definition of the process of democratization of communication and discusses access and participation.

The second part of this chapter assesses one of the steps to achieve democratization of communication recommended by the MacBride report, namely alternative communication from the Latin American perspective. The establishment of both national communication policies and horizontal communication was critical. The national communication policies issue, and its failure, is analyzed only briefly, as it is not my main focus on this dissertation. The concept of alternative is analyzed in relation to lower-status groups, within the so-called *comunicación popular*. Alternative communication is assessed according to the definition of the Chilean scholar Fernando Reyes Matta, who distinguishes between alternative communication and alternative media. In this context, several examples are provided to clarify popular participation in the Latin American experience.

The last part of this chapter presents the issue of the "participatory process" among the popular classes. This



section shows how, in elaborating a theory of mass media in terms of democratization, Latin American scholars are now less concerned with "resistances" and are more interested in the potential of popular culture for democratization of communication. Lastly, a brief analysis of the participatory issue is provided in the framework of development and communication.

### **5.1 The "right to communicate"**

As the MacBride Report became a landmark in the history of the New World Information and Communication Order, it is used as a framework in this section. In fact, one of the key merits of the Report is its broad consideration of the problematic involving communication generally, rather than simply analyzing only news and the mass media. It was in this whole analysis of communication that democratization started to take on a new resonance and range of echoes. In the Commission's words, democratization of communication is the process whereby:

a) the individual becomes an active partner and not a mere object of communication; b) the variety of messages exchanged increases; and c) the extent and quality of social representation or participation in communication are augmented. (MacBride Report:166)

Such a definition is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN on December 10 1948, which asserted that

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom of opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Art.19)<sup>1</sup>

However, such an assertion is not good enough for the existing development of communications, because the emphasis was put on the content of communication rather than on the process of communicating. The statement suggests "a one-way flow from the transmitter to the receiver of the communication."<sup>2</sup> The explosive growth of science and technology, specifically in the field of computers and communications technologies, requires a new understanding and renewed attempts to redefine and promulgate rights and freedoms. Thus, a reexamination of rights and freedoms was needed.

At the XX General Conference in Paris (1980), Unesco made clear that improving the flow of information did not mean only increasing the amount of items transferred. In order to achieve the proper use of communications for promoting culture and development, a new factor was needed --access and participation. The MacBride Report, therefore, asserted:

Communication, nowadays, is a matter of human rights. But it is increasingly interpreted as the right to communicate, going beyond the right to receive communication or to be given information. Communication is thus seen as a two way process, in which the partners --individual and collective-- carry on a democratic and balanced dialogue. The idea of dialogue, in contrast to monologue, is at the heart of much contemporary thinking,

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1 Quoted in Desmond Fisher, "The Right to Communicate: a status report", Unesco Report, 1982, N.94, p.11.

2 Ibid., p. 8.

which is leading towards a process of developing a new area of social rights... Today, the struggle still goes on for extending human rights in order to make the world of communications more democratic than it is today. But the present stage of the struggle introduces new aspects of the basic concept of freedom. The demands for a two way flow, for free exchange, for access and participation, make a qualitatively new addition to the freedom... (MacBride Report:172)

According to the Report, the matter is not just about providing more and varied means to more people or simply giving them more facilities. Democratization of communication "implies a change of outlook" (173). It means larger access to existing media by the general public. It also signifies "broader possibilities for nations, political forces, cultural communities, economic entities, and social groups to interchange information." The application of such a process should occur without mastery over weaker partners, and discrimination against no one (173).

In this regard, the right to communicate is not seen only as the "individual right" to communicate, to transmit, and to receive information, as a fundamental human right. But the right to communicate "belongs to individuals and the communities which they compose."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, communication is seen as a fundamental social process. It enables individuals and communities to exchange information and opinions. The MacBride Report stressed this "social right":

Communication needs in a democratic society should be met by the extension of specific rights such as the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy,

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3 Working Group on Right to Communicate, Ottawa, September 1980, Final Report, p. 2.

the right to participate in public communication --all elements of a new concept, the right to communicate. In developing what might be called a new era of social rights, we suggest all the implications of the right to communicate be further explored. (MacBride Report:265)

This process of democratization of communication introduced a new factor --access and participation (166-174). It promoted a horizontal flow of communication, representation of the public in policy-making, the access to information sources, and participation in decisions about diffusion of contents or information distributing (167). As Fisher pointed out, communication process should no longer be considered solely in terms of the downward and outward flow from an elite to the mass, from the centre to the periphery, from the communication-rich to the communication-poor, but should instead be seen "as the right of the individual to communicate with as many of his fellow-humans as his own ability and the availability of resources allows." It is from this right of the individual that the right of communities, societies and nations to communicate stems.<sup>4</sup>

From a Latin American perspective, the process of democratization is seen from within the MacBride Report framework. It was defined in an interview with Luiz Ramiro Beltran<sup>5</sup> as "a process which amplifies the access of the

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4 Desmond Fisher, "The Right to communicate...", *op. cit.*, p. 28.

5 Interview with Luiz Ramiro Beltran in Quito, June 1989. L. Ramiro Beltran is the first communicator to receive the McLuhan Teleglobe Canada Award in 1983. He is the author of

popular basis (*base popular*) to employ the mass media." The democratization of communication is also "a process which intensifies the participation by the popular basis in the management of such media." From a national level, Beltran sees the democratization of communication as a process of implementation of access and popular participation in the mass media. At an international level, he understands it as a process "to pursue a balance in the liberties of relations of communication among developed and developing nations." According to Beltran, the pursuit of access and participation is the fundamental factor in the process of democratization. He also recognizes that as we draw near to the year 2000, the process of democratization of communication is becoming increasingly utopic. This is because the situation of communication is tending more and more to "concentration of power", and, in Latin America, this is worse than it was in the past due to the economic crisis. This latter factor constitutes a large obstacle to achieving democratization of communication, as "the governments are not concerned with reforms in a stage in which the economic situation is so heavy and drastic." Beltran believes that the attention to communication by Latin American governments will diminish considerably in the years to come, as the economic crisis increases. This is not only because of other important themes in their agenda's, but because the economic crisis will absorb

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"A Farewell to Aristotle: Horizontal Communication", and is the Unesco Consultant for communication in Latin America.

the few resources available to communication. "We should be realistic, that is to say, to dream of a democratization at national or international level may be an utopia."<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Beltran is convinced that the many experiences of democratization of communication in Latin America, beginning in the 1940s, have greatly helped in building the process of democratization of communication. And this fact constitutes a strong reason for hope.

The ideas expressed by Beltran are also shared by Rafael Roncagliolo.<sup>7</sup> He believes that the struggle for democratization of communication must be continued in terms of creating the necessary conditions for access and participation by the public. This is also the main theme of the *Lima Declaration* (1990), discussed in Chapter IV.

## **5.2 Alternative communication - toward democratization of communication**

Alternative communication has been a stage for frequent debate among scholars inside and even outside Latin American countries. Although alternative communication was the primary approach among communication practitioners and researchers

6 Despite Beltran's comments on the obstacles for achieving democratization of communication in Latin America, other reasons for the failure of communication policies in the region are further analyzed in this chapter.

7 Rafael Roncagliolo, Reunión de Consulta - Comunicación e Informe Final, (Caracas, 1988 - Estudios y Documentos - Unesco) p. 19.

during the 1960s and 1970s, the theme has sounded even more frequently in the 1980s, particularly by scholars such as Fernando Reyes Matta and Simpson Grinberg.

Actually, the beginning of an indigenous tradition in Latin America goes back to the 1960s, achieving a much broader base in the 1970s. The development of original communication experiences --*comunicación popular*-- was influenced by Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories developed by a number of scholars and practitioners in the region, particularly Armand Mattelart. It was a period characterized by a growing socio-political awareness, and scholars were concerned with using social science research in order to contribute to social change. In this regard, the work of the Belgian researcher Armand Mattelart (late 1960s) had an important role in Chile and in Latin America at large, as a part of a struggle to "return the word to the peoples" --an expression that Mattelart took from the Chinese leader Mao Zedong. Mattelart's first scholarly task was to denounce existing communication practices. Then he tried to design and to construct new communication forms, for instance, "to link news with popular initiatives, to place grassroot people in the middle of news commentaries."<sup>8</sup>

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8 C. Shwarz and O.Jaramillo, "Hispanic American critical Communication Research in its historical context", Communication and Latin American Society - Trends in Critical Research, 1960-1985, ed. Rita Atwood and Emile McAnany, (The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1986) pp. 38-75. Due to political reasons, Mattelart had to leave Chile, where his work had started in the 1960s.

In this context, the conceptions of Latin American underdevelopment in terms of dependency and cultural imperialism in the early 1970s<sup>9</sup> were diffused insofar as the public at large and progressive political leadership were convinced that policies for a greater indigenous control were needed, as a reaction to the modernization model introduced by the developed countries. The dependency approach<sup>10</sup> saw the development of industrial, technological, financial, and cultural systems as the result of a complex transnational net

9 The "media imperialism" approach is concerned with the role that modern communications play in the development of the Third World (Fejes:1981). In Latin America, this approach can be seen as a more elaborated conception of Mattelart's original ideas on cultural imperialism, and have influenced Latin American scholars particularly in the 1970s. This new approach has been elaborated by both European (Cruise O'Brien, 1979; Varis, 1973), and North American communication scholars (Schiller, 1971, 1976, 1978). F. Fejes, "Media imperialism: an assessment", Gazette 3 (3), 1981, pp. 281-289. H. Schiller, Communication and Cultural Domination, White Plains, (NY: International Arts and Science Press, 1976). See also Appendix I, Note 6 in this dissertation.

10 The Dependency Theory was originally sketched by Argentine economist Raul Prebisch and developed by Teotonio Dos Santos, Celso Furtado, Ruy Mauro Marini, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and other Brazilian and Chilean economists and sociologists who were working for the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in Chile, in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Ronaldo Munck, Politics and Dependency in the Third World - the Case of Latin America, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1985). This theory grew in the field of economics and states that, in the world capitalist system, the relationships between developed ("centre") and underdeveloped countries ("periphery") are unequal, and that this inequality limits the capacity of the internal market of the underdeveloped country creating an ever increasing relationship of dependency (R.H. Chilcote, Theories of Development and Underdevelopment, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984.) At large, the principles of the dependency theory have been applied by some Latin American communication scholars to studies on cultural dependency, transnationalization of culture, and mass media ownership. See also Chapter II in this dissertation.



of economic and ideological structures. Latin American countries were, thus, economically and ideologically dependent on transnational structures of mass media and subject to the ideological role assumed by the media. Formulation of a national media policy, an indigenous communication theory, and participation at an international level, were therefore urgent.

Within the framework of "liberation communication", a series of theoretical production and communicative experiences were developed, and characterized as alternative communication. To carry out such an ideal of democratization of communication --the main proposal of NWICO--, research institutes such as ILET (Mexico), ININCO (Venezuela) and similar centres were established in Latin American countries, to gather some of the most talented communication researchers to translate theoretical analysis into policy formulations. In the agenda of these researchers, the major concern was the establishment of a new world information and communication order by the democratization of communication structures. This goal requires new communication policies and new democratic methods for popular communication to assist the lower-classes in their struggle and liberation from political, military, economic and class oppression.

One of the major proposals was the creation of national communication policies for the promotion of local news agencies and the pooling of the resources of the news agencies of the Non-aligned countries (Beltran, 1976; Fox de Cardona,

1976; Munizaga and Rivera, 1983; Canclini, 1988). With the support of Unesco, in July 1976, representatives of twenty Latin American and Caribbean governments met in San José (Costa Rica) to discuss this issue and to identify problems in national media systems. From the late 1960s and through the 1970s, communication policy experts in Peru, Venezuela and Mexico were able to get reform-minded presidents to begin implementing or at least introducing legislation which incorporated practical adaptations of the public philosophy of communication. The political failure of these reform movements brought out to Latin Americans some of the deficiencies of their sociology of the mass media, particularly the reliance on the dependency approach that neglected analysis of internal national hegemony and political processes.<sup>11</sup>

As Elizabeth Fox has pointed out, Latin America is one of the few places in the world where "privately controlled, commercially operated mass media predominate over any other form of media organization."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the analysis of the failures of national communication policies in Latin America has considered some basic obstacles, namely "the social rigidities and the concentration of social and political power

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11 The new generation of dependency theorists, particularly F. Henrique Cardoso, focused on domination by local groups and classes. Without discarding the possibility of dependent development, it stressed the class alliance at national level. (Ronaldo Munck, Politics and Dependency..., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

12 Elizabeth Fox, Media and Politics in Latin America - the Struggle for Democracy, (Sage Publications, London/Beverly Hills, 1988).

which characterize most societies in Latin America. The formation of commercial media in Latin America thus is closely linked with the social dichotomy of "widespread poverty and enormous wealth." These obstacles block the establishment of democratic media policies, as they often impede change and reform of social and economic policies which seek social justice and a more balanced distribution of wealth and power.<sup>13</sup>

Fox identifies four distinctive stages in her analysis of the failure of communication policies in Latin America. First, "the early failure to establish a tradition of media policy." When radio began in most of Latin American countries in the early 1920s, the region already had a strong tradition of private newspapers. During this early stage, the Latin American countries failed to establish a significant tradition of media policy based on public philosophy. According to Fox, the period between 1920s and 1940s was

13 The Mexican case illustrates the mentioned "obstacles." Starting in 1976, Mexico began to prepare a national plan for communication. By 1980, after numerous debates and public hearings at the Congress, with the participation of journalists, media entrepreneurs, unions and parties, the proposal for a National Plan for Communication and a General Law of Communication was ready. In Salinas Bascur's view, the plan included also rural communication issues and was the most complete diagnose and all-embracing proposal ever made in a developing country. However, the study leaked to the press. Mexico then underwent harsh and furious press campaigns against communication policies, and the project was accused by the press and other private sectors of being inspired and manipulated by the Soviet KGB. After this, the offices for Social Communication were simply closed (based on Salinas Bascur, "Communication policies - only a miracle could have made them work", Occasional Papers, (Mass Communication Research Centre, Budapest, 1988)).

characterized by little general public discussion of the basic guidelines of media policy.

The second stage was the "consolidation of the commercial media." The period after the Second World War, characterized by the theory of modernization and industrialization, was one of consolidating of the commercial media. Commercial and transnational expansion of the mass media was facilitated by the alliance between private media owners and centralist governments in Latin America. The private media started to share "the aims of their governments and of U.S. investors." Without government regulation of broadcasters' commercial operations, the formation of lucrative monopolies started to appear, subsidized by governments as part of their policies of industrial development. As Fox explains, media policy at this stage allowed entrepreneurs and foreign investors a free hand in its general openness to the United States model of mass media.

The third reason is "the flawed search for reform." In the late 1960s and early 1970s, political leaders and planners started to recognize the central role of the media in their economies, cultures and politics. Such realization was the result of the significant growth of the media, but also the work of Latin American intellectuals or "analysts of the mass media" who attempted to introduce reforms by the establishment of communication policies. However, the search for radical changes in private and government-owned media and for national communication policies collided with private

media empires at the national and international level. First, because the confrontation occurred when the Latin American private media and advertising empires were most confident, strongest and at the highest point of their economic expansion and consolidation. Second, because the policy proposals and the critical analyses of the monopolistic power of the media failed to "transform this understanding into a broad-based political movement to influence public opinion and support for their policy proposals." In other words, it lacked grassroots support.

The last stage pointed out by Fox was the dictatorship in the military regimes. Attempts to formulate communication policies were discarded by military governments in most Latin American countries from the mid 1970s. Almost total control and censorship of radio, cinema, television, newspapers and magazines, as well as theatre, and music were exercised by the authoritarian regimes. It was particularly at this time that alternative media developed as an important side-effect of the military system, in spite of the repression. However, with the return of the democratically elected regimes, these experiences "were modest", as the new leaders were not prepared to bring the practices of alternative media into a broader dimension of discussion.

Media policy in Latin America has largely neglected most social-responsibility goals of equality and participation. This stems from the centralization and often authoritarian nature of the states in Latin America that has not permitted

independent, participatory and representative communication structures to develop. Such state centralization and authoritarianism has generated a strong reaction among media owners, journalists and many of the people against regulation by government. On the other hand, Fox recognizes that the growing interest and specialization of political parties, social groups and other organizations related to communications and information policy could bring a new realism in communication policy formation and implementation for the future. This could be possible as the philosophy of communication and reform models have become part of the thinking of many policy and political leaders in Latin America.<sup>14</sup>

### 5.2.1 Grassroot communication

The second main concern of Latin American research is the democratic alternatives of communication for lower-status groups, the grassroot communication or people's communication, known in Spanish as *comunicación popular*. In order to better understand *comunicación popular*, a distinction from other communication experiences which bear the English term "popular" must be made. The term "popular" often refers to the products of the mass culture industry such as popular songs, popular entertainment, etc. This may simply signify

14 Elizabeth Fox, Media and Politics in Latin America..., op. cit., pp. 171-188.

"having a wide acceptance," but it also implies a contrast with the high culture and tastes of a better-educated elite which has more direct access to the centres of national economic, political and cultural decisions.<sup>15</sup> However, popular is also related to the word "people", and in Latin America the nouns *pueblo* or *povo* and the adjective *popular* began to denote a movement of emancipation. *Pueblo* refers to "ordinary people", sometimes called "grassroot", who are determined to free themselves from the political and socio-cultural constraints of the power structures.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, as I have mentioned above, people are distinct from the masses of the mass media, masses being those listening to "pop music" or reading the "popular press", for instance. In other words, people are those "who are conscious of being powerless and who are willing to gain control of their own lives and circumstances." Thus, people means the oppressed, the defenceless, no matter who they are --peasants or workers, or women and children, or blacks, or the unemployed, etc.<sup>17</sup>

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15 R. White, "*Comunicación popular: language of liberation, Media Development*", (WACC, London, 1980) N.3.

16 The significance of the word "people" in this context is not related to "populism" viewed as the predominant political system which was developed from the 1930s to the 1960s in Latin America (President Vargas in Brazil, Cardenas in Mexico, Peron in Argentina, Rojas in Colombia). The populist state conceived itself as a referee and legitimate representative of people interests. For a full elaboration on this issue, see Ernesto Laclau (1977); Marques de Melo (1981); Martin Barbero (1987). "People" is rather related to lower-status groups seen within the framework of *clases populares* in an economic and social scale.

17 Quoted in Media Development, (WACC, London, 1988) N.1.

To demonstrate this understanding of popular, as a movement of emancipation, i.e., seen within the framework developed by Paulo Freire's educational philosophy<sup>18</sup>, Robert White writes that *comunicación popular* is not any one kind of media such as group media, local radio or published materials. It arises within a lower-status movement and is peasant and workers groups speaking among themselves or to other similar groups. The language and informal channels of communication grow out of interaction within the movement. Obviously, these patterns of communication may move toward some special medium and may involve specialists who are able to give the necessary information or instruction to use a new medium effectively.<sup>19</sup> White stresses that there is often a tendency to see communication only as "media" and to consider that a process of *comunicación popular* has been established simply by introducing a particular medium such as printed materials, radio, group media, folk media, etc.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Freire's method of *conscientization* is quoted in Chapter II and VI.

19 For instance, in an earlier stage, media institutions promoting group communication tended to produce and distribute medium for somewhat scattered groups that could be organized. Now, the popular organizations and movements assume the task of producing the media themselves. These media may lack the technical quality, but they are directly related to the immediate needs, and incorporate the language, symbols, and themes important for the group. (R. White, The Latin American Experiences from "group communication" to "comunicación popular", Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, London, 1987. Unpublished paper.

20 R. White, "Comunicación popular: language of liberation", *op. cit.*, pp. 3-9.



White's understanding of *comunicación popular* can be illustrated by the Popular Women's Union of Loja, founded in Ecuador (1984). UPML is a grassroots women's organization mainly urban but also some rural women of thirty-five grassroots organizations with 1500 members. The women are extremely poor and saw the necessity for developing a space to come together and join the overall struggle of the poor. For them, the enemy of the poor is injustice, exploitation, poverty and oppression. To reflect on their situation, they say

... together we analyze our experience of reality and, guided by the word of God, explore how we can liberate ourselves from the double oppression and exploitation in which we live (...) Nonetheless, it is we women ourselves who must take and lead in working toward our own liberation (...)<sup>21</sup>

In order to guarantee the development of the organization, UPML has set some clear goals: to promote organization and solidarity of women, especially those most marginalized, so they can learn new ways of living within a supportive community; to educate the grassroots women of Loja; to expose the conditions of injustice and oppression that women are subjected to today; to build women's skills through all types of activities, so they can find ways to improve their standard of living.

To achieve those objectives, UPML maintains a minimum of internal structure in which participation from the grassroots

21 Mariana Troya, "Challenges in Organizing Women", Growing Together: Women, Feminism and Popular Education, (Rome: Isis International and Network for Women and Popular Education, 1987), p. 43.

in decision making is a matter of priority. The implementation of the objectives and programmatic activities is carried out by courses, seminars and workshops at different levels. The issues and concerns addressed are taken from the women's reality. For this reason each course is different, and they vary according to the condition of the peasant women, what is going on in their province, and in Latin America as a whole. Other programs are related to human rights in general and women's rights, and also to the political educational and popular organization. In other words, UPML works with the base level organizations, taking into account the needs of each group. The courses address topics such as methodology for popular education, methodology for socioeconomic research, techniques for analysis of social reality, and popular medicine and health education. As a result of the struggles and discussions of the groups, UPML has produced and published its first book *And We Had No Voice* compiling experiences of the active participation of the base-level organizations and articles written by small groups.<sup>22</sup>

In this regard, *comunicación popular* starts from an analysis of one's own historical situation, which transforms consciousness and leads to action, involvement and struggle. These local movements are often the first step toward building an alternative, horizontal communication and organizational structure among the rural and urban people. Communication,

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22 Ibid., pp. 43-48.

therefore, is not seen as something which takes place between "sender" and "receiver", but as a participatory process, which becomes a symbol of opposition to the authoritarian, vertical, hierarchical pattern of elite-dominated, control-oriented communication, typical of Latin American societies.

Within this framework, alternative communication<sup>23</sup> was defined as

a process of social origin, whose content and significance are shaped by the dimensions acquired by the social praxis of the sectors under domination. No form of alternative communication is ever conducted on the basis of the one-way, individualistic, non-participatory flows which are a feature of institutionalized communication.<sup>24</sup>

Alternative communication is part of a socio-political praxis of social transformation; consequently (...), these forms of communication are predetermined from outside the communicative field. They are found within the framework of a political project that produces them as instrument and expression of its development.<sup>25</sup>

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23 Definitions of alternative communication are still unclear: "marginal communication", "group communication", "popular communication", and "horizontal communication" are encompassed by the widest definition of alternative communications. According to Reyes Matta, however, they all must refer to the relationship between alternative communication and the dominated --oppressed sectors of society at the national level, and the dominated countries at the international level (F. Reyes Matta, "Alternative Communication: Solidarity and Development in the face of Transnational Expansion", Communication and Latin American society - Trends in Critical Research, 1960-1985, ed. R. Atwood and E. McAnany, (The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1986) pp.190-213). According to R. Salinas Bascur, "alternative communication" is a vague and weak concept. She prefers "basis communication" or "popular communication" which embody a concept of social stratification (Interview with Salinas Bascur, June 1989).

24 Fernando Reyes Matta, Alternative experiences (II): Communication practices in Latin America, (CIC Document) N.68. Quoted in MacBride Report, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

The primary characteristics which emerge from Reyes Matta's definition is that alternative communication is:

1) a process which implies a participatory process committed to social change. Participatory communication consists of a horizontal process of shared messages, circularity of communication, and feed-back. In this process there are no senders and receivers. People interchange messages and both are alternatively transmitters and receivers. It is this "interaction of participants that maintains life in the social fabric... in sum, the social being recovers his or her voice."<sup>26</sup>

2) Alternative communication in Latin America is characterized as "oppositional" to the vertical communication system. In this sense, it plays roles of "counter-information", "non-formal education", "consciousness-raising", "contributors to the mobilization", and "empowerment." However, alternative communication may imply an opposition also to the dominant discourse of power (Grinberg:1986), for instance, to confront political authoritarianism -- predominantly military dictatorships-- and economic authoritarianism --the privilege and power of groups. At this point, Reyes Matta differentiates "oppositional communication" and alternative communication which has an oppositional

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25 Fernando Reyes Matta, "La comunicación transnacional y la respuesta alternativa", Comunicación alternativa y cambio social. Vol. I: América Latina, ed. M.Simpson (ILET, 1981) p. 34.

26 F. Reyes Matta, "Alternative communication: Solidarity and Development...", *op. cit.*, p. 191.

feature. It implies more than just "another" message going in the opposite direction from the dominant model. Alternative communication is conceived of as "a process in which solidarity and participation" are the fundamental parts of the process.<sup>27</sup>

3) Alternative media are forms which embody alternative communication. Reyes Matta observes that alternative communication has frequently been conceived of as a set of forms involving small audiences. However, he emphasizes, "alternativeness" lies not in instruments, but in the way such media are used. In other words, the creation of forms should be marked by a process of participation. The use of small format media, such as bulletins, newspapers, cardboard pictures, slides, loudspeakers, and popular radios at the local level represent the communicative alternatives to traditional educative process and one-way media (Matta 1981, Paiva 1983, Peirano 1985). Presently, the use of video in Latin America, for instance, is one of the main examples of alternative media being used to create an awareness of larger social and political issues such as the right to communicate, and the democratization of society.<sup>28</sup>

In general, the strategies of alternative communication and alternative media are focused on more immediate problems

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27 Ibid., p. 205.

28 Examples to illustrate alternative media used as alternative communication can be found in Chapter III and Chapter IV of this dissertation.

of basic education, health or rural development, but their objectives are to build up capacities for organization and political action. These alternative forms of communication have clear goals of developing values of participatory communication and an infrastructure of innovative participatory forms of media.<sup>29</sup>

To illustrate these three characteristics, the case of Brazilian experiments have been strong and creative. In Brazil, popular forces have banded together since the military coup in 1964. Particularly in S.Paulo, with its high concentration of workers and people with low income, the Basic Christian Communities have played a central role. Significant forms of communication, alternative media, emerged from the social movements alliance. Among those forms, the *nanica* press (from *nana*, "grand-mother" or "nanny", so called because its circulation was small) has had a great influence. It questioned military authoritarianism and criticized the economic model that sustained profound injustices. Pasquin (a

29 In this dissertation, popular communication is seen and analyzed within a framework of struggle for social-political change in the context of Latin America. Alternative communication and alternative media within grassroot movement are seen as having an oppositional character. Although popular culture constitutes an important issue emerging from the popular movements, the analysis of such a theme is not part of the present work. The role of popular culture and the mass media in the transformation of national cultures is drawing attention of communication researchers in Latin America in recent years. They are shifting away from a focus on external cultural domination to analysis of the internal socio-political factors that are influencing the development of Latin American cultures. Among the outstanding scholars on this theme are Jesus Martin Barbero (Colombia), Nestor Garcia Canclini (Mexico) and Jorge Gonzales (Mexico).

famous illustration of the *nanica* press) was a newspaper that demonstrated that there was a space to create alternative media. After *Pasquin* appeared, other forms of alternative media began, for instance, books.

Presently, video is an excellent means of bringing groups of people together to tackle problems within their communities. Actually, experiments all over Latin America are being conducted showing how successful video is in developing a participatory process of communication. The experiments are growing so fast that in some countries, like Chile, alternative video networks are being built up to interact with people in a process of *conscientizacion* and, therefore, they are becoming a great political, social and cultural force.

### **5.2.2 Experiments in participatory process of communication**

In Brazil, popular or community video is very successful. Even in the *favelas* people are using media that convey their own experience and realities. Centres are being created, such as the Center for the Creation of Popular Images (CECIP), showing that video can be used at the level of small communities to create an awareness of larger political issues. CECIP is an independent, non-profit association dedicated to producing educational material, booklets, posters, comic strips, illustrated manuals and audiovisual media --slide sets, specially video. The project is located in Nova Iguacu,

on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, an area of nearly two million people. The aim is to stimulate discussion and participation so as to seek ways to overcome people's situation. This project is also connected with the Catholic Church, and, today, the Popular Video Project records the experiences of local people, and is increasingly involving the participation of people in the production of videos. The Project also brings information about the communities --twelve regional sections of the Dwelling Association are visited each month and a large number of grassroot communities are animated by diocese groups. People see themselves, and their reality, because the videos prompt people to discuss local problems and possible solutions of change.<sup>30</sup>

Another case, is the Radio Latacunga (Ecuador). Currently, experiments of this type abound in Latin American countries.<sup>31</sup> Radio Latacunga is located in the city of Latacunga, south of Quito. The station is owned by the Catholic bishop and is involved in a project initiated by a Catholic priest, Javier Herran, and developed with a Unesco

30 Quoted in Claudius Ceccon, "Brazilian centre shows that video is an agent of change", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1989) N.4. See also other experiences quoted in Chapter III and IV of this dissertation.

31 The experience of the Catholic School Radios (ACPO - Popular Cultural Action, in Colombia), transformed now in ALER (Latin American Association for Radiophonic Education, 1972) with more than forty affiliated radio schools systems in more than 15 Latin American countries is one of the most conspicuous examples of a broader movement of structural change in the continent. Full information may be found in Robert White, "The Latin American Association for Radiophonic Education", Media Education and Development, 1983.



organization CIESPAL. In the Radio Latacunga experiment, teams of *campesinos* in the countryside are equipped with simple recording equipment and after receiving technical training they produce tapes which are sent to the station for broadcasting as part of a special programme for the *campesino* population in the area. According to O'Connor,<sup>32</sup> the experience of the Radio Latacunga *cabinas* each with their team of *campesinos* representing their communities, and simple radio equipment has set a new standard for the meaning of "participation" in popular radio. Of particular importance is the matter that most *radios populares* are self-organizing, part of popular movements and frequently in conflict with the State. Their practice opposes local structures of power, like for instance, the big landowners, the national elites and their political representatives, and the capitalist owners of the national media and their allies.

### 5.3 The issue of "participatory process"

As the attempts to introduce media reform, and national communication policies during the 1970s were blocked by coalitions of traditional and modernizing elites, movements of popular and alternative communication emerged at the margin of

32 Allan O'Connor, "People's radio in Latin America - a new assessment", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1989) N.2. O'Connor also points out that the activities and institutions supported by the Catholic Church are the most successful examples of alternative communication described by the Unesco reports of the late 1970s.

society. Such movements, while developing conceptions of communication, forms of media use, and innovative practices of cultural formation, embodied concepts of democratic communication, such as *access* and *participation*.

These movements increasingly developed not only their own internal communication, but they were potentially capable of transforming the communication institutions of society. Aware of such potentiality, many Latin American communication researchers began to propose that the media reform would likely come not from top-down planning, but from the bottom up by the gradual permeation of these new forms of communication developed in the popular movements.<sup>33</sup> Regina Festa writes that experiences in countries such as Brazil, with movements toward democracy based on the grassroots communication network, has shown that popular communication could bring people into the Latin American political and cultural process.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1980s, a central question arose among communication researchers about this participatory process whether the rapid expansion of popular communication was likely to influence the future development of communication in

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33 Robert White, The Latin American contribution to Communication Theory, op. cit., 1989, pp. 12-13 . Regina Festa et al., "Movimientos sociales, comunicacion popular y alternativa", Comunicacion popular y alternativa, (Buenos Aires, Ediciones Paulinas, 1986), quoted in R. White, The Latin American contribution... p.13.

34 Ibid. Regina Festa refers, for instance, to the contribution of the grassroots movements to the formation of the Workers Party in Brazil. This issue is discussed further in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

Latin America (Proano, 1983: 2-3; 1986: 2-3).<sup>35</sup> They asked, firstly, could the formulation of national communication policy take into serious account the presence of popular communication and bring this phenomenon more directly into communication institutions of Latin America? Secondly, are the popular classes becoming more active, critical creators of cultural meaning in the use of mass media as a result of being active producers of media at the local level?<sup>36</sup> This subject has recently become the centre of a body of theory in Latin America, regarding experiences at the micro-level, as producers of cultural meaning and the daily practices of mass media. Therefore, the concerns of Latin American communication researchers, in the last ten years, have shifted away from a "focus on external cultural domination to the analysis of the internal socio-political factors" influencing the development of cultures in Latin America.<sup>37</sup>

In the same steps of Anglo-American cultural studies (Hall, 1982; Fiske, 1987), Latin American scholars are giving greater consideration to the capacity of popular classes "to resist and reinterpret hegemonic ideologies" in favor of the interests of such classes. However, what White emphasizes is

35 Quoted in R. White, The Latin American contribution..., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

36 Rosa Maria Alfaro, "Participación...Para qué? Un enfoque político en la comunicación popular", Diálogos de la Comunicación, 1988, N.22. Quoted in R. White, The Latin American contribution..., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

37 R. White, The Latin American contribution..., *op. cit.*, p. 14.

that the involvement and identification of Latin Americans with grassroots movements is demonstrating that the appreciation of the capacity of the popular classes lies in the fact that these classes are not just reacting to mass media, but are being active subjects in the creation of cultural meaning. Hence, in terms of elaborating a theory of mass media in terms of democratization, Latin American scholars are, now less concerned with "resistances" and more interested in the potential of popular culture for democratization of communication and culture.<sup>38</sup>

Looking back to the 1970s and early 1980s, the alternative communications (*comunicación popular* in Latin American approach) was marked by an *oppositional* character, due to the socio-political and economic background in Latin America. Many aspects of that situation remain, and have become even worse --economic crisis, for instance. Therefore, the *oppositional* character of alternative communication is still present, especially in movements based on gender (feminists), neighborhood organizations, popular religion (Basic Christian Communities), consumer organizations, youth, etc. But the development of the grassroots movement is also bringing out the capacity of such movements for being active producers of cultural meaning. My contention is that the

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38 Ibid., p. 14. Works by J. Martin Barbero, mentioned previously, are being developed in that direction. See for instance, J. Martin Barbero, De los medios a las mediaciones (1987) and "Introduction", Comunicación y culturas populares en Latinamerica - 1987, (Ediciones G. Gili, Mexico).

oppositional character in alternative communication is not the most important aspect in alternative communication. What is fundamental is the process of participation, pointed out by Reyes Matta and described above.

The issue of participation, especially in the framework of national development efforts, has been dealt with frequently over the last ten years, and it "might represent a new development paradigm, replacing that of modernization theory" (Jacobson, 1989).<sup>39</sup> In the modernization theory, communication was conceived as a process of diffusion whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a more technically developed life style. In this approach, introduced by Everett Rogers, the importance of mass media was to create awareness of new possibilities and practices, within the one-way flow of information, which established an hierarchical

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39 The development of the following work is based on Jan Servaes, a major scholar in the area of communication and development, at the Institute of Mass Communication, The Catholic University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands: Participatory Communication research with new social movements. Paper presented at the "Seminar on Participation: a key concept in Communication for change and development", University of Poona (India), January 1989; and The role and place of research in participatory communication projects. Paper presented at WACC Congress, Manila, 1989. Also Robert White, Cultural Analysis in communication for development, to be published on the journal Development, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication, The Gregorian University, Rome, April 1990; and Participatory Communication as a Social and Cultural Process to be published in Participation: a key concept in Communication for change and development, Rome, May 1990. Also Thomas Jacobson, Old and new approaches to participatory communication for development. Paper presented at the "Seminar on Participation: a key concept in Communication for change and development", University of Poona (India), January 1989.

relationship between the communicator (source) and the receiver, and which resulted in dominant and dominated relationships (Aggrey Brown in Jan Servaes, October 1989:3).

A second generation of theorists, influenced by dependency theory and concerned with the expansion of multinational corporations, grew up in conflict with the modernization paradigm. For them, obstacles to development are external to the underdeveloped country. What is needed, therefore, is for a peripheral country to dissociate itself from the world market and strive for self-reliance. A third paradigm has been proposed in the late 1980s, termed "multiplicity in one world." Contrary to modernization and dependency theories, the central idea in the multiplicity paradigm is that "there is no universal development model, and that development is an integral multidimensional, and dialectical process that can differ from society to society." (Jan Servaes, October 1989:4). In his argument on behalf of the third paradigm of development and communication, Servaes states that such a model

implies that the development problem is a relative problem and that no one nation can contend that it is 'developed' in every respect. Therefore, I argue that the scope and degree of inter(in) dependency must be studied in relationship with more content related qualitative aspects of the development problem. In other words, it should be defined as need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound, and based on participatory democracy and structural transformations. As a consequence, each society must attempt to delineate its own strategy of development, based on its own ecology and culture... it should not attempt to blindly imitate programs and strategies of other countries with a totally different historical background. (Jan Servaes, October 1989:4-5)

The argument of this new approach of development and communication points out that the community is the point of departure. Servaes emphasizes that it is at the local communication level that the problems of living conditions are discussed and interactions with other communities are obtained. This process implies participation in the planning and production of media content, i.e., participation in the decision-making. It does not signify that there is no longer a role for development planners or institutional leaders. It means, in fact, that participatory communication in the development process has to be planned and executed not by "communication researchers and policy experts sitting at desks in government bureaus" (White, May 1990:1), but instead the capacities of the community members must be taken into consideration, as they are the subject of their own social change process.

The participatory process for this paradigm applies to local situations,<sup>40</sup> and it starts from a more dialectical mobilization and conscientization strategy. It refers, once again, to Freire's *conscientización* method, oriented to bringing the individual to critical reflection about his own being and conditions, whereby the individual becomes an agent able to break the "culture of silence" and, then, actively participates in the historical process. Therefore, the concept

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40 According to Servaes, the choice of the place and the context of research and the place and role of policy maker and researcher differ fundamentally in each paradigm.

of alternative media, following the participatory principle, adapts the media to the language, the symbols to the communities, and employs communication patterns of the lower-classes. In this regard, alternative media has three characteristics: it is participatory, it articulates popular culture, and indigenous national cultural production, and it is openly critical.



## CHAPTER VI

### ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN PRACTICE (TWO CASE STUDIES IN BRAZIL)

Democratization of communication, according to the MacBride Report, implies access and participation in order to allow individuals to be active agents, rather than passive objects of communication. In this regard, the Report recommended horizontal and alternative communication. In the *Quito* and *Embu* documents (Chapter IV), the Church in Latin America emphasized the importance of promoting forms of alternative communication in order to develop a process of democratization of communication.

It is within this context that the two case studies in Brazil are analyzed in this chapter. They both demonstrate the participatory process: this is the contribution of alternative communication to the democratization of communication. The chapter begins with the case study on Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) in Brazil, and it continues with its study on the Centre of Communication and Popular Education of S.Miguel (CEMI) in the outskirts of S.Paulo. The communication perspective used to analyze both is from Reyes Matta's approach to alternative communication and alternative media, considered in Chapter V of this dissertation.

## 6.1 Origins of Basic Christian Communities in Brazil (CEBs)

Basic Christian Communities constitute a new conception of the traditional way of "being Church"<sup>1</sup>. They have an invaluable role in the popular process, as they promote popular participation. The Basic Christian Communities in Brazil (CEBs - *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*),<sup>2</sup> emerged in

1 The expression "a new way of being Church" is found originally in the literature about Basic Christian Communities by the theologian Leonardo Boff, who has called into question the way the Church has traditionally operated. According to Boff, CEBs are not only a "new way of being Church", but a better way. Specially in his book *Ecclesiogenesis* (see Note 29 of this Chapter), Boff explains his ideas by contrasting two very different ways of being Church: institutional and community. "The traditional institutional Church acts from the top down. It views itself as a juridical society in which God the Father empowers Jesus to found a Church headed by a pope and bishops who transmit teachings and the sacraments through priests to the faithful below. Its very size and structure preclude it from being a true community. The new basic community Churches, in contrast, develop from the bottom up. They view all members as equals, sharing with each other their special gifts and charism. All bear responsibility for the Church, not just a few... The need for some hierarchy and administration does arise, but as a service to the community. Boff does not envision or desire the elimination of the institutional Church in favor of the community-style Church. The basic communities, while they witness to the communitarian aspect of Christianity, "cannot pretend to constitute a global alternative to the Church as an institution". They can, however, in addition to their witness as Church, be a ferment for the renewal of the institutional Church" (based on Arthur McGovern's interpretation of Boff's ideas about basic Christian communities, Liberation Theology and its critics, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989) p. 214.)

2 The qualification "cristas" (Christian) instead of "eclesiais" (ecclesiastical) was specifically used at Medellin and has become standard in English usage up to today. According to Marcelo Azevedo, a shift took place in Brazil during the ten years between the Medellin Conference and the Puebla Conference (1968-1979): from "basic community" (*comunidade de base*) or grassroot group with an ecclesial

the mid-1960s as a result of pastoral initiatives by the Church. While they did not start as part of any determined plan from the hierarchy, nevertheless, they are considered to have been born inside the Church, as they had the bishop's approval in the dioceses. According to historians, basic communities began to form in Brazil in 1963-1964,<sup>3</sup> but their official launching in the Brazilian Church is considered to have begun in 1965. Throughout the years CEBs have continued to be approved and implemented by the National Bishops' Conference (CNBB):

Today, in our country, *Basic Ecclesial Communities* constitute a reality embodying one of the most dynamic features in the life of the Church... We can adopt as our own the words of the bishops at Puebla: 'In 1968 Basic Ecclesial Communities were just coming into being. Over the past ten years they have multiplied and matured, particularly in some countries, so that now they are one of the causes for joy and hope in the Church. In communion with their bishops, and in line with Medellin's request, they have become centers of evangelization and moving forces for liberation and development' (N.96).<sup>4</sup>

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character but with emphasis on sociological aspect, to "basic ecclesial community" --conceived and understood since the Puebla Conference, as markedly and consciously ecclesiological. Marcelo C. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil - the challenge of a new way of being Church, (Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1987.) In this dissertation, CEBs will be used as the abbreviation for *Basic Christian Communities* (Basic Ecclesial Communities).

3 It is interesting to note that the beginnings of CEBs coincided with the meeting of theologians in Petropolis (1964, Brazil), which initiated the process of liberation theology.

4 CNBB, "As Comunidades Eclesiais de Base na Igreja do Brazil" (Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Permanent Council, Brasilia, 11/23-26/82, (Doc. of CNBB, N.25, Ed. Paulinas, S.Paulo, 1982). Quoted in M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 34.

There were three movements that contributed to the birth of the CEBs. The first was the popular catechesis of Barra do Pirai in the late 1950s. To extend evangelization and the presence of the Church to all people and all areas of the diocese, the bishop Dom Agnello Rossi mobilized lay catechists to gather Catholics to pray and listen to scripture. Many of these lay people also became community coordinators and organized the teaching of religion and basic literacy skills. Because of the shortage of priests, the situation prompted the involvement of more lay people and by 1956 there were already 372 popular catechists. As Marcelo Azevedo stresses, this gave lay people the possibility to take into their own hands what was previously the exclusive work of the priest.<sup>5</sup>

The second important movement in the formative process of CEBs in Brazil was the *Natal Movement* by Dom Eugenio Sales in the northeast of Brazil. It was launched to create treatment centers for diseases and malnutrition. In this movement, as in others, the Church addressed itself to human beings in all of their aspects, i.e., to a people marked by poverty, illness, ignorance, exploitation, malnutrition and social injustice. The *Natal Movement* made special use of radio programs to develop basic instruction in literacy and to raise critical awareness among the population about problems, and to

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5 Marcelo Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 26.

instruct in the faith. By 1963, 1,410 radio schools were functioning in the diocese of Natal.

The Popular Movement of Culture (*Movimento Popular de Cultura*) also had a role in the formation of the CEBS. These famous "culture circles" used the new method of popular education in the northeast of Brazil initiated by Paulo Freire in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although Freire was sent into exile for fifteen years, his ideas and methods rapidly spread and were carried on by church people, social workers, organizers and most of all, by university students, artists and intellectuals who were members of the Popular Cultural Movement in Recife in the 1960s. His methodology -- *conscientización*-- provided a pattern of work in which outsiders, that is, people who are not themselves poor, can go to the popular classes in a nonpaternalistic way.<sup>6</sup>

Freire's ideas and techniques for adult education known as "pedagogy of the oppressed" stressed respect for the poorer classes and took into consideration their abilities. He insisted that "educators serve as facilitators, enabling the poor to develop their own ideas in confrontation with their living situations, rather than simply 'imparting' knowledge to them."<sup>7</sup> According to Freire, learning should be an active

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6 Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1987) p. 35.

7 Arthur F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and its critics, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989) p. 200.

process. In this way, the poor can come to their own decisions and obtain greater control over their lives.

Freire's ideas pivoted around the belief that the poor themselves need to be enabled to become agents of their own destiny. Commenting on Freire's method, Scott Mainwaring<sup>8</sup> points out that it rejects elitist approaches that made traditional politicians or leftist "vanguard parties" the main agents of change. On the other hand, the method stresses and develops a conscientization process, encouraging people to view their problems as part of issues in the larger society, and, therefore, to make them aware of the need for social change.

The *Movimento Popular de Cultura* started in the grassroot groups teaching peasants to read and write. Words and images from the adult world of the peasants were used --peasant's crops, tools, customs-- sometimes referring to issues of conflict and power like land tenure. A typical session of the "culture circles" would begin with a poster or slide projection showing, for example, peasants harvesting a crop. Opening the discussion, the leader would encourage people to make observations. From the elements of the picture itself the discussion would move to their own work, their values, and their problems. The leader would strive to have people react to the picture. "The picture was a codification of their life

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8 Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil - 1916-1985, (Stanford University Press, 1986). Quoted in A. McGovern, Liberation Theology..., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

situation, which they were decoding through dialogue."<sup>9</sup> Only after forty minutes or more of discussion, the session would move to reading skills, using "generative words", i.e., words denoting elemental realities in people's lives --for instance, mother, father, land, corn, work.

It was also in the framework of Freire's methodology for popular education that MEB (*Movimento Educacional de Base - Movement for Grassroot Education*) launched its own movement for popular education in 1961. MEB is considered the third main factor in the contribution to the production of CEBs in Brazil.<sup>10</sup>

### 6.1.1 Religious and socio-politic context of CEBs

The rise of CEBs in Brazil is enmeshed in the profound ecclesiastical and socio-politic transformations which have occurred in Brazil since the 1950s. At the ecclesial<sup>11</sup> level, the creation of the Brazilian National Conference of Bishops (CNBB) in 1952 marked an important step in the work of the Brazilian Church. This organization brought together all the

9 Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

10 Full account of MEB is found in Chapter III of this dissertation.

11 The term "ecclesial" in this chapter refers to the Church's affairs in general and means "ecclesiastical." Although it is an old English term, according to the Oxford Dictionary, recent authors such as Arthur McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics, (1989), as well as translators of books about the Latin American Church's activities use "ecclesial" instead of "ecclesiastical."

bishops of the country, and it spoke out and acted for all of them. Therefore, it represented the Church and unified the hierarchy to analyze and face the tensions existing in their country, placing the Church on the side of change.<sup>12</sup>

As already noted, the major event in the Church throughout the world, was the Second Vatican Council, begun in 1962.<sup>13</sup> For Brazil, the Council began precisely when the national and ecclesial life in Brazil were in a difficult relationship, as mentioned previously. In other words, the first two years of the council (1962-1963) coincided with the J. Goulart's government, and the next two years (1964-1965) with the first military government of Castelo Branco. The new posture of the Church in its relationship with the contemporary world, opening up to a different view of its presence and evangelizing activity, gave the Church in Brazil a new outlook on the world. The council paved the way, for the Church to bring its pastoral work into line with the existing realities.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Thomas Bruneau, "The Church, State and Religion in Brazil", The Catholic Church and Religions in Latin America, ed. T. Bruneau, M. Mooney, C. Gabriel (Monograph Series, Centre for Developing-Area Studies, McGill University, Montreal, 1984) pp. 16-17.

13 The significance of Vatican II is considered in Chapters I and II of the present dissertation.

14 According to M. Azevedo, however, the spelling out of the Church's awareness vis-a-vis the poor and oppressed in the full sense, as it is today, did not happen specifically at Vatican II. It was the fruit of contextual readings of the council, specifically the reading undertaken in Medellin (1968) by the bishops of Latin America. (M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., op. cit., p. 33.



At the economic and political level, the decade of the mid-1950s to mid-1960s was marked by the developmentalist programs of the Juscelino Kubitschek government. Beginning in 1955, the transfer of multinational assets and technologies to Brazil was accelerated, and the nation became dependent on foreign capital and technology. In addition, an industrial park centered in S.Paulo was created, aggravating the exodus from rural areas, and creating problems of migration. The industrialized urban areas were not prepared for the influx of so many people. Major highways and hydroelectric projects were constructed, as well as the new capital, Brasilia.

This process of modernization "woke up Brazil" but implanted a highly concentrative model of economy spurring a durable-goods industry that did not serve the basic needs of the population. By the early 1960s, an increasing national consciousness emerged, especially in some of the movements mentioned previously, such as MEB, and the work of Paulo Freire. The call for radical change was reflected in the governments of Janio Quadros and Joao Goulart.

During this period, tensions from international pressures and national oligarchies were increasing on the one hand, contrasted with people seeking basic reforms on the other. Amid these tensions, the military took over in March-April 1964, establishing a long period of authoritarian rule by the armed forces. This authoritarian rule was marked, at the political level, by the neutralizing and atrophying of the legislative power of Congress, and by dealing arbitrarily with

the executive branch. Economically, the military period was marked by the adoption of a rigorous model, unchangeable in its basic structure. It was a period marked by a highly concentrated neocapitalism, which dominated public life, and the economy was increasingly taken over by the military government. However, this model threw Brazil into a crisis of foreign dependence, especially after 1973, and into foreign indebtedness.

At the social level, there was an increasing awareness of the inadequacy of labor, tax, and social-welfare laws to meet the real life situation in Brazil. In addition to that discrepancy, there was also a drop in the purchasing power of the laboring and middle classes. These classes were also silenced by a series of repression, criticism and discrimination. While many sectors of the government bureaucracy, and industrial and economic sectors grew in this period, such improvements were in sharp contrast to the everyday reality of the Brazilian population, who continued to suffer in such basic areas as nutrition, health, and education, and in their participation in politics and labour unions. It was a period when Brazil lived under the ideological conception of the so-called Doctrine of National Security, which characterized repressive military regimes in many countries of Latin America.<sup>15</sup>

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15 The socio-political analysis in the present work is based on J.B. Libanio, "Experiences with the Base Communities in Brazil", Missiology, an International Review, (VIII/3, 1980)

With the military takeover in 1964, conservative bishops took over leadership positions in the National Conference of Bishops, and they extended their conservative views to the MEB, as discussed earlier. The various branches of the Catholic Action movement such as the Catholic Youth Workers (YCW - JOC) and the Catholic University Youth (YCS - JUC), slowly started disintegrating. These two lay movements in Brazil stem from the 1930s, when they were tightly controlled by the hierarchy. In the 1950s, JUC became increasingly affected by and involved in the student movement. By the 1960s it was actively involved in the Brazilian Left, achieving such radicalization that it ran into sharp conflict with the hierarchy, which in 1961 forbade the movement to make radical pronouncements and take radical political commitments. By 1966, the movement finally disbanded.

JOC was a movement for the urban working class and died out in the 1970s "as a victim of brutal repression from the state and insufficient support from the bishops."<sup>16</sup> It had become a politically moderate organization, who was more concerned with the Church's sacramental life than involved in popular movements. However, during the years before the coup it began to reflect its working-class composition in concern for supporting the factory struggle, involvement in the labor movement and in its commitment to socialism. By 1970 JOC's

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pp. 320-38, and quoted in M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 28-30.

16 Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil..., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

leadership in these movements meant it was one of the military regimes' primary targets of repression. Given this repression and the Church hierarchy's lack of support, the movement was disbanded.

As Mainwaring points out, "tragically" JOC helped transform the Church by forcing the institution to face the repressive nature of the authoritarian regime. Initially, the hierarchical Church supported the military regime, including thanking the military "for rescuing the country from the threat of communism."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the military regime started to imprison and torture many leaders and members of JOC and priests related to the movement. In searching for members of JOC, the military invaded a Jesuit study centre in Rio de Janeiro, and detained the secretary general of CNBB, Dom Aloisio Lorscheider, the head of the Catholic University of Rio and the head of the Jesuits in the southeastern region. The increasing repression and torturing of so many Church people and the violation of Church property prompted it to respond to the regime's violations of human rights, and the CNBB issued an energetic protest stating that "terrorism by the repressive apparatus is not a legitimate response to terrorism by subversives."<sup>18</sup> The Church then defined itself

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17 A. McGovern, Liberation theology . . ., op. cit., p. 201.

18 Quoted in Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil . . ., op. cit., p. 132.

in contrast to the regime and the socio-economic model it promoted.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, the Church became the lone voice able to speak out against human rights violations, and to protest the conditions of the poor. The Church, through its bishops, especially Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns in S.Paulo, started to condemn torture and repression. Many bishops began to speak out in defense of landless peasants, and to condemn the violence against Indians and peasants. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the northeastern bishops began to denounce the military rulers and raised criticisms of development policies in the Amazon. The government's agricultural policies had prompted the modernization of the traditional "latifundia" and encouraged rapid growth of nontraditional primary exports. These policies led to the rapid expansion of agribusiness and expulsion of peasants from the land. According to Mainwaring,<sup>20</sup> because of large fiscal incentives, investors from other countries and from the south acquired huge tracts of land, beginning in 1966. The expansion of large cattle farms, displacing subsistence agriculture, created difficulties for peasants to own land, as the amount of land held by the large farms increased more than sixfold in a period of fifteen years

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19 For details on the conflicts between the Church and state see chapter nine and ten of Thomas Bruneau, The political transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974).

20 Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil ..., op. cit., pp. 79-115.

(1960-1975). The real problem started, however, when the government claimed that the agribusiness projects were pioneers in those areas, without considering that such areas were already occupied by "posseiros" who occupied the land for generations without holding title to it. In the late 1960s, the government sanctioned settlement on previously occupied land, creating, therefore, violent conflict throughout the Amazon. The Church's criticisms had no effect on the government's policy. On the contrary, the regime viewed any institution that criticized the military as threatening the social order. As a consequence, members of the Church themselves also became victims of repression --many religious leaders were arrested, including bishops and priests. Some such as the 28 year old priest, Father Antonio Henrique Pereira Neto (1969), were assassinated. Many others were tortured and several were expelled from the country. The CEBs were too young at the time to have any significant voice.<sup>21</sup>

It was during this same period that the contextual reading of Vatican II in Latin America took place at Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979). The formation and development of CEBs in Brazil is closely connected to those conferences. The bishops in Medellin and Puebla came to realize that poverty

21 Full information on statistics on persecution of the Church may be found in Guillermo Cook, The Expectation of the Poor - Latin American Basic Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.York, 1985) p. 48. For a full account of human rights violations under the military regime in Brazil, see Torture in Brazil - a Report by the Archdiocese of S. Paulo, (Vintage Books, Random House, N. York, 1986).

was not an accidental or episodic social phenomenon, but was the key structural feature of Latin American social organization. Looking at itself in terms of its mission, as M. Azevedo explained, the Church discovered two facts: first, "the extent to which it was and is itself a part of the very social organization in which established injustice served to generate poverty and oppression." Second, the Church also recognized that through its members, methods, and institutions, "the Church itself had helped to maintain and reproduce that situation in the past."<sup>22</sup> Such a realization by the Church prompted it to develop its mission in the concrete world of Latin America. In other words, with Vatican II's document *Gaudium et Spes* as a reference point, the Latin American Church started to develop its relationship with the contemporary world from the concrete reality of Latin America. Based on Vatican II as well, the Church also began "its awareness of itself as a People, and saw its mission as one of service to this People."<sup>23</sup> It also explains why the Church, at the Puebla Conference, made a preferential option for the poor and projected itself into the future in terms of *participation* and *communion*. In this sense, the Church redefined its approach, assisting the lower classes and seeking their liberation.

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22 M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 36.

It was in this socio-political and ecclesial context that the CEBs in Brazil emerged. The CEBs surfaced in the midst of the *post conciliar* process, risen among common people, whose consciousness was being raised by clergy and religious within a framework that was in contrast to the national reality. In other words, the CEBs combined and articulated the broad participation of the laity along with the demand for a society built upon more active, egalitarian, and participative social relationships. M. Azevedo concludes that the CEBs arose from the common people and as the result of the "consciousness-raising activity of clergy and religious" who helped the people "to see real elements of their life and historical situation."<sup>24</sup>

Today, the growing phenomenon of CEBs in Brazil, expressing a new presence of the Church among the poor, is estimated at eighty to one hundred thousand groups with a total of one to two million members. Although estimates about the numbers vary considerably, it can be said that the Brazilian communities represent approximately half of the communities in Latin America.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Ibid., p. 35.

25 There is no precise estimate of the number of CEBs in Brazil. Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church..., *op. cit.*, gives an estimate of eighty thousand basic communities with two million members. Edward Cleary, Crisis and Change. The Church in Latin America today, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.York, 1985), estimates one hundred thousand CEBs with over a million members in Brazil.



## 6.2 Grassroot Christian Communities

As a new way of "being Church", CEBs are small groups integrated by Christian lay people, and with more popular lay leadership than ever before. They are supported by the hierarchy as a response to the shortage of priests. The CEBs exist mainly in rural areas or in the slum peripheries of large cities. As small groups, CEBs vary in size, made up of ten to thirty persons in a group, who come together once a week to read the Bible, to pray, to sing hymns, and to discuss problems involving their lives, and how to cope with their situation.

Two writers have noted how CEBs are first of all *communities*. M. Azevedo,<sup>26</sup> has written that they reunite people with the same faith, who live in the same regions, are motivated by the same Christian faith, and who live in *communion* around their problems of immediate survival and subsistence. They strive to form a mutual support group, sharing in each other's cares and struggles for better living conditions. The members speak in their own words, using their own terms to discuss, for instance, better salaries, unemployment, accommodation, lack of transportation, and basic sanitation. T. Bruneau also defines CEBs as *communities*, meaning interaction, equality and opportunity within the

26 M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, chapter 2. See also Frei Betto, "Comunicacao Popular e Igreja", Comunicacao alternativa no Brasil, (Ed. Paulinas, S. Paulo, 1986) pp. 99-117.

group, and also the potential to grow in collective consciousness. These are elements integrating a process of taking lay people into greater consideration, that has been missing in the Church and society in Brazil.<sup>27</sup>

The second major characteristic of CEBs in Brazil is that they are *ecclesial* (or Christian). Far from being a mere label, the ecclesiality of CEBs is a dimension of the identity of those groups. Azevedo explains that the first reason why they are ecclesial is because of the *faith* of CEBs' members. Second, because they are *linked* with the *Church hierarchy*, "obedient to it, and recognized by it in turn."<sup>28</sup> Every year

27 Thomas Bruneau, "The Catholic Church and the Basic Christian Communities: a Case Study from the Brazilian Amazon", Religion, the Poor, and Politics in Latin America Today, ed. Daniel H. Levine, (University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

28 M. Azevedo, *ibid.*, p. 66. Alvaro Barreiro also stresses in "Roots of the Ecclesial Awareness of CEBs" that CEBs in Latin America, and particularly in Brazil, are an initiative of the Church (priests, nuns, and lay people) with the approval of the bishops in the diverse dioceses ("Raizes da Consciencia Eclesial das CEBs" in Convergencia, XVII/158 (December 1982), pp. 602-09). The emphasis on the "link with the Church hierarchy" appears a great deal in the literature about CEBs. This stems from the fact that the 1984 Vatican instruction on liberation theology cautioned basic communities to not become divorced from the Church and grow into a "popular Church" in opposition to the official, institutional Church. This applies specifically to the Church in Nicaragua, for instance, which has struggled with such tension because of division in the Church over support for the Sandinista government. The hierarchy generally viewed it as Marxist-Leninist, while basic communities tended to view it as the defender of a revolutionary process in which they felt a part. However, the origins and development of the base communities and popular Church movements never had the same kind of endorsement in Nicaragua that they had in Brazil (based on A. McGovern, Liberation theology..., *op. cit.*, chapter 10).

In 1990, during *ad limina* visit (visits required every five years by bishops to report on the status of their dioceses),

representatives of the CEBs meet in their respective dioceses, and every three or four years, there is a National Encounter of the CEBs with the presence of bishops, theologians, sociologists and over fifteen hundred representatives from all over Brazil. These encounters are an important opportunity for the hierarchy to feel the pulse of people, to listen to and to understand people's problems and necessities. Together, they reflect on existing situations such as land or the current economic system. In the light of faith, but within the historical environment of CEBs, they all set the orientations for the future. These directions are passed on, in turn, to all the CEBs' representatives in different regions of the country.

The third reason CEBs are *ecclesial* is because they constitute "a new way of being Church." In other words, this new "face" of the Church involves many shifts that M. Azevedo synthesizes as giving the poor a sense that they are the church --People of God--, and, therefore, allowing them to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives, taking an active role in liturgies and in evangelizing each other. This process of participation, in the CEBs, leads the Church as institution to break out in the new forms of service, creating different forms of ministry,<sup>29</sup> in which women have also a role of leadership.

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one of the Pope's themes included "support for basic Christian communities as long as they remain obedient to the hierarchy and do not become overtly political" (A. Bono, The B.C. Catholic, (Vancouver, 1991, March 24).

The third main characteristic of CEBs is that they are "of the base" in a sociological sense primarily; that is, they constitute the poor and marginalized in Latin American society. Explaining why CEBs have the characteristic of being "basic", Leonardo Boff says that it is because the majority of their participants belong to the "base" of society, to the poor classes of people. Boff adds as well that CEBs also belong to the "base of the Church because they are lay people, Christians plain and simple."<sup>30</sup>

In this framework of considering the people as the base, G. Deelen refers to them as "those who live at the base of the social pyramid without benefitting from its laws or social institutions."<sup>31</sup> In this sense, Roger Garaudy considers "base" that part of society's population "deprived of possessing, power, and knowledge."<sup>32</sup>

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29 M. Azevedo, *Ibid.*, p. 66. Although the ecclesiology of CEBs constitutes a crunch among the Church as institution, such an issue is not part of my concern in this dissertation. Full discussion on the matter may be found in M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, chapter 4; in A. McGovern, Liberation Theology..., *op. cit.*, chapters 10,11; L. Boff, EcclesioGenesis: the Base Communities reinvent the Church, (Orbis Book, Maryknoll, N.York, 1977), and Church: Charisma and Power - liberation theology and the institutional Church, (Crossroad, N.York, 1981).

30 Leonardo Boff, "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e teologia da libertacao", Convergencia XIV/145 (September 1981), p. 431.

31 G.Deelen, "Las Comunidades de Base en la Iglesia", Pro Mundi Vita, 81, (April-May-June 1980) p. 14, quoted in M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

32 Roger Garaudy, "A base no marxismo e no cristianismo", Concilium, 104/4, 1975, p. 434-44 quoted in M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, p. 75. M. Azevedo remarks that is not easy to pinpoint for sure the origin of the term "base" as it has come to be used in basic (ecclesial)

When visiting rural CEBs in Brazil one can rapidly identify the participants of CEBs as the agricultural workers, peasants, small landowners, small cultivators without land or ownership, who are employed in farms, tenants without title or drifters who have been expelled from the land. In the urban peripheries, one can identify participants as workers in light industry, casual workers, housewives, washerwomen, homemakers, garbage workers, low-salaried laborers without steady employment, unemployed, youth employed in retail stores, etc. According to the latest survey of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas (IBGE - 1984) and published by Helio Jaguaribe in 1986, 61.2% of Brazilian population were considered between poor (1 or 2 minimum salaries), and people living below the poverty line (less than 1 minimum salary). In December 1989, the average minimum salary in Brazil corresponded to US\$60 monthly.<sup>33</sup>

Based on the understandings of the Medellin and Puebla Conferences, the Church tries to give special attention to these poorest sectors of society.<sup>34</sup> However, the Church makes

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communities. Everything indicates it derives originally from Marxist vocabulary and then found its way into modern discourse. Similar instances are the terms "alienation", "infrastructure", and "superstructure" (M. Azevedo, *Ibid.*, p. 110).

33 Helio Jaguaribe et alii, Brasil 2000: para un novo pacto social, (Paz e Terra, Rio de Janeiro, 1986). Also, Helio Jaguaribe et alii, Brasil: reforma ou caos, (Paz e Terra, Rio de Janeiro, 1989).

34 In theological or biblical terms, the notion of "people" stands for several meanings. Among them, people constitute "Ochlos", meaning grassroot, people at margins of society, crowd, people who do not have voice in the society. This is

clear that CEBs differ from class organizations. The theologian Clodovis Boff, a leading thinker who has written extensively on the subject of CEBs, describes them as being "popular," rather than "class organizations." The membership of CEBs is not determined by their position in the system of production. Boff situates CEBs in the context of the "polarization" rather than the "confrontation" of classes. Such an attitude, according to Boff, stems from the nature of the Christian faith that CEBs profess and manifest. Therefore, the Church prefers the notion of "*povo*" rather than class. He states that CEBs' radical criticism of the capitalist model and their initial rejection of a "third position" leads them in the direction of a "new society." This "new society" is viewed by liberation theology as different from existing models, both capitalist and socialist. The view of this "new society" is based on Christian values and practices -- transcendental and worldly. Theologically speaking, it should be a "human city" which starts at the "divine city". In other words, salvation is reached through the path of liberation. Boff stresses that for the time being, it is only necessary to become aware of the iniquities of the present system and that alternative models could possibly emerge, without having to define precisely what form they will take.<sup>35</sup>

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also the concept taken by the document of Puebla (1979). (Explanation by Pedro G. Gomes, based on H. E. Groenen's ecclesiological studies. "Consciencia de Gente: auto-consciencia eclesial do laicato nas CEBs do Brasil." Unpublished thesis in theology at Pontificia Universidad de Chile, 1980)

### 6.3 Communication process in the grassroot communities

Although most of the studies on CEBs in Brazil focus primarily on the ecclesial aspect of such communities, this case study deals with the process of communication emerging amid those groups. In fact, while there is abundant literature on CEBs<sup>36</sup> as a new "face" of the Church, and on the social, economic and political significance of them, no in-depth study, within a theoretical framework, was found, relating to the communication aspect of CEBs in Brazil.<sup>37</sup>

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35 Clodovis Boff, "CEBs e Praticas de Libertacao", Revista Eclesiastica Brasileira (REB), December 1980, N. 160, pp. 595-624.

36 It is almost impossible to cite the great amount of literature on CEBs in Brazil. However, among the most representative authors are the brothers Leonardo and Clodovis Boff with a variety of articles published in REB - Revista Eclesiastica Brasileira (Brazilian Ecclesial Magazine), edited by Vozes (Petropolis), and books already quoted in this dissertation. Also M. Azevedo, Basic Ecclesial Communities..., *op. cit.*, 1987; Guillermo Cook, The Expectation of the Poor..., *op. cit.*, 1985; Thomas Bruneau, "Basic Christian Communities in Latin America: their nature and significance (especially in Brazil)", Churches and Politics in Latin America, ed. Daniel Levine (Sage Publications, Beverley Hills, California 1981); Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985, (Stanford University Press, California, 1986).

37 Some authors have spoken in conferences held in Brazil about considerations and analysis on communication in the CEBs. However, they do not offer major analysis on the process of communication as it is considered in this dissertation, i.e., in relation to democratization of communication as an alternative communication, and this is due, in my opinion, to: first, the interrelations in the CEBs are viewed more as "popular education" rather than "communication." In addition, there is a lack of specific research related to the communication process in *comunicacion popular* --it is considered within popular movements at large. Second, attention has been devoted to the sociological impact that the CEBs may have, for instance, as creating "space" for

The communication issue in the CEBs in Brazil could be analyzed from several different standpoints --liturgical communication, symbols, production of communication as meaning of culture, the linguistic aspect. However, this work limits its focus to the participatory process of communication, of alternative communication on which I have based my dissertation. The theoretical framework referred to was considered previously in Chapter V and is based on Fernando Reyes Matta's definition of alternative communication.

Another important point is that CEBs have been considered in Brazil at large. No particular region was singled out for this analysis. My own experience has made me aware that CEBs in Brazil vary from region to region, and even from one diocese to another, as their discourse varies depending on whether the diocese is conservative or progressive. However, there is a single method of reflection and action followed by all CEBs in Brazil.

What makes it possible to discuss CEBs in general is that their process of communication is based on the same methodology, that is, a three-step process: *see-judge-act*. The people bring their family, district or work problems to the meeting. This is the *see*, followed by the inquiry as to the

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democracy in society. See, for instance, Regina Festa, "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e comunicacao", Comunicação, hegemonia e contra-informação, ed. C.E.Lins da Silva (Cortez Editora/Intercom, S.Paulo, 1982); Frei Betto, "Comunicacao Popular e Igreja", Comunicação Popular e alternativa no Brasil, ed. R. Festa and C.E.Lins da Silva (Ed. Paulinas, S.Paulo, 1986). Jose M. Pires, A comunicação hoje nas comunidades eclesiais de base, (Loyola, S.Paulo, 1984).



causes and consequences of such problems in the light of the Bible's reading --this is the *judge*. As a third step, *act*, the group draws up a plan of action. The content of discussions and the results of the groups' reflection to be put into practice may change, while the methodology remains the same.

### **6.3.1 Grassroot communities - process of participation**

The grassroot communities (CEBs) meet weekly to discuss their problems, ranging from the need for employment to better salaries, transportation, education, basic services, such as mail, water, sewage, schools, to problems concerning rural families such as land tenure, title to land, cooperatives, etc. CEBs have, in fact, become a place that allows people to organize, to discuss their lives, their values, and also their political needs. This step is called *facts* in the liberation methodology and constitutes a new way of seeing reality. Pastoral agents help the poor to overcome fatalistic views about their situation as it was in the past. These *animadores* (animators) help the poor to recognize the structural causes of their poverty and also to believe that by working in solidarity as a community they can effect change. The pastoral agents or *animadores* are not hired by the Church to develop such a work. It is part of their mission as members of the Church. Therefore, economically speaking, they are volunteers,

although the parishes and dioceses supply them with the necessary means for the work.<sup>38</sup>

A second step in the meeting is called *reflection* (or *judge*). The issues raised by the community are reflected in the light of the Bible, most frequently the Gospel. For example, if the members are treated differently in society because they are poor, in the light of Gospel they reflect and find out about their dignity as human beings, with the same rights in society as everybody else. The following example comes from a meeting in the S. Mateus community<sup>39</sup> in the centre east of Brazil and demonstrates the methodology of *conscientización*, and the socio-economic implications of the grassroot communities through the reading of the bible from the perspective of the poor:

*The theme of that fortnight was "that Jesus was born poor and humble and shares our life", and the question was "Why?" The eight women present were all poor. None had much formal*

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38 "Pastoral agents" are lay people, priests or nuns who help to start the discussion on the scriptural selection and keep the meeting moving. These vary widely within the CEBs and have implications for the life of the group and also for the ecclesiastical institution. As they try to identify themselves with the community needs, they act as facilitators enabling the poor to develop their own ideas and practices. Although pastoral agents may embody a "professional of the faith", who communicates from the institution, most of them implement "participation" as the key word in the liberating process of poor. Although "pastoral agents" are considered also the *animadores* of communities, the latter expression applies most to the "leaders" of community who keep it moving. In general, the *animadores* are from the respective communities.

39 The case is quoted in E. Cleary, Crisis and Change. The Church in Latin America Today, op. cit., p. 118.

education. Most were migrants from rural areas. All knew real hardship. They could easily identify with a poor family on the move whose baby had been born in a stable. Indeed a one-minute reading of Luke's account of the nativity provoked a one-hour discussion of the injustices, humiliations, and hardships that mothers themselves experienced.

They discussed the terrible health services available in the area and how a local woman's baby had been born while she was waiting in queue to see the doctor. (The baby died) They swapped accounts of having to wait in shops while better dressed people were served first and how as domestic servants they were treated without respect by their mistresses. They talked of the high cost of food in the local shops.

After an hour, the catechist put the question, "Why did Jesus choose to be born poor and humble?" "Maybe", said one woman, a mother of ten of whom three had died and only two were working, "maybe it was to show these rich people that we are important too..."

A ripple of excitement went through the room. Was God really making such a clear statement about their humanity? About their rights [as persons]? The discussion progressed, but with an electric charge in the air. Half an hour later, a young woman said: "I think we still haven't got the right answer to the first question." A complete hush. "I think", she went on, "that God chose his son to be born like the rest of us so that we can realize that we are important" (...) The woman went on to discuss overcharging in grocery stores and

how they would link up with other groups and basic communities around their part of town to organize a boycott of the stores.

The community reflects on Jesus as the one who came to liberate them, and they are very quick to realize that liberation is more than a spiritual matter. Through their discussions, the grassroot communities grow in the understanding that they do not have to live in conditions that they once thought unchangeable. What is important for them is to reflect on their own cultural, economic, and social situations, and to begin to become masters of their own lives. This process of *reflection* helps the members to overcome resignation, suffering and fatalism. It is in this context that *conscientizacion* won a place for itself at the heart of liberation thought.

The focus on subjects that concern members of the group creates the possibility for critical reflection on themselves and their environment. The emphasis is on transcendental values and on ethical concerns, in other words, members are involved not only in analyzing society --the deeper causes of poverty, inequality, and misery, for instance-- but also in developing a self-analysis at the personal and collective levels. They are also aware of the danger of every oppressed person becoming a potential oppressor. In this regards, the "pedagogy of liberation", based on their Christian faith, develops a significant role.

After the awakening of awareness regarding both transcendent and worldly concerns, comes the third step of the

meeting: *action*. The participatory process of communication developed by the group, through their discussions, decision-making, etc. results in a variety of forms of action, which may be seen as alternative forms of media. This may include developing courses dealing with religion, literacy, or health. For instance, in the CEBs of Conceicao do Araguaia (Para-south of Amazon region), where land was and still is a main problem, the communities felt the necessity to learn about the land, and they wanted to find out their rights according to the law. In this case, lawyers and sociologists were paid by the Church to give courses to help them know about their rights and how to stop prevent exploitation. In S. Paulo de Olivenca (Amazon) after more than one year reflecting about land in the bible, the CEBs initiated a communal plot. One day a week was dedicated to the communal planting. With the income from this production, they were able to introduce popular education for their children, and get some improvement in health conditions in the communities.

The "action" step may also lead to neighborhood improvement projects, or the exertion of non-violent pressure on authorities to implement change. For instance, petitions (*reivindicações*, as they are called) are drawn up and circulated throughout the neighborhood, or the members may participate actively in communal work (*mutirao*), the planting of communal plots, the building of roads, bridges, or schools, the construction of fishing boats, and so on. In urban situations, CEBs engage in whatever form of popular movement

or neighborhood improvement is needed: for example, running water, street sewage, garbage removal, child-care centres, health-care facilities, and so on.<sup>40</sup>

The step of *action* is enmeshed in a variety of forms to express the discussions, and the reflections in the group. This *comunicación popular*, may result in the news texts (generally mimeographed newspaper)<sup>41</sup> about jobs, or popular struggles. The content includes prayers, verses, tales, accounts by the members of the community --their lives, their struggle for better conditions--, accounts of people's lives and problems. It may also include petitions to hand to authorities, letters to civil authorities and to bishops. A variety of photo-murals, flyers, pamphlets, drawings, posters drawn or illustrated by the communities as a mirror of what the groups live, think and want are also essential parts of groups concerns. Music, theatre, dramatization and audiovisuals,<sup>42</sup> based on the local experience, have more

40 CEBs activity is synonymous with intra-ecclesiastical (celebration of religion), and extra-ecclesiastical linked to the popular struggles in the city or in the rural areas. In many of Brazil's regimes it was through CEBs that the popular movements (Women, Resident's Association, Friends of the Neighborhood Movement MAB, etc.) grew. (Frei Betto, "Comunicacao Popular e Igreja", *op. cit.*)

41 According to research developed by Ismar O. Soares, around three thousand popular bulletins were published in 1980, mostly from CEBs, with three million copies average monthly (based on Ismar O. Soares, A morfologia e o conteúdo dos boletins diocesanos catolicos, ECA-USP, 1980). There is no updated research on this subject.

42 See example of "Audiovisual Project" by the Production and Training Centre of Bahia (Brazil) in Chapter III of this dissertation.

effect on the community than those which are foreign to the community, as a matter of social identity. Those communities more technologically advanced are also using video. The community chooses what to produce, and how to produce it. In this way, video and other media represent the ideas of the community involved.<sup>43</sup>

The importance of these practices can be gauged by the fact that they are increasingly a forum for a variety of different ideas. It was recognized and expressed by the CEBs themselves at the sixth national meeting in Goiania, July 1986, attended by fifteen hundred representatives, fifty-one bishops, and an observer sent by the Pope, cardinal Adrian Simonis:

The people's movement has many rivers --the river of the trade unions, the river of the political parties, the river of the neighborhood groups, the river of the handless movement, of the slumdweller, of marginalized women, of the aged, of the physically handicapped, of children, of women, of blacks, of the Indian nations... But the struggles recounted here [by the communities' reports] show that they are growing all over Brazil; struggles of resistance are becoming struggles of conquest. The people's political project will channel the waters of all these rivers into one great river that will finally do away the society of wealth and oppression and lay foundations for the kind of society God wants.<sup>44</sup>

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43 Ibid. See also example described in Chapter V about Popular Video project. It is important to note that the work of UCLAP, UNDA and OCIC with grassroot communities has been remarkable in training people to use, and also to produce alternative media. This has been an option of such Catholic Organizations in order to carry out the main idea of NWICO movement --democratization of communication-- all over Latin America. For full information about activities of UCLAP, UNDA and OCIC, see the bulletin ARANDU (Secretariado Conjunto OCIC-AL, UNDA-AL y UCLAP, Quito, Ecuador), and published by the mentioned organizations.

In developing *conscientización* through a participatory process of communication (*see, judge and act*), the CEBs are giving rise to many popular movements which in the long term will have impact on the socio-political context. The sensitive issue of land, for instance, is high on the list at CEBs' meetings, especially in rural areas. Land Reform in Brazil has not yet come, but the grassroot communities keep the discussion ongoing and the struggle moving. The impact on national politics has been felt since 1981 through the Church's pastoral on "Faith and Politics." The objective was to allow the people to gradually develop the theoretical and organizational tools, to go beyond the low and fragmented knowledge inherited from their historical situation of oppression. The programme "Faith and Politics" materialized in political booklets (*Cartilhas Políticas*) that were centered on a "critical confrontation between the direction chosen by the political parties and the new forms of popular organization against repression and dictatorial manipulation."<sup>45</sup> These collective discussions also contributed to the formation of the Workers Party of Brazil in the early 1980s. This was pointed out by Maria Helena Moreira Alves, in the speech "Latin America's Future: Economic Restructuring

44 This material is taken from the reports issued during the Goiana's meeting and reported also in Latinamerica Press Report (Noticias Alliadas), Vol. 18, N. 31, 28 August 1986. Quoted in Christopher Rowland, Radical Christianity, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988), p.121.

45 M. Darcy de Oliveira, Faith and Politics, the Challenge of the Christian Grassroot Communities in Brazil, (IDAC, 23/24, 1986), p. 7.



and Democratization", given at Simon Fraser University in March 1991. She stated:

The idea of the Workers' Party arose with the advance and reinforcement of this new broadly based social movement, which now extends from the factories to the neighbourhoods, from unions to Christian Basic Communities, from cost of living movements to dweller associations,... from the Black movement to the women's movement, as well as others...

In terms of the Church, as participation has been implemented, CEBs are also demanding more participation in the decision making of the Church. This was proposed by the national meeting of CEBs in Goiana and mentioned previously. The CEBs were asking the bishops to propose that CEBs' representatives participate in the preparation of the synod in Rome on the laity, and that they be invited to be present at that event. Another proposal to the Church was that the debate on women's participation in church life be opened up at once.<sup>46</sup>

#### **6.4 Centre of Communication of S. Miguel (CEMI)**

The second case study that illustrates the contribution of the Catholic Church to democratization of communication is the Centre of Communication and Popular Education of S.Miguel (CEMI) in S.Paulo. The origins and development of CEMI show

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<sup>46</sup> In this chapter, the impact of CEBs on socio and political aspects is considered in a broad sense, as I focus this work rather on communication process in those communities. The increasing demand of CEBs to participate and the reaction of the Church is further discussed in Chapter VII.

how the Church has opted to work with the poor, and more specifically how the participatory process of communication has developed in the grassroot communities.

CEMI emerged in 1983 in the diocese of S.Miguel, under the bishop Angelico Sandalo Bernardino, who had become one of the strongest defenders of the people and their participation in popular movements.<sup>47</sup> The diocese of S.Miguel is located in one of the largest working class areas --which has a high rate of unemployment--, of S.Paulo. With 2,5 million population in an area of 200km<sup>2</sup>, the diocese includes seven neighbourhoods and around 269 CEBs, and is made up of the highest level of poverty of the city of S.Paulo.

CEMI was set up with the help of the bishop, himself a former journalist, in order to articulate several pastoral works in the diocese, such as that of workers, land, CEBs, popular movements for education, human rights, etc. It was felt that a new kind of communication, dealing with the interests of the popular movements and their struggles for better conditions, was strongly needed. In addition, it was necessary to offer space for the grassroot communities or popular movements to develop their latent talents in popular music, for instance. In this context, CEMI was set up and with

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47 In 1989 D. Angelico S. Bernardino was transferred to another region and CEMI was undergoing a process of transformation not included in the present work. My research is based on my visit to CEMI and interviews in 1989 before that change. Interviews with the former director of CEMI, Carlos Strabeli, and also Mario Celli and Cida Pimentel were particularly helpful for the purpose of this work.

the financial aid of an external agency, Misereor, it was possible to buy some communication equipment, such as a slide projector, video camera, small offset-press to training people to use and to produce their own communication.<sup>48</sup>

The centre started producing a variety of forms of communication such as a monthly newspaper *Grita Povo* (Yell, People), which reported on local issues such as strikes, the problems of housing and land use, the poor state of public transport, information on catechesis, the youth and workers' pastoral and the basic communities. *Grita Povo* also educated the people on important issues such as Brazil's foreign debt problem or national politics. The centre also used video to pose questions and animate discussions on issues of local importance, and document the fiestas, the strikes and the struggles of the people. At least in the beginning, another team was made up of children who produced their own puppet shows for other children. As well the centre collects the rich culture of the local people, many of whom have migrated from the northeast of Brazil with its own very distinctive culture.

48 According to one of the coordinators of CEMI, Cida Pimentel, one of the main concerns for the CEMI at the present moment is whether the centre can be self-supporting, as the contract for several years with Misereor is now coming to an end. For this purpose, along with all work to serve CEBs, CEMI purchased an offset machine to develop commercial printing and obtain some revenue to carry on the popular service of the centre. Cida Pimentel also explains that CEMI wants to be self-supporting to avoid depending on the new bishop for financial help. The centre fears that such procedure would affect, for instance the newspaper *Grita Povo* (Yell People), transforming it into a bulletin of mere information about the diocese and not an instrument of people's interests and issues.

CEMI tapes the people telling the stories of their past and collects their very distinctive *cordeles* --pictures printed from handmade wood carvings, with long poems telling of their lives.

Carlos Strabeli has pointed out that CEMI had to reevaluate itself on many occasions, modifying not only their objectives, but their strategies and ways to carry out their proposals. These changed with the new demands from the social and political situation, economic pressure, and also the process of participation in producing alternative media. For instance, he admits that people have learned to count on the presence of a professional, not to impose alien culture or interests, but to offer new techniques that people can choose and decide to use, to produce and communicate their interests.

#### **6.4.1 CEMI - activities**

CEMI is, today, organized around a number of different activities. They furnish and lend equipment (video, screen video, slide projector, slides, etc.) to grassroot communities such as the CEBs, popular movements related to health, education, land. With a small truck, CEMI transports projector of slides, screen, VHC, and tapes, and other equipments requested by the movements. In Itaim Paulista, a neighborhood of S. Miguel, young people from the CEBs wanted to produce a small newspaper covering local events to have an opportunity to participate, discuss their communities' situation, and to

produce something related to their interests. CEMI provided the training in newspaper production, and provided financial support for the first editions. The group began in the CEMI facilities. Today, "O Matraca" is produced by the communities on their own. It is a monthly publication with four pages.

CEMI also publishes a biweekly popular newspaper *Grita Povo* (12 pages), with a circulation of one thousand. The small newspaper is made up of issues on the communities interests, and interviews, and keeps people informed about events in the area. One of the current struggles of *Grita Povo* is to involve more local people in writing articles. This is a process that goes beyond the people's participation in the discussion and decision-making. The delivery of *Grita Povo* is through the local communities: the representatives of communities pick up the newspaper at CEMI and pass it on to the local communities. Lately, the communities are being encouraged to subscribe to the newspaper.

CEMI also has a documentation centre which includes material on the history of the region and records the local people's struggles and daily lives. The centre is now also visited by students of public high schools. Selling the booklets produced throughout Brazil for the education or conscientization of the people, as well as those of itself, CEMI has also published several booklets on topics such as how to organize a meeting or build up a community. In 1990, a group of women of Pedro Nunes (S. Miguel) connected with the popular women's theatre *Maria e Dia* (Maria is Day), and other

women's groups of the region got together to form a new group called Cunhaite. They are popular poets, who play and sing together at popular local events. The group decided to record their poems and music describing the popular women's struggle in their daily lives. CEMI provided the technical assistance, and currently the songs and poems are being used in all meetings of women's groups. CEMI also published a booklet with all the poems and lyrics of the songs and the booklet is used a great deal by the grassroot communities.

More than 40 of 260 CEBs in the region have a *popular radio*, which consists of two or four loud-speakers fixed on the top of a pole in the community, and connected to a sound system with a tape-recorder. The radio broadcasts once or twice a week (Saturday and/or Sunday) with two hours of transmission. The grassroot communities bring in the news, reports, and interviews and then CEMI helps their representatives to elaborate and record the entire program, leaving some space for people who want to intervene when the program is on the air.

There is also a literacy project for adults, in response to the high level of illiteracy in the region. There are fifty literacy groups of twenty people each, and the ages range from 17 years upward. These groups are located in the most peripheral and poor areas of the diocese, and in the slums (*favelas*). The pedagogy used is that of Paulo Freire. The monitors of the program are paid by MOVA --movement of

literacy for youth and adults, created by Paulo Freire as Secretary of Culture in the city of S.Paulo.

### **6.5 Horizontal communication**

From a communication point of view, it is important to note that the method developed in a CEBs meeting does not function in a linear mode, as if every moment was separated by another, or grouped in tight sequence. In practice, the method functions in a dialectical manner: the *see* already brings within its capacity elements with which to *judge* and demands to *act*. Each moment of the method is interrelated to the others. For instance, the consideration of the *act* is not a restarting of everything, but a continuation of action taken under a critical conscience of its errors and omissions, and so forth.

The main point here is the participatory process of the meeting: people exchange ideas and experiences, and support one another. The members are encouraged to speak in their own words, using their own terms, and expressing their own interests and ideas. This, in turn, gives rise to comprehension of the causes of the members' problems. This participatory process, therefore, implies interaction, equality, and opportunity for community members to speak and grow in a collective consciousness. Such a way of acting, starting from an analysis of one's own historical situation, which transforms consciousness and leads to action,

involvement and struggle is what constitutes *comunicación popular* as mentioned in Chapter V of this dissertation.

The process of communication developed within the CEBs encompasses the characteristics emerging from the definition of alternative communication presented by Reyes Matta and taken as a theoretical framework in this dissertation as the most significant strategy to build democratization of communication from a Latin American perspective. In other words, CEBs in Brazil develop a participatory communication based on an horizontal process of sharing messages.<sup>49</sup> There are no senders and receivers -- the people are both transmitters and receivers.

Another characteristic that emerged from Reyes Matta's understanding of alternative communication is that it has an "oppositional" character to the vertical system or to the dominant political discourse, for example in the various configurations of political and economic authoritarianism --

49 Besides F. Reyes Matta, Latin American authors as A. Pasquali (Comunicación y Cultura de Masas, Monte Avila, Caracas, 1972) provided some basis for horizontal communication thought. Diaz Bordenave (New approaches to Communication Training for Developing Countries, 1972) evaluated the initial evolution of the concept of communication towards a democratic model, which has been highly stimulated by Freire's thinking. In fact, another long-term consequences of Freire's effort in Brazil, and in Latin America, is his contribution to the introduction of a new thinking of communication in terms of horizontal or dialogical communication. According to the Brazilian researcher Marques de Melo, it was from Freire's publication of "Extension or Communication" (1968) in Chile, that Latin American researchers started to think critically about the theory of communication inherited from Northamerican culture (Para uma Leitura Crítica da Comunicação (Ed. Paulinas, S. Paulo, 1985), p.186).



military dictatorships, and the privilege and power groups. According to Reyes Matta, alternative communication may have an oppositional character, but he stresses that alternative communication has to be more than just "another" message (opposed to the dominant system). Alternative communication has to imply fundamental parts of the process such as *solidarity* and *participation*. From the development of the meetings of CEBs in Brazil, it is easy to understand that they have an oppositional character to the vertical process of communication. In this sense, they play roles of counter-information, consciousness-raising, non-formal education, and so on. For instance, during the period of military regime in Brazil, when there was a repression of unions and popular movements, CEBs became the only popular organizations that allowed people to organize and discuss their daily lives, values and political needs.

Finally, the alternative media in CEBs are considered forms which embody alternative communication, that is, the participatory process of communication developed in CEBs. In this way, the alternative media used by the grassroots communities are *forms*, tools which are marked by a process of participation shared in CEBs. Therefore, forms (alternative media) of alternative communication (process) are never conducted on the basis of the one-way, non-participatory process. Nor is it two-way flow of information, which requires a feed-back, but does not necessarily mean a dialogical and participatory process of communication either.

The alternative media used by CEBs are forms which embody a participatory process of communication implying the right to provide input, but also to participate in the decision-making.

CEMI represents one of the most advanced works of the Catholic Church in the development of alternative forms of communication. CEMI has become a space where people may go to discuss and confront a particular issue --for instance, exploitation by an employer--, to discuss elections, to talk about a local labour union, to build up a program for popular radio, and so on. In this sense, CEMI is an organism of the Church, working not exclusively to serve and articulate only the Church's pastoral work. The Church in S. Miguel itself transformed CEMI into a centre available for popular movements, related to the Church or not, and for all their struggles.

Within the theoretical approach of Reyes Matta on alternative communication, CEMI may be seen as a facilitator and as a centre of popular communication which offers opportunity, space and training for grassroot communities to develop a participatory process of communication and, consequently, a democratization of communication. If in the earlier stage, the centre of communication or group communications had a tendency to take the initiative in setting up groups for reflection and analysis, CEMI, as a centre of popular communication --although promoting and training people-- exists rather to respond to requests to help popular movements to define their needs and to help to

produce forms of communication embodying those needs. Therefore, the centre avoids producing something for the people, or about the people, but helps the movements to assume the production task by themselves, incorporating the language, symbols and themes that are their own concerns. In this sense, people are the subjects, but also the participants of the decision making of what to do and how to do it. They can count, however, on the training and technical support offered by CEMI.

The two case studies described in this chapter have shown first, that the MacBride Commission recommendation to use alternative communication as an important step to achieve democratization of communication is being implemented in Brazil and all over Latin America. Although the MacBride Report refers mainly to alternative communication at the technological level, the Report also emphasized horizontal and dialogical communication in the discourse of democratization of communication. The case studies showed that beyond the technological alternative, democratization of communication implies a change in the concept of the process of communication. Alternative media are the embodiment of a new model of participatory process, and are already being applied using a number of different technologies such as print media and video.

Second, the two case studies are linked to liberation theology. This theology in Latin America has been the great inspiration behind the CEBs, and also CEMI: a "liberating

communication" as the process of giving people space and opportunity to take control over their own lives. The analysis of these two issues is part of the discussion of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

DEMOCRATIZATION OF COMMUNICATION - CHALLENGE IN THE CHURCH  
OF LATIN AMERICA (CONCLUSIONS)

Previous chapters argue that even if the Catholic Church at large has always been concerned about communication, and had different ways of conceiving of and interpreting the issue of communication, the Church in Latin America has developed its own ways of dealing with communication. Although the Latin American Church has based its principles on the Vatican documents, especially on *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio*, this thesis argues that specific interpretations by the Latin American Church in the past three decades were based on the liberation theology framework, drawn mainly from the Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) Conferences and respective documents.

In the early 1970s when NWICO debate started, the Church in Latin America became interested in this movement because the principles for democratization and relations of equality in the communications field claimed by NWICO movement matched basic Christian orientation regarding justice, human rights, and especially the right to communicate. In other words, the common good was to establish patterns of communication in which access and participation are part of a process in building a new order of information and communication, whether this be as small as the family circle or as large as a

national broadcasting network. In this regard, and inspired by liberation theology, the Church understands that the dynamics of such process require special efforts to open up the possibilities of active communication to the less powerful, the poor who are at the margins of society. NWICO debate was then recommended by Pope John Paul II and assumed by the Church in Latin America in the general content of the Puebla document. However, it was taken up mainly by the Catholic Church organizations for communication in Latin America -- UCLAP, UNDA and OCIC.

In this regard, these organizations set up special seminars and issued important documents --Quito (1982) and Embu (1982)-- in order to implement NWICO discussion in the various sectors of the Church and also to find ways of building up a process of democratization of communication in Latin America. For this purpose, these organizations took Unesco's analysis of the existing state of communication in the world, and assumed the MacBride Report (1980) as a point of reference to develop the desired process of communication. As has been said in Chapter V, democratization of communication is the most innovative part of the MacBride Report, a process which requires a break through barriers which impede democracy in communication such as undemocratic political systems, bureaucratic administrative systems which exclude representation of the public in policy-making, and technology controlled or understood only by a few. On the other hand, it is necessary to achieve access and

participation in order to allow individuals to be active agents rather than mere objects of communication.

Regarding this process of democratization of communication, the MacBride Report recommends important steps such as the development of communication policies, horizontal communication and alternative communication. To accomplish this goal, efforts in Latin America have been made, especially by communication researchers, to demonstrate first that new communication policies were needed to be set; and second, that the democratic means for popular communication (or alternative communication) was to be implemented in order to assist the lower classes in their struggle for liberation from political, military, economic and class oppression. In this context, one of the major proposals for achieving democratization of communication in Latin America was the creation of national communication policies, considered in Chapter IV and V. As was described in Chapter IV, earlier national communication policies in Latin America did not work out as planned, and are seen as a failure according to such authors as Elizabeth Fox, Ramiro Beltran and Salinas Bascur.<sup>1</sup> The latter, especially,

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1 Elizabeth Fox (ed.), Media and Politics in Latin America - The Struggle for Democracy, (Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1988). R. Salinas Bascur, "Communication Policies - only a miracle could have made them work", Occasional Papers, (Mass communication Research Centre, Budapest, 1988); and Política y Comunicación - el eslabón que falta en la Iglesia, (Document prepared for UNDA-AL Assembly, 1984). In Salinas' publications, she praises the Church for the effort to carry on the discussion on communication policies at the meeting in Embu-S.Paulo, 1982. However, in 1984, Salinas stresses the Church's omission in the discussion of communication policies: "el eslabon que falta en la Iglesia" -- the link (of a chain)

emphasizes that new strategies have to be found to apply communication policies in Latin America. Regarding the Church and communication policies in Latin America, on the one hand the Church did denounce the monopolistic control over information, either by government or by private interests according to the document of Puebla (N.1071). On the other hand, the Church has been timid and slow to develop progressive communication policies, revealing a gap between its documents and its practice, missing the opportunity to consider the discussion on communication policies as a new proposal to enrich the Church's focus on communication with a new perspective. In other words, the relation between the Church and communication has always been at the level of an institution and its tools; however, democratization of communication demands dealing with communication in terms of concepts as well, and it implies a process of participation.

As considered in Chapter IV, the assumption which emerges from the Church's attitude with regard to communication policies, seen as an important step for democratization of communication in Latin America, is that more involvement by the Church in such a process would require changes in the Church's structure. It would demand the development of a process of democratization in the Church's relation not only with the world, but within its own hierarchies and communities. Although I point out such a lack by the Church in

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that lacks in the Church. Both cases are referred to in Chapter IV of this dissertation.



contributing to a democratization of communication in Latin America through the establishment of communication policies, I have not discussed this issue at length. This thesis focuses mainly on the second step to achieve democratization of communication recommended by Unesco (MacBride Report), i.e., the move to develop horizontal communication and alternative communication. It is for this aspect of alternative communication --developing a participatory process of communication-- that the progressive side of the Church and more specifically UNDA, UCLAP and OCIC in Latin America committed themselves to the emancipation of people, as well as to popular sectors of Latin American society. The Church at large discussed this issue in official documents, but the progressive side of the Church, which I have dealt with in this thesis, tried to carry out the proposal of NWICO -- democratization of communication-- through the coincidence between NWICO's central premise of democratization of communication and liberation theology. As I point out in this thesis, such theology stands for the process of liberation to overcome not only economics, but also social and political dependence, as well as to emancipate the oppressed and defenceless people. In addition, the Catholic organizations for communication mentioned above accepted the Puebla proposals to devote special attention to communication in the context of Latin America, and defined *people* as those who are at the margins of society, and defined commitment to the emancipation of people as the central subject of their work in

the making. It is, therefore, in this context of grassroot groups or people at the margins of society that the progressive Church in Latin America contributed to the development of democratization of communication based on Paulo Freire's method of *conscientización*<sup>2</sup> and liberation theology framework. It was not a planned work by a specific communication department, but it was a convergence of principles and goals searching for liberation. On the other hand, UCLAP, UNDA and OCIC in Latin America, are organizations in the Church which deal with communication. Their work with people, especially in the grassroot groups, was a choice, a planned task, embedded in Puebla's proposals and liberation theology.

It is also in this context that I have chosen the two case studies in Brazil to illustrate the contribution of the Church to the democratization of communication, as alternative communication and alternative media --Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) and the Centre of Communication and Popular Education of S.Miguel (CEMI). Through these two case studies I have intended to show the concept of alternative communication as a participatory process of communication from a Latin American perspective based on Fernando Reyes Matta's concept of the issue.<sup>3</sup> The two case studies, which both deal with

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2 Paulo Freire's method of *conscientización* is considered in Chapter II of this dissertation.

3 Full explanation of Reyes Matta's definition of alternative communication is found in Chapter V.

grassroot communication, demonstrate that the creation of alternative communication developed by the grassroot movements such as CEBs and popular movements as unions, neighbourhood associations, etc. are, to a great extent, effective in contributing to a change in the perception of what communication is and how it is to function in human and social development. Even if the strategies of grassroot groups are focused on the more immediate problems of basic education, health, employment, rural development, etc., the alternative forms of communication used by the movements have clear purposes of developing a culture and values of participatory communication, and an infrastructure of innovative participatory forms of media. For instance, the popular radios in Latin America which started with a quite vertical model of radio now have found ways to make it participatory because the vertical model did not fulfill the demands of *comunicación popular*.

At this point of consideration, three main points emerge as conclusions from this thesis as attempts to verify the contribution of the Latin American Church to democratization of communication in the continent in the past three decades. The three conclusions are considered in the following sections, and are, first, that liberation theology has had a great influence on alternative communication; second, the communication practice of the Church in the grassroot groups is contributing to a new concept of communication; third, that

democratization of communication is required within the Church itself.

### **7.1 Liberation theology - influence in alternative communication**

Throughout this thesis I have underscored the fact that the contribution of the Church to the process of democratization of communication in Latin America has achieved a great deal, in the framework of alternative communication (or *comunicación popular*), understood as a participatory process of communication described by F. Reyes Matta in Chapter V of this dissertation. I have also tended to restrict my analysis to the progressive Church, meaning the side of the Church which tried to practice the spirit of the documents of Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979), through liberation theology.

The main proposal of liberation theology is to help people to live the social and political dimension of their faith, which Berryman explains as an interpretation of Christian faith out of suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor. In other words, it is an attempt to help the poor to interpret their faith in a new way. The social and political dimension of faith acts, in practice, when people understand that they do not happen to be poor, but their poverty is largely a product of the way society is organized. Thus, the word "liberation", based on the Gospel's message, plays an

important role to help people break free from their oppression.<sup>4</sup>

This liberation is also understood in the conception of a new evangelization stressed by Vatican II. In general, the pastoral work of the whole Church was excessively geared toward the sacraments, with little concern for deeper human contact and deeper forms of evangelization. In other words, and in terms of Latin America, the progressive side of the Church viewed the new evangelization as too geared to attendance at mass, to the number of people who met the formal requirements of the Church, and not concerned enough with more practical forms of evangelization: forms such as being in the midst of the community and discussing problems with the popular classes, for instance, with sufficient respect for their values and culture. In this regard, it was realized that the Church's attitude in such communities should be to serve the community and to avoid authoritarian practices. This new role of the Church would develop confidence in the laity and encourage freedom of initiative and corresponsibility.

For this purpose, the popular Church developed the notion of changing one's social position (*lugares sociais*) to express the attempt to identify with the popular classes.<sup>5</sup>

4 Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1987). See also Documents of Medellin and Puebla.

5 About this subject see authors as C.Boff, Libanio, Be'to, Jose S.Martins all quoted in Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985, (Stanford University Press, California, 1986) p. 288, N.8.

This means that the effectiveness of the Church's evangelization among the lower classes (the poor) must respect and penetrate the world view of the popular classes. In doing so, the Church could have an increasing understanding of the peoples' situation and would be able to realize that people at the margins of society are not inept, but are victims of oppressive social structures. Inspired by liberation theology, the Church would thus have an important pastoral role in helping people to develop a critical capacity, instead of passively accepting what happens. Beyond that, the progressive side of the Church believes that the people can also learn and reflect on society and make choices about changing that society.<sup>6</sup>

Paulo Freire and Gustavo Gutierrez have been preeminent in the creation of liberation thought. Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed emphasizes respect for the popular classes and their abilities. Developing a dialogical process of learning rather than simply imparting knowledge, Freire stresses that the notion that the poor should control their own destiny is a matter of dignity for all humans. In this regard, education should be to help people "to reflect on their own capacity to reflect."<sup>7</sup> Freire believes that popular education through a participatory learning process is

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6 Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil..., *op. cit.*

7 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Oppressed, (Continuum, New York, 1970).

important for creating a "democratic space" in society and also because it has potential to mobilize the popular sectors to work for social transformation.

In the "liberating" perspective proposed by liberation theology, *participation* is a key word in the dynamic of the Church of liberation, according to the theologian Clodovis Boff in an interview for the present work.<sup>8</sup> Boff emphasizes that the word "participation" synthesizes the meaning of "being Church, being subject" (*sujeto*) of a new ecclesial process which begins in the grassroot community. This is so because *participation* means "to assume its (community) words, to assume its role, to assume a project, and the ways to develop it, and being agent of transformation" (C.Boff). Such process gives to the members of communities a chance to express their opinion, to take part in discussions, in the decision-making, and in the commitments of the community and in the ways it will carry out the projects. In this sense, the participatory process implemented in the grassroot communities is contributing to the creation of more democratic and participatory practices enabling the communities to become agents of transformation in society. Boff emphasizes that

if we want to create a new society, we also have to create agents of transformation who participate in the social process. By saying that, I mean participating in the neighborhood associations, in unions, in political parties, i.e., enable people to take part, to take place, to speak, to give opinion, to participate in the

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Clodovis Boff in Rio de Janeiro, November 1989.

decision-making, and to assume responsibility. (Interview - C. Boff)

Liberation theology is, in Boff's view, the reflection which inspires, nourishes and implements the "democratic space" or "participatory space" in the Church and in society. In this regard, the author states that without participation it would be impossible to create a true liberation, "because the liberation process is a self-liberating process." In other words, "it is not the Church which is going to liberate people; but it is the people which liberate themselves through participation in the social process" (C.Boff). He stresses that the Church's mission is to create conditions and to implement initiatives to help people to become subject (*sujeto*) of their own history and, therefore, an agent of transformation. To reach this goal, the Church implements *comunicación popular*, and particularly liberation theology contributes to the creation and promotion of this process of participation. In this context, and according to Boff, participation could be the definitive word of the "new face of the Church and the new face of society which we want to create" (C.Boff).

In relation to communication, the greatest influence of liberation theology on alternative communication (or *comunicación popular*) has been shown through the Church's practices among people, based on the participatory process of communication seeking change.

The participatory process described thus far is the convergent point of liberation theology and alternative



communication understood as a participatory process in the democratization of communication. As I have explained previously, horizontal communication, which implies a dialogical process, and recommended by the MacBride Report as an important step to develop democratization, is being developed in the grassroot communities as popular communication under the inspiration and nourishment of liberation theology. It can be said, therefore, that liberation theology, as explained throughout this thesis, has an effect of ideological character on the development of alternative communication, i.e., to help people to become, through a participatory process, agents of their own transformation. Communication, in this sense, assumes a "liberating" role in the creation of a democratic space to develop the potential and to begin the mobilization of the popular sectors in the work for social transformation.

The effects of such influence pervade religious, political and socio-economic movements of society in Latin America, as has been described through the several examples mentioned in this thesis to illustrate situations involving those aspects. Through the participatory process of communication, the Church promoted and supported grassroot groups in the development of their critical awareness of Latin American reality. It has also encouraged these groups to assert their right to communicate, to produce their own culture and to resist dominant models, based on the principle that the "poor" have the right to participate in society,

expressing their thoughts and showing their values in the forms of local cultural production. This gradual promotion and implementation by the Church of alternative communication is now evident in a variety of forms of communication, as the result of the participatory process of communication. It corresponds to the third element carried out by the methodology applied by CEBS --action--, which aims to lead to societal transformation.<sup>9</sup>

## 7.2 A new concept of communication

Within the theoretical framework of alternative communication, understood as a participatory process of communication in Reyes Matta's definition, and one of the important steps for democratization of communication, the emphasis is placed on practices of communication which is believed will help to create a new communication order in the

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9 As I have restricted the analysis in this thesis to alternative communication seen as participatory process for the development of democratization of communication, it is not possible within the present work to pursue a debate on the effects of liberation theology on political and socio-economic aspects of society in Latin America. However, the statement of Dom Ivo Lorscheiter in December 1984 illustrates the influential role of the Church through liberation theology on the popular movements to take part in the political, social and economic problems: "In the last twenty years, the Church hierarchy often had to speak about political, social and economic problems because the laity could not do so. From now on, in a situation of greater freedom and popular organization, although the hierarchy will not become silent, it wants the laity to speak more." (Quoted in Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics..., *op. cit.*, p. 240)

long term. It is also called horizontal communication, participatory communication or popular communication, and implies communication as dialogue. Therefore, it is a process that goes beyond adding new directions of message flow and types of content; it transcends a linear and one-way model of communication. As Nerula and Pearce say, communication is seen as an "interactive process in which the source and the receiver share in the responsibility for what happens."<sup>10</sup>

If the practices of popular or alternative communication are believed on the one hand to be part of building democratization of communication, they may also on the other hand, be viewed with skepticism by theorists who believe that democratization of communication should start at the top where there is power, and where decisions are made. Therefore, people such as Salinas Bascur believe in and struggle for democratization of communication based only on the establishment of communication policies. The question they raise is "where does popular communication lead to?", and also, "how could alternative communication (popular communication) be articulated in a bigger dimension, and, thus, be influential in transforming the mass media system?" It is unthinkable, for instance, that a small newspaper in a neighbourhood could compete with the big, mainstream press, or

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10 Uma Nerula and W. Barnett Pearce, Development as Communication. A perspective on India, (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1986) p. 41.

that popular radio, with a local spectrum, could compete with the large networks.

Salinas Bascur adopts this view, and states that the mass media and popular communication are following their own way without convergence between the two paths. She stresses that it "could be compared to a parallel development --they do not touch each other."<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Regina Festa,<sup>12</sup> as the director of the Workers' TV in S.Paulo and with much experience in popular practice, contests Salinas' idea, saying that in the analysis of many popular networks using technology, the experience of popular video in Brazil and also in other Latin American countries, and the Workers' TV itself are sufficient examples to show that the participatory process, born in the *comunicación popular*, is growing and is now using major forms of media technology. Those examples prove that a participatory process of communication is possible even by using media on a mass level. It also proves that the conception of using major media is changing and that its use at the mass level does not need applying patterns of communication based on a top-down or one-way direction message. Festa also emphasizes that the *forms* of communications are changing gradually in the long term process, but that what has been created at the basic level, and what characterizes popular communication as a

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11 Interview by the writer, Santiago (Chile), June 1989.

12 Interview by the writer, S.Paulo, June 1989.

participatory process, still remains. In this sense, what really matters is not the forms that are being used, but content that is conveyed and the process that is being created and which can be transferred to the use of major media in the long term process.<sup>13</sup>

In my view, this type of discussion about alternative communication as a participatory process, and the subject of social change, prompts this dissertation to consider two main issues. First, if one sees the role of popular communication as being in combat to compete with commercial mass media, such a struggle would be hopeless from the outset since there is no equality of forces in the battle. However, if one understands popular communication as a participatory process for popular movements, cooperatives, education and popular cultural centres, neighborhood associations, women's movement, and CEBs, etc., and comprehends alternative media as *forms* to create more awareness and to mobilize people seeking change, then popular communication becomes a field for analysis of practices and experiments of a collective action. In other words, popular communication, developing a democratization of communication, aims to transform from below. As Kaplun<sup>14</sup>

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13 For instance, C. Boff in an interview with the writer and referring to the Project Lumen 2000 mentioned in Chapter IV, is clear in saying that what should be criticized about such project is not because the Church is using mass media to evangelize. What should be discussed is how the process is applied, i.e., he says the project has no participation and is conducted in a top-down model. (Rio de Janeiro, November, 1989.)

points out, the operation, relevance and efficiency of popular communication and alternative media ("artisanal") is not posed as having the capacity to compete with the mass media at large, but as contributing to the popular movements in terms of their functioning, orientation for action, and quality of the decisions made. In this regard, alternative communication is understood as part of a socio-political practice geared towards a social transformation.

Second, alternative communication as a participatory process of communication may be seen as a contribution to changes in the understanding of communication models and concepts. At the macro level of communication, the system appears incompatible with horizontal communication, unless the structure incorporates the process of participation into its origin as happened in the construction of the Workers' TV, described in Chapters IV and V. However, if one positions oneself in the grassroot movements through popular communication, one realizes that dialogical communication is an inevitable part of the participatory process being developed there. Therefore, what might appear as a naive concept of communication implying not only two-way message flow, but *increasing interaction* between sender and receiver, sharing decisions and responsibilities, becomes a reality in the grassroot groups, thus showing that the concept of communication is changing in people's minds. This dialogical

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14 Mario Kaplun, "La comunicación popular, alternativa válida?", Chasqui (Democracia y Comunicación), June-September, 1983, p. 35.

or horizontal communication overcomes the traditional concepts of communication introduced by Lasswell and later by Berlo.<sup>15</sup>

According to Beltran,<sup>16</sup> dialogue is the axis of horizontal communication, for each person should have comparable opportunities for emitting and receiving messages so as to preclude monopolization of the word through monologue. In this perspective, these opposite roles are subsumed into a constant and balanced dual performance; *all* participants in the communication process should be identified as "communicators." Thus the differentiation between the two separate options --source and receiver-- is no longer appropriate. As the American researcher L. S. Harms explains, communication then may be defined as

the process of democratic social interaction, based upon exchange of symbols, by which human beings voluntarily share experiences under conditions of free and egalitarian access, dialogue, and participation. Everyone has the right to communicate in order to satisfy communication needs by enjoying communication resources.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Harold D. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society", The Communication of Ideas, ed. L. Bryson (Harper and Row, N.York, 1948), pp. 37-51. Lasswell defines communication as *who says what in which channel to whom with what effect*. Later on David Berlo introduced the two-way interaction and feedback in the concept of communication - David K. Berlo, "Communication Theory and Audiovisual Instruction", Keynote Address, (National Education Association, Denver, April, 1963).

16 Luis Ramiro Beltran, "A farewell to Aristotle: "horizontal" communication", Communication, V.5, 1980.

17 L. S. Harm, "Toward a shared paradigm for communication: an emerging foundation for the new communication policy and communication planning sciences", Perspectives in

It is in this sense that the traditional concept of communication is changing in people's minds and this fact constitutes an important achievement in terms of democratization of communication which will have its consequence in the construction of the new order of communication in the future.

### 7.3 Democratization within the Church

As I have emphasized in many points throughout this thesis, democratization of communication requires a participatory process of communication, and the Church in Latin America, more specifically the progressive side, has contributed a great deal to the development of such a process. However, the document of *Embu* (1982), analyzed in Chapter IV, has pointed out that the Church should develop a democratization of communication not only in relation to the rest of the world, but also at the internal level. I have demonstrated in this thesis, using examples, how the process of communication has been applied by the Church hierarchy, on different occasions,<sup>18</sup> and also the lack of involvement by the Latin American Church in the efforts to establish new communication policies on the continent.

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Communication Policy Planning, ed. Syed Rahim and John Middleton (East-West Communication Institute, Honolulu, 1977) pp. 77-99.

18 See for instance, the Church's attitude regarding CLAR, and liberation theologians mentioned in Chapters II, IV and VI of this dissertation.



In the Latin American Church there are presently two types of process of communication happening at the same time. On the one hand, a process of participation is being developed, especially in CEBs, which embodies liberation theology. On the other hand, a traditional process of communication continues, based on the hierarchy and carried out specifically by the conservative wing, called now the "Church of restoration", according to C.Boff in his interview. Since the 1960s, the progressive Church has promoted the participatory process, although it has faced tensions and setbacks provoked by the conservative Church. All of this has had, in turn, diverse reactions from different countries and governments in Latin America.

The popular Church, inspired by liberation theology, represents a challenge to the Church as an institution. It is seen by the conservatives or by the hierarchy as an attempt to break from the traditional model of the Church. As the popular Church is committed to helping people to create democratic space and to participate in decision-making, it now confronts a crucial issue, that is, the current trend toward a more hierarchical, politically cautious Church under the leadership of John Paul II. In my interview with the theologian Clodovis Boff in Brazil about this participatory process, I suggested that through it people may find their "space" in society, but not in the Church. In reply, he stressed that this point is the most serious question that the Church, as a whole, will have to face in the future. He explains that for the time

being these two processes in the Church --one participative and democratic, the other vertical and centralized-- are just beginning to touch each other. However, the tendency is towards a confrontation between the two processes because the grassroot communities (CEBs) are growing in their awareness, in their participatory process of communication, and are increasingly demanding the right to participate in the decision-making, for instance, in the process of naming bishops and priests, a right reserved for the hierarchy. On the other hand, there is a process of denying participation, which comes from the top down. In Boff's view, this signifies an ecclesial setback or an "ecclesial restoration" (hence Church of the restoration) as a conservative movement in the Church.

This increasing tension within the Church, specifically in the case of Latin America, points to the different interpretations of the Gospel's message as the cause of the tension. That message is that Jesus came to liberate the poor. Liberation theology maintains that in order to achieve liberation for the oppressed, the Christian faith must incorporate a social and political dimension. The traditional Church, on the other hand, is inherently cautious in its approach to social and political issues. The different interpretations, in practice, are pervaded by a political character which tends to justify different points of view, and obtain more or less success according to the leadership in terms of hierarchy. In this sense one can understand that the

Church is one of the most complex institutions in the world. The same Church which reevaluated itself and welcomed "aggiornamento" with Vatican II (Pope John XXIII), and issued important documents about the Church as institution and its relation with the world; the same Church which has given rise to the most progressive theologians; this same institution remains closed to the alteration of formal hierarchical structures. In Latin America, and in Europe, despite the profound social and political changes of the past three decades, the conservative forces in the Church never waned and since the accession of John Paul II, the conservative pattern has even been consolidated. The neo-conservative movement seems to appear now, as Boff stated, as a "Church of restoration" to "restore" order and discipline.<sup>19</sup>

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19 Among most recent examples of the struggles between conservatives, moderates and progressists both in Europe and Latin America is the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) which brought major innovations but then in the late 1960s and early 1970s the thrusts for change were partially enervated. In the early 1960s, the most progressive Church in the world, the Dutch Church, suffered a series of disciplinary measures by the Vatican, and became almost isolated from the world episcopacy. In Latin America, the neo-conservative reactions began in 1972 with the election of Alfonso Trujillo as a secretary general of CELAM. After several years of progressive advances, moderate and conservative sectors regained control of CELAM and articulated a counterproposal to the liberationists, using also the meeting of Puebla (1969) as a way of isolating the progressive sectors. In the case of Brazil, the Vatican began to limit innovation in the late 1960s. On the one hand, warning measures from Vatican to more progressive sectors of the Church, on the other hand, the Pope's support to conservative sectors. These events are among the increasing pressure by the neo-conservative sector in the Church. For a full elaboration on this issue, see Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil..., op. cit., pp. 242-253.

At the present moment, the progressive side of the Church seems to be losing its battle. A number of facts contribute to this conclusion: constant restrictions through a variety of interventions by the hierarchy of the institution; replacement of progressive bishops or the nomination of conservative ones for important offices and strategic places; and increasing reduction of "space" for participation in the Church are examples of setbacks to the Church in recent years. The progressive Church, however, has introduced new social practices with emphasis on participation and democratic methods, especially through CEBs. Popular movements have also been implemented by the Church throughout many different countries in Latin America. Therefore, the process of participation is launched and its tendency seems to be irreversible, despite the conflict mentioned above. In the long term, however, this policy of the "Church of restoration" will affect pastoral activities and, therefore, communication process and its practices as well. I conclude, however, with a Spanish expression used by Gustavo Gutierrez in a recent interview in Toronto with the *Catholic New times* (April 28, 1991) about the importance of continuing to working in spite of the difficulties of a situation: "*No me gusta perder las batallas antes de darlas.*" It means "I don't like to lose battles before engaging in them." Continuing this battle, however, is one of the hardest task of the Latin American Church today. It requires a belief in the possibility, and in

the continuing struggle for the construction of  
democratization of communication in Latin America.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EPILOGUE

The purpose of this Epilogue is to update the discussion as the research for this study ended in 1991 and the thesis defense is being held in 1992. This Epilogue relates to the discussion in the dissertation regarding the relationship between the Catholic Church and communication. This relation was analyzed under the leading framework of democratization of communication, which implies a participatory process of communication. Therefore, this Epilogue adds to the three concluding points of the discussion and deals with liberation theology, the process of communication (vertical and participatory process) and the need for democratization within the Church itself.

The main point I would like to emphasize is the increase in tensions between the progressives and conservatives in the Church, which pervades the entire process of communication and specifically the search for democratization in that field. In recent years, the Church has been torn between the strength gained from opening up to the world<sup>1</sup> and the impulse to draw back into itself, to strengthen its hierarchical structures and its dogmatic principles.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For more information, see the analysis of Vatican II in Chapter I of this dissertation.

The unfolding of these tensions demonstrates that the process of democratization of communication has become a far-reaching process within the Church. As Scott Mainwaring points out, the progressive Church has been profoundly affected by the conservative direction in the institutional Church.<sup>3</sup>

Briefly, one of the crucial differences between the conservatives and the progressives is on the question of authority. For the former, authority is fundamentally linked to doctrinal orthodoxy. They conceive the Church primarily as an ecclesiastical institution. Any adaptation of its teaching to new social circumstances must always be given by the hierarchical authority, the bishops and ultimately the Pope. Therefore, as Mainwaring states, democracy may be a desirable form for political society, but the Church cannot and should not be democratic."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the progressives understand the Church's authority in a very different sense, i.e., in "its moral reach and significance in society."<sup>5</sup> They point to a practice of authority in the Church centred on the idea of collegiality and disagree with the fact that authority has become centralized. They base this argument on the Second

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2 See, for instance, the two major schools of thought that emerged during the Synod of Bishops (1985) in Rome, and described in Chapter I.

3 Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wile, The Progressive Church in Latin America (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana), 1989.

4 Ibid., p. 30.

5 Ibid., p. 31.

Vatican Council (1962-1965), which discussed the matter at length and depicted the Church in terms of the biblical image of the "People of God."<sup>6</sup>

According to the theologian Leonardo Boff, the progressives are not denying the authority in the Church, as institution. Instead he wants to call attention to the risk of the Church, as institution, becoming autocratic, or a system of power and domination.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned previously, the conservatives have recently reasserted the issue of doctrinal authority. The dispute between them and the progressives is creating tensions, and misunderstandings and giving rise to a serious concern about the Church's future.

CONTRADICTION BETWEEN STATEMENTS AND PRACTICE - An amalgam of experiences undergone by the progressive Church in the last few years demonstrates how progressives have become under fire throughout Latin America.

First of all, there is a contradiction between the statements from the Vatican and its practice. Rome called liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez to account,<sup>8</sup> and has approved a series of

6 "Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n.8) in Documents of Vatican II (Guild Press, New York), 1966.

7 Leonardo Boff, Church: Charisma and Power (Crossroad, New York), 1986.

8 Gustavo Gutierrez, widely known as the father of liberation theology, is under a two-year-old investigation by the Vatican



conservative episcopal nominations,<sup>9</sup> (some of them have searched for evidence of Marxism in any theologian concerned with social structures.) At the same time, the Pope has affirmed his sympathy for liberation theology. In 1986, he sent a supportive letter to the Brazilian bishops:

...we are convinced, we and you, that the theology of liberation is not only timely, but useful and necessary ... In this field, the Church in Brazil can play an important and at the same time delicate role --that of creating the space and conditions for the development of a theological reflection that fully adheres to the Church's constant teaching on social matters, and ... is suitable for inspiring effective pastoral praxis in favor of social justice, equity, the observance of human rights ... (Pope's Letter to Brazil's Bishops, May 22, 1986, p. 14).

Because of the numerous appointments of conservative bishops and the increasing retreat from the orientation of the National Brazilian Bishops' Conference (CNBB), the country's archbishops asked for a meeting with John Paul II and were granted a three-day synod in Rome. After the meeting, the Pope announced to the world that he now saw that liberation theology was not only orthodox, "but necessary for the whole Church." However, nothing has changed with Vatican practice, and with their expectations shattered, the tensions have grown dramatically.

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (see Chapter II, Note 6 in this dissertation). Leonardo Boff was barred from lecturing and writing on theology from April 1985 to March 1986. This issue will be discussed further in this Epilogue.

9 For instance, the archbishop Elder Camara, around whom Pope Paul VI moulded the Latin American Church, was succeeded by someone with whom over 90 per cent of his clergy does not get along.

According to Bishop Matthias Schmidt (originally from Kansas, who was chosen by Paul VI to work in Brazil), all bishops in Brazil who try to be faithful to the spirit of the Gospel, the papal documents that support liberation theology, and specially to the great declarations from CELAM (the Latin American Bishops' Conference) are asking for trouble from Rome.<sup>10</sup>

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, CENSORSHIP AND COLONIALISM - At the heart of the dispute over the authority of the Church are three other related issues --freedom of expression, censorship and colonialism.

In regards to freedom of expression and censorship I want to discuss two cases. The first one is that the most outstanding liberation theologian in Brazil is leaving the Franciscan Order and the priesthood. His brilliance in propounding liberation theology placed him in the centre of a controversy about the very meaning of the Church. In 1985, Leonardo Boff was ordered to stop writing or speaking publicly for a year on controversial theological matters, as a result of the Vatican's disapproval of his book *Church: Charisma and Power*. In May 1991, Boff was removed as editor of a popular theological magazine (*Vozes*). The "tactical error" that Boff made was to argue against the Church system. He pointed out

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<sup>10</sup> "Prairie Messenger" (Catholic Journal, Muenster, Sask. Canada), July 6, 1992. See also Chapter II, Note 57 in this dissertation.

that the Church's current hierarchical structure was not intended by Christ and the authority springs also from the community of the faithful. From that point on, Boff and the Brazilian Church experienced the dark side of the Church's governance.<sup>11</sup>

Although Boff intends to continue his theological work, he told the S.Paulo newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo* (July 1992) that "everything has a limit. I arrived at my limit." He also discussed his experience of dealing for the last 20 years with doctrinal power "It is cruel and merciless. It forgets nothing, and exacts a price for everything. To achieve their end --the imprisonment of theological intelligence-- the doctrinal powers take all the time necessary and use all the means necessary. There is an undeniably grave crisis in the Catholic Church as it stands."<sup>12</sup>

Another tension in the Church which provoked Catholic journalists to protest was the release of the *Instruction on some aspects of the Use of the Instruments of Social Communication in Promoting the Doctrine of the Faith*, issued on June 9, 1992 by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. This documents summarizes the norms of canon law regarding sound Church teaching disseminated through the media

11 Cardinal Paulo E. Arns of S. Paulo lost every posting he had in Rome for supporting Boff. Against his wishes, his diocese was divided; even his request to remain with the poor in Brazil's largest city was denied. (Quoted in "Prairie Messenger", *op. cit.*, July 6, 1992.)

12 Quoted in "Prairie Messenger", *op. cit.*, September 14, 1992.

of social communication in general and books in particular. It says that Church law requires bishops and religious superiors to have their manuscripts reviewed by censors, who are competent to judge the doctrinal content, before allowing publication.

The *Instruction* also states that prior approval is needed for all writing, textbooks on faith and collections of Church documents. Such permission is also required for "what is written by clerics and members of religious institutes for newspapers, magazines or periodicals which are accustomed to openly attack the Catholic religion, or good morals", says the instruction.

On September 26 1992, an international gathering of Catholic journalists in Campos do Jordao, Brazil, protested against the document claiming that it contradicts the Second Vatican Council and the document *Communio et Progressio* and *Aetatis Novae* on communication.<sup>13</sup> The representatives of the International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP) made public their protest, stating that such instruction "conveys an attitude of mistrust toward journalists." They also stressed that "faith grows from the freedom of a well-formed conscience, rather than from prohibitions and commands." The journalists think that Rome should know their position as Catholic journalists.

13 *Communio et Progressio* is analyzed in Chapter I of this dissertation. *Aetatis Novae* (*A New Era*) was made public on March 17 1992 and reinforces the ideas of *Communio et Progressio*.

The third and most recent controversy has arisen over the selection of delegates for the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM), being held (October 12-28) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Retired bishop Candido Padin of Bauru, from S. Paulo, Brazil, was one of 39 delegates elected by the Brazilians to attend the Conference which will ratify or give new direction to the Church's activities in Latin America. However, his name was replaced by the Vatican with that of known conservative bishop Karl Romer of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>14</sup>

Padin is also a lawyer and became well known for his opposition to Brazil's military regime. The Vatican claimed that only active bishops can be elected as voting delegates by bishops' conferences, and Padin is retired. However, the bishop says his election was valid because the rules of the CNBB (Conference of Brazilian Bishops), allow a retired bishops to be a conference member if he has an active Church job. The Vatican move was considered by many Brazilian bishops "an offense" and "intervention."

Reaction by Padin was made public in a letter to other bishops and was published in Rome (September 21, 1992). He stated that the Vatican is authoritarian and colonialist in dealing with this Latin American Bishops' Conference. He criticized the decision as one of many actions that shows

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14 It is worth mentioning that of the 39 Brazilian delegates elected in April 1992, 23 were named bishops before Pope John Paul's election in 1979.

disrespect by the Roman Curia, the Church's central administrative office. Padin adds that "the centralism of the Roman Curia, exercising authoritarian power and communicating decisions without giving adequate reasons, is a very different model from that recommended by the Second Vatican Council." He concludes that "predominating in a majority of Curia clerics is a mentality and attitude of European cultural colonialism."<sup>15</sup>

Such colonialism by the Vatican makes one question other recent statements by the Pope. He recently told a group of catechists in Rome to respect diverse cultures when they bring the Gospel into daily life. John Paul II emphasizes that this concept of cultural diversity or "inculturation", should be at the heart and constitute the goal of the new evangelization. On the other hand, the Pope has centralized authority in Rome to a greater degree than ever before. However, "inculturation", by its nature, demands that decisions be made locally. It is not a question of correct or incorrect, of proper or improper decisions made in Rome. If Rome insists on having the power, even to the extent of determining whom the Brazilian episcopate may or may not send to represent them at a conference, we are dealing with colonialism, not with "inculturation."

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15 Padin's letter was quoted in "Prairie Messenger", *op. cit.*, September 21, 1992, and was published by ADISTA, a news agency which covers the Catholic Church.

It is within these tensions that the Latin American Church is searching for democratization of communication. No matter how conflicted the relationship of the progressives with the institution as a whole, their intention was never to splinter the Church.<sup>16</sup> They believe in the institution's legitimacy, but they also have sharp criticisms of the institution's leaders.<sup>17</sup>

However, the participatory process of communication, promoted and influenced by liberation theology, is ongoing. This is despite the hostile environment and internal problems of the Church; the appointment of conservative bishops, the lack of supporting or the selective dismantling of grassroots structures created by progressive bishops, especially in the Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) and the consequent isolation of progressive Church sectors. Despite all these conflicts, grassroot communities, through *comunicación popular*, are increasing their understanding of faith and distinguishing it from centralization or "colonialism." The recent events described in this Epilogue demonstrate that people in Latin America (at least the progressives) are growing in their conscientization distinguishing between the need to building unity in the Church and with that of a "Vatican colonialism." This is a legacy from liberation

16 Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, The Progressive Church in Latin America, *op. cit.*

17 For instance, progressive pastoral agents have discovered that the poor people with whom they work have great respect for bishops and the Pope.

theology, the promotion of the participatory process of communication and the fostering critical awareness among people.

If one looks ahead, to the future of this participatory process in the Church in Latin America, I agree with Clodovis Boff<sup>18</sup> who states that the CEBs in Latin America may suffer a deceleration, but they have a historical power and the process of change is irreversible. Moreover, the CEBs have been legitimated by the Church in the Medellin and Puebla documents. Boff also stresses that one of the Basic Christian Communities role is not to turn the entire Church into basic communities, but to "teach" the Church how to deal with other pastoral sectors in a participatory way. In this view they will become communities of resistance, with great sense of awareness of their faith and their social and political responsibilities.

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18 Interview with the liberation theologian Clodovis Boff by the writer (July 1992).



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## APPENDIX I. NWICO

**The Non-aligned nations and New World Information and Communication Order**

The movement for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)<sup>1</sup> was guided by a concern about the political and cultural functions of mass media information, and was "articulated within the movement of Non-aligned countries as a particular reflection of the movement's general anti-imperialist effort to achieve decolonization."<sup>2</sup>

As a coalition of small and middle-sized nations, mostly of former colonies and developing countries, the Non-aligned movement was formed in 1961, and presently has over 100 members. Conceived in the context of struggling against colonialism and the increasing polarization of international relations resulting from the cold war, the movement centers its fundamental principles on peace and disarmament, independence --including the right to self-determination, and

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1 The new order in the field of communication has been labelled in different ways, as "new world information order", "new international information order", "new international information and communication order". At the General Conference of Unesco and General Assembly of the United Nations (1978), a consensus was reached on the term "more just and more efficient world information and communication order" (MacBride Report, p. 38, N.3).

2 Kaarle Nordenstreng, "Defining the New International Information Order", World Communications, a handbook, ed. George Gerbner and Marsha Siefert (Longman, New York & London, 1983) p. 28.



economic and cultural equality.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the member states is to unite around specific issues rather than around the two superpowers, which has sometimes resulted in conflicts between elements of the Non-Aligned movement, and the industrialized nations or one or both of the superpowers.

In order to situate the debate about NWICO, it is important to remember that during the previous decade, the development of communication institutions in many of these new nations was influenced by the diffusion-modernization thesis of Americans Lerner, Schramm and Rogers.<sup>4</sup> This group conceived development as the transfer of technology from the industrialized nations to the modernizing elite sector of the less developed countries, and through these elites to the lower-status urban and rural groups. The role of communication was to provide channels through which the techniques, life style, motivations, and attitudes of the "modernizing" sector could be diffused to the more technologically "backward" traditional sectors. According to Everett Rogers, once the communication technologies were introduced, especially the mass media, the technical and cultural capacities of the elite

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3 A.W. Singham and Shirley Hume, Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1986) pp. 14-15.

4 Kaarle Nordenstreng and Herbert I. Schiller, "Communication and National Development, Changing Perspectives: Introduction", National Sovereignty and International Communication, ed. J. Nordenstreng and H. Schiller (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Company, 1979) pp. 3-8.

sector would be made available to the disadvantaged sector, and the social inequalities would gradually disappear.<sup>5</sup>

However, after a decade of failures of this development model, researchers and planners in Latin America and other non-aligned countries, began to realize that their national development was not being driven by indigenous priorities, but instead was becoming dominated by the developed countries. These were precisely the years of greatest economic expansion in the Third World of the United States Transnational Corporations (TNCs). By the 1970s, many of these nations were speaking out about cultural domination from outside, and specifically about the dangers of *cultural imperialism*.<sup>6</sup> A number of theorists began to articulate the centrality of communication to three types of domination --economic, political and cultural.<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning as well that

5 Everett Rogers, "Communication and Development: The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm", Communication Research, Vol.3, N.2, 1976, pp. 213-240.

6 In this dissertation, cultural or media imperialism is understood as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content and media in any one country are simply or together subject to substantial external pressure from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected", according to J.O. Boyd-Barret, "Media Imperialism: Towards an International Framework for the Analysis of Media System", Mass Communication and Society, ed. J.Curran et al. (London, Edward Arnold, 1977) p. 117. Cultural imperialism was the main subject in the writings of Schiller, 1969, 1976; Mattelart, 1974, 1979.

7 L.R. Beltran, Communication between the United States and Latin America: a case of Cultural Domination. Paper presented to the World Media Conference sponsored by the News World, New York City, 1978.

this was a period of unprecedented American military intervention, i.e., the war in South East Asia; and the backing of military dictatorships in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As a result, the Third World countries became aware of the relationship between the economic expansion of US-led capitalism in the Third World and the extensive exportation of American mass culture and communications technology.

Hence, in the 1973 Fourth Summit Conference of the Non-aligned movement held in Algiers, the Non-aligned countries called for a new international information order to help achieve and preserve some degree of communication and cultural self-determination.<sup>8</sup> As Ramiro Beltran points out,

Third World countries are not struggling today only to bring about a real end to colonialism by obtaining fair treatment in trade and aid. They are simultaneously and relatedly pursuing the establishment of a 'New International Economic Order' and a 'New International Information Order.'<sup>9</sup>

The Algiers Conference made clear that the transformation of the international economic system (NIEO)<sup>10</sup> would require action in the field of communication in order to promote a greater interchange of ideas among those countries.

A series of subsequent meetings narrowed the focus to the matter of communication. The Tunis meeting in 1976 was closely followed by a conference of information ministers and news

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<sup>8</sup> This is considered the birthplace of NWICO.

<sup>9</sup> L.R. Beltran, "A Farewell to Aristotle: 'Horizontal' Communication", Communication 5, 1980.

<sup>10</sup> NIEO - New International Economic Order was approved at a special session of the UN General Assembly in May 1974.

agency chiefs from 60 Non-aligned countries in New Delhi, July of the same year. The *New Delhi Declaration*, signed by ministers of information, put emphasis on the information dependency experienced by the Third World countries, and stated:

just as political and economic dependence are legacies of the era of colonialism, so is the case of dependence in the field of information which in turn retards the achievement of political and economic growth.<sup>11</sup>

### **News - the first concern in the NWICO debate**

The Declaration encompassed all information processes, but only highlighted news imbalance. With the endorsement of the Fifth Summit Meeting of the Non-aligned countries, news became the axis of non-aligned action. The initial solutions offered, for this problem were the consolidation and expansion of the pool of news agencies of the Non-aligned countries; the development and improvement of a framework of responsibility for the activities of transnational news agencies; the quest for ways to balance the international information flow; the establishment of national communication policies as an integral part of development policies, and the strengthening of horizontal cooperation among Third World countries.<sup>12</sup>

11 "New Delhi Declaration", Communicator, April-July, 1976, pp. 20-22.

12 The most significant documents regarding the matter are the following: the Final Document of the Symposium of Non-aligned countries, in Tunisia; "What now: recommendations for action", conclusions of the ILET seminar, Mexico, 1976; the

The initial efforts to solve the problem of imbalance of news flow were devoted to the creation of national news agencies. Therefore, in 1975, the Non-aligned News Agencies Pool was established. In January 1976, the Caribbean News Agency (CANA) came into being. Inter Press Service (IPS), a journalists' co-operative specializing in Latin American news, redefined its mission as that of a Third World news agency in 1977. In 1979, Acción de Sistemas Informativos Nacionales (ASIN) was established by ten Latin American governments. The Asia Pacific News Network (ANN) started operations in 1982. Pan African (PANA) started its transmissions in 1983. Agencia Latinoamericana de Servicios Especiales de Información (ALASEI) was established in 1984. The Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) was established in 1974 as a decision of the League of Arab countries and it includes seventeen national news agencies.

The establishment of these networks is considered by the Chilean researcher Salinas Bascur as the Third World's main achievement in the NWICO proposals. In the early 1970s no news exchanges existed among developing countries, so that their communication was totally dependent on coverage by transnational agencies. By the beginning of the 1980s, each

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Final Declaration of the Ministerial Conference of Non-aligned Countries, New Delhi, 1976; the San Jose Declaration and some recommendations of the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies sponsored by UNESCO, Costa Rica, 1976; the Resolution of the Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned countries ratifying the pool of news agencies, Colombo, 1976; Resolution 4.14 on "Free flow of information and communication policies" adopted in the 19th UNESCO General Conference, Nairobi, 1976; The MacBride Report (UNESCO), 1980.

developing region and subregion was participating in some system to exchange news produced by their own national agencies. Emphasizing this fact, Salinas states:

The existence of all these networks is in itself a tremendous accomplishment of developing countries, yet the complete success of such undertakings still depends on overcoming great obstacles [political heterogeneity, cultural complexities, scarcity of qualified professionals, etc.]. Some of them are permanent features of the ways in which the systems are organized, and convey therefore constant impediments to a rapid unfolding of their possibilities.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the establishment of these news agencies, news flows are still as imbalanced as ever. In 1987, AP averaged 17,000,000 words per day; UPI 14,000,000; TASS 4,000,000; Reuters 1,500,000; and AFP 1,000,000. Meanwhile Inter-Press Service (IPS) sent 150,000 words per day; the Non-aligned News pool only 100,000; the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) only 20,000; the Caribbean News agency (CANA) 25,000 words per day; and the Gulf News Agency, 18,000 words.<sup>14</sup>

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13 R. Salinas Bascur, "Information in the Third World: adjusting technologies or strategies?", Media, Culture and Society (Sage, London/Beverly Hills, 1985) Vol.7, p. 359. According to studies published by Mohammed Musa, most of the so-called alternative agencies have so far been living on one form of subsidy or the other. However, the current economic crises facing most of the economies in the Third World make it difficult to continue to subsidize these agencies, mostly state owned, especially in the case of Africa. Many of these alternative agencies have already begun to cut down on their spending, with negative effect on the services. For a full discussion on this issue, see Media Culture and Society (Sage Publications, 1990) Vol.12, N.3, pp. 331-341.

14 The statistics are from the Draft World Communication Report -UNESCO 1988:1.54 quoted in Colleen Roach, "The movement for a New World Information and Communication Order: a second wave?", Media, Culture and Society (Sage, London, 1990) p. 290. For consideration on the international flow of

The "marginal impact" of the Third World news flows shows that most Third World countries' newspapers and broadcasting organizations continue to rely on Western TNAs for their basic news reports and are likely drawing on what is provided by the regional agencies only supplementarily. This "marginal impact" of the Non-aligned News Pool should not be interpreted as a failure. It simply proves that in the past years, the dominant TNAs have continued to work within the parameters of the world news. In this framework, R. Samarajiwa emphasizes the necessity of understanding the structure of the world market in news and the problems of gaining entry to that market. According to him, such an understanding is useful not only in evolving realistic news agency policies, but also in making such policies acceptable.<sup>15</sup>

### **The MacBride Report**

A second intervention made by the NWICO movement was to take their concerns to the international forums provided by Unesco. As a result, the 19th General Conference held in Nairobi (1976) recognized that the communication systems of the developing countries were still in a state of dependence. The General Conference emphasized the importance of a free and

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television programmes, see also Colleen Roach, *op. cit.*, p. 291-292.

15 Rohan Samarajiwa, "Third World entry to the world market in news: problems and possible solutions", Media, Culture and Society, (Academic Press Limited, London, 1984).

balanced flow of information and the need for intensifying efforts to eliminate the imbalance that had characterized relations between industrialized countries and the Third World. To carry out the proposals of the General Conference (1976), and to support the NWICO movement,<sup>16</sup> Unesco sponsored several meetings all over the world, including the San Jose Conference in Costa Rica (1976).<sup>17</sup>

In 1977, an International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems was established by Unesco under the leadership of Sean MacBride. The Commission members -- prominent media personages from varying national and ideological backgrounds-- produced the *MacBride Report*<sup>18</sup> in 1980. The Report recognized the imbalance in information and the domination of the western countries in this sector, giving a full airing to the many complaints of the Non-aligned nations about the defects in the prevailing system of international news flow. On the other hand, it presented the

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16 The major objectives of the NWICO movement may be summarized as: equity and autonomy within global communications; establishing national communication policies; promoting more participatory communication institutions within nations; stimulating indigenous cultural expression and local cultural industries; and the establishment of major non-governmental and autonomous institutions. (Quoted in R. White, "NWICO has become a people's movement", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1988) N.1, pp. 20-25)

17 The *Mass Media Declaration* of Unesco in 1978 was also of great support to the NWICO movement.

18 The MacBride Report refers to Many Voices, One World - Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow, ed. Sean MacBride (Kogan Page/Unipub/Unesco, 1980).



Western fears about the dangers of defining responsibilities of journalists, and placing undue restrictions on their work.

While there was a consensus on the major issues, including a number of recommendations and guidelines for the establishment of NWICO, the Report did not fully please anyone.<sup>19</sup> The vast majority of the organization's members, most of which are situated in the south, remain committed to the establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order. In the north the report led to an organized attack from Western countries, led by the United States.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Individual members expressed their differences in *Appendix 1 (General Comments)* of the MacBride Report. For example, Sergei Losev (USSR) commented on the definition of the term "communication", on the westernized terminology and approaches to deal with the subject of communication, and on the notion of a free flow of information. Mustapha Masmoudi (Tunisia) wished for further advanced reflection on the NWICO issue. Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Juan Somavia (Colombia and Chile) emphasized the importance of considering communication not just as news, but as a determining factor in many social processes. They also wrote about the relevance of the issue of democratization of communication.

20 Several West European nations were already expressing concerns about such issues as cross-border data flow, deregulation of national communications systems, technology transfer and the impact of US advertising and entertainment fare on their cultures. Consequently, many of those nations found themselves in an increasingly uncomfortable position. On the one hand, they were pressured to support the Western position in favour of free flow doctrine. On the other hand, they were being pressured by NWICO supporters to assert their right to function as autonomous states. Therefore, to avoid ideological approaches and a NWICO stalemate, they preferred direct involvement in practical projects supported by the International Program for Development of Communication (IPDC), set up by Unesco in 1981. (R. Terrell, R. Koerner, "NWICO: a framework for policy-makers", Media Development (WACC, 1987) p. 26).

**Reactions by the United States - the concept of "freedom of information." Unesco's new position**

Almost from the very beginning, the three main "actors" in the American opposition --the US press, the US interest groups such as the Heritage Foundation, and the US government-- saw NWICO as a menace to US political and economic hegemony and acted accordingly. Their much publicized accusation is that NWICO is a move to legalize the control of reporters' access to information and to stop the *free flow of information*<sup>21</sup> in the world through such tactics as requiring reporters to be licensed by governments. However, according to Kaarle Nordenstreng, such a proposal was never made in official discussions of NWICO.<sup>22</sup> Behind the specific accusations, their politico-ideological argument was that NWICO is essentially a movement "to promote government-controlled media in the Third World and to legitimize their existence in the Soviet-bloc countries",<sup>23</sup> states Colleen

21 The doctrine of the free flow of information was conceived by the US at the end of the Second World War. In 1945, the free flow doctrine was added to the agendas of the United States and Unesco. Three years later it was incorporated in the Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 19, which asserts that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

22 Kaarle Nordenstreng, The Mass Media Declaration of Unesco, Norwood, N.J: Ablex Publishing Company, 1984, p. 243. See also Colleen Roach, "The position of the Reagan administration on the NWICO", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1987) N.4, p. 34.

Roach, who worked for many years at Unesco on NWICO-related projects.

NWICO supporters' response to the *free flow* claims was to demonstrate how the application of the principle of free flow, in the present international communication structures, has generated a mainly unidirectional flow from Western industrialized countries to the Third World. According to Juan Somavia, NWICO was not rejecting the principle itself, but the manner in which it has been applied, which has led to imbalances among countries and cultures.

The information and entertainment transnational, based on the principle of free flow, offer the latest technology, the best and most modern programs (...), ready-made advertising and all the other advantages of the transnational communication system. Thus, under the protection of free flow, the transnational cultural industry installs itself: strong, powerful, and efficient. (...) When efforts are made to react to this situation, the commercial interests that promote the sale of programs and information services are confused at this point with the untouchable principle of free flow. Thus, not accepting the whole commercial package offered by the communication transnational is practically equivalent to violating the freedom of expression. (...) ... the confusion between the defense of principles and the defense of commercial objectives is clearly evident.<sup>24</sup>

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23 In the early stages of the debate in Unesco, the U.S.S.R. championed the cause of Third World nations under the banner of "national sovereignty". The US control of satellite technology and easy transborder data flow were special concerns. This fact confused the NWICO movement with the cold war conflict and obscured many central issues, such as cultural autonomy and the demand for more participatory structures. A full account of this matter can be found in R. Terrel and R. Kroener, "NWICO: a framework for policy-makers", *op. cit.*, p. 26. See also commentary by Rafael Roncagliolo on the Declaration of Talloires, "El NOMIC: comunicación y poder", *Chasqui - Revista Latinoamericana de comunicación*, (Quito, 1982) N.3.

24 Juan Somavia, "Third World Participation in International Communications. Perspective after Nairobi." Discussion paper

Several commentators pointed out that the means of communicating information were concentrated in a few countries, and the majority of nations are dependent on information disseminated from a few centres. In this regard, freedom of information had meant the freedom of these few countries to propagate information in the manner of their choosing (New Delhi Declaration - August 1976).

The MacBride Report reinforced these ideas, emphasizing that:

On the international scene, more powerful countries and bigger organizations for the provision of information (data banks, computerized sources for specialized information, news agencies, film distributors, etc.) have in some instances a preponderant position, which can produce adverse economic, social and even political effects. Thus, it is claimed that the 'free flow' doctrine has often been used as an economic and/or ideological tool by the communication rich to the detriment of those less well endowed.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, what the NWICO movement was demanding was the application of a truly free multidirectional and multidimensional flow. It is not only the rights of the communicator that count, but also the participation of recipients in the communication process.

In the decade since MacBride, this has become even more urgent as the growth of television, satellite transmission, and computer technologies, have only acted to reinforce the imbalance. As Cees Hamelink emphasized at the time of

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presented at the Seminar International Communications and Third World Participation: a conceptual and practical framework, Amsterdam, September 1977, p. 9.

25 Sean MacBride, Many Voices, One World..., *op. cit.*, p. 141.

MacBride, the NWICO debate goes far beyond news, the rights of the press and journalists. He argued that, albeit important, international news is only a small aspect of the international flow of information. The balance of the information flow consists of what he calls "informatics", which embraces word processing terminals, and, of course, the myriad computer-based information services from the telephone and telegraph to satellite-transmitted radio and television.<sup>26</sup> It is also in light of this understanding of a larger range of information flow that the Tanzanian Senior Information Officer at the United Nations, F. Lwanyantika Masha stated: "Freedom of the press is not the issue in the call for a new information and communication order... the issue is whether each country will be free to determine its future, based on its history, culture and values, without manipulation or imposition of others."<sup>27</sup>

What is at stake, indeed, is the monopoly of the industrialized countries in the field of information. Information is largely owned and guarded by national and transnational corporations, and the critical point is to protect the private sector. It also explains the imperative for US transnational communications industries to ensure that

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26 Cees Hamelink, "Informatics: Third World Call for New Order", Journal of Communication, (Summer, 1979) Vol.29, N.3, p. 146.

27 F. Lwanyantika Masha, "De-colonizing Information: Toward a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)", Political Communication and Persuasion, (Crane Russak & Co.Inc., 1982) Vol.2, N.4, pp. 337-342.

NWICO "would not reinforce government-run or public sector communications media at the expense of the private sector."<sup>28</sup>

### **Unesco shifts position**

Even after the United States' withdrawal from Unesco in 1985, the US continued its attacks. For example, President Reagan spoke to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1987, saying: "We cannot permit attempts to control the media and promote censorship under the ruse of a so-called New World Information Order" (*New York Times*, 22 September 1987).<sup>29</sup> The effect of this attack and of the withdrawal of financial support from both the United States and the United Kingdom (who had withdrawn in support of the U.S. position a year later) began to be felt at Unesco.

At the 1987 General Conference of Unesco held in Paris, the organization elected a new director general, Federico Mayor of Spain, and Unesco started to change its policy in the field of communication. The new director began to make a number of speeches and statements to the press in which he endorsed the *free flow of information*, adopted the "policy language of the United States used through NWICO debates."<sup>30</sup>

28 Colleen Roach, "The U.S. position...", *op. cit.*, p. 39.

29 See also the articles published in the *New York Times*, 22 and 25 September 1987; 25 October 1987; 8 November 1987.

30 Colleen Roach, "The Movement for a New World Information and Communication Order: a second wave?", *Media, Culture and Society*, (Sage, London, 1990) Vol.12, pp. 286-289.

Such endorsement became very clear when Mayor toured the United States in February 1989 with the manifested attempt to pacify the US and bring it back to Unesco.

Unesco must guarantee the free flow of information full stop, said Mayor... He said plans for the New World Information Order "no longer exist" at Unesco, adding that they had violated human rights clauses in Unesco's charter. (*Washington Post*, 25 February 1989)

At its 25th General Conference in November 1989, Unesco adopted a "new strategy in the field of communication." The purpose of such new strategy is to improve the effectiveness of Unesco, "ensuring the free flow of information" at national and international levels, and "its wider and better balanced dissemination, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression"<sup>31</sup> and constitutes Unesco's Third Medium Term Plan 1990-95. Its "new strategy" consists in "developing the training of communication professionals and the facilities for a media education that would lay emphasis on the development of critical acumen."<sup>32</sup> The document gives the impression of support for NWICO, while not pushing the concept too far.

According to Roach, a number of the NWICO items still exist in this plan: elimination of imbalances; plurality of sources; free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination

31 Herbert Schiller (USA), Cees Hamelink (The Netherlands), Kaarle Nordenstreng (Finland), Colleen Roach (USA), Slavo Splichal (Yugoslavia), Rafael Roncagliolo (Peru), Hamid Mowlana (USA), Rohan Samarajiva (USA), Wolfgang Kleinwachter (Germany), Karol Jakubowicz (Poland) have their assessment of the Third Medium Term Plan 1990-95 in Media Development, WACC, London, 1990, N.3.

32 *Communication in the Service of Humanity - Third Medium Term Plan 1990-95*, Unesco, Paris.

of information; freedom of the press; and cultural identity. However, Roach argues that other components cannot be found, such as the elimination of monopolies, and freedom and responsibility of journalists. Practically ignored in the new plan are three of the earlier "policy principles" for NWICO: the right to communicate --associated with emerging "collective or people's rights"--; national communication policies; and, lastly, the reinforcement of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). "Each of these policy principles was, not surprisingly, stringently opposed by the United States", concludes Roach.<sup>33</sup>

Kaarle Nordenstreng suggests that the new Programme presents a "poor balance between action and reflection." He argues that

A Programme today which has nothing to say about the responsibility of journalists and concentration of media industries, while speaking repeatedly about the freedom and independence of the media (including private media), runs the risk of being characterized not only as inadequate but indeed as a caricature... In the past the Communication Programme included research and other reflective measures with a view to promoting media coverage of global problems such as peace, human rights and environment. Now this aspect of international understanding has been played down so that it is no longer to be found even as an unambiguous sub-programme but is placed as a kind of instrument in publicizing Unesco's actions relating to global problems.<sup>34</sup>

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33 Colleen Roach, "Limitations and new possibilities", Media Development, (WACC, London, 1990) N.3, pp. 28-30. Despite Unesco's publication of the Third Medium Term Plan 1990-95, the Bush administration decided not to rejoin Unesco.

34 Kaarle Nordenstreng, "From compromise to compromise", *op. cit.*, p. 36.



Nordenstreng suggests that earlier programmes of Unesco also "were far from saturated with the NWICO ideas." In his view, Unesco's documents "were in principle compromise packages similar to the latest one", although they presented more balance in terms of action/reflection and were more up-to-date. Nordenstreng also calls attention to the illusion many have about Unesco. He argues that "it is an illusion to think that Unesco used to be an uncompromised stronghold of NWICO and a straightforward supporter of the MacBride Report." However, he maintains that this illusion may prevail if one concludes that "now all is gone,"<sup>35</sup> in terms of NWICO's status at Unesco.

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35 Ibid., *op. cit.*, p. 37.

## APPENDIX II. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACPO	: Popular Cultural Action (Acción Cultural Popular).
ALAIC	: Latin American Association of Communication Researcher.
ALASEI	: Special Information Service (Servicios Especiales de Información).
ALER	: Latin American Association for Radiophonic Education.
ANN	: Asia Pacific News Network.
ASIN	: Informative National System Action.
CANA	: Caribbean News Agency.
CCFD	: French Catholic Development Committee.
CEBs	: Basic Christian Communities.
CELADEC	: Evangelical Latin American Commission of Christian Communication.
CELAM	: Latin American Bishops' Conference.
CEMI	: Centre of Communication and Popular Education of S.Miguel.
CIESPAL	: International Centre of Advanced Studies in Communication for Latin America.
CLAR	: Confederation of Latin American Religious.
CNBB	: National Conference of Brazilian Bishops.
CP	: <i>Communio et Progressio</i> .
CSCC	: Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture.
CUT	: Association of Trade Unions (Brazil).
DECOM	: Development and Communication for Latin America and Caribbean.
DECOS	: Department of Social Communication of CELAM.
EN	: <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (document of the Catholic Church).
FANA	: Federation of Arab News Agencies.
FELAC	: Latin American Federation of Journalists.
FELAFACS	: Latin American Federation of Faculty of Social Communication.
GS	: <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (document of the Catholic Church).
ILET	: Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies.
IM	: <i>Inter Mirifica</i> (document of the Catholic Church).
IMF	: International Monetary Fund.
INTERCOM	: Brazilian Association for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies.
IPAL	: Centre for the Study on Transnational Culture.
LG	: <i>Lumen Gentium</i> (document of the Catholic Church).
MEB	: Movement for Grassroot Education.
MP	: <i>Miranda Prorsus</i> (document of the Catholic Church).
NIEO	: New International Economic Order.
NWICO	: New World Information and Communication Order.
OCIC	: International Catholic Organization for Cinema.
PANA	: Pan African Agency.
SAL-OCIC	: Latin American Secretariat of the International Catholic Cinema Organization.

SIAL : Latin American Information Service.  
SERPAL : Latin American Radiophonic Service.  
UCBC : Brazilian Christian Communication Union.  
UCIP : International Catholic Press Union.  
UCLAP : Latin American Catholic Press Union.  
UNDA : International Catholic Organization for radio and  
Television.  
UNDA-AL : Latin American Catholic Association for Radio and  
Television.  
UNESCO : United Nations' Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization.  
VG : *Vigilanti Cura* (document of the Catholic Church).  
WACC : World Association for Christian Communication.  
YCS : (JUC) Catholic University Youth.  
YCW : (JOC) Catholic Youth Workers.

### APPENDIX III. CHRONOLOGY

- 1487 : publication of the first document of the Catholic Church on press, *Inter Multiplices*, by Pope Innocence VIII.
- 1559 : the *Index* of forbidden books was approved and published under Pope Paul IV.
- 1820 : (around 1820) independence of Latin American countries from Spain.
- 1822 : Independence of Brazil from Portugal
- 1870 : beginning of the First Vatican Council in Rome.
- 1878 : with Pope Leo XIII, the Catholic Church begins a second and important period of relations regarding communication. The Church starts to show some flexibility towards the press and the new communication technologies, particularly motion picture, radio, although it still acted cautiously.
- 1885 : publication of the encyclical *Immortale Dei* by Pope Leo XIII.
- 1891 : publication of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on social order by Pope Leo XIII.
- 1897 : publication of the encyclical *Officiarum ac Munerum* by Pope Leo XIII.
- 1906 : publication of the encyclical *Pieni d'Animo* by Pope Pius X.
- 1907 : publication of the encyclical *Pascendi* by Pope Pius X.
- 1927-28 : creation of the International Catholic Press Union (UCIP) in Belgium.
- 1928 : creation of the International Catholic Org. for Cinema (OCIC), founded during the International Catholic Congress of Cinema in Holland, under Pope Pius XI.
- 1928 : creation of the International Catholic Organization for Audiovisual (UNDA) in Germany.

- 1929 : publication of the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* by Pope Pius XI, with reference to cinema.
- 1930 : publication of the encyclical *Casti Conubii* by Pope Pius XI, with reference to cinema.
- 1930 : Hays Code (Production Code originally) agreement of the Hollywood producers regarding self-controlling of movies to avoid censorship by states against films considered immoral.
- 1931 : establishment of Vatican Radio under Pope Pius XI.
- 1936 : publication of the encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* on cinema by Pope Pius XI, and addressed to the bishops of the United States regarding the *Legion of Decency*.
- 1939-58 : with Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church starts to increase and deepen its reflections on social relations in a democratic society and on the role of information in building public opinion.
- 1947 : Radio Sutatenza. Beginning of educational radio by Fr. José Joaquim Salcedo in Colombia, with Acción Cultural Popular - Radio Sutatenza (ACPO).
- 1950s : Latin America was characterized by a great optimism related to the opportunity of achieving self-sustained economic development.
- 1950s : (and 1960s) beginning of the new dimension of communication by the Church in Latin America through "school radio."
- 1950s : beginning of the "popular missions" in Latin American Catholic Church, from country to country, preaching the gospel on the continent.
- Mid-1950s : (to the mid -1960s) developmentalist phase by the Juscelino Kubitschek government in Brazil.
- 1950s : (late 1950s and early 1960s) Latin America was characterized by a process of social, political, cultural, economic, demographic and ecclesial change under the heading of "modernization".
- 1950s : (late 1950s) first movement of popular catechesis of Barra do Pirai (Rio de Janeiro).

- 1950s : (and early 1960s) the development of communication institutions in new nations was influenced by the diffusion-modernization thesis of Lerner, Schramm and Rogers.
- 1952 : creation of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB).
- 1955 : creation of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM).
- 1957 : publication of the encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* on motion pictures, radio and television by Pope Pius XII.
- 1958 : beginning of the national programs with radio schools pioneered by D. Eugenio Sales in Natal (Brazil).
- 1960s : (early 1960s) beginnings of liberation theology in Latin America.
- 1960s : the Church's discussion on communication brings out the strong belief in the efficiency of the media to promote change and evangelization.
- 1960s : pessimistic diagnosis of economic, social and political situation in Latin America gives rise to the dependency theory.
- 1960s : (early 1960s) beginning of the Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) in Latin America.
- 1960s : (early 1960s) period of an increasing national consciousness in Brazil reflected in the government of Janio Quadros and João Goulart.
- 1961 : publication of the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII.
- 1961 : beginning of the Movement for Grassroot Education (MEB) in Brazil.
- 1962 : beginning of the Second Vatican Council in Rome.
- 1963 : publication of the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John XXIII.
- 1963 : French, American and German groups of journalists launch critiques on the text of communication during the period of discussion by the bishops in the Second Vatican Council.

- 1963 : decree *Inter Mirifica* issued by the Second Vatican Council. The document marks the official Church's acceptance of means of communication to develop pastoral work.
- 1963 : Promotion of the "Alliance for Progress" by the United States to Latin America.
- 1964 : meeting of the Latin American theologians in Petropolis (Brazil) which had important influence in the introduction of liberation theology.
- 1964 : Military coup in Brazil.
- 1964 : confiscation of copies of MEB's new primer *Viver e lutar* (To live is to fight) by the governor of Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro), Carlos Lacerda, under allegation that the copies were communist textbooks.
- 1964 : publication of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, by the Second Vatican Council.
- Mid-1960s : beginning of the Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) in Brazil.
- Mid-1960s : (to late 1970s) rising of cultural imperialism thinking.
- 1965 : publication of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, by the Second Vatican Council.
- 1965 : conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in Rome.
- 1966 : *Index* of forbidden books renounced by Pope Paul VI.
- 1966 : first seminar of people in charge of social communication in Santa Ines (Lima), sponsored by CELAM.
- 1967 : publication of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (on the progress of peoples) by Pope Paul VI.
- 1968 : three regional seminars on communication in Montevideo, Lima and Costa Rica, sponsored by CELAM.
- 1968 : Paulo Freire launches its new method of education which implies the process of *conscientización*.

- Freire's method has had a significant influence in liberation theology.
- 1968 : Chimbote Conference (Colombia). First sketch of liberation theology presented by Gustavo Gutierrez.
- 1968 : Second Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) in Medellin (Colombia).
- 1968 : document of Medellin issued by CELAM.
- 1970s : (early 1970s) dependency theorists started to analyze and explain the presence of social inequalities in Latin America, and "liberation" was identified as the solution to the problems of Latin American countries. It was under these circumstances that liberation theology was born also as a product of a profound historical movement.
- 1970 : meeting in Melgar (Colombia) on communication.
- 1970 : free election in Chile of the Unidad Popular government. First attempt to exchange capitalism for a socialist-marxist alternative through democratic means.
- 1970s : beginning of discussions on New Information and Communication Order, articulated by the Non-aligned countries.
- 1971 : seminar on communication and education in Mexico, sponsored by CELAM.
- 1971 : publication of *Octogesima Advenians* by Pope Paul VI to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.
- 1971 : publication of the Synod document "Justice in the World."
- 1971 : publication of *Communio et Progressio* - pastoral instruction for the application of the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the means of social communication, by the Pontifical Council for social communication, in Rome.
- 1972 : regional seminars on pastoral of communication in Antigua (Guatemala), in San Miguel (Argentina) and in Cumbaya (Ecuador).
- 1972 : Interamerican meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication in Cumbaya (Ecuador).



- 1973 : return of Peronism in Argentina after eighteen years of military dominance.
- 1973 : Fourth Summit Conference of the Non-aligned countries in Algiers. This meeting is considered as the birthplace of NWICO.
- 1974 : approval of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) by the United Nations Assembly at a special session.
- 1974 : publication of "Social Communicator Perspectives" in preparation of the Bishops' Synod on evangelization.
- 1974 : establishment of the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) as a decision of the League of Arab countries.
- 1975 : publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* - Instruction on evangelization in the modern world, by Pope Paul VI.
- 1975 : meeting of the Basic Christian Communities in Brazil, "A Church born of the people through the spirit of God", which gave rise to the short form of the slogan "popular Church."
- 1975-79 : the socio-cultural context of Latin America was dominated by an ever increasing people's exodus from rural to urban areas, demographic explosion, economic crisis, massive migration of people to industrial cities. Military governments (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay) tried to obtain economic development employing technocrats in association with transnational corporations, ignoring the political rights and the social and cultural needs of the majority. The National Security Ideology was introduced by the military dictatorships as well.
- 1975 : establishment of the Non-aligned News Agencies Pool.
- 1976 : Conference of San José (Costa Rica) on national communication policies, sponsored by Unesco.
- 1976 : meeting in Tunis of the Non-aligned countries with special focus on the matter of communication.
- 1976 : document "What now: recommendations for action", of the ILET seminar in Mexico about NWICO.

- 1976 : "New Delhi Declaration" signed by ministers of information and news agency chiefs from 60 Non-aligned countries regarding NWICO.
- 1976 : XIX General Conference of Unesco in Nairobi.
- 1976 : publication of the Resolution of the Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned countries ratifying the pool of news agencies in Colombo.
- 1976 : establishment of the Caribbean News Agency (CANA).
- 1977 : international commission for the study of communication problems, by Unesco, under the leadership of Sean MacBride.
- 1977 : Inter Press Service (IPS) redefines its mission as that of a Third World news agency.
- 1978 : publication of "Evangelization and Social Communication in Latin America" - document prepared by DECOS-CELAM for the Puebla Conference.
- 1978 : "Mass Media Declaration" of Unesco.
- 1979 : Third Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) in Puebla (Mexico).
- 1979 : Document of Puebla - "Evangelization in the present and in the future of Latin America."
- 1979 : establishment of the Acción de Sistemas Informativos Nacionales (ASIN) by the Latin American governments.
- 1980s : special implementation of *comunicación popular* was given by the Catholic Church in Latin America.
- 1980 : publication of the MacBride Report by Unesco.
- 1980 : XX General Conference of Unesco in Belgrade.
- 1980 : creation of the Intercommunication system integrated by the Press and Publishing Office of CELAM and by the National Offices indicated by the National Bishops' Conferences - SIAL.
- 1980 : Pope John Paul II addresses to the Catholic Press Union (UCIP) congress in Rome, and asserts the commitment of the Church to search for a new order of information and communication.

- 1981 : meeting on the "Protection of Journalists", sponsored by Unesco.
- 1981 : publication of "Church, Charism and Power" by the theologian Leonardo Boff, which contains controversial issues about the Church, according to the Vatican point of view.
- 1981 : publication of the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* by Pope John Paul II.
- 1982 : Document of Quito on the Church and the New World Information and Communication Order, issued by the Seminar held in Quito (Ecuador).
- 1982 : Document of Embu on the Church and the New World Information and Communication Order, issued by the Seminar held in Embu (S.Paulo - Brazil).
- 1982 : the Asia Pacific News Network (ANN) starts its operations.
- 1983 : assertion by the spokesman of Vatican, Msgr. Angelo Felici, in the Unesco assembly in favor of the NWICO.
- 1983 : beginning of transmissions of Pan African (PANA).
- 1983 : "Project Lumen 2000", a religious program relayed by satellite, operating twenty four hours a day set up.
- 1983 : creation of the Centre of Communication and Popular Education of S.Miguel (CEMI) in S.Miguel (S.Paulo - Brazil).
- 1984 : establishment of the Agencia Latinoamericana de Servicios Especiales de Informacion (ALASEI).
- 1984 : Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, representing the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issues an "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation."
- 1984 : creation of the Women's Union of Loja (UPML) in Ecuador.
- 1985 : withdrawal of the United States from Unesco followed by the British one year later.
- 1985 : extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council.

- 1985 : the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff is barred by the Vatican from lecturing and writing on theology.
- 1986 : International Conference on Liberation Theology held at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada.
- 1986 : Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) issues the document "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation".
- 1986 : letter of Pope John Paul II addressed to the Brazilian Episcopal Conference at the conclusion of the "ad limina" visit concerning the life and mission of the Church in Brazil.
- 1987 : publication of the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* on concern for the social order by Pope John Paul II.
- 1987 : headquarters of the three Latin American Catholic organizations for communication -- UNDA-AL, UCLAP, SAL-OCIC-- begin to carry on their activities under a sole secretariat in Quito.
- 1987 : speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations by President Reagan. Reagan's speech warns of the dangers of NWICO.
- 1987 : XXIV General Conference of Unesco in Paris. Election of the new director general Federico Mayor.
- 1989 : new strategy in the field of communication is adopted by the XXV General Conference of Unesco. The new strategy is expressed in the Third Medium-Term Plan 1990-95.
- 1989 : publication of "Pornography and violence in the communications media: a pastoral response" by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, in Rome.
- 1989 : the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff publishes article in *Vozes* about the predominance of bishops' appointments among "conservatives" and the Vatican's desire eventually to reduce the power of bishops' conferences.
- 1989 : MacBride Round Table on Communication in Harare.

- 1989 : the Manila Declaration issued at the Congress held in Manila, sponsored by WACC.
- 1990 : Second MacBride Round Table of non-governmental organizations in Prague.
- 1990 : publication of Prague Statement on communication.
- 1990 : "Lima Declaration - towards a new communication" issued by the Lima meeting sponsored by WACC in Peru.
- 1991 : the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff is removed as editor in chief of a theological magazine, *Vozes*, after several confrontations with Church authorities over his writings and teaching.