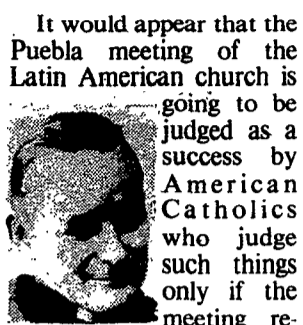


The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

'Liberation' Of Whom?



It would appear that the Puebla meeting of the Latin American church is going to be judged as a success by American Catholics who judge such things only if the meeting results in a complete victory for "liberation theology." Should there be anything less than a ringing endorsement of radical revolution in Latin America, the meeting is going to be represented as a "retreat," as "conservative," as a betrayal of the former "liberal" thrust of Latin American Catholicism. It will be asserted that the new pope is a conservative if not a reactionary.

It is no mean political achievement for the "liberationists" to get matters defined that simply. It is perhaps the only political victory of "liberation" theology, though it has always been a media event instead of serious political and economic analysis or serious religious vision.

Liberation theology, quite simply, is a rehash of German political theology which, in its turn, is little more than a sloppy mixture of simplified Marxism and simplified Christianity.

I have never encountered a liberation theologian who has the slightest knowledge of economics or the slightest interest in acquiring such knowledge. "Simplistic," "vulgar" Marxism (rarely requiring any reading of Marx) supplies all the

economic tools the liberationists need.

There must be revolution; there must be radical change; there must be destruction of the old order and the establishment of the new one in which the "vanguard" of the people dictates for the rest of the nation the way to "liberation" a liberation, by the way, which will involve less freedom rather than more. Gary MacEoin, one of the staunchest American publicists for liberation theology, says that human freedoms and social freedoms are incompatible.

There are a number of concrete economic problems for which liberationists have neither an answer nor an interest:

1) Why is it that foreign aid or foreign investment ALWAYS leads to an increase of income inequality in the receiving nation? The more transfer of funds, in other words, from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere, the more inequality there is between the rich and the poor in the Southern Hemisphere (and it doesn't matter whether the country is "socialist" or "capitalist").

2) Why is it, therefore, that income transfer thus far means that in effect one taxes poor people in the rich nations to provide more money for the rich people in the poor nations?

3) Why is it that virtually all the new oil-rich nations that have been the recipients of income transfer of the sort the liberationists demand from the Northern Hemisphere have fallen apart economically and waste much if not most of the money that has been transferred to them?

4) Why is it that a sober Mexican economist would admit that the "structural problems" in his country preclude the possibility for at least the next quarter of a century that Mexico's enormous oil wells can be used to improve the lot of the poor people in Mexico and diminish the illegal migrant rate to the United States?

In other words, liberation theology's political and economic analysis leads to a strategy which will make things worse for the poor people in the poor nations though better, of course, for the elite like the liberation theologians who teach in universities and go to international meetings.

Liberation theology, in its present format, is intellectually sloppy, religiously irresponsible and politically and economically dangerous to the well-being of the people in the poor countries (with whom, incidentally, most of the liberation theologians associate very little).

Our American self-hatred must be enormous if we take seriously spokesmen for a Latin American church which has utterly failed in everything it has tried to do since the coming of the Conquistadores. Who are they to come to prophesy to us? What evidence, either theoretical or empirical (in terms of the history of successful pastoral ministry), do they have to back up their idiotic ideas? And still we listen docilely and applaud.

And the orders which support the Catholic Theological Union pick up the tab out of money collected one way or other from despised ordinary folk of American Catholicism, who are somehow or other stupid enough to think that individual and personal freedom still matters.



Police estimated that 60,000 took part in the Jan. 22 March for Life in Washington. (RNS).

'Footsteps Echoing Through Congress' 60,000 March for Life

Washington, D.C. (RNS) - The sixth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision liberalizing most state anti-abortion laws was observed for the sixth year, with a "March for Life" down Pennsylvania Avenue and rally on the U.S. Capitol steps.

The Jan. 22 anniversary also was marked with two separate news conferences called by organizations supporting the decision and "choice" in the matter of abortion.

The two-hour march from the White House to the Capitol involved 60,000 persons, as estimated by the U.S. Park Police, and culminated with a 90-minute rally before which three senators, six representatives and a rabbi spoke.

A number of the speakers made note of the political gains made by pro-life forces in affecting the course of legislation in the last session of Congress and in sending more "pro-life" candidates to Congress.

"Your footsteps have echoed through the halls of Congress," said Rep. James Oberstar, Democrat of Minnesota. "You've sent us a bigger pro-life Congress than any in history."

The rally attracted a crowd as enthusiastic as those of previous years, interrupting and applauding at every opportunity statements by the senators and representatives who spoke.

Sen. Richard Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, told the pro-life supporters "much remains to be done" in the Congress, despite the increase in the proportion of lawmakers who oppose abortion. He urged they continue to work on "convincing those not yet committed that our cause is just."

Sen. Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, pledged the debate in the Senate will continue until a "human life amendment" is adopted and he urged the marchers to "keep coming back" to Washington until such an amendment is passed.

Sen. Roger Jepsen, Republican of Iowa, who defeated "pro-choice" Sen. Dick Clark last November, said he believes the 1973 decision "is as wrong as the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case which said that the Negro was not a human being."

He urged his hearers to "not judge your brothers and sisters who disagree with you on this issue but pray for them and urge them to consider this question in a new light."

Rabbi Jacob Kassin, speaking for the Rabbinical Council of the Syrian and Near Eastern Jewish Committee in America, said five national Jewish organizations, representing more than 1,000 Orthodox rabbis, issued on Jan. 22 a "joint appeal to governors and mayors throughout the United States," asking them to "use their lawful police power to put a swift stop to the wholesale wanton killing of innocent unborn babies by abortion."

Meanwhile, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights issued a statement "pledging to escalate the visibility and activity of the pro-choice religious community in the abortion rights controversy."

And on the same day, the National Abortion Rights Action League also called a news conference at which four leaders of the movement renewed their commitment "to protect the Supreme Court rulings of six years ago which lifted unconstitutional laws against abortion."

Participants in the news conference were Gloria Steinem, editor of Ms. Magazine; Karen Mulhauser, executive director, National Abortion Rights Action League; Uta Landy, executive director, National Abortion Federation; and Ellen Frankfort, co-author of Rosie: Investigation of a Wrongful Death, and also of the book, Vaginal Politics.

Pope

From 1

Police estimated more than 2 million lined the route of the motorcade.

As of this writing, the hisses and rumbings in this poverty-stricken part of the world already are evident. Whether they grow into rebellion and splintering remains to be seen.

After 105 days in office, Pope John Paul has shown himself to be a complex man, not given to easy analysis. He is obviously willing to risk popularity in voicing his views on a wide range of issues from urging nuns to wear habits to endorsement of the United Nations Year of the Child.

For instance, while his remarks at CELAM probably will give comfort to those who hold the more traditional, conservative view regarding the Church's role in Latin America, his meeting with Russia's Andrei Gromyko just before leaving Rome could cause the same ideologists some concern.

It was the first major contact between the Vatican and the U.S.S.R. since John Paul's election in October. Speculation was that the Pope and Gromyko discussed the issue of religious freedom in the U.S.S.R., especially with regard to Lithuania the Ukraine, and other areas having sizeable Catholic populations.

The Italian news agency, ANSA, said the two also discussed human rights and world peace, with special focus on the Middle East.

Gromyko is no stranger to the Vatican; he met there with Pope Paul VI on at least four occasions.

Before leaving Latin America, the Pope may visit Cuba, according to some sectors. It has been reported by CBS News that John Paul had asked Cuba for permission to visit that Communist nation. As of Monday morning, no further reports were available.

Lithuanian Prayers Asked Feb. 16

The bishops of the United States have suggested that everyone pray for those living in Communist Lithuania, as part of the observance of Feb. 16, Lithuanian Independence Day.

A diocesan Pastoral Center release suggests that parishes may want to insert a petition into the General Intercessions for Sunday, Feb. 11, reading:

"That God bless and strengthen the suffering Catholics of Lithuania and all those throughout the world whose spiritual and human rights are violated, we pray to the Lord..."

Married Couples Retreat Set

A weekend retreat for married couples is scheduled for Feb. 9-11 at the Cenacle, under sponsorship of the Catholic Family Center and the Cenacle. John and Elizabeth Barnowski and others will lead discussions of communication in marriage. Reservations may be made with Sister Arline Breatz 716-271-8755.

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