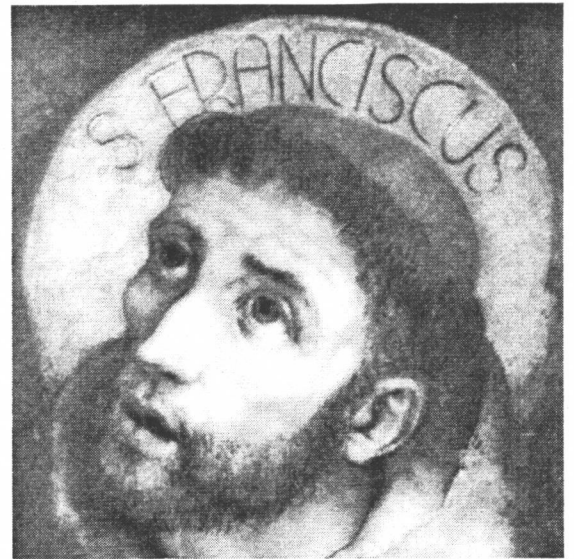


Go,
Rebuild
My Church!

**Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan
Mission
Charism**



Prophetic
Criticism of Social
Systems from the
Franciscan
Viewpoint

Lesson Unit 21
Part 2
Marxism

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our *cloister*, we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.



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**Go, Rebuild My
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*A Comprehensive
Course on the
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Charism*



**Prophetic Criticism
of Social Systems from
the Franciscan
Viewpoint**



**Lesson Unit 21
Part 2
Marxism**



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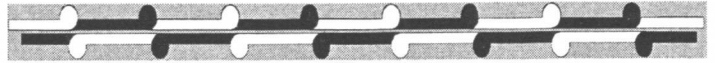
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M

arxism

Karl Marx and those who followed him elaborated the most vigorous criticism of capitalism there is. Consequently it should come as no surprise that, from the time of its origins down to our day, Marxism has embodied the hopes of the labour movement and the poor population. From Marxism these people have drawn a strikingly "messianic vision" (Puebla 210) of a final reorganisation of social structures. The messianism already lies in Karl Marx's way of thinking; his Jewish-Protestant roots are a plausible explanation for it. The collapse of communism, which saw itself as the realisation of Marxist ideas, managed to shake their hopes. Yet many people today who refuse to put up with capitalism, still remain convinced Marxists. Are these stubborn ideologists who don't want to see their error? Or does the Marxist analysis of capitalism with its alternative proposals still remain valid today? As soon as we raise this question, we

shall find ourselves caught up in a violent controversy. The passion that people bring to the discussion of Marxism is nothing new; it is part of the very history of Marxism.



Lenin speaking in May 1917 to the workers at the Putilow factory in St. Petersburg.



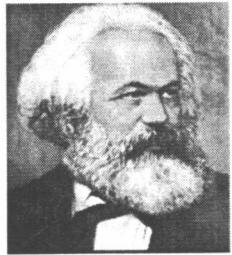


Marxism - What is it?

What is Marxism? An adequate answer to this question cannot be subtle and complex enough.

For Marxism defies a simple definition. So we have to proceed with care and take it step by step.

Karl Marx



Karl Marx was born on May 5, 1818, in the German city of Trier. His parents were Jews, but his father, the lawyer Heinrich (Heschel) Marx, had his son baptised when he was six. As a Protestant pupil, Karl attended primary school and

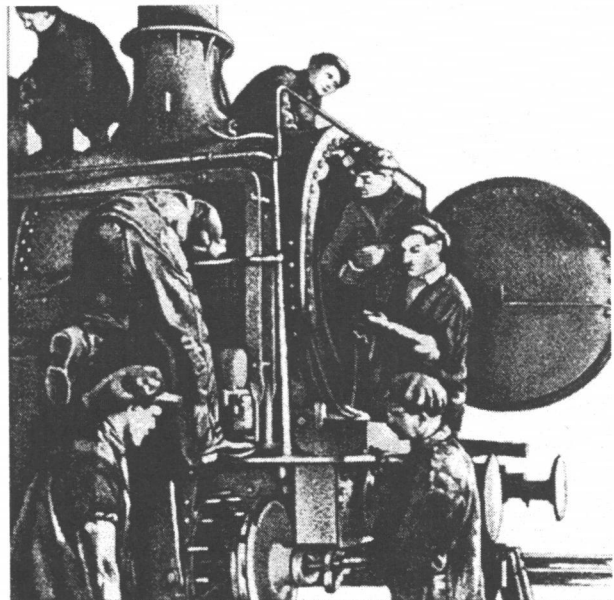
secondary school in his hometown of Trier. He continued his studies at the universities of Bonn and Berlin and finished with a doctorate in philosophy (Ph.D.). In Bonn and Berlin he came into contact with the philosophical currents of his time. He encountered the ideas of two people and studied them critically. They helped forge his thinking.

• *His encounter with Friedrich Hegel, the Hegelians and with German Idealism*

Marx was intellectually convinced by the dialectics of Friedrich Hegel, with its progression from thesis, through antithesis, to synthesis. Hegel's thought deepened Marx's understanding and helped him reconcile oppositions on a higher level. Hegel had addressed such difficult questions as the freedom of a created being, personal sacrifice and self-realisation, the incarnation of the unchangeable God.

Hegel set out to explain how the Pure or the Absolute Idea (hence the concept "Idealism") – Hegel's term for the Divine – realises itself in space and time. Through material nature and the finite human spirit, the Idea progressively reaches its highest forms in the state, in art, and in religion, - and in this order.

Marx changes the Hegelian pattern. He replaces Idea with matter, and idealism turns into Marx's *materialism*. Matter stands forth and replaces spirit, or Idea, as the principle of being, and thus we have historical materialism. Nature and human beings are expressions of matter. In time, matter finds its highest expression, not in Hegel's state, art, and religion, but above all, in applied technologies, in production, in "the praxis" of people in a communist¹, classless society.



Marxism arose out of protest at the oppression of the exploited working class.

According to Marx this classless society was historically the origin of all social development and is its objective. We have lost paradise, so to speak, and must find it again. We wander as aliens

¹Communist: from Latin *communis* = common, equal in the sense of a society common to all and not divided into classes.



(hence *alienation*) through the world and have to find our way back home. So, until now, history has not merely been a constant failure to live up to an ideal; it runs counter to the original plan. We see this most clearly in private property and in social classes, as well as in the separation between capital and labour.

The fact that Karl Marx gives the working masses the leading role in the struggle to bring back the classless society has a practical reason for the philosopher: it was from them that he expected the energies needed for the necessary revolution to come. Also they are the ones who, in a society divided into classes, have to suffer the most from exploitation and alienation.

- **His friendship with Friedrich Engels**



Thorough studies in economics and philosophy, and his encounter and friendship with Friedrich Engels, gave Marx an insight into socio-economic connections that are of lasting importance. This in-

sight into the close links between economic and social processes and phenomena provided the philosopher Karl Marx with the critical apparatus, enabling him to launch an historically speaking unparalleled political movement. Its inaugural moment was the publication of the "Communist Manifesto," of 1848, jointly written by Marx and Engels.

Not until Marx and the arrival of *Marxism* did the labouring masses become conscious of themselves as a social class. Marxism became a spiritual orientation, a kind of religion to many: from its ideas they derived their sense of meaning and of purpose. This should not surprise us! The church stood on the side of those with wealth and power; it was unable to free itself from the suspicion of the workers that it sanctioned the *status quo* and pointed to a final consolation in heaven rather than take sides with the workers. Now the suspicion found confirmation in the fact that the church's principles of social justice were elaborated and published only 50 years after the *Manifesto* of 1848, and little or nothing was done to see to their implementation.

Various Forms of Marxism

1.2.

- **The early Marx**

When he was setting out, Karl Marx proposed an unconditional humanism: a humanism that the esteemed Russian philosopher A. Ignatow described as "astoundingly rich and many-sided." Here is Marx in his early writings: "A man's roots lie in himself... The criticism of religion leads us to the teaching that man is for mankind the highest being. He it is who, by the categorical imperative², has the task of reordering all relationships in which man is a downtrodden, enslaved, forlorn and



²Kant's term for the maxim: "Act in such a way that your action can become law for everyone."



worthless being..." It is clear: For mankind, the human person is the absolute value. He is subject neither to social pressure nor to economic laws. Marx proposes a humanism that he called "the positive path beyond religion." In other words, what religion is actually striving to achieve becomes reality, when the human person stands radiant in the perfection of his/her human dignity.

We can appreciate this attitude of mind when we recall that at that time, religion – as people saw it in the Church – stood on the side of the powerful, while offering the poor the comfort of "the next life". Thinkers at the time did not see clearly how much more fundamental both religion and spirituality were to human nature. At any rate, Marx was not speaking then about a revolution to reorganise society, but about "a metaphysical transformation and an eschatological event" (A. Ignatow). The mythical figure of Prometheus³ makes this clear. He did not accept the "status quo" but stole the fire from the gods to bring it to earth. In this and other ways he helped humankind begin its history. For that reason he is "the foremost saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar" (Texts on Method 130).

This early Marx was not discovered until the 20th Century. Many people wanted to invoke Marx the humanist when the inhuman face of communism more and more came to light. Orthodox Marxists blocked off such recourse. Marx, so they said, was not a Marxist in his early years. Even when Marxists were getting rid of Stalin's destructive influence on the Communist Party, they censured any reference to the young Marx as unpardonable heresy and revisionism. Even Western Marxists such as the French philosopher L. Althusser maintained that "early Marxism was not real Marxism. The early writings lack maturity, use of them is reversal" (Ignatow).

• The later or 'mature' Marx

When Marx met Engels, his way of thinking changed radically. According to one's mental attitude, this can be considered as a sign of maturity or an aberration. Even Marxists do not

agree which it is.

From Engels Karl Marx took, among other things, a naive belief in science and progress, along with a reduced idea of the real nature of the human person. The metaphysical dimension in human nature is now denied. The human person is subject to social and, above all, economic circumstances. He/she ends up more their product than their master. The human person no longer counts as a human individuality and disappears under the weight of history. Although all of this is but theory, it ended up having frightful consequences. The human person becomes an *object* that the party can knead and form as it wishes. Stalin pushed that line of thought to its extremes.

Stalin's excesses put an end to the Marxism of N. J. Bucharin (1888-1938). As a member of the Politburo, Bucharin supported Stalin's program at first, but turned against him decisively when Stalin began collectivising agriculture and forcing industrialisation. People spread the rumour that Bucharin maintained "that it was high time to put an end to all the talk about economics and begin thinking about people" (Ignatow). Accused by Stalin of drifting to the right of the party line, Bucharin was manoeuvred aside and lost all his roles and influence. On account of his opinions he was later thrown into prison, where he wrote and left behind a philosophical tract. In it he once again placed especial emphasis on the essential nature of the human individual. He was executed in 1938, but in 1956 his name was restored to honour.

• Communism (Lenin, Mao, Tito, Castro) also called 'Eastern Marxism'

Lenin, along with other exponents of his theory, accorded the state primacy, subordinating the individual people to the prevailing social conditions. They turned the unquestioned rule of one party, initially proposed as dictatorship of the proletariat, into a totalitarian system without concern for people. They turned it into what Alexander Solzhenitsyn called "The Gulag Archipelago", where countless people were imprisoned, tortured, and killed.

³Greek, prometheus = the one who thinks ahead. A Titan = from the family of the Gods. A benefactor of the humans and a bringer of culture.





"The Soviet People follow with determination the way shown by Lenin."

People like Lenin made their mark on Eastern Marxism: dogmatism in science, regimentation of thought, impatience with doubters, and so on. They subjected everything to the single goal of bringing forth a classless society and a condition of general happiness. The end justifies the means. In doing so, they sacrificed the individual on the altar of History.

We find the standard expression of Eastern Marxism exemplified in what Leo Trotsky said about the murder of the Czar family: *"The ruthlessness with which we did away with the Czar let everyone know that we are determined to pursue a merciless struggle. Nothing will make us hesitate. The execution of the Czar and his family was necessary both to strike fear into the heart of the enemy and to remove all hope and, further, to shake up our own people to the realisation that there is no turning back"* (Trotsky). We have here a clear example of the barbarity of which man is capable when he pursues a lofty moral goal (happiness) by immoral means (violence, terror, murder). Violence can recoil upon its perpetrators, as Wladimir Majakowskij shows in his poem (quoted by Ignatow):

*I too am fed up with agitprop art.
I too prefer fine literature.
I'd lie to feel good and make money.
But I controlled myself, though shaking,
And blocked the song in my throat.*

Agitprop was the public relations work by writers and artists for the communist party's programs. They and all others, if true supporters of the system, were expected to discipline themselves to its ends. Out of such behaviour arose the expression "ascetic Marxism," which fascinated such ascetics as Ernesto Cardenal (see his Cuban diary).

• "The Western Marxism"

"Western Marxism" is a term for the broad array of interpretations of Marx. These readings of Marx differ in the way they handle party-based communism; some accept it at face value, others criticise it even to the point of rejecting it, while working through Marx's basic ideas.

Western Marxism differs from its Eastern counterpart above all in that it exercises no party domination over the state. It strives for the liberation of man from all alienation and for the humanisation of society. In this way it proposes to bring about happiness on earth. Western Marxists want programs of social transformation that work now, in the present, and do not put off to a distant future the dawn of a new and happy era. That distinguishes *Western* from *Eastern* Marxism, and this leads Ignatow to call it a *hedonistic* Marxism. Marxists of this Western cast include well-known names: A. Gramsci in Italy (1891-1937); G. Lukacs in Hungary (1885-1971); L. Kolakowski in Poland (1927-); in France L. Althusser (1918-1990) and R. Garaudy (1913-); E. Bloch in Germany (1885-1977); W. Reich in Austria (1897-1957). Each name could furnish material for a fascinating biography.

• Cultural Marxism

This concept embraces a good number of writers and groups, who, although influenced by Karl Marx to a considerable extent, use his ideas in their own way. Those who spoke up for a radical humanism containing echoes of Marx include: the French playwright, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) with his social philosophy; the psy-



choanalyst Erich Fromm (1900-1979); the philosopher Bertrand Russels (1872-1970); the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt School (Max Horkheimer, 1895-1973; Theodor Adorno, 1903-1969; Jürgen Habermas, 1929; Herbert Marcuse, 1898-1979). In recent decades they have influenced Western thought thoroughly and been studied as well by philosophers of the southern hemisphere. Given their commitment to justice for workers as the weaker members of society, other socialist or social-democratic movements have been grouped under Marxism as well. This is true, even though their formal relations with Marxism might be loose or non-existent, or no longer existent.

• **Marxism in the Third World**

In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, with due respect to the particularities of cultural currents and socio-political conditions, Marxism or socialism has come to the fore. For example, Julius Nyerere developed a specifically Tanzanian socialism on the basis of *Ujamaa*, a word designating the tradition and role of the extended family in the life of Tanzanians. Similar independent experiments have taken place in Zimbabwe and Egypt, while Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia have adopted Soviet Marxism. These explicit efforts at Marxist politics influenced other instances of Marxist socialism in Africa. China, the most populous country with a communist government, overshadows Asia. Mao Tse-Tung led the country onto its own communist way. This resulted in considerable tensions with the Soviet Union, which claimed to represent the pure teaching of Marxism. Both communist models, Chinese Maoism and Soviet communism, cast their light in various ways on the other Asian countries. No other forms of Marxism have emerged in Asia.

Because of its consequences for the Church's theology, let us look more closely now at Marxism in Latin America. We have all the more reason to do so as the different forms of liberation theology have had repercussions throughout the world.

To understand *Marxism in Latin America*, we need a little more his-

tory. Not intellectuals, but immigrant labourers from Europe were the ones who brought Marxism to Latin America. They did so not so much by spreading his teachings but rather by spreading the hope intrinsic to socialism.



Mikhail Bakunin

Also they did not *preach* Marx at first. It was the social revolutionary, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), whose thoughts they spread, thoughts not taught as a system but melded variously into the social conditions of Latin America.

Bakunin had first joined with Karl Marx, but ended up going his own way. He wanted to develop a social order on the basis of total freedom for the individual and with due respect for the principles of justice, equality, and fraternity. Still he was ready, should it be necessary, to use force and terror to bring about communism. Bakunin's ideas led to the first communist parties in Latin America.

Marx achieved significance in Latin America because he stood up for the oppressed from the very beginning. When Karl Marx died in 1883, **Jose Marti**, a Cuban revolutionary and writer, published an obituary in the Argentinean paper, *La Nación*. "Karl Marx is dead," he wrote. "He took up the cause of the weak, and for that he deserves honour." He fascinated people by what we today would call his "option for the poor." Yet Jose Marti already put in critical words of Marxism which are valid still today. In opposition to class war, Marti proposed the gentle solution of development because he saw danger in foment-



1949: China becomes communist.
The declaration of the Peoples' Republic of China.

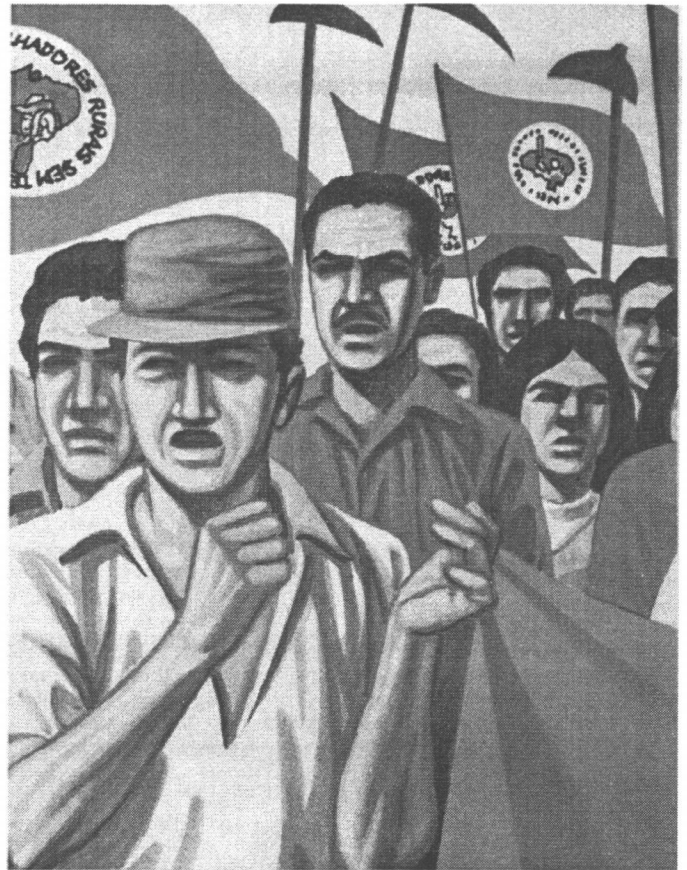


ing enmity among men. According to Marti, Marx proposed such tactics exploratorily, *“without seeing that neither from the womb of a people in history nor from the womb of a woman at home can children be brought to life, ready for all of life’s complications, unless they are the fruit of a natural and energetic development”* (as quoted in Fornet-Betancourt).

Only after Lenin’s “October Revolution” in 1917, did Karl Marx come to the fore as the most important motor of Latin American communist parties, whether already well established or newly founded. These parties took over the basic elements of Lenin’s interpretation of Marxism. Historically, they have not exercised much influence. The case is different with the early forms of an independent Latin-American Marxism. Here there comes to mind first of all the name of **José Carlos Mariátegui**, who in the years 1928-1930 developed a Marxist program that no longer derives its way of thinking from its European roots but from the context of Peru. He is considered to be Latin America’s “first Marxist.” But at the same time each country on the continent had people who thought similarly. Mariátegui rejected a dogmatic Marxism whose lessons had to be learned and passed on. He argued that such Marxism belonged to the 19th century and had no validity in the 20th. He looked on Marxism much more as a method with which to analyse Peruvian or Latin-American realities. In other words, *“the only way to continue and transcend Marxism”* is to take it as a method and not as a doctrine (as quoted in Fornet-Betancourt). In the eyes of the Soviet Union, of course, that was heresy.

In Mariátegui’s writings, it is also clear what was to be understood by the term “the Marxist method.” It studied a clearly defined problem

- in the light of economic and social exploitation;
- from the point of view of those who suffered it;
- with the goal, when necessary, of changing the situation by a revolution.



‘Option for the Poor’ and ‘Salvation as Total Liberation’ are two concerns of the Latin American Bishops at Medellin, 1968.

Between 1928-1930 Mariátegui wrote sentences which could have been penned today: *“We note that the economic and political system which we have been fighting, is gradually transforming itself into a tool of the colonisation of our country by foreign, imperialistic capitalism. For that reason we propose that, at the present moment in our history, one cannot be a true nationalist or revolutionary without at the same time being a socialist”* (Fornet-Betancourt).

Mariátegui’s position gains in importance when we consider that he already proposes theses that show their great promise more clearly today, in the wake of the collapse of Soviet communism. It is to be regretted that his ideas were not used in Latin America. The Latin-American Marxists even developed with time along Leninist-Stalinist lines, especially in the era of the Cold War.⁴

⁴The enmity and struggle without weapons between the two military power blocks in East and West.





Of great importance for Marxism in Latin America is the Cuban Revolution under **Fidel Castro** in 1959. Out of it grew a movement that has had long-lasting social-revolutionary effects over the whole continent.

Castro's victory led in the first place to a new reflection on Marxism, along the lines of Mariátegui. Thus in the year of the Cuban Revolution we have the Brazilian, Leonicio Basbaum, writing: "Our task today as Marxists is to free Marxism from dogmatism so that it can catch up with what has been happening in history. We have to see to its dialectics... We have to think it through day by day by absorbing into its development the events of the day, new scientific knowledge, the changes occurring in society. Perhaps in doing so we will see the lasting contribution of Marxism." He continued by recalling the hard times through which independent-thinking Marxists had to pass. Then he went on: "We must try to win for ourselves as Marxists the right to criticise Marxism, especially the Marxism current today, and to do it without being excluded or liquidated as a consequence. We also have the further task of seeing to it that we keep Marxism from becoming irrational" (Fornet-Betancourt 227).

●●● Following on Castro's victory, the social and economic reality of the continent is more and more being analysed and interpreted in Marxist terms.

●●● In 1960, the first edition of Marx's complete works in Spanish appeared in Santiago de Chile. In the same year Jean-Paul Sartre gave conferences in Cuba and Brazil on the connections between Marxism and existentialism. He found attentive audiences and his thought became an integral part of Latin-American Marxism.

●●● In 1961, following the unsuccessful invasion of Cuban exiles from the United States in the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban revolution turned radical. A movement of solidarity swept over the continent. When Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist, Cuba was excluded from the Organisation of American States (OAS), because of pressure from the United States, which also imposed an economic embargo of Cuba which would con-

tinue for decades. Cuba fell victim to the Cold War, which almost led to an atomic war in 1962.

●●● In 1965 Ernesto Che Guevara published his program: "Man and Socialism in Cuba". The following year he was murdered in Bolivia.

●●● In 1968 Fidel Castro delivered a speech that, like a clarion call, resonated throughout the whole of Latin America, without, unfortunately, having the necessary consequences in Cuba itself: "It is clear that we face new conditions and new phenomena. Without a doubt revolutionaries like us, as Marxist-Leninists, have the duty of analysing these new phenomena. For nothing is more contrary to Marxist thought than rigidity of mind. And there are proposals made, some even in the name of Marxism, which belong to times long past ... Marxism has to develop further, it has to overcome a certain inflexibility. It has to look at today's reality with scientific objectivity, it has to behave like a revolutionary force and not like a pseudo-revolutionary church. These are the paradoxes of history. When we see that sectors of the clergy are turning into revolutionary forces, how can we let sectors of Marxism turn into ecclesiastical forces? We have to think about this and act dialectically" (Fornet-Betancourt). We can understand these lines only in light of the support which Castro's revolution was getting from the Catholic Church and even from the Nuncio. The church looked on the revolution as social reform necessitated by the Batista regime. In the same year, the Marxist tinged *Junta Revolucionaria* began to rule in Peru.

●●● In 1970 **Salvador Allende** took office in Chile as the first democratically elected Marxist president.



Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda.



●●● In 1979 the Sandanistas⁵ led the people's revolution in Nicaragua to victory. It carried Marxist features and gave a new quality to the dialogue between Christians and Marxists. In the mid 1960s it became ever clearer how the economic situation in Latin America had worsened to a hitherto unprecedented extent. As a consequence there occurred, under Marxist influence, a reorientation of the way Latin-Americans thought socially and politically. The UN Economic Commission for Latin America put forth the so-called "dependence theory", which explained the *immiseration* [growing poverty] of the Third World as a direct consequence of exploitation by the countries of the North.

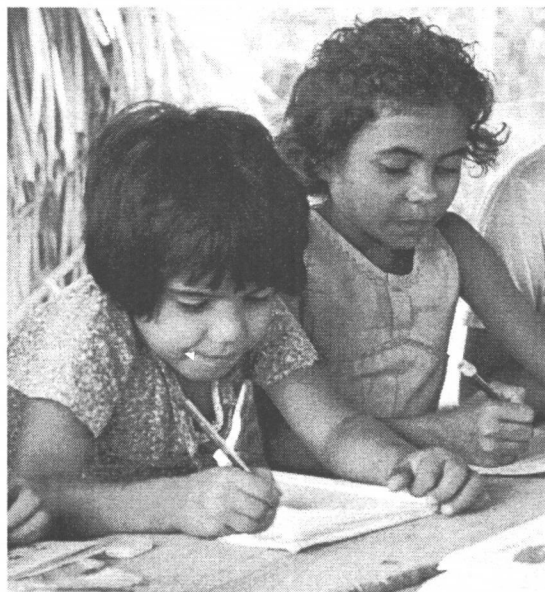
In this context we can understand the development of the Catholic Church in Latin America. In 1968 the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) took place in **Medellín**, Colombia. The bishops set out to translate the Second Vatican Council into action, and they did so with two key expressions: "Option for the Poor" and "Salvation as Total Liberation." In order to describe the reigning injustice, which enslaved and imprisoned the people, the theologians at the conference used the social sciences – drawing on Marx and Marxism – and liberation theology saw the light of day. Liberation theology (see Lesson 20) thus turned into a place where Marxism as method helped in a justified and understandable way. The same is true of Catholic social teaching. So we can see how false it is to reproach liberation theology for falling under the sway of dogmatic Marxism, for example, by the very fact that Latin-American Marxists reject dogmatic Marxism.



Che Guevara (1928-1967), certainly the best known Latin-American Marxist, along with Fidel Castro, rejected vehemently and logically any and every form of Marxist dogmatism. He too looked on Marxism as a method, "a textbook for action," a creative way of mastering challenges. According to him Marx-

ism has to proceed critically. There are no set truths that pass untouched through experience: *"The only way to throw off error is to show error for what it is and then to make it public. The only way the revolution continues is by open discussion of mistakes, mistakes of thought on our part and mistakes of our organisations. Then we can draw the consequences. We must have no fear of coming to grips with reality"* (Fornet-Betancourt). As for the Communist Party, it plays an understandable role, but a different one to that in Leninism: *"The party of the future stands in solidarity with the masses and draws from them its great ideas. The party, in accord with democratic centralism,⁶ will expect discipline in action, while, at the same time, seeing to ongoing open discussion, criticism and self-criticism... We have to remember, and never forget, that the Marxist is not an automatic fanatical machine..."* (Fornet-Betancourt).

Che Guevara focused attention on people. Marxism became a means of self-liberation, hence the need for a consistent educational program. Guevara looked to schools first of all to help people fashion a critical consciousness of themselves from which would arise the ideal of a truly communist society. Unlike Leninism, this process does not depend on an elite or a party that understands and forces its knowledge on oth-



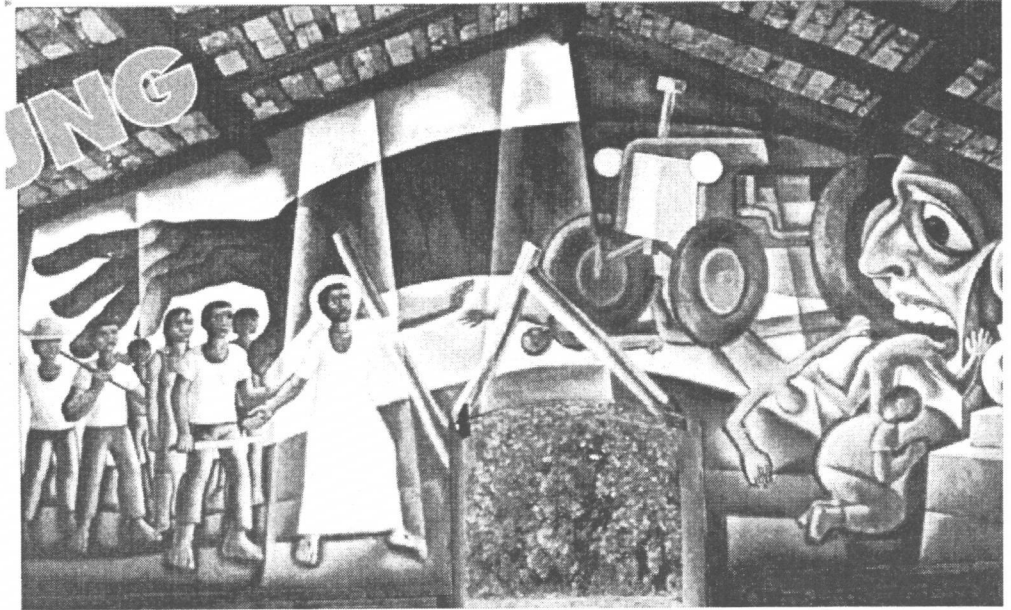
Schools help people fashion a critical consciousness of themselves.

⁵Named after Sandino, the successful Nicaraguan freedom fighter against the US occupational military forces. He was murdered by the Nicaraguan National Guard during peace negotiations (1934).

⁶democratically elected leaders, a strict party leadership.



ers. Education is much more a question of social dynamics. Guevara did call for armed revolution, but that was the consequence of unjust structures. So he believed they must be overcome so that people can live and grow. The way of **Enrique Dussel** (1934), historian and professor of philosophy is also interesting. An Argentinian Catholic, he was at first influenced by the "anti-Marxist affect" (Fornet-Betancourt 272), that is, he was convinced



Jesus as the defender of the rural worker against profiteers and the mighty.

that Christianity and Marxism were two absolutely irreconcilable modes of thought. However, since 1976 he had begun examining Marxism more closely and turned into one of the most important spokesmen for an independent Marxist path in Latin America. The way he understands himself as a Marxist is particular to Latin America. That means that he has resolutely set aside all dogmatism of a European cast: "...it is a question of continuing with Marx's thought, of picking up and following his logic... Latin-American Marxism is creative...because it opens itself to new perspectives which never occurred to Marx..." (Fornet-Betancourt 287).

Also for Dussel, Marxism is a method and not a doctrine. The method analyses two problems in particular:

- the dependence of developing countries on the industrialised countries (criticism of capitalism);
- the liberation of peoples from humiliating dependencies.

So the discussion that has been going on for decades first among Marxists, then between Marxists and non-Marxists and between Marxism and the Church, turned into a practical controversy of general importance. As a result Latin America developed a tradition of Marxism that has little to do with European Marxism. People have to take this into account when they assess both Marxism and liberation theology.

• Terrorist organisations that lay claim on Marxism

While the forms of Latin American Marxism, which we have been dealing with in this lesson unit, limit themselves to debate and discussion on an intellectual level and are prepared to cooperate with progressive elements in society, there are at the same time groups and movements that resort to violence and terror to bring about a better society.



The recourse to violence and terror to change society has not legitimated itself with political theory, but frequently arises from despair at existing poor social and economic conditions. To



blame Marxism as the root cause in such circumstances is superficial. We have examples of this with the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, *Pol Pot* in Cambodia, the *Brigate Rosse* in Italy, the *RAF* in Germany and the *P.K.K.* in Kurdistan. Now to conclude it may well be necessary to point out that

in the context of the East-West confrontation, many people were driven into the arms of the socialist camp. They ended up there as they tried to shake off a colonial past and free themselves. There *Marxism* remained more an external label than an inner conviction.

A Summary Description of Marxism

1.3

"How can we gather together and label as Marxist the different theses, some of them hardly reconcilable with each other and some of them even mutually contradictory, who claim to be Marxist? All Marxists do have a common conceptual core, though a much smaller one than people think. To our mind, a thesis is Marxist insofar as it says that it is possible and necessary to overcome class divisions, exploitation, injustice, the political, social, national, and cultural contrasts and, as consequence, the socially conditioned sufferings of humankind in order to reach a harmonious, integrated and peaceful society. All Marxists hold to the idea of societal happiness, of a golden age here on earth, a transfiguration in this life, a condition of paradisaical peace as the final achievement of the social struggle" (Ignatow 20). In this way Marxism presents itself generally as a secularised socio-political eschatology: that is, as an expectation of a final time freed from religion which will bring about happiness for all peoples. So we can see how the different forms of Marxism differentiate by the different paths they propose leading to that final goal.



"All Marxists hold to the idea of societal happiness and of a golden age here on earth" (Ignatow).



Critical Comments

The explanatory remarks made so far about Marx and the different ways in which his thought is interpreted already imply a funda-

mental criticism of him and his philosophy. The limitations in his ideas about the human person and history inevitably led to difficulties



if and where they were thought through to their logical conclusion. Insofar as they were promoted politically, they had disastrous consequences. Humanness (a fulfilled, meaningful life, freedom, justice) cannot be realised on the basis of a mistaken idea of the human person. Lofty moral goals are not reached by immoral means. In that sense the collapse of communism in East-

ern Europe did not result only from the mistakes and abuses of political leaders. It lay in the logic of flawed process and false principle. Wherever this faulty logic was recognised and corrected, the criticism levelled against Marxism loses its force. Marxism should not be declared dead so soon. Serious scholars and philosophers still refer to Karl Marx.

Marxism as Heir to Humanism

2.1.

We have already made the point: as a young man, Karl Marx saw himself as a passionate proponent of humanism. Even if in his later years he tended to see the human person as the product of social relations, we have come to see the Marxists of our day have returned to the idea of the early Marx. They maintain that the course of history is the responsibility of men and women, who themselves are also subject to change. They are involved in their own growth and development. They constitute the subject of history. They – particularly the poor and oppressed – are summoned to struggle against every form of oppression. History is not simply something to be endured fatalistically; it is much more a work of active construction in which all people must join and build together.

We have seen how Marxism arose out of protest at the oppression of the poor, exploited working class. This background has led many of today's Marxists to look on Marxism mystically. For them it involves an almost religious experience of freedom and struggle. It unfolds on a high level of human responsibility and involves a serious ethic. Such a Marxism sees itself as heir to the humanist ideal of justice and freedom. And that has lost nothing of its timeliness.



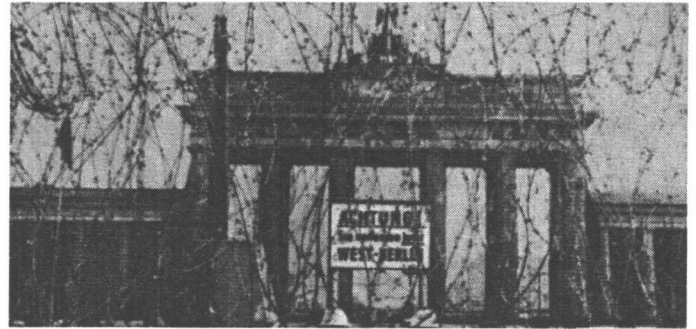
"Communism fell into conflict with the way people are made – it denied human freedom" (Ignatow).

However, Marxism must not forget its own history, a history that followed generally in the steps of the older Marx, who looked on the human person as no more than a product of history. Here is a text of A. Ignatow that, in its detail, may go too far. However that be, it does succeed in touching Marxism's sore spot. *"The failure of 'actually existing socialism' was also the failure of its idea of man"* (Ignatow 119). *"We should*



have no trouble understanding the failure of communist anthropology; it would even have been a miracle if such ideas had not failed, for communism forgot something basic: it failed to take into consideration that freedom is an unconditional component of human self-realisation and of human happiness. If communism had truly kept its promises, if it had factually attained a degree of prosperity, even then the people under its rule would have been far from happy. The economic disaster of Eastern Europe was an additional factor, one that sharpened the perception of the sad mess, and was not the cause of the failure. We can go further: The suppression of freedom is the cause of the economic catastrophe. The cause of the communist fiasco has metaphysical roots; communism fell into conflict with the way people are made – it denied human freedom. We admit that this is no great dis-

covery; it has long been known that communism goes against human 'nature'. But now we see clearly the consequences of the conflict between human freedom and communism, we see how it worked out in the disintegration of communism" (Ignatow 125 f.).



The Brandenburg Gate – Berlin, Germany, before the fall of the Wall.

Marxism as a Social Theory

2.2.

Marxism is a system of thought (principles, methods and theoretical knowledge) that evolved in opposition to capitalism, and as long as capitalism exists, Marxism will have something to say. In Latin America above all, Marxism supplies today's sociology with research material, ideas, and methods which enable it to make critical studies of social reality.

Marxism has good reason to reproach capitalism for the following assumptions: 1) that economics has precedence over politics, law, social reality, and the thoughts and desires of people; 2) that increase in value is measured by material profit; 3) that for the sake of such profit we must accept a degree of poverty.

Marxism as a Philosophy of History

2.3.

Marx, the philosopher, subjected the philosophy of his day to searching criticism, but he too was subject to the limits of his age and its blind spots. Therefore he did away with the spiritual and religious in his view of the human person, and committed himself to a belief in science and progress. Today we consider that naive. In that belief, he held that nature, thought, history, and the future of humankind could be grasped and explained scientifically. According to him progress did not occur in a straight line, but rather in a conflictual zigzag. This he called "dialectical materialism."

Among the principles of "dialectical materialism" are the following three points.

●●● First, history necessarily passes through the dictatorship of the proletariat to the realm of freedom. In other words, when the time is ripe, wage earners (the proletariat) will overthrow capitalism. They will take over with force and power and see to it that the conditions of a new world come about, with freedom for all.

●●● Secondly, class conflict and revolution are the motor of history. In other words, history will reach its human term only through the revolt of the dissatisfied masses.



●●● Thirdly, socialism claims scientific legitimisation. It even proposes that science is science only in virtue of fidelity to socialist principles. This proposition also covers literature, art, music, sports... Such activities are to be engaged in *scientifically*, and they support socialist politics, revolutionary forces, and class-warfare.

When we express these principles in this general, one-sided way, they no longer elicit consent. Yet experience teaches us that intellectual progress and social development often follow rapidly on tension and conflict – that is, they

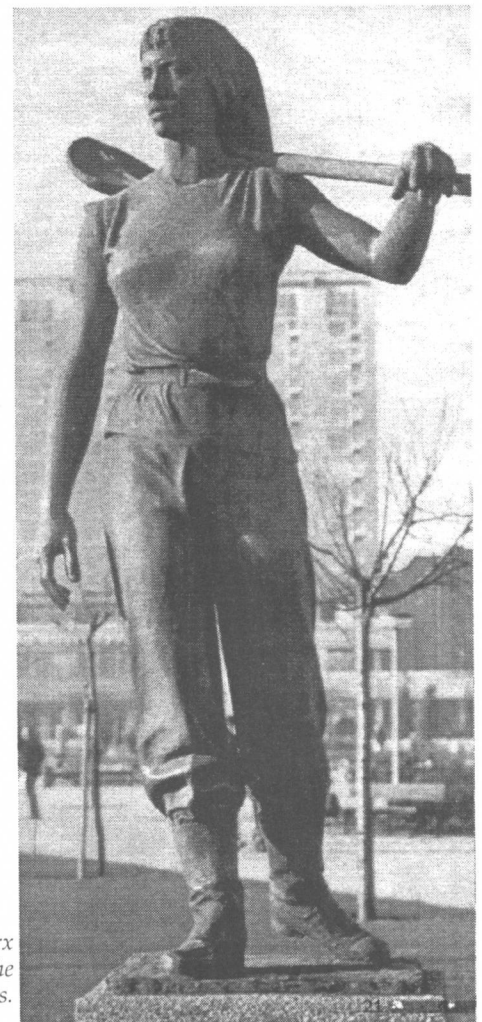
occur dialectically. Other ideas of the Marxist philosophy of history have lost their persuasive power because conditions have changed. Now that economic production to a great degree no longer depends on labour power, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” has no ground to stand on. Wage earners can no longer organise themselves into a revolutionary force. Especially out-moded is the belief that science loses its claim to scientific validity if it does not serve the goals of Marxism wholeheartedly.

2.4. Marxism as a Political System of Thought in Countries under Communist rule

Those who suffered under communism, or still do, pin a different meaning on Marxism. For them it means dictatorship and official terrorism, the suppression of individual freedoms, of democracy and faith. Those particular forms of communist states destroyed the prophetic vision of a socialism of justice and equality for all evoked in *the Communist Manifesto*. We can see that the deviations of “actually existing socialism” were pre-programmed in Marx. For example,

- He abandoned critical thought for praxis.
- He thought little of human rights, decrying them as ‘middle-class’.
- He did not tolerate other ideas and opinions.
- He passionately rejected other forms of socialism.
- He idealised the working class.
- He ascribed party activists the role of vanguard.

These attitudes led logically to state-terror, which reached a frightening degree under Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.



Marx idealised the working class.



If we reject the justified concerns of Marxism, we ultimately reject the biblical vision of a just and happy future as well. It cannot be emphasised enough that Karl Marx was influenced by the Bible. His parents were Jews, he himself was a Protestant. Marxist thought and action absorbed the way the biblical prophets took a stand for the poor and the weak. Marx also took over the substance of the Bible's vision of history; he did, however, relocate history's goal in this life. Besides, he manages without God. For him, people can reach their goal by their own efforts.

However wrong both views were, from the Bible's point of view, Karl Marx remains a natural middleman for Christians. For that reason, in the 1960s and 1970s, Christian theologians and Marxist thinkers engaged in serious dialogue. Such encounters took place all over the world: for example, in Munich with the internationally known theologian Karl Rahner, in Vienna with Cardinal König, in Chile with Miguez Bonino and "Christians for Socialism," in Zimbabwe with the Methodist theologian Canaan Banana, in Bangalore (India) around the Fernandes brothers. Even in the former German Democratic Republic, Marxist scholars tried to disengage themselves from Marxism's atheistic background or to show that atheism was not a necessary component of Marxist philosophy. Liberation theology drew in part on Marxist thought and drew as well, independently from Marx, on biblical prophecy and apocalyptic literature. It was unjustly censured and rejected as *Marxist* both by self-appointed officials and by the highest church authorities. In an article that attracted much attention, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J., explained the Church's position. Von Nell-Breuning had served as advisor to popes in the development of the church's social teachings from the 1930s on. He wrote:

We always take Marxism too easily. In particular we have to draw a few careful distinctions:

1. *We must see what we cannot reconcile with faith in a personal God and with the details of Chris-*

tian belief in revelation which, as irreconcilable, we cannot accept;

2. *Apart from what does not touch directly on teachings on faith and morals, we have to distinguish assertions of Marx which are not only wrong but dangerous as well;*
3. *As concerns assertions of pure fact about economic, social, or political matters, we have to sort out which are valid and acceptable, and which are wrong and need the correction of better information.*

Instead of proceeding from these distinctions, we tend to condemn Marxism summarily, or 'Marxist analysis' with preference. And we tend to explain the inadequacies of the analysis without taking pains to find out what exactly the analysis is. All of this we toss together and condemn in one lump as Marxism or Marxist analysis, without explaining what exactly it is that Marx taught. And so we easily get the impression that those who warn about or wave off Marxism, do not themselves know about what they are talking, but simply sound alarm about something only vaguely known and for that reason frightfully evil.

'Marxist analysis'

The greatest lack of clarity surrounds what is referred to again and again as 'Marxist analysis'. The many who do not distinguish carefully here are proceeding from bias. At least they fail to separate fact from judgement, and for that reason can hardly avoid a summary condemnation. Given our Catholic teachings, we know that we cannot always draw an absolute line between fact and value, report and judgement, in the way required when discussing basic values. That, however, should not lead us to toss observation of fact and its evaluation together, and proceed to denounce the analysis as Marxist because we do not like the facts so revealed. Marx was the first one to state a series of basic facts about the new social realities in a politically effective way, as the synod of bishops in Würzburg put it in their document on the church and the working classes. Since then this knowledge has been connected with Marx's name; it has circulated throughout the world in his terms. There is no cause to reproach Marx for this knowledge and still less to cast it aside as Marxist. He is to be reproached for mixing it



together with his errors, and among them his ideological convictions.

We have made the following mistake. Instead of correcting the false set of ideas in which Marx offered his facts, we readily speak in a way that inevitably gives the impression that we deny, against our better knowledge, things that we also know are true. Such behaviour robs us of credibility. It exposes us to the objection of Marxists that Pope Leo XIII (*Rerum novarum*'s yoke of slavery) branded such things in sharper language than we use, and for that reason it is dishonest of us to ~~criticise~~ ~~criticise~~ for criticising such conditions but for wanting to get rid of them.

'Class struggle'

On the other hand, when we simply use words such as 'class', 'social classes', or even 'class struggle', which of themselves have nothing to do with Marxism, we awaken in Catholics the suspicion that we are Marxist or at least infected by Marxism. Pope Pius XI saw fit to distinguish between an objectionable class struggle, fuelled by hate and envy, and the struggle between classes borne of the longing for justice. For the latter he coined the expression 'the contention between classes' (*classium disceptatio*). The reprehensible 'class struggle' could slowly turn into (*paulatim transire*) 'contention between the classes'. Such a struggle, cured of its poison, is not only admissible, he said, but necessary, to achieve a classless society (*Quadragesimo anno*: 114). This decisively important clarification disappeared from the church's documents on social questions, until it surfaced again in Pope John Paul II's encyclical '*Laborem exercens*' (1981, 20:3).

'Class'

When we say class, we mean a major social group which does not wholly fit into society, either because it enjoys unjustified advantages (the ruling class), or because it does not or cannot contribute rightly or satisfactorily to the commonweal, and accordingly enjoys but a reduced share in the commonweal (oppressed or exploited

class). The condition exists in the class societies of capitalism given the inadequate separation between work and capital. That will not change, as Pope Pius XI himself said, through mere debate; it calls for conflict and struggle.

Marx maintained that the oppositions between the classes in capitalism was absolute and unavoidable. Consequently the oppressed class has to use force in order to 'liquidate' the ruling class. Only then will the classless society emerge. We maintain that the opposition is only relative, and for that reason, surmountable. We have to see to it that both the faulty separation between labour and capital is corrected, and that the proper union of both be established. To that end, with a classless society in the offing, the struggle is not only admissible but necessary. It does not, however, involve the destruction of one of the two classes. That is the position of the church.



"With a classless society in the offing, the struggle is not only admissible but necessary"
(O. von Nell-Breuning, SJ).

Conclusion

As long as we reject Marx, his teachings and his terminology, summarily, we make a serious mistake (Oswald von Nell-Breuning, SJ).

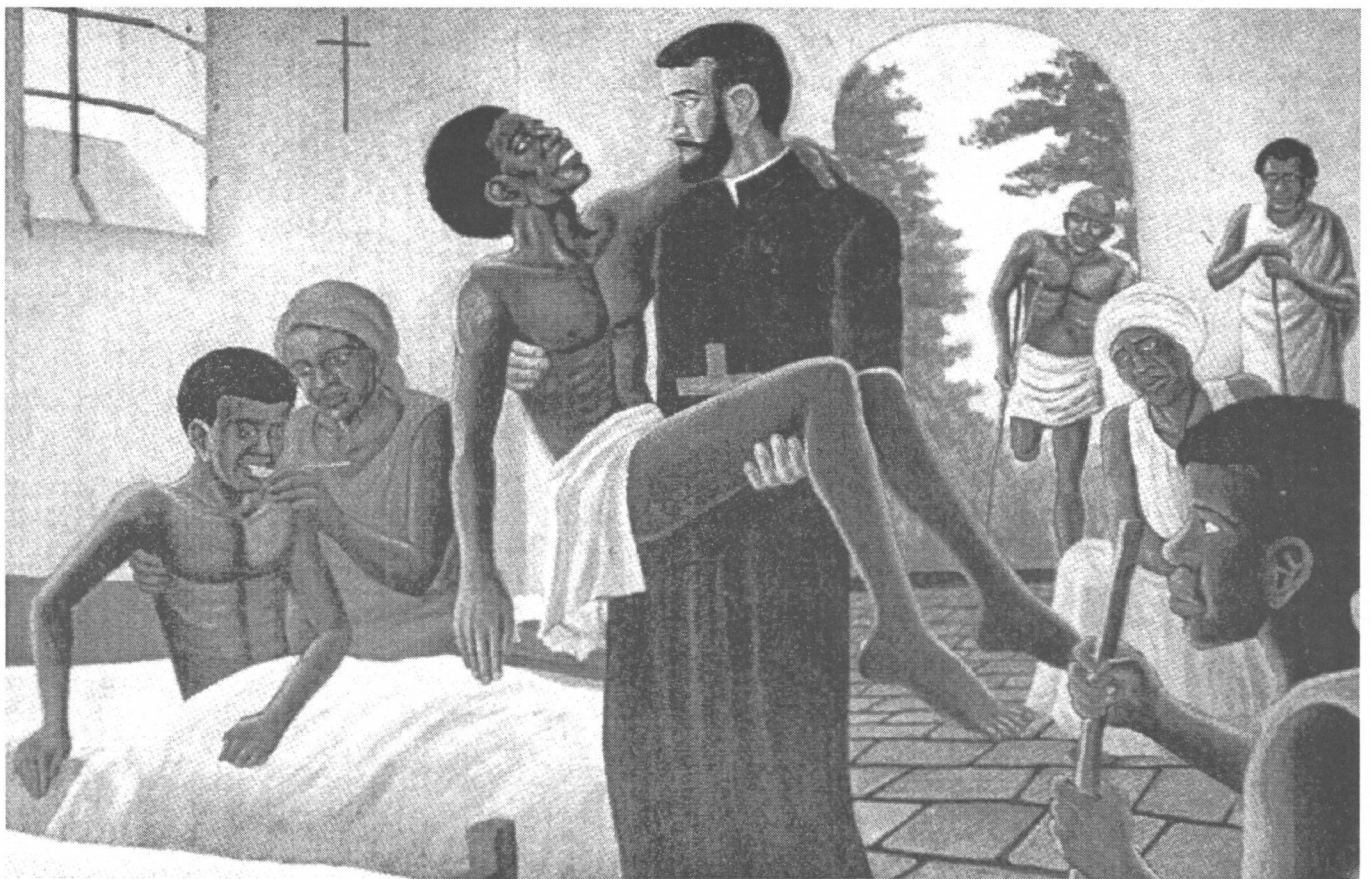


If Marxism and Christianity truly have common roots and similar visions, then the Franciscan family should be able to find familiar features in Marxism. In any case it will be able to recognise the different forms of Marxism and assess them critically, but also it will especially enter into a dialogue with those who, inspired by Marxism, are working for a more just world. After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the German communist writer Stephan Hermlin had this to say: *"I am convinced that a communist writer is heir to all the dreamers and visionaries and looks up to people like Marx and Lenin and, as well, Francis of Assisi"* (quoted by Ignatow 140). Such a proposal must provoke a critical discussion. Francis of Assisi is certainly a "dreamer and visionary" for the Franciscan family, but he lived in solidarity with the poor at the same time, in rigorous poverty and as everyone's brother. The Franciscan family, however, will have to draw attention to the fact that it is at best the

young Marx, not the later Marx, and certainly not Lenin, who is able to serve as a model together with Francis of Assisi.

In order to overcome injustice, co-operation between people who think as Franciscans and as Marxists is needed as well. If we as Franciscans do not seek this discussion, whether through ignorance or laziness or fear, we are at fault. The way and the means as to how that can happen, must be left to the Franciscan brothers and sisters to decide for themselves, on the spot, for circumstances differ.

Bishop R. Graber has described how Lenin, as he faced death, told a former student friend: *"I have made mistakes. Certainly we had to free the oppressed masses. But our way of going about it led to other oppressions and to frightful massacres. You know that I am near death. I feel like I'm lost in the ocean of blood of countless victims. Still we had to, to save our Russia. And now it is too late to do it differently. What we really needed was ten of Francis of Assisi."*



"What we really needed was ten of Francis of Assisi" (Lenin on his deathbed).





Franciscan Attitude towards political and economic power

After dealing with capitalism and Marxism, we pass now on to the question: What is the relationship

III.



Francis, Clare, and the political-economic Conflict

Francis was neither a revolutionary nor a sociologist. Yet he saw through the socio-economic and political system of his time. He lived in a society marked by deep divisions between the nobility and the townspeople, between lords and serfs, between pope and emperor, between Assisi and Perugia. Again and again these deep divisions in society led to revolts and wars. Clare,

The system of power

Francis did not despise 'those in power;' he looked on them as human beings just like all other people. He knew that *"our God is their Lord as well. He has the power to call them and to justify them as his chosen ones"* (L3C 14). All the same, Francis broke away from the system over which these men ruled. He committed himself consciously and freely to another order because, for him and his brothers, a system built on the logic of power was worthless. He rejected, for himself and his brothers, roles that seemed desirable in the municipal system: accountant, secretary, treasurer, chairman, everything that represented or entailed power and money. He wanted

of the Franciscan movement towards society as a whole?

1.

Francis, and the nascent Franciscan movement rejected the dominant feudal system, but turned even more resolutely still, from the rising capitalism with its worship of wealth and money. Little wonder then that Francis was initially marginalized and scorned and not immediately taken for the prophet he was!

1.1.

neither power nor control over others, as he wrote in his rule (ER 7). Francis maintained this practice before the powerful political and religious leaders of his age (pope, bishop, lord, mayor).

Francis, Clare, and their sisters and brothers renounced any symbols or badges that elicited public respect: bearing arms, riding horses, spending money, living fashionably, enjoying leisure, residing in castles, possessing books, accepting titles, speaking pretentiously. Francis introduced his own set of 'signs and signals,' symbols that send the contrary message: he travels on foot, he bears no arms, he works for his living, he begs if not paid, he wears simple peas-



ant clothing, he lives in caves and ruined chapels, he wants nothing to do with books and or book-learning, since this only leads to vanity. Instead of resounding titles he chooses for his Order simple names: friar minor (lesser brother), minister (servant), guardian (watchman). He spoke simply and peaceably.



Each Brother should be an original person, expected to bring his own gifts in his own way into the brotherhood.

Much more decisive was their refusal to exercise power within their respective Orders. Francis and Clare chose not to exercise any dominant role where they would have to preside over their brothers and sisters. Each Order is a family of "friars minor" and of "sisters minor." Towards one another they should feel the love of a "spiritual mother" who loves and nourishes her children, as does a real mother. In her rule

Clare provides for the abbess to gather her sisters once a week in chapter, where they shall humbly confess to one another their offences and failures. The theological justification for the designations *brother*, *sister*, and *fraternity* lies in "the love of God." Such terms and their meaning fit easily into the way we feel and think today. Clare has a strong sense of democratic, shared responsibility; this lies behind a series of rulings in Chapters Four and Five of her rule that were new to religious women in her day: weekly consultation with all the sisters about the tasks and business of the convent; the election of eight sisters as counsellors to the abbess; the election of a vice-abbess. It is therefore impossible for anyone who claims to live by the Franciscan-



Clare and Francis turned resolutely from the rising capitalism with its worship of wealth and money.

Clarean charism to tolerate any form of government that worships power and practises the exclusion of others and the exploitation of the weak (ER 5:6).

Francis and Clare regularly redefine concepts of their day to mean the opposite. The true nobles and lords are the poor; poverty is the Queen of the Order; the minister or the abbess are the servants and can or should sometimes be deposed.



The system of money

1.2.

Francis and his brothers did not reject only power and its structures, but also money and its pressures. They refused to have any dealings with money, thus setting themselves beyond its control and injustice. Thanks to their rigorous observance of this, they succeeded in keeping free of socio-economic domination.

For Clare and her sisters it was a little different. Unlike Francis and his Order, they had no absolute prohibition against the use of money. On ac-

count of their monastic life, that they had to adopt because of the age they lived in - they could not wholly renounce the use of money. But with admirable firmness against church and state, Clare and her sisters defended their "absolute poverty." Francis and Clare wanted to abide by the gospel, for that was their first and consuming passion. Their experience with the economy, culture, and politics of their times led them to their alternative form of life.



Freedom and Justice as central Franciscan concerns

2.

When looking more closely at the systems of capitalism and Marxism, we discover their weaknesses.

Freedom

2.1.

The Communist idea was originally inspired by the will to provide justice for all: all were to share their goods with each other. This motive runs through the Franciscan movement as well, where private possessions and property ought not to be words in our vocabulary.

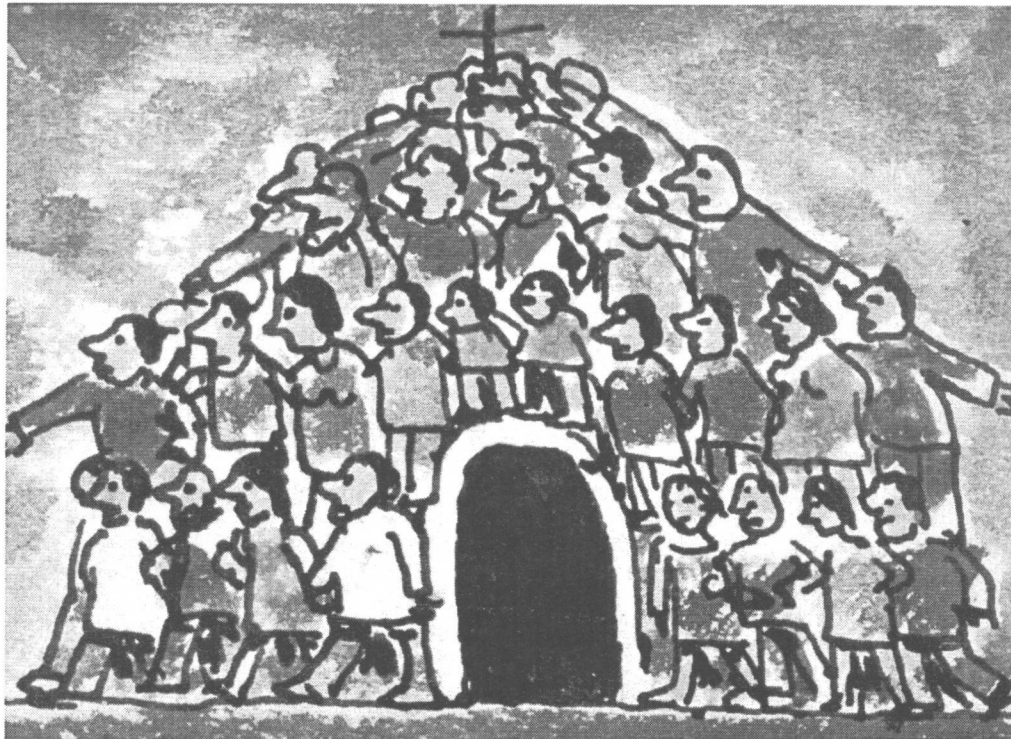
But what distinguishes the Franciscan ideal from Communism is freedom. When James of Voragine told the story of Francis' life at the end of the 13th century, he emphasised that Francis was a frank and free man who had a liberating effect on those around him. For that reason he was called FRANCIS, frank and free. In fact, both Francis and Clare repeatedly stressed they had not followed any human example. Francis wrote: "*No one showed me what I was to do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I was to live according to the Gospel*" (Test 14). Francis emphasised his immediacy to God and his freedom, and brought

it into play against pope and emperor. For that reason he wanted each brother to live as God gave him to understand. The letter to Brother Leo can be read as a passionate plea: Let him choose his own path and make his own free choice.

In fact, the stories called the *Fioretti* begin with a very graphic portrait of each individual brother. Brother Giles was marked by his mystical ecstasies; Brother Philip the Long by his prophetic facility; Brother Sylvester by his close friendship with God; Brother Bernard by his razor-sharp intelligence; Brother Rufino by his absorption in God. Each one could – even should – be an original person, expected to bring his own gifts in his own way into the brotherhood. Communism for its part is a viable human perspective only when justice, for which it was born, is paired with freedom.



On the other hand, in Capitalism, freedom has been understood as an absolute value. Capitalism does not take into consideration that human freedom is always the freedom of others as well. Freedom therefore can never be absolute; it is always relative to the fellow human beings, the brothers and sisters whom I encounter. Francis and Clare were well aware that freedom is always found within a social context. For that reason Francis brings himself into the social context of the Church; he has his way of life approved by the Church. Francis joins freedom with obedience, which certainly does not mean thoughtless submission, but a sensitive readiness to listen to the needs of others. Francis' obedience arose out of his attention to others, to whole groups as well, to the church, and even to the whole world. Obedience meant for Fran-



Franciscan spirituality envisages a society where people can live in peace and harmony with one another.

cis 'belonging' and 'solidarity' - at all levels. Freedom became for him quite naturally a creative way of relating to those who crossed his path. In other words, a freedom which did not do justice to others was no longer freedom to Francis. In this sense, real freedom can only be truly called 'freedom' when it is combined with justice.

The Franciscan Movement: The Seeds of a New Political Culture

Francis and Clare did not only think of the life hereafter, but gave their attention also to the realities of this world. They did not remain indifferent to the consequences here and now of power and wealth. In their own age, they lived a culture that was new, free and just, which was to be valid also for future generations. Since this was so, Francis turned his thoughts to "the Brothers who would come after us," to a community that would continue "from now to the end of the world," and not

only in Italy, but "in other countries" and "in other regions," too. He wanted to shake up and renew relationships of political communities with one another and in the larger society.

We in the Franciscan family have the task of applying to ourselves what we have found to criticise in both capitalism and Marxism, as well as the values contained in both systems. Then aware of our prophetic mission we must make these insights available to society at large.



Franciscan spirituality envisages a society where people live with one another. When they live in true harmony, people cannot accept either the ruin of the environment or the ruin of the enemy, of the oppressor, of other cultures or ethnic groups. Let us face reality, should the social harmony of Franciscans not reach beyond our own circles, then it would not correspond to the ideal as lived in the early Franciscan movement.

- *A society of togetherness*

Franciscan spirituality envisages a society where people can live in peace and harmony with one another; where the destruction of the environment, the physical annihilation of one's enemies, the suppression of ethnic or cultural identity can not be tolerated. If this social harmony remains limited within the confines of the Franciscan Family, then it would not correspond to the ideal as lived in the early Franciscan movement.

- *The Franciscan understanding of the human person*

Franciscans look upon others as sisters and brothers. All people, men and women, old and young, deserve the same reverence and respect that is due to Jesus of Nazareth (comp. Mt 25). Even the most wicked, most indecent, most dangerous people retain the dignity that marks them as children of God. Franciscan spirituality will have nothing to do with the utilitarian principle that is so deeply rooted in our society. A person is not a person only when he/she is usable and useful. Even if someone does not fit into the world of work he/she remains a human being. Capitalism robs a person of one's dignity when it removes one's identity and meaning. It shunts aside those who contribute nothing to the market: children, the elderly, the unemployed, the sick and the handicapped. No one wants to take responsibility for this state of affairs. Similarly, in states that have a socialist-communist structure, the individual is without significance. People are not sacrificed to the idols of the 'market', but to those of a 'better future.'

- *The meaning of the unique and the singular*

In the crisis that we have to weather in our day, we could learn a lot by going to school with the Franciscans Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. They emphasised the significance of the singular and the unique, of concrete things, of history and of the individual. These views can help us move forward when we address the question of developing a new relationship to nature and to history.



Franciscans look upon others as sisters and brothers.

- *A new perception*

The Second Vatican Council summoned us Franciscans to read 'the signs of the times' (GS 4) and to develop new ways of seeing. The fact that no one has time any more to reflect, and that there is a readiness to forget the past, stands in sharp contrast to the practice and the whole experience of our Christian beliefs. An essential element in our faith is memory, the remembrance of times past, which we commemorate and renew in the celebration of the Eucharist. Likewise, looking towards the future promised by God is part of our faith too. We expect God to enter into our lives bringing the arrival of the completely new and different in our world. Daily



routine and doubts, however, tend to grind our hope to dust. People who remember nothing and expect nothing will wilt away as they die off spiritually and then politically, just as a tree will when it loses its roots.

The lack of feeling for time and the readiness to let the memory of history fade away contradict the Franciscan outlook. Such attitudes amount to ignoring our origins, relinquishing the plan of our founders, and waiving the normative character of the sources.

• *A shared self-awareness*

A new awareness of our Franciscan family arises out of our reflection in this lesson. Being rooted in our own faith, we are enabled to co-operate, without anxiety, with all groups of good will. That means, in particular:

- collaboration in trans-regional and international organisations and popular movements that concern themselves with questions of society, politics, ecology;
- a new way of dealing with power so that all sorts of people have the opportunities they need;
- a democratic way of exercising leadership, derived from the Franciscan idea of holding office;
- networking with people and groups and institutions;
- co-operation with non-religious groups and political forces;
- solidarity beyond party, class, national,

cultural, and gender borders;

●●● co-operation with everyone committed to positive change.

●●● As we do so, we can be sure that Francis and Clare have a great drawing power, not because their political ideas were correct, but because they pursued social justice out of their deep love for others and lived in solidarity with them.



Christ the Saviour has come.

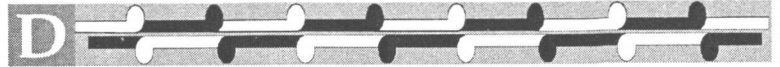
Church Documents and Franciscan Sources:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Scripture | Mt 25. |
| Church Documents | QA 114; GS 4; Puebla 210. |
| Franciscan Sources | LtR; LtOrd 47; ER 2:1; 5; 7; 9:10 ff.; LR 6:9;12:1; Test 14; 1C 38; 2C 37; 184; L3C 14,58; RCI 4 ff.; 8:15; LP 35. |
| Inter-Franciscan Documents | |
| OFM, OFMCap, OFMConv | |
| Poor Clares | |
| Third Order Regular | Rule 7:23; 8:25.27. |
| Secular Franciscans | |
| Supplements | |

Participants in this course are invited to add documents from their own communities.



Exercises



Exercise

In this exercise the reality of the situation in which each participant is living, is made clear.

Tasks:

1. In the first column list the three most important problems of your country, your region, and your continent.
 - In the second column identify the respective effects of the problems.
 - In the third column list the apparent causes.
 - In the fourth column indicate with keywords solutions to the problems in which you can play a role.
2. Share together what you have written and discuss what you can do together.

| | | | |
|---------|---------|--------|-----------|
| Problem | Effects | Causes | Solutions |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |



Exercise

"The Thoroughly Uncomplicated History of Debt Bondage," by Traude Novy.

Directions.

Three participants act out the following sketch.

The roles: A speaker.

Anita, a woman in Manila.

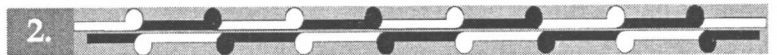
George, a man from America.

Anita: Hey, Mister, here, buy this shirt from me. It is very well sewn and cheap besides.

George: Let's see. Yeah. And what do you want for it?

Anita: Five dollars.

George: I'll give you four. You know, I can get you a loan. You can buy yourself a new sewing machine and



then, in the same time, sew four shirts and earn twenty dollars.

Anita: Thank you, Sir.

Speaker: - Later -

Anita: Here, Mister, here are four shirts. The new machine is really great.

George: Unfortunately I can only buy two of your shirts. I don't have any customers.

Anita: Ten dollars, please.

George: I can't give you ten dollars. You know, I can get the shirts in China for two dollars a piece. As for the four dollars, I have to take out the interest on the credit. You're going to have to put more into your

sewing, for next year you have to begin paying back the loan.

Speaker: A year later. - George doesn't need any more shirts. Anita sells her shirts to a commercial chain at a dollar a piece. The sewing machine is pawned. The debts are still there...

Questions and Assignment:

1. Show where the debt cycle comes from.
2. How could it all have turned out differently?
3. Act out the new version of the story. Assign roles to different actors.



Exercise

The Sabbath Year and the Jubilee Year

There are passages in the Bible that speak directly to today's discussion on transnational debt. The theological context for all rights to land and property is the assumption that Yahweh owns the land (Lev 25:23). Private property counted as "entrusted space for living." That is, no one had the right to fence it off with no concern for others, or to enrich oneself at the cost of those who were economically weak. From this principle came first of all the ban on interest towards one's countryman (Deut 23:20 ff.); secondly the Sabbath Year (Deut 15:1 ff.), which remitted loans every seventh year; and thirdly the so-called Jubilee Year (Lev 25:8), which occurred every fifty years. Land acquired in that time returned to its original owner and all those enslaved for debt could return to their families. The biblical rules for Sabbath and Jubilee Years cannot be applied literally today; social, cultural, and economic conditions are structured in a basically different way. The thought behind them, however, is as valid today as it was then.



3.

Lev 25:8-11. The Jubilee Year.

Count seven times seven years, a total of forty-nine years. Then, on the tenth day of the seventh month let the trumpet resound; on this, the Day of Atonement, the trumpet blast shall re-echo throughout your land. This fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when every one of you shall return to his own property, every one to his own family estate. In this fiftieth year, your year of jubilee, you shall not sow, nor shall you reap the aftergrowth or pick the grapes from the untrimmed vines.

Ex 23:10-11. The Sabbath Year.

For six years you may sow your land and gather in its produce. But the seventh year you shall let the land lie untilled and unharvested, that the poor among you may eat of it and the beasts of the field may eat what the poor leave. So also shall you do in regard to your vineyard and your olive grove.

Deut 15:1-3. The Sabbath Year.

At the end of every seven-year period you shall have a relaxation of debts, which shall be observed as follows.

Every creditor shall relax his claim on what he has loaned his neighbour; he must not press his neighbour, his kinsman, because a relaxation in honour of the LORD has been proclaimed. You may press a foreigner, but you shall relax the claim on your kinsman for what is yours.

Method:

From Life to the Bible and from the Bible to Life.

To understand the situation of the people of Israel and to grasp that of people today, we use the four-sided approach: we look at the economic and social factors, the political and religious conditions.

●●● Choose one of the three texts above and break up into small groups.

Step One:

Today's situation.

●●● Every Bible study has to begin with the search for the four factors, the four sides of reality, which determine our situation, the economic, social, political, and religious factors. If we do not succeed in fixing the context in which we live, we will not be able to relate the Bible's message to our day and recognise the message's meaning.

●●● Once done, together share the results, and then regroup and analyse the situation in light of the four factors.

Step Two:

Study and consideration of the text.

●●● Read the text, first each alone, and then listen to it read aloud.

Study of the text:

1. What is the content of this passage?
2. The situation of the people: how is their economic, social, political, religious situation as revealed by the text?
3. How does Scripture explain the economic and social reality in the light of the faith?
4. What rights do the poor have here and for what reason?

The message of the text:

1. How does the text challenge our faith in God?
2. What sort of God do we believe in?
3. How could this social adjustment demanded by the law concretise itself in our day, in our personal and communal life, in family, parish, region, country, continent, internationally?

Conclusion:

●●● Sum up in an atmosphere of prayer the insights gained in the past hour and choose finally a key expression that brings into focus what was shared together.



Exercise

Read the following text:

The Christian faith does not base itself on the idea of God who always appears on the side of the one who wins. On the contrary, it bases itself on the confession that Jesus of Nazareth

is risen from the dead. That is the core of our faith. The confession that Jesus (defeated, condemned, and executed by the Roman Empire and by the Temple) has risen from the dead is the belief in a



God who is not allied with the victors, with the Roman Empire and the Temple. This faith enables us to distinguish between victory and might on the one hand and truth and justice on the other. Jesus' disciples were not taken into custody because they taught there was a life after death but because they proclaimed the resurrection from the dead in Jesus (Acts 4:2). The great revolutionary, startling Good News did not consist in proclaiming the resurrection of the victorious and the mighty, but in announcing the resurrection of those overcome politically and religiously and who, in God's eyes, were "the holy and just" (Acts 3:14). At the same time we discover that Jesus, the crucified, is risen from the dead, we also discover that the dominant social order and those in power are neither just nor do they represent the will of God. This faith leads us to give witness to the resurrection of Jesus by protecting the life and the human dignity of the poor and the meek.

Luke tells us how the first communities gave witness to Jesus' resurrection:

Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of these things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:32-35).

This moving passage has something in it quite strange. The core of the message is witness to the resurrection of the Lord. But this central message is embedded in two passages (Acts 3:14 and 4:32f.) that resemble one another and say nothing about the resurrection, but speak about

economic matters: people put together their goods and properties, as each one could, and then some distributed to each in need, so that no one among them lacked life's necessities. Sharing turned a crowd into a community. Some might propose that the two paragraphs containing the central message appear there through an oversight of Luke, and that therefore witness to the resurrection of the Lord has nothing to do with economic questions. Others can point out, correctly, that, by handling concrete goods in this way, the Christians bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord. Belief in Jesus' resurrection makes clear that redemption does not lie in the accumulation of power and wealth, but in the forming of human communities where everybody is recognised, independently of their wealth or of other social distinctions.

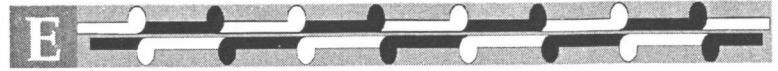
Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is a revolution in the way we perceive things, a revolution in understanding. It enables us to discover the real image of God and the human being, when we see the true face of God and the fundamental dignity of every human being, we feel that the cry of the poor speaks to us, calling us to build a more human and a more just society (Jung Mo Sung).

Tasks:

1. Summarise the main points raised in this text.
2. Discuss the point of view put forward by the author.



Applications



1 Application

Meditation on a Bank-Note.

Lay a bank-note of your currency on the ground, in the middle of a circle. Read the text slowly. Take your time in going into each of the themes. The meditation is to bring to light the many layers of the phenomenon of money. The many levels of money play a role deep within the individual and collective psyche. This meditation will be addressing these levels.

Preparation and warm-up:

- *Sit comfortably and be aware of your breathing. How does your breath enter, how does it leave your body, what does it bring with it and what does it take away?*
- Where am I at present with my feelings?
- What is worrying me at the moment, what refuses to leave me alone?
- In what direction do my thoughts carry me?
- How far or near to our theme do I feel at this moment?

Guided Meditation:

- What passes through my mind when I look at the familiar bank-note?
- What were the circumstances when I last had one in my hand?
- How did I spend it or receive it?
- What would I really want to do with it?
- What role does money play in my life?
- How often do I think about it and in what way?
- How has my relation to money changed in the course of my life?
- How did we talk about it in my family? And how is it today?
- Have my standards of values also changed because of this bank-note?
- When and in what circumstances did I first earn money, and what are my memories and feelings about that time?
- How much money do I carry around with me, and is there a sum that makes me feel secure and another that makes me feel poor?
- Have I ever lost a big sum? What were my feelings?
- Do I give beggars money? How much and with what feelings?



- Is there a connection between money and my personal sense of worth? Do I feel guilty when handling money?
- What would change today if I had no money?
- What would change today if I had a large sum of money?
- What is the most important thing which money makes possible for me at present?
- Is there anything which money hinders? Do I know aspects of my personality which perhaps without money would come into play in new ways?

Finale:

- *Slowly come back, become aware of the others around you.*

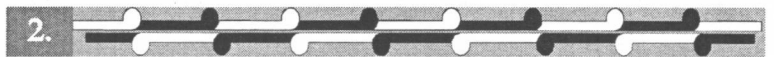
Task:

Write down important insights of your 'journey through money'. Then collect the papers, and distribute them among yourselves at random. Read them aloud and comment on them from your point of view.



Application

Read the business section of your local newspaper.



Assignment:

1. What economic activities does the paper report on?
2. What presupposed purposes do the reports serve?
3. Who benefits from and who suffers from this sort of economic activity? Be specific in naming things.



Application

Read the following text by Dorothee Soelle from *Mysticism and Resistance*.

I saw to what lengths this voluntarily accepted poverty can go from an interesting document, a letter in "The Catholic Worker" addressed to the treasurer of the City of New York. For a subway building, the city had expropriated the site on which the house of the community stood. The

city had paid two-thirds of the expropriation sum in advance. It did not get around to the last third until a year and half later. To the 68,700 US\$ the city had added the usual interest of 3,579.39 US\$. Dorothy Day (Catholic radical, 1897-1980), as publisher of *the Catholic Worker*, replied to the office of finance in July of 1960.

I return to you herewith the interest on the money, which we received from you recently. We do not be-



lieve in paying rent on money. As Catholics we know the teaching of the early church. All the early councils forbade charging for money. They declared it reprehensible to make people pay interest on money loaned. During the Middle Ages Canon Law forbade it, and published a series of decrees, to the effect that profit of this sort should be paid back. The Christian emphasis on the duty to do good demands that we lend for nothing, that we give generously, even in the case of expropriation, as in our case, and not oppose it but accept it with a happy heart.

We do not believe in the profit system. And so we cannot accept profit and interest for our money. People who have a materialist view of welfare are on the lookout for profit. For our part, we try to do our duty by seeing to services, without requiring money from our brothers and sisters, as Jesus has commanded us through his Gospel (Mt 25). A Franciscan considers

lending for interest the curse of culture. The English artist and writer Eric Gill called usury and war the two major problems of our age.

Seeing that we have addressed these problems in every issue of the 'Catholic Worker' since 1933 (human freedom, war and peace, the state and the individual, man and his labour) and seeing as Scripture teaches us that love of money is the root of all evil, we take this occasion to put our faith into practice and set a sign against the love for money by returning the interest to you.

Questions:

1. How do you take this sign?
2. What do you think about it?



Application

Julius K. Nyerere, the first president of independent Tanzania and the "Father of African Socialism," had a vision for his country, for Africa, and for the whole world. He called it socialism. The following text has been compiled from various speeches and essays by Julius K. Nyerere.

Ujamaa: Foundation of African Socialism

Socialism is, as democracy, a state of mind. This essay intends to examine this state of mind. It separates socialists from people who are not. This holds for individuals as well as for societies. It has nothing to do with whether one is rich or not. The needy can be potential capitalists, those who exploit their fellow man. Millionaires do not depend on their society for their wealth. In very poor countries like Tanzania people can become millionaires as readily as in rich countries. The

basic difference between a socialist society and a capitalist one does not lie in the methods for acquiring wealth, but in the way this wealth is distributed.

Seeing that the presence of millionaires in a society does not depend on its wealth, sociologists should find it interesting to discover and show why our societies in Africa have not produced millionaires. I suspect that they would discover that it hinges on the organisation of traditional African societies, which does not allow for parasites. It includes as well the way we distribute wealth. One could say as well that Africa, as a consequence, could not bring forth a class of leisurely landowners. One result of this is that there was no one to pay others to produce works of art or learned books, about which the capitalist countries are so



proud. But works of art and the achievements of science come from the mind, which is, just as land, a gift of God to humankind.

Something must be wrong in a society where one man, no matter how clever or industrious, can get as wage the sum of what a thousand of his fellow citizens earn. Greed, as the way to power and prestige, is not socially responsible. In a greedy society, wealth tends to corrupt those who possess it. The evident difference between their own prosperity and the relative deprivation of the rest of society, is almost needed for them to enjoy their wealth. Along with this un-social consequence from the accumulation of private wealth, the factual need to acquire wealth has to be interpreted as a vote of non-confidence against the social system. If a society is organised so that people look after their fellow citizens, then no one has to worry what the next day will bring and he does not have to hoard today. He just has to be ready to work. Society itself should look after him, or after his widow and orphans. That is what the traditional African society had in mind, and it worked. The catastrophes of nature were followed by famine, but everyone suffered, the *poor* as well as the *rich*. That was socialism. That is socialism. In its essence, socialism means just distribution.

Three things are needed to create wealth, whether in the old or the modern way. First of all, land. God has given us land. From the land we draw raw material and transform it to meet our needs. Second, tools. Experience has taught us that tools help us. And third, effort, labour. We do not have to read Adam Smith or Karl Marx to discover that neither the land nor the hoe produces wealth. We need no degree in economics to know that neither the farmer nor the landowner made the land. Land is God's gift to humankind.

Everyone worked in the traditional African society. There was no other way to see to society's necessities. Even the tribal elder, who had no task and took it easy and let the others work for him, had in truth worked very hard in all his past years. The riches he now seemed to own were

not his personally. He held the wealth only as the tribal elder of the group which had produced it. The younger ones paid him their respect, for he was older than they and had served the community much longer.

When I point out that everyone was a worker in traditional African life, I do not use the word worker as the opposite of employer, but in contrast to the idler or loafer. The capitalist and the landowner were not the only ones unknown to African life; there was absent as well that sort of parasitic class of modern times, the idlers and men-about-town, who claimed hospitality as their right, without at all being ready to return it. Those of us who discourse on the African way of life are well advised to recall the following Swahili saying: "Two days long treat your guest as a guest. On the third day give him a hoe." There is no socialism without labour.

The other use of the word *worker*, meaning a wage earner as opposed to the employer, reflects a capitalist way of seeing things. It was brought to Africa when colonialism took hold and is

wholly foreign to our way of thinking. There is nothing wrong with our desire to be well off, nor is it wrong for us to want the power that comes with wealth. But it is certainly wrong if we pursue wealth and power in

*"Two days long treat
your guest as a guest.
On the third day
give him a hoe."*

order to dominate others. Unfortunately there are some among us who have already learned to covet wealth for such purposes. For that reason we must take the first step towards re-educating ourselves and get back to our earlier outlook. Just as we reject the capitalist way of seeing things which came to Africa with colonialism, we must as well reject the capitalist way of doing things. One of those things is appropriating land. In Africa we have always looked on land as the possession of the community. The African right to land was always no more than the right to use it. The Europeans came with a wholly different idea: land was a marketable commodity. Such a system is not only foreign to us, it is also thoroughly wrong. In a social order that recognises the appropriation of land, landown-



ers can end up in the same class, and usually gravitate in that direction, as idlers, about whom I have spoken: the parasitic class. We cannot let the parasitic life take root here in Tanzania. But, as I said when I began, true socialism is a state of mind. For that reason people in Tanzania must see to it that this socialist state of mind does not get lost through individuals succumbing to the pursuit of personal profit. Some groups will always contribute more to the national product than others, as a consequence of the market worth of their line of work. In reality, the other groups may well be producing goods and services which have the same or greater factual worth. For example, the foodstuffs which a farmer produces have a higher social worth than the diamonds panned in the mines of Mwanua.

Unions have the task of seeing to it that workers get a just share of the profits. But a just share also has to be right in its relation to the whole of society. What holds for groups holds as well for individuals. Certain capacities, some qualifications, for good reason, draw higher pay than others. But here as well a true socialist will claim an appropriate return for his expert work and not try, unless he is a potential capitalist, to blackmail society by demanding a salary corresponding to that of his technical equals in far richer societies.

Socialism in Europe followed on the agrarian revolution and the industrial revolution. The former led to a landed class and to a landless class within society. The latter resulted in modern capitalism and the industrial proletariat. Both revolutions planted the seed of conflict in society, and this conflict led not only to European socialism. The apostles of socialism turned conflict into a philosophy. Civil war was no longer seen as an evil or a misfortune, but as good and necessary. As prayer for Christianity and Islam, so for the European version of Socialism civil war (called class struggle) is a means tightly bound to its goal. Both turn into the basis for a complete way of life. The European socialist cannot imagine his socialism without its father, capitalism!

I, who grew up in tribal socialism, find this contradiction unbearable. It confers on capitalism the rank of a philosophy which it neither claims nor deserves. The glorification of capitalism through doctrinaire European socialism, I must

repeat, is, for me, unbearable.

African socialism did not begin with social classes fighting against each other. In fact I doubt if there is any equivalent for the word class in any African language. The basis and the goal of African socialism is the large family. *Ujamaa* or "a feeling for the family" describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which aspires to bring about a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man through man. It is opposed as well to doctrinaire socialism, which aspires to bring about a happy society on the basis of a philosophy of unavoidable conflict between people.

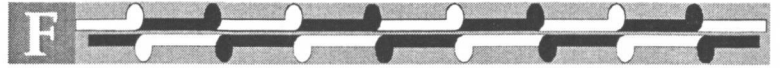
Here in Africa we have no more need to be converted to socialism than we need instruction about democracy. Both have their roots in the traditions from which we have come. Modern African socialism, drawing on its heritage, can look on social space as the extension of the basic family unit. But the idea of a social family can no longer be limited to that of a tribe, nor to that of a country. When we were fighting to break the might of colonialism, we learned how necessary unity is. We came to understand that the same feeling for others, which gave each one security in tribal times through membership in an extended family, must remain alive in a still larger community, the nation. But we should not stop there. The embrace of the family to which we belong and as we understand it, has to reach out still further, beyond the tribe, the community, the nation, and even the continent, to take in the whole of humankind. That is the sole logical consequence of true socialism." (The original appeared in *Freedom and Unity*, Oxford U. Press, 1962)

Questions and Assignment:

1. Identify the points that distinguish African socialism from socialism on other continents.
2. Bring these points into relation to Catholic social teaching.
3. Do you see any parallels here to the utopia of Franciscans and of the Bible?
4. In this context, what does the "option for the poor" mean?



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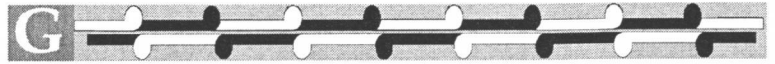
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- p. 3 Symbol of communism.
- p. 8 "The true Trinity in the true Unity", The master of the Hildegardis Codex, ca.1147. Benedictine Abbey of St. Hildegard, Elbingen bei Rüdesheim, Germany.
- p. 10 From: *Parteileben*, n. 2; January 1974.
- p. 13 **(top)** Fidel Castro as depicted on a poster by Niko, 1970.
(bottom) From: *Chile – a Black Book*.
- p. 14 **(right)** From: *Franziskaner Mission*, March 1993.
- p. 15 **(top)** Mural in the parish church of Santa Teresinha, Brazil.
(bottom) From: *Flugsand*, 1992. A drawing from Asia.
- p. 16 Portrait of Cerezo Barredo, 1995. Brazil.
- p. 17 From: *Chile – ein Schwarzbuch*.
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- p. 21 From: *Chile – a Black Book*.
- p. 24 **(left)** From: *MF*, Sept. 8, 1997.
(right) Miniature from the Umbrian School. Spoleto, Museum of the Comune.
- p. 26 From: *Alle Welt*, October 9, 1991.
- p. 27 From: *Kontraste*, February 1992. Photo by Gérard Klijn.
- p. 28 Beate Heinen, 1989.

