

The Ideology of National Security

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Because every single nation talks about national security, it is necessary to point out that the national security this article is concerned with is that particular kind of philosophy which at present is the basis of the justification of most Latin American military dictatorships.

In so far as these Generals and 'Colonels' are concerned, national security is simply the national expression of what they see as the permanent and irreconcilable conflict between capitalism (actually: neo-classical capitalism) and Marxism (actually: the Russian interpretation of it). So here we have our 'black and white'. No grey can be allowed in. The military governments in South America which have, each in their own way, adopted the doctrine of 'national security' are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. There are other régimes which are more crudely dictatorial in the sense that they are simply based on family ambition. The most glaring example is Nicaragua where until recently President Somoza tried to maintain his position in the face of world-wide protest.

It is true that for a long time *caudillismo* prevailed in Latin America, in fact ever since Spain and Portugal colonized it. This was a quasi-dictatorial régime which, with a number of variations, thrived on a co-operation between the two authoritarian institutions of the post-Renaissance Catholic world: the army and Mother Church, an unholy marriage perhaps but this was the situation. This combination was not dictatorial in the modern sense, but rather overwhelmingly paternalistic. Where then did these Generals find the inspiration for this new philosophy of 'national security'?

The answer to this question does not lie in Latin America but in North America, the United States. In 1823 President Monroe, afraid of Spanish absolutism and Russian claims on the Pacific Coast, declared that the whole American continent was no longer open to colonization, while at the same time declaring that the USA was not interested in the politics of Europe. The USA saw in Latin America a future for its own prosperity.

When, however, more than a century later, the alliance of the Western Powers during World War II disintegrated into the cold war, the USA saw in the expansion of Russian communism a threat to its economic prosperity, particularly in Latin America. As there was trouble in Greece and Turkey, President Truman translated the Monroe doctrine into a universal 'capitalist versus communist'

doctrine, and in 1947 persuaded Congress, on this basis to provide 400 000 000 dollars in military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey to stop the spread of communism in the Balkans. Ever since then the USA has put itself at the head of a vast military and economic defence of the capitalist world against communism. For the USA economic and military aid became one in purpose. Since Marxism had proved that economics had even more power than the military, the two could no longer be separated in the struggle between capitalism and communism.

As after World War II there was a world-wide awakening of political and social consciousness, the USA became particularly concerned about what might happen on its own doorstep, Latin America. The American trans-national companies had already put a stranglehold on the economy of the Latin American republics. Via the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) this was supported by a vast deployment of 'military and economic' aid. On the military side this was embodied in the Military Assistance Advisory Groups (MAAG) which had in 1969 more than 7000 military men attached to it who administered the Military Assistance Programme (MAP) and the Foreign Military Sales Programme (FMS). MAAG works "very closely with the armed forces of the local government in developing and assessing the latter's military requirements, evaluating local requests for assistance, advising and assisting in training local forces to use the material supplied, and screening and recommending the local candidates proposed for military training in the United States" (J. Cloffelter, *The Military in American Politics*, N.Y. 1973, p. 267). All agreements gone into must conform to the policies laid down by Washington, and MAAG can by-pass the local US Ambassadors and get a direct line to Washington.

This set-up organized the Laotian war in the 1960s, the Army Special Forces (Green Berets) in Vietnam, a Civilian Irregular Defence Group; they trained counter-insurgents in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Bolivian troops who killed Ché Guevara in 1967. "It was hoped by the Pentagon that among the 10 000 foreign military personnel trained annually by the United States at 175 domestic bases and centres overseas were *future leaders of their nations' armed forces and perhaps governments* (my italics). The President of El Salvador, the President of Nicaragua, the President and Foreign Minister of Peru, and the War Minister of Brazil were MAAG trainees ... Even in a sensitive area such as chemical and biological weapons, several hundred were trained" (*Ibid.* pp. 208-9). Finally, "In effect, since the change of hemispheric defence strategy by the Kennedy Administration in mid-1961 in response to Cuba, the emphasis placed on internal security and the fight against subversion, at the expense of the usual external orient-

ated defence, transformed the military institutions of Latin American countries into forces of control and social conservatism” (Alain Rouquie, “Changing Functions of Military Rule. Military Revolutions and National Independence in Latin America”, in P. C. Schmitter, ed. *Military Rule in Latin America*, vol III 1973, p.8).

What is important here is that in a number of Latin American countries the generals, trained by the War College of Panama or the one in Brazil, have bent the traditional role of the military from external defence or attack into a nationally *introvert* function. In other words, the military is orientated, *not* so much towards external enemies and an external defence or attack, but rather to internal enemies and an internal defence. This means that the ultimate power to secure the survival of the nation, traditionally accepted when there is an external war on, is now seized by the military *within* the nation. Since war is and has been taken traditionally as allowing of no compromise because it is a matter of survival (even if for many of us it is no such thing, historically speaking), the military have taken over the civil government. Thus the national government becomes a military dictatorship in theory and practice.

It also means that, apart from an outright civil war, this internal war is a war of words, internal policies, attitudes, social and psychological elements rather than a question of missiles and tanks, the military lays down what ideas are the right ones, what attitudes are allowed, what the priority is of the values by which people shall live, whether they like it or not and the range of sanctions to impose the military ideology on the people. It is therefore essentially an ideological war. From this point of view, then, it is obvious that there is no difference in the manipulation of the people between Russian communist dictatorship and Latin American capitalist dictatorship. Both exhibit the same violence, the same reliance on spying and reporting, the same perversion of justice, the same repression of any ideals which are not strictly and narrowly the same as those of the dictatorship. The only difference is that the capitalist ideology is individualistic, while the communist ideology is collective. Here we have a black-and-white Manichae-an opposition. It precludes mutual tolerance, genuine understanding, rules out any humanist interpretation of politics and is simply a celebration of power, power over people. As Pinochet, the Chile dictator, put it in his textbook *Geopolitica*: “National power is the power wielded by the State in organizing social life in the broadest sense of the term, and this includes organizing the people with a view to controlling the country and the population living within its boundaries, in order to implement the will of the State in an essentially dynamic fashion” (2nd ed. Santiago, 1974, p. 153).

What we have therefore in Latin America is a complex system. Out of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism grew an independence movement which led to independent nations ruled by an elderly couple, the Army and the Church, in a rather patronizing way, sometimes beneficial, sometimes brutal and monstrous. The USA, with obvious good sense, never indulged in the costly military and political kind of colonialism of the European powers. It saw that real power lay in controlling the economic factors by which people live: food, drink, property, labour, industry, and under the tyranny of capitalism, money, which has become, under it, the ultimate sovereign and totally amoral norm by which human actions and human beings are judged.

So the USA occupied Latin America economically – the evidence is now so vast and conclusive that nobody denies this any more. But one of man's lowest, though very powerful, instincts is to defend and hold on to what one owns, at all costs. For this is what capitalism is all about. Wealth today is not simply a matter of a peasant holding on to his coin-filled stocking at the foot of his bed, it is not even the bit of soil owned, but it is the peculiar myth that finance, money, is the supreme security, even though we all know it is not. Hence the pompous myths of the excruciating BBC's Financial Reports every night on the home programme. Yet, money today is the core of power.

Because of their economic and financial interests (and methods) the American trans-national companies have a major interest at risk in Latin America, the United Fruit Company being one of the most scandalous instances, as has been shown by the Haslemere Group in various leaflets and many more weighty sources. So, the US (as a political and economic entity, *not* necessarily representing the American people) did not send armies to Latin America, but the trans-nationals bought up everything by generously paying Latin American owners who in turn kept wages at the lowest possible level. This is what is meant by neo-colonial capitalism: external dependence of the country on some capitalistic body, (not accountable to any government at all), combined with internal exploitation of the little people by the few rich landowners of the vast latifundia where the materials (vegetable or mineral) are produced.

When World War II produced a wave of genuine democratic conscientization through its own propaganda for popular support, a new situation arose. The trans-nationals found themselves threatened by what was – in their eyes inevitably – called subversive Marxism but was in fact the people's demand for economic justice. They never understood that precisely because of this accusation in this situation they paid Marx a highly Christian compliment.

So in the USA it was not a matter of crude military intervention. It was a matter of using the Central Intelligence Agency with all its devious and amoral methods to build up a reactionary group inside these Latin American countries, principally by training and indoctrinating the military and organizing the secret police, and then letting the military dictatorship face the music. No expense to the USA trans-national companies, no American blood spilt (Vietnam had proved the total failure of such crude interventions) and strengthening the built-in military Quislings with a wealth which looked right in statistics and balances of payment, but wholly wrong to the little people (see Gary MacEoin's *Chile. The struggle for Dignity*, London 1975 and New York 1974).

The curious fact of the situation was that in order to maintain a semblance of justification for their savage military and police rule the Generals needed the traditional help of their matrimonial partner, the Church. Unfortunately, this had not been considered by either the purely materialistic trans-national companies nor by the Generals when they were indoctrinated.

In 1968 the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) met at Medellín. Already the bishops were aware of the rising tension. This tension was two-fold: one of a more determined opposition to dictatorial regimes and one between some members of the hierarchy who wanted to preserve the traditional status and security of the Church by supporting the ruling élite, and a large number of others who realised that the whole evangelical credibility of the Church was at stake, as Helder Camara did and still does. The traditional ones, however, were powerfully supported by the Roman Curia, though apparently not by Pope Paul; those committed to the poor were exposed to the harassments of the authorities, military and ecclesiastical.

Some facts about Medellín may illustrate the situation. CELAM II was convoked by the Roman Curia. It was the Curia that chose the three presidents, the principal of whom was Cardinal Samoré, who belonged to the Holy Office (as it was then called) before acting as a nuncio in Colombia. The Conference was given no autonomy and no juridical status. The votes and conclusions had to be ratified by the Curia. Canon Houtart, Fr Arroso, Fr Velasquez and Mr Vanistendael (Pax Romana) were excluded by the Curia. From the suggested twenty representatives of the working classes, only three were allowed in, by order of the Curia. The bishops were forbidden to receive outside documents without the consent of the president, Cardinal Samoré, and so a petition, representing five million workers, was not allowed to be distributed although it was addressed directly to the Pope. Mgr Mozzoni, nuncio to Argentina, present at the insistence of the Curia, claim-

ed that the preparatory draft “smacked of ‘horizontal humanism’,” and accused the few lay participants of calumniating the Church and reducing everything to Vatican II. As Henri Fesquet, religious correspondent of *Le Monde*, pointed out, most Latin American nuncios practically refused to accept Pope John’s aggiornamento, yet five of them were called into the Conference (See my *The Roman Curia*, Pastoral Dev. Booklet 2, 1970, p. 19).

One can understand therefore that there is some nervousness in the camp of the local bishops with regard to Puebla, where CELAM III took place. As at Medellín, the preparatory document was tampered with. The official Secretary was Bishop Lopez Trujillo, who frequently attacked the camp of Helder Camara and Cardinal Arns and whose advisor is Roger Vekemans, paid by the CIA for bringing down Allende. The Curia was represented by Cardinal Baggio, and there was talk of Fr Comblin, author of *Le Pouvoir Militaire en Amérique Latine. L’idéologie de la Sécurité Nationale*, Paris, 1977, being expelled.

One can understand the attack made by a group of Peruvian theologians on the preparatory document when one reads para. 657 as manipulated by Bishop Trujillo: “By evangelizing them and receiving them into its bosom, the church makes poor people participants in a supreme hope, founded on the promises of the Lord. Even when they are deprived of everything, they possess the richness of having a God, who being rich became poor (II Cor 8:9), and faith, as a word that nourishes, lets them live with fortitude and the joy of the Kingdom, already embryonic, which no human pain can take away” (*Latin American Press*, 23 February 1978; see *Cross Currents* xxviii, 1 p. 48.) How did Trujillo think any bishop or parish priest could put this across to people who have no money, no bread, no work and no land, and who see their defenders arrested, imprisoned, tortured or disappear without trace (Amnesty International has published the lists)?

The Latin American Church can no longer wriggle out of the conflict between capitalism and Marxism. The Generals exploit their ‘Catholicism’ quite blatantly. Rear-Admiral Guzzetti said on 15 April 1976 (three weeks after the 24 March coup in Argentina): “It is a task which God has been pleased to put into our hands”. On 13 June 1977 General Menendez declared: “The Argentinian people must grasp the meaning of the struggle we are engaged in ... It is for belief in God”. On the very day of the military coup in Chile, 11 September 1973, General Leigh simply asserted: “It was a mission given to us by God”. On the other side we have Helder Camara saying at Lausanne on 27 December 1976: “Every country in Latin America, except three, is governed by the military, who use methods we all know too well ... The real root of the evil

is the logic of National Security, imposed by North America". The utter ruthlessness of this National Security doctrine is well illustrated by the Argentinian General Saint Jean who is reported as having said: "First, we must kill the guerilleros, then the collaborators, then the sympathizers, then the indifferent and finally the hesitant".

One could easily fill a book if one concentrated on all the factual and documentary information available. In spite of the wonderful and persistent work done by Fr Comblin, the easiest, most sober and careful summary of the whole complex situation is to be found in the Bulletin, published by that really very competent set-up of Pro Mundi Vita, under the direction of Fr Jan Kerkhofs, which has produced a wealth of very relevant publications and operates from Rue de la Limite 6, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium. This particular Bulletin is headed: *The Churches of Latin America in confrontation with the State and the Ideology of National Security* (nr. 71, March-April 1978). Also basic are Joseph Comblin, *Le pouvoir militaire en Amérique Latine. L'idéologie de la Sécurité Nationale*; Gary MacEoin, *Chile, The Struggle for dignity* (Coventure, London, 1975); the Spring issue of *Cross-Currents* 1978 (obtainable from the Latin-American Bureau, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1); and finally the whole series of fortnightly issues of *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, Paris, from 1968-1978. One could also do worse than subscribing to *The Tablet* for its rubric 'The Church in the World', which keeps up remarkably high standards of reporting.

The trouble with having masses of separated facts and statements is that it obstructs a clear insight into what is at stake and so paralyses any collective effort to find a positive solution. The result is simply well-meaning chaos, no doubt producing martyrs but no solution. I therefore want to conclude this article by pinning down a few basic issues which are implied in this whole 'National Security' heresy but which, when spelt out, we are remarkably reluctant to face. I want to know why, and shouldn't we all?

If we begin with matters within the Catholic Church only, we have the basic conflict between the political- and power-orientated Roman Curia and the evangelical- and pastoral-orientated local hierarchies. The Curia as it has existed from roughly the fourth century to the present day has grown up historically as a predominantly political instrument, without any spiritual, evangelical or theological foundation, to support a secularised concept of St Peter's leadership, embodied in a monarchical papacy, with a papal State and a papal worldly sovereignty. Unfortunately, even Pope John Paul II introduced himself at the UN as "Head of the Vatican

State”.

Yet, throughout the world, nuncios are attached (at considerable expense to the Church) to all countries to supervise the local hierarchies. Because the Curial set-up sees the Church of Rome (still very Italian) as a political and obviously traditional and conservative establishment, it is bound to come into conflict with those bishops and priests whose whole existence is wrapped up with ordinary people of all nations and races and political persuasions. What do Catholics subscribe to? This, obviously, leads to a more fundamental question. If the papacy became a rival power to the Byzantine Emperor (paying the price of a schism which so far has not found enough generosity for reconciliation), this was only because, under historical circumstances which I have tried to explain in my “Changing Shape of the Institution” (*Authority in a Changing Church*, Sheed & Ward, London 1968, pp. 103-137), the movement which Jesus founded became an *institution*, and so institutionalised God’s message – the very reason why institutionalised Judaism condemned Jesus to death. It is this ambiguity of the Catholic Church (is it a political institution or a prophetic movement?) which has to be resolved. Cardinal Suenens pointed this out as the major problem for theologians, referring to the inherent contradiction between chapters II and III of Vatican II’s *Constitution on the Church*. People are at stake, not rationalised doctrines.

This leads to a far more agonizing issue. The point is that (as shown in the quote from the Peruvian theologians above) there is not only ambiguity in the present state of the institutional church, but statements which sometimes verge on hypocrisy. Anybody who calls himself a Christian and tells the totally deprived that they share in God’s richness is not only devoid of any Christian understanding, but excruciatingly insensitive to the actual degradation of poverty when it has reached the stage where no recovery is possible, mainly because the more well-to-do refuse to face the fact of their unchristian clinging to unnecessary wealth.

Dr Huizing, in *Concilium* 8, 1978, explains in his introduction to this issue about Canon Law that in the West we are so deeply involved in the system of capitalism that the Church simply cannot extract its vast and unnecessary wealth and property because it is the practical way in which Western society operates. Huizing is one of the most perceptive canon lawyers it has been my privilege to translate. He is cool and plainly states the facts.

Now, if it is true (in spite of some over-simplification) that the church is split into a politically and power-orientated Curia and a pastorally and people-orientated hierarchy, then it is obvious that the Curia – the “spiritual power” sector – will side with the polit-

ical establishment, the property-owning classes, the multi-national companies and the right-wing dictatorships. The bishops – the “spiritual-pastoral” sector - will look for support from anybody genuinely committed to the real needs of the people. As long as the Curia was thought to represent the ‘church’ the ordinary people and particularly the poor identified the ‘church’ with the ruling élite, and in the West this means ‘capitalism’, Because of this historically built-in attitude, the Catholic Church has traditionally been seen to be on the side of the monarchy, the landowners, big business, bankers, and, in politics, the dictators, the Conservatives and the right-wing Christian Democrats. This has happened, not only in Latin America, but also in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria. This means that capitalism was not only seen as good and sound and stable, but also that its totally amoral and frequently immoral principles were never seriously queried. One has only to listen to the extraordinary mystification of capitalism in the nightly financial report on the BBC to realise that capitalism is totally divorced from any concern for people or human values. One ought to be grateful to the Latin American Generals to have at long last forced Catholics to face the fact that capitalism is as materialistic, as atheistic, as besotted with the lust for power as communism at its worst, particularly in Russia. For it is clear from the available evidence that the Latin American dictatorships are primarily rooted in the all-pervasive economic power of the capitalist system and its main representatives, the trans-national companies, who not only set the tone for the ‘affluent society’ but impose the materialistic values which corrupt Western society and cause the decay of Christian norms and the Christian way of life.

We are very wrong in seeking an escape in constantly using so-called Marxism as the scape-goat for our own moral failure as Christians. Our moral and ascetic values have been sapped by capitalist materialism, not Marxist atheism. Even *Concilium* has frequently examined Marxist atheism, but I don’t know that it has ever examined with an equal moral concern and on a true theological basis the far more subtle and dangerous atheism of the capitalist system with its total disregard for true human values, the evil of greed and power, the ruthless and often humanly disastrous lust for more wealth and more power, and the total attack on the spiritual values and self-restraint on which the Christian ethos is built. It is hypocrisy to maintain that ruthless individualistic competition is equal to ‘freedom’ in St Paul’s sense; it is hypocrisy to maintain that the socially concerned Christians neglect the love of God because they love the neighbour. None of us can love the neighbour in the terms of the gospel: losing one’s soul, laying down one’s life for the brother, without clinging to God so that

we may love mankind as a whole and each member of it as God loved mankind and sent his only Son to liberate man from exploitation, suspicion and mutual torture. Surely, it is theologically pernicious to explain the love of the neighbour as a threat to the love of God? This was the perversion underlying Edward Norman's Reith lectures and what he called 'politicization'. The PMV Bulletin, referred to above, and which is based on the work done by Aldo Büntig at PMV's request (he died on the job in Costa Rica, 23 February 1978), has an exceedingly helpful appendix on the use and abuse of the term 'Marxism'. This very careful analysis should be widely distributed in Catholic publications.

The Manichaeic concept of a total war between total capitalism and total communism is perverse. The total capitalist and the total communist do not exist. Man is simply not built that way. The real evil lies in that such an absolute concept is exclusively concerned with power. In either version such an absolutism leaves no room for any genuine freedom, and above all, it excludes love. The inaugural statements of Pope John Paul II give one the feel that this is precisely where he thinks the Christian should stand; nowhere is mankind a mere schizophrenic combination of the wholly black and the wholly white. Without freedom and without love humanity just is not real.

There is, however, a problem which — at least from my own experience — is extremely worrying. When we all cool down and talk things over, it seems that, as individual persons, there is nobody totally devoid of some sense of goodness and nobility towards which we should all strive. The terrible fact of experience, though, is that as soon as one sees politics at work on a large scale, dealing with large numbers of people, the level of personal reflection and commitment goes down. One can always whip up the masses for anything that boosts their primitive instinct for material survival. As Hitler showed: all that is necessary is to give selfish instincts a flavour of emotional dignity and prestige. Why is it so hard to make them work together communally for their spiritual survival? We all experience that tug-of-war inside ourselves. Why must the lowest common denominator always prevail, in Church or State? Does it mean that our emotions are always and inevitably self-centred? Does it mean that reason is essential to channel the emotional forces and discipline them? Should we then always sneer at the intellectual but always accommodate our precious feelings? Is it possible that in psychology and sociology we have overreacted in favour of free emotions? Is it possible that consumerism, always playing on emotional reactions, is in fact a corrupting element in an already individualistic society? I hope that this will set some clever people thinking. A positive answer to these questions would take the sting out of extremist ideologies.