

# PROMOTIO IUSTITIAE

## EXCHANGES ÉCHANGES INTERCAMBIOS

Nº 67, May 1997

\* INTRODUCTION ..... 41

<p>LETTER and STUDY DOCUMENT on NEO-LIBERALISM in LATIN AMERICA</p>
---

\* FAITH and JUSTICE in FORMATION ..... 61  
Peter Henriot, S.J., Zambia

\* The SOCIAL APOSTOLATE INITIATIVE, 1995-2005

\* An INTERVIEW ..... 65

\* The PREPARATORY COMMITTEE ..... 69

\* FIFTY YEARS among the PEOPLE of HONDURAS ..... 71  
Ricardo Falla, S.J., Honduras



# INTRODUCTION

In November 1993, the Province of Argentina asked that an interdisciplinary group be formed to study neo-liberalism in Latin America and propose viable broad alternatives to it. The work began after the 34th General Congregation. A first draft in October 1995 led to much discussion among the Provincial Superiors of Latin America, a second one circulated among a few Jesuit confrères in the United States as well as the Latin American Social Apostolate Coordinators, and consequently a third version was written. At their October 1996 meeting in Mexico, with Father General in attendance, the Provincials finalized and signed the letter and study-document which *Promotio Iustitiae* is happy to re-publish here.

The Provincials address the letter to their brother Jesuits and through them to "all those who participate in the apostolic mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the continent and all those concerned about, and committed to, the fate of our people, especially the poorest." With their standpoint clearly stated, the Provincials focus on the increasing poverty and evident marginalization of Latin Americans as effects of global economic forces at work there, and these they vigorously criticize in the name of the poor.

The letter and document should always, if possible, be read together and not separately, and the same is true of their publication. Wherever you are in the world, wherever you stand in society, you may wish to study the letter and document with the following questions in mind:

- i) Which ideas in the Provincials' letter and document are useful in helping you to understand poverty or economic injustice in your local context? Which ideas, from your perspective, are not helpful?
- ii) What helps you to understand the global economic realities (forces, patterns, structures) which affect poverty, marginalization and exclusion?
- iii) At a national level, what are key causes or sources, whether economic or cultural or whatever, which generate poverty and injustice?
- iv) Which ideas are most helpful in connecting your understanding of local poverty/injustice with the new global situation, patterns or system?

If something in the letter or document strikes you, your brief comment as a contribution to the dialogue is very welcome in *Promotio Iustitiae* whose masthead proclaims "EXCHANGES ÉCHANGES INTERCAMBIOS." A relevant example of such exchange is the notion of "social science literacy" which the texts on neo-liberalism both require and promote, and for which Fr. Peter Henriot eloquently pleads in his "Formation for Faith and Justice," looking to the future of the Society's mission in Africa and Madagascar.

All these concerns also flow into the "Social Apostolate Initiative" which began about two years ago. The good work of reflection already done has made us keenly aware of the diversity that must be respected in characterising the many Jesuit social ministries. There is no single, relatively typical, institutional framework or structure such as "school" or "parish" or "retreat house". Jesuits and

colleagues labour in the widest variety of economic, cultural and religious contexts which make up the world today and tomorrow.

Fr. Fernando Ponce explores such issues and nudges them forward in his interview from Paris, while the brief report by the international Preparatory Committee hints at the flavour and spirit of the Social Apostolate Congress to be held in Naples in June of 1997.

The Congress is one step in the long-term "Initiative 1995-2005" whose purpose is to renew the social apostolate in all its forms and to assure what might be called its "sustainability," namely, the continuity of the social apostolate, its capacity to renew itself and develop the service it offers, the corporate commitment of the Society, the involvement of each new generation.

A prayer-message on the fiftieth anniversary of the Jesuits' arrival among the people of Honduras speaks of giving thanks, seeking pardon, confronting forces of evil and envisaging a society in the image of God's Kingdom, renewing our commitment and joining in celebration, and all these points also serve very well for our meditation on concluding this issue of *PJ*.

Michael Czerny, S.J.

# A LETTER on NEO-LIBERALISM in LATIN AMERICA

The Latin American Provincials of the Society of Jesus

Dear brother Jesuits,

1. As Provincial Superiors of the Society of Jesus in Latin America and the Caribbean, hearing the call of the 34th General Congregation to deepen our mission: "**to proclaim the faith which seeks justice**," we wish to share **some reflections about the so-called neo-liberalism in our countries** with all those who participate in the apostolic mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the continent and all those who make common cause with our people, especially the poorest. To claim that the economic measures applied in recent years in every Latin American and Caribbean country represent the only possible way of shaping the economy, and that the impoverishment of millions of Latin Americans is the inevitable price for future growth, are claims we cannot accept with equanimity. These economic measures are fruit of a **culture**, propose a vision of the human person, and mark out a political strategy that we must discern from the perspective of models of society to which we aspire and for which we work along with many men and women motivated by the hope of living in a more just and human society and of leaving it so for future generations.

2. The reflections presented here do not claim to be the scientific analysis of a complex issue that merits study with many disciplines. They are reflections concerning the criteria and effects of neo-liberalism, and characteristics of the society we long for. Our main concern is ethical and religious in nature. The economic and political practices that we discuss reflect, in the public sphere, the counter-values and limits of a culture founded upon a conception of the human person and society incompatible with the values of the Gospel.

## THE SOCIETY WE ARE PART OF

3. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, communications link us closely, technology offers new possibilities for knowledge and creativity, and markets permeate all social spaces. In contrast to the past decade, the economy in most of our countries has begun to grow again.

4. This material expansion could create hope for everyone, but instead it leaves multitudes in poverty with no chance to participate in building up a common destiny; it threatens cultural identity; it destroys natural resources. We estimate that in Latin America and the Caribbean at least 180 million people live in poverty and 80 million subsist in extreme poverty.

5. The economic forces that produce these perverse results tend to turn into ideologies and lift certain concepts up as absolutes. The market, for example, which used to be a useful and even necessary instrument to improve and increase supply and reduce prices, has become **the means, the method, and the goal** that govern relationships among human beings.

6. This cause is behind the spread of so-called "neo-liberal" economic measures throughout the continent.

- They consider economic growth — and not the totality of men and women in harmony with creation — to be the economy's *raison d'être*.

- They restrict State intervention to the point of stripping it of its responsibilities for the minimum goods that every citizen deserves in virtue of being a person.
- They eliminate comprehensive programmes meant to generate opportunity for everyone and replace them with incidental assistance to specific groups.
- They privatize businesses on the assumption that, in all cases, the State is an inefficient administrator.
- They open borders to the flow of capital, finance and merchandise without restrictions, leaving the smallest and weakest producers without enough protection.
- On the problem of the foreign debt whose servicing requires drastic cutbacks in social investment, they keep silent.
- They subordinate the complexity of the public treasury to the adjustment of macroeconomic variables: a balanced fiscal budget, inflation reduction, and a stable balance of payments; as if from this would flow all common good without creating new problems for the population.
- They insist that these adjustments will create growth which, when substantial, will increase income levels and trickle down to solve the situation of the disadvantaged.
- In order to create incentives for private investment, they eliminate any obstacles entailed by legislation to protect workers.
- They exempt powerful groups from taxes and environmental obligations and shelter them in order to accelerate the industrialization process, thus leading to an even greater concentration of wealth and economic power.
- They place political activity at the service of this economic strategy, by removing every restraint, every political and social control, in order to guarantee the hegemony of the free market in every field including the free contracting of labour.

7. We acknowledge that the structural adjustments have also had some positive effects. Market mechanisms have increased the supply of higher quality products at better prices. Inflation has been reduced throughout the continent. Governments have given up tasks outside their competence in order to attend, as is their duty, to the common good. General awareness has risen of the value of fiscal austerity which uses public resources better. And trade relations among our countries have moved ahead significantly.

8. But these factors far from compensate the immense imbalances caused: a great concentration of income, wealth and land tenure; an exponential increase in masses of urban unemployed or those who subsist with unstable or unproductive jobs; the bankruptcy of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses; destruction and forced displacement of indigenous and rural populations; spread of drug-trafficking based in rural sectors whose traditional products are no longer competitive; disappearance of food security; increase in criminality, often exacerbated by hunger; destabilization of national economies by the free flow of international speculation; imbalances in local communities caused by projects of multinational companies that do not take the local population into account.

9. As a result, concomitant with moderate economic growth, social unrest is on the rise in nearly all our countries, as expressed in strikes and public protests. In some areas, armed struggle has reemerged, which solves nothing. There is a growing repudiation of the general direction of the economy which, far from improving the common good, is deepening the traditional causes of public discontent: **inequality, misery, and corruption.**

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN

10. Underlying the "neo-liberal" economic logic there is a conception of the human person which limits the greatness of man and woman to their capacity to generate monetary income. This intensifies individualism and the race to earn and to own, and easily leads to attacks on the integrity of creation. In many cases, greed, corruption, and violence are unleashed. Moreover, as this conception permeates social groups, it radically destroys community.

11. A set of values is imposed which puts priority on individual freedom of access to satisfaction and pleasures; it legitimizes, among other things, drugs and eroticism without limits. It is a freedom that rejects any government interference in private initiatives, opposes social planning, ignores the virtues of solidarity, and acknowledges the laws of the market alone.

12. Through economic globalization, this manner of comprehending man and woman penetrates our countries with highly seductive messages and symbols. Thanks to the control which this vision exercises over the mass media, it destroys the identity of local cultures that lack the ability to make themselves heard.

13. The leaders of our societies, usually linked to these movements of globalization and imbued with the wholesale acceptance of the market logic, often live as strangers in their own countries. Rather than dialogue, they perceive the people as an obstacle and threat to their interests, not as brothers and sisters, companions or associates.

14. This subtle and attractive conception considers it normal for millions of men and women on the continent to be born and die in misery, unable to generate enough income to obtain a **more human level of life**. Consequently, governments and societies are not shocked by the hunger and insecurity of multitudes left hopeless and bewildered by the excesses of those who abuse society's and nature's resources with no thought for others.

### THE SOCIETY WE WANT

15. Thanks be to God, different cultural and ethnic groups and generations, different classes and various social sectors are taking initiatives at transformation that suggest the emergence of a new world.

16. Inspired by these efforts, we want to help build a reality closer to the Kingdom of justice, brotherhood and solidarity found in the Gospel, where life with dignity is possible for all men and women.

17. We long for a society in which all people have access to the goods and services they deserve by virtue of having been called to share this life as a common path toward God. We do not demand a welfare society of unlimited material satisfaction. We call for a just society in which no one remains excluded from work and from access to basic goods necessary to achieve personal fulfilment, such as education, food, health, family and security.

18. We want a society in which all can live in family and look toward the future with hope, share the natural environment and bequeath its marvels to the generations which will succeed us.

19. A society which respects the cultural traditions that have identified the indigenous peoples, those who came from other regions, Afro-Americans, and those of mixed race.

20. A society sensitive to the weak, the marginalised, those who have suffered the impact of socio-economic processes that deny first place to the human being. A democratic society, structured in a participatory manner, in which political activity is a viable choice for those who wish to serve the broader interests important for everyone.

21. We are aware of the high cost to be paid for achieving this kind of society in terms of the changes required in attitudes, habits, and priorities. We are challenged to adopt as our own the positive elements of modernity such as work, organization, and efficiency, without which we cannot build that society we dream of. Finally, we want to contribute to the construction of a Latin American community among our peoples.

### TASKS

22. An enormous task lies ahead of us to be accomplished in different fields:

- For our universities and research centres to collaborate with many others on the basis of theology, social sciences, and the philosophy of man and nature, in a serious study of neo-liberalism followed by effective publication, with a view to discovering its underlying rationality and the effects which strike at human beings and destroy the harmony of creation.
- To **compare** and **discern** the courses of action that flow from the analysis so as to take the appropriate options.

23. This understanding and these decisions should lead us:

- To share the plight of victims through communities of solidarity, in order to safeguard the rights of the excluded and undertake with them, in dialogue with decision-making sectors, the building-up of societies which are open, non-excluding and mutually supportive.
- To strengthen the cultural and spiritual traditions of our peoples so that they may become involved in global relationships based on their own identity, without jeopardizing their symbolic richness and community spirit.
- To incorporate into educational work, which we do with many others, the order of values necessary to form persons capable of protecting the primacy of human beings in the world we share.
- To give our students the necessary training to understand this reality and work for its transformation.
- To resist the consumerist society vigorously and its ideology of happiness based on the unlimited acquisition of material satisfaction.
- To communicate and disseminate widely in all media the findings of this analysis of neo-liberalism, the values that must be preserved and promoted, and to make the possible alternatives known.
- To propose viable solutions in those arenas where global and macroeconomic decisions are made.

24. Beginning from the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola which is engaged in the transformation of the human heart, we will work to strengthen the value of gratuity in a world where everything has its price; to stimulate a sobriety of life and a sense of simple beauty; to promote internal silence and the spiritual quest; and to reinforce a responsible freedom that resolutely incorporates the practice of solidarity.



25. To make our undertaking credible, to show our solidarity with the excluded of this continent, and to demonstrate our distance from consumerism, we will not only strive for personal austerity, but also have our works and institutions avoid every kind of ostentation and employ methods consistent with our poverty. In their investments and consumption, they should not support companies which violate human rights or damage the eco-systems. In this way we want to reaffirm the radical option of faith that led us to answer God's call to follow Jesus in poverty, so as to be more effective and free in the quest for justice.

26. With many others we shall strive for a national and Latin American community of solidarity, where science, technology, and markets are at the service of all people in our countries. Where the commitment to the poor makes plain that working for the well-being of all men and women, without exclusions, is our contribution both modest and serious to the greater glory of God in history and in creation.

We hope that these reflections stimulate efforts to improve our service to the peoples of Latin America. We ask our Lady of Guadalupe, Patron Saint of Latin America, to bless our peoples and intercede with God to obtain for us abundant grace to carry out our mission.

Mexico City, November 14, 1996  
Feast of Saint Joseph Pignatelli

Ferdinand Azevedo (Northern Brazil); Carlos Cardó (Peru); José Adán Cuadra (Central America); Benjamín González Buelta (Dominican Republic); Juan Díaz Martínez (Chile); Mariano García Díaz (Paraguay); Ignacio García-Mata (Argentina); José Adolfo González (Colombia); Mario López Barrio (Mexico); Jorge Machín (Cuba); Allan Mendoza (Ecuador); Emilio M. Moreira (Bahia); Fernando Picó (Puerto Rico); Armando Raffo (Uruguay); Marcos Recolons (Bolivia); João Claudio Rhoden (Southern Brazil); Francisco Ivern Simó (Central Brazil); Arturo Sosa A. (Venezuela).

## CONTRIBUTIONS to a COMMON REFLECTION

### Working Document

This document, which accompanies the letter on neo-liberalism in Latin America, is **an aid for study, discernment, and the community-based pursuit of courses of action**. It is not a scientific analysis of a very complex problem. It should be read as a presentation of points for **dialogue** about an issue that has been studied from various angles and as an **invitation** to attempt other approaches, in seeking a deeper analysis and a corporate way of acting together with our fellow Jesuits, lay people and colleagues, men and women, with whom the cause of justice unites us.

The text introduces conceptual elements of neo-liberalism and its attendant notion of man and woman. It then illustrates the effects of neo-liberalism on the poor and on the common good of society. It concludes by suggesting courses of study and action.

### 1. From our perspective

As followers of the Lord Jesus the poor man, we are neither better nor worse than the people of Latin America and their leaders. Nonetheless, we have been called upon to contribute, in the Church, so that **God may be revealed** in the hearts of men and women, in the cultures and processes of this people.

Dedicated to the ministry of perceiving signs that speak of God in the fulfilment of a fully human being or that silence Him in persons excluded by others, we have learned through discernment that, **when people allow God to reveal himself**, then merciful love, solidarity, forgiveness, justice, and freedom spring forth in communities.

From this perspective, we have contemplated the development of our peoples in recent years. During the 1980s, we see that the adjustment process – necessary to reorganize economies, to overcome the fiscal deficit and the deficit in balance of payments, to pay the debt and to resume growth – **dealt a powerful blow to the popular majorities** in all of our countries.

Subsequently, as the process of adjustment and economic opening progressed during the 1990s, everyone hoped that the difficult times would come to a close. But we see that this has not been the case, despite the fact that moderate economic growth has really occurred. There is a widespread feeling of **diminished quality of life** among the popular and poor sectors and convincing evidence of a deterioration in the distribution of income. Civic protest is on the rise and, in some areas, armed struggle has re-emerged forcefully as an invitation to change radically the situation. The three most significant causes of general discontent – inequity, misery and corruption – persist and have worsened in many ways.

There are 180 million of our brothers and sisters living in poverty and 80 million living in misery. We know that this problem has a long history of models of uneven economic growth and selective development in which, alongside very rich groups and a significant middle class, the immense majorities remained excluded from a worthy human life. In recent years, however, we see that an **economic approach called neo-liberalism** underlies this situation and also penetrates the political sphere and social life as a whole.

## 2. A conceptual approach to neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism, as it is understood in Latin America, is a **radical conception of capitalism** that tends to absolutize the market and transform it into the means, the method, and the end of all intelligent and rational human behaviour. According to this conception, people's lives, the functioning of societies, and the policy of governments are subordinated to the market. This absolute market disallows regulation in any area. It is unfettered, without any financial, labour, technological, or administrative restrictions.

This current of thought and action **tends** to turn the economic theory of some of the most brilliant economists of modern capitalism, the authors of neoclassic thought, into **a total ideology**. These thinkers did not intend to reduce human and societal behaviour to the concepts they themselves had developed in order to explain in part the relationships and complex life of people and communities.

Therefore, **neo-liberalism is not equivalent to an economy** that acknowledges the importance of the market of all goods and services without making it an absolute, **nor is it the equivalent of liberal**

**democracy.** Opposing neo-liberalism does not mean being against the efficient use of resources available to society, nor does it mean restricting individual freedom, nor does it mean supporting State socialism.

Rather, opposing neo-liberalism means affirming that there are no absolute institutions to explain or direct human history. That **man and woman cannot be reduced to the market**, the State, or any other power or institution which would impose itself as ultimate. It means protecting human freedom by affirming that **only God is absolute** and that His command is love, which is expressed socially as justice and solidarity. And it means to denounce totalitarian ideologies because their imposition has resulted in injustice, exclusion and violence.

### 3. Input on the view of the human person underlying neo-liberalism

The 34th General Congregation invites us to react to the fact that "structural injustice in the world is **rooted in value systems promoted by a powerful modern culture** which is becoming global in its impact" (D.4, n.24). This impact penetrates our countries through technology and the international financial systems.

This **cultural impact**, made more radical by neo-liberalism, tends to value a human being solely for the capacity to generate income and achieve success in the marketplace. With this reductionist content, it permeates the leadership of our countries, runs through the middle class, and reaches into the farthest corners of popular, indigenous, and rural communities, destroying solidarity and unleashing violence.

So we find ourselves before a **value system**, deep in that it touches the human heart and all-encompassing because it imposes its persuasive messages that cut across the social and institutional life of Latin America.

Making the market absolute even acquires religious connotations. By saying that the market is "right and just" we make it morally legitimizing of questionable activities. We let the meaning of life and human fulfilment be defined **by the market**.

This value system is characterized by ambiguous symbols with great seductive powers and, thanks to its far-reaching influence over the **mass media**, it easily affects local traditions that are ill-equipped to establish a dialogue which enriches all parties and preserves the identity and freedom of deeply-rooted human traditions which lack the market power to get their own messages across.

We do not overlook the **positive elements** of neo-liberalism in the international mobilization spurred by technological transformations which have led to a decline in disease, easier communications, increased time available for leisure and the inner life, and a more comfortable home life. However, we also notice the aspects of these processes that diminish man and woman, particularly in the context of neo-liberal radicalization because — whether intentionally or not — they unleash a race to possess and consume, exacerbate individualism and competition, lead to disregard of community, and cause the integrity of creation to be destroyed.

### 4. Neo-liberal policies

Neo-liberalism becomes evident in its policies of adjustment and liberalization that are applied with certain variations in Latin American countries. These policies consider economic growth – and not the fulfilment of all men and women in harmony with creation – as **the economy's *raison d'être***. They restrict State intervention to the point of stripping it of its responsibilities to guarantee the minimum goods that every citizen deserves in virtue of being a person. They eliminate comprehensive programmes meant to generate opportunity for everyone and replace them with incidental assistance to specific groups. They privatize businesses on the assumption that administration in private hands is ultimately better for everyone. They open borders to the flow of capital, finance and merchandise without restrictions, leaving the smallest and weakest producers without enough protection. They keep silence on the problem of foreign debt whose payment requires drastic cutbacks in social investment. They subordinate the complexity of the public treasury to the adjustment of macroeconomic variables: a balanced fiscal budget, inflation reduction, and a stable balance of payments; as if from this the common good would follow in the long run, and without attending to the population's new problems that result from these adjustments and require simultaneous attention by some State policies. They insist that these adjustments will create growth which, when substantial, will increase income levels and trickle down to solve the situation of the disadvantaged. In order to create incentives for private investment, they eliminate any obstacles that could be imposed by legislation to protect workers. They exempt powerful groups from taxes and environmental obligations and protect them in order to accelerate the industrialization process. Thus they bring about an even greater concentration of wealth and economic power.

These adjustment measures have made **positive contributions**, such as that of market mechanisms in increasing the supply of higher quality products at better prices; reducing inflation throughout the continent; relieving Governments of tasks outside of their competence so as to give them the opportunity to attend, if they wish, to the common good; raising general awareness of fiscal austerity which results in public resources being used more effectively; and progress in trade relations among our nations.

But these factors far from compensate the immense **imbalances and disruptions caused by neo-liberalism** in terms of the exponential increase in unemployed urban masses or these who subsist with unstable or unproductive jobs; the bankruptcy of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses; the destruction and forced displacement of indigenous and rural populations; the spread of drug-trafficking based in rural sectors whose traditional products are no longer competitive; the disappearance of food security; the increase in criminality often exacerbated by hunger; the destabilization of national economies caused by the free flow of international speculation; imbalances in local communities caused by projects of multinational companies that do not take the local population into account.

## 5. Problems of structural poverty exacerbated by neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism arises within modern culture and, without necessarily intending to, produces structural effects which **generate poverty** and which have already been at work long before the peak of neo-liberalism in the 1980s. These factors include inequity or injustice in the distribution of income and wealth, instability of social capital, and inequality or exclusion in the terms of trade.

### 5.1. Uneven distribution of wealth and income

Economic inequity or social inequality bars **nearly half of the inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean** from securing the material conditions necessary to live with dignity and to exercise their rights effectively.

By opposing State efforts at redistribution, neo-liberalism today perpetuates and intensifies long-standing socio-economic inequality. Neo-liberalism brings in the principle that only the market has the ability efficiently to assign resources and establish income levels for the different social actors. Therefore efforts are abandoned to achieve social justice through a progressive tax structure and an allotment of social spending favouring the most disadvantaged; and attempts to democratize shareholding or conduct comprehensive agrarian reform are discarded.

### 5.2. The instability of social capital

Social capital is understood as the sum total of human, natural, infrastructural, and institutional wealth which a society possesses. Social capital, therefore, includes the culture, knowledge, education, natural resources, transportation, and communications that a nation offers to its inhabitants. This capital is built up gradually through such private and government investments as raise the potential and creativity of all the men and women in a country. **Social capital** is based upon civil society and the State **participating** in the expansion of opportunities.

An examination of social capital in our countries shows that the **supply of education** is scarce and of low quality for more than half of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean. Investment in science and technology is minimal in most budgets. Health conditions are dismal. There is an immense lack of infrastructure, of roads in areas of *campesino* economy, and of infrastructure in housing for most of the urban or rural poor. The destruction of natural resources continues. Further, as the administration is decentralized in each country, the extreme fragility of local institutions becomes obvious, particularly in poor towns.

One could say that **Latin America's poor** have always experienced this lack of social capital, but the deficiency has been aggravated by neo-liberal policies: the withdrawal of the State in favour of private initiative, decreased social spending, and failure to support natural and cultural heritage and civic organizations.

### 5.3. Markets without social control

**The market** as an historical expression of the need for human beings to support each other in order to permit us to fulfil our present and future potentialities **is neither good nor bad**, neither capitalist nor socialist. It is set up for everyone as a relationship that must be controlled skilfully, in freedom and solidarity, in order to ensure an agreeable existence for everyone. Like any kind of relationship, the market can be employed perversely to destroy persons and peoples. But the fact that such perversion is possible should not make us forget the patrimony of knowledge and culture that humankind has created around the market throughout its history. The challenge is not to destroy the relationship of trade, but to place it **at the service of human fulfilment** in harmony with creation; to situate it in a context of equality of basic opportunity for all people; and to dignify it by liberating it from the forces of domination and exploitation that distorted it into the mode of production that proliferated in the western world.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n.28.

With the advent of neo-liberalism, the social imbalances produced by a market uncontrolled by civil society and the State are underscored.<sup>2</sup> In fact, by neglecting the production of social capital, the market remains at the service of the most educated, those who own infrastructure and take advantage of institutions, and those who control information. By establishing labour and financial deregulation, the market easily transfers the value produced to centres of national and international accumulation. The population often is not included in the vigorous production of added value. And in processes such as the assembly (*maquila*) industry or the informal economy, the people are not allowed to benefit from the wealth produced. A process whereby the poor, working, and middle classes are increasingly incorporated in economic relationships, with the capacity to retain the value added by them and to overcome poverty, has not in fact taken place.

The labour market is the **central factor** in the integration of the world economy. In the current neo-liberal competition, investment seeks cheap labour in order to compete internationally. This lowers costs of production and hurts both Latin American workers, who are badly paid, and workers in the North, by creating unemployment as factories migrate to the South. Further, workers from poor countries are routinely barred from entering richer countries.

In an unrestricted financial market, short-term financial capital or so-called "hot money" migrates with the sole purpose of taking the most advantage of the monetary and banking systems. Such capital flows can totally destabilize any economy, with devastating effects upon even the strongest Latin American countries.

The **effects of a market without social controls** have been particularly severe for rural populations hard hit by the economic opening which took millions of peasants out of agriculture, just where social capital is so much more lacking.

Therefore, taking **the region as a whole**, neo-liberal policies are seen to aggravate the structural problems underlying poverty: distribution of wealth, social capital, and the social distortions produced by a market operating without social controls.

#### 5.4. Neo-liberalism and the generalized social crisis

It is very important to reflect on the relationships between neo-liberalism and the generalized social crisis in our societies, for we observe that longstanding problems in our societies, with both pre-modern and modern roots, have intensified along with persistent poverty and growing inequality. We are dangerously propelled by **a culture that exacerbates the ambition** to possess, accumulate, and consume; one in which individual success in the market supplants people's fulfilment in communities of participation and solidarity.

---

<sup>2</sup> As an effect of these markets, 20 per cent of the world's inhabitants receives 82.7 per cent of the total world income, while 60 per cent receives only 5.6 per cent. Restricted or unequal access to global markets and the status of unequal partners cost developing countries about US\$ 500 billion annually, a figure ten times greater than what they receive in foreign assistance. In the finance market, the poorest 20 per cent of the world population accedes to only 0.2 per cent of the international commercial loans. The North, with about a fourth of the world population, consumes 70 per cent of the world's energy, 75 per cent of the minerals, 85 per cent of the wood and 60 per cent of food. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1992*.

Indeed, throughout the continent a **general breakdown in societies** can be observed which has multiple causes and is characterized by: family instability, increasing and diverse forms of violence, discrimination against women, environmental degradation, manipulation of individuals by the mass media, harassment of peasant and indigenous communities, the growth of inhospitable cities, the loss of legitimacy by political parties, corruption of leaders, the privatization of the State by economically powerful groups, State structures losing the capacity to govern, the proliferation of alienating commodities such as drugs and pornography, the complexity of the secularization processes and spiritual quests that disregard commitment to community and the practice of solidarity.

**Neo-liberalism exacerbates this crisis** by contributing to the disappearance of the common good as the central objective of politics and economics. The common good is supplanted by the goal of balancing market forces. Contrary to the Church's social teaching, which holds that the State should have as much influence as the common good requires, neo-liberalism flatly asserts that for the State to have less influence is the best, only what the macro-economy requires to function well and for the stimulus of private businesses.

In this context, an overall **concern for the general quality of life** of present and future populations, as formerly embodied in the so-called welfare State, disappears. When the goal of the common good disappears, so too disappears the sense of a common "home" or public domain.

Accordingly there would be no need to care for **the family** as the nucleus and cell of a common good which no longer matters. Women become merely the cheapest labour force. Nature becomes a source of rapid enrichment for the present generation, and the peasant becomes an inefficient citizen who must emigrate.

Against this background, **the public domain** tends to disappear, and political parties as proposals for building up society and nation become irrelevant. Political and administrative competence is reduced to showing that the candidate or president is the one most able to create the conditions required for the open, free play of market forces. All of these are subordinated to programmes of economic adjustment and liberalization imposed by the same international requirements of the market.

In a context where **community** is irrelevant and the common good worthless, it should surprise no one that violence intensifies, the production and consumption of drugs skyrocket, and the aspects of the prevailing culture most contrary to human fulfilment are reinforced, even as the most valuable contributions of the modern and post-modern periods are left aside.

## 6. Tasks we must undertake

Before this reality contrary to the initial design of our Creator springs up a demand of faith so that God may be God among us. It calls us to resist the forces destroying our brothers and sisters and to work together with many others for change, to contribute to building up a society closer to the Kingdom of solidarity and brotherhood found in the Gospel.

We should prepare to pay the price for this resolve. We have no alternative. Our loyalty to the Lord Jesus is at stake. It is the basis and condition that make **living in brotherhood** possible, for which Jesuit martyrs have given their lives in different places in Latin America.

Our aspiration is to contribute to **the construction of a society** in which all people, without exception, can obtain the goods and services they deserve by virtue of having been called to share this common path to the Father. A just society, in which no one is excluded, sensitive to the weak, the marginalised, those who have suffered the impact of socio-economic processes that do not put the human being first. A democratic society, built through participation and equitable in its gender relations. A society in which we can live in family and look to the future with hope, share nature and bequeath its marvels to the generations which come after us. A society attentive to the cultural traditions that have given our peoples their own identity.

### 6.1. The study of neo-liberalism

The first task awaiting us is so **to understand neo-liberalism in depth** and its attendant social dynamics, and so to discover its rationality and its ethical suppositions.

To accomplish this, we propose to embark on **a coordinated process of reflection and action** which gathers the intellectual contributions and experiences of the various Provinces, systematizes them in a useful way, and puts them at the service of a more fruitful action, toward the more universal good, within the Social Apostolate Initiative of the Society of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

This process begins by seriously posing the **relevant questions** in our communities and works: What is this neo-liberalism and how can we come to know it in depth? What are its anthropological, philosophical, economic, and historical roots? Which ethics is implicit in its positions, and what does theology have to say in this regard? How should our Ignatian spirituality approach it? How to discern its effects in people, institutions, and communities? How to get at the heart of this culture in dialogue with modernity, globalization, and technology? How to prepare Jesuits, and particularly young ones, to undertake discernment of this reality? How to work in collaboration with many others in our works, with the institutions of civil society, with churches and religious movements, and with governments, in order to be effective here, where the very meaning of men and women of our continent is at stake? How to enter into dialogue with those who make technical and political decisions that have devastating consequences for the poor? How to educate our students to become capable of working in building up a different world? How to confront the consumerist obsession in the media, and rescue humanism, aesthetics, the gratuitous enjoyment of nature, the richness of the spirit, and the satisfaction of solidarity?

We must undertake this task of interdisciplinary research together with lay people, and with other Christians and non-Christians, in **an apostolic network** that involves our universities, social research and action centres, and many other institutions internationally committed to the cause of justice and life (GC 34, D.3, n.23).

Understanding the **anthropological underpinnings** of the neo-liberal current and its effects should be part of the culture of every Jesuit. Therein lies the importance of everyone being formed in social science, economics, politics, public ethics..., so that we may be able to take up with clarity the challenges this situation poses for us now and in future.

As we deepen our understanding of these complex realities, we must turn to Ignatian discernment and bring the demands of the Spirit to the Exercises, to spiritual direction, and to preaching.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Promotio Iustitiae* 64 (June 1996).



To our high school and university students we must impart an understanding of the situation and disseminate it pedagogically through the mass media.

### 6.2. Overcoming exclusion

We have an **immense pedagogical task**: as the horizon of the common good is disappearing and each individual seeks his or her own advantage in the market, social exclusion is getting worse.<sup>4</sup> An educational effort, formal and informal, must be initiated to transform the policies of exclusion, the institutions, businesses and projects which exclude, and the men and women who, often without realizing it, are agents of exclusion. We have to begin by looking at ourselves, our preferences, and the groups we spend time with. We too can be part of the dynamics of exclusion. And we also have to promote change among the excluded, for often they in turn are counterparts of the type of national and international society that we have created.

The challenge lies in beginning with those who have been excluded and then, **alongside the poor and walking with them**, in proposing the most inclusive or participatory society for all from among the possible and viable ones. So this task calls for a structural transformation of our societies that goes beyond simply resisting the disturbing aspects of neo-liberalism. It is not a matter of including the excluded in systems that structurally generate exclusion. It is a matter of creating, with gradual and patient efforts, a society of solidarity which does not exist yet.

### 6.3. Overcoming the culture of poverty

This expression does not allude to the culture of the poor with **its values and ambiguities**. The expression refers to the behaviour of society as a whole at a national and continental level. A society whose leadership, whose social, political, educational, and religious institutions, and whose poor citizens, have become used to living with poverty as something normal. Although the means exist to overcome this situation, there is no interest in putting them to use.

People may say that this culture of poverty has existed for decades in Latin America, but as neo-liberalism has spread in all our countries, this way of seeing and perceiving things has found a **perverse justification**. Indeed, for neo-liberalism, the existence of millions of poor and destitute in Latin America causes no shock. These people have no claim because they have no value in the market. And the purpose of the economy is not to lift them out of poverty, but to produce more, sell more, and earn more.

### 6.4. The search for viable economic alternatives

One of the most urgent responsibilities is to move from critical analysis **to proposals**. Therefore we must present viable alternatives for a sustainable human development, guided by the common good, that assures the fulfilment of all of our brothers and sisters, present and future, in harmony with nature.

In very general terms, the following are among the topics that must be studied:

---

<sup>4</sup> "In many parts of the world, even in the most developed countries, economic and social forces are **excluding** millions of people from the benefits of society" (GC 34, D.3, n.15).

- The goods that everyone deserves

Our primary focus should be to get the State and society **to guarantee for everyone the goods that persons deserve** in virtue of being persons, sons and daughters of God. These are goods that should be guaranteed as basic rights of citizens whether or not families are able to buy these indispensable items on the market. Such goods are health, education, security, a house and home. These things are really public goods. We do not want a welfare state dedicated to meeting the insatiable demands of citizens as consumers. We do want a just society where each person has what is essential in order to be able to live in dignity.

- Natural resources

Sustainable development requires environmental security, and fairness between the men and women living today and those who will come in future. Alternatives must be presented so that the economy might manage natural resources **differently than the management currently imposed** by neo-liberalism, which disregards the long-term social and ecological costs and benefits. We have the enormous responsibility to find new approaches that guarantee the quality of life for all people, with patterns of consumption and exploitation different from those in northern countries and among the rich elites of our societies, which destroy the environment and appropriate the earth's riches to such an extreme that 20 per cent of the world population consumes 80 per cent of the earth's resources.

- Gender parity

In recent years, as incomes of salaried workers have decreased and unemployment has risen, families have been obliged to have several of their members participating in the informal sector. Currently, in the informal labour market, middle-class and popular-sector women are forced to work triple time: they work to contribute to the family income, they shoulder the burden of housework, and they raise the children. Women are also used as objects in advertising and as commodities. In this context, it is important to recall the reflections of the 34th General Congregation that speaks of "a systematic discrimination against women" and would have us share in a task that "is indeed a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate faith and justice" (GC 34, D.14, nn.3,1).

In the Latin American context, the words of the Congregation make perfect sense: "There is a 'feminization of poverty' and a distinctive 'feminine face of oppression'" (n.4). We must take up the call to align ourselves **in solidarity with women** in specific ways: listening to them, teaching explicitly the fundamental equality of men and women, supporting liberation movements that oppose the exploitation of women, and involving women in the Society's activities.

- Rural policy

The neo-liberal opening has brought **ruin to peasants throughout the continent**. Small and medium-sized farmers make up the majority of agricultural producers in nearly all our countries. To embark on a different process requires the vigorous promotion of a complex series of measures including: the involvement of peasants in modernizing their systems of production; research into their own particular systems; access to new technologies and technical assistance; links to the national and international markets without neglecting their own consumption; attention to the typical conditions and requirements for different products in different areas; credit for livestock; land tenure, distribution, and ownership; less concentration of control over the channels of distribution and

information about markets; credit; the provision of transportation, rural electricity, and public education and health services. All this in a framework of sustainable agriculture and food security.

- Industrial policy

In the neo-liberal economic framework, the export industry is the engine of development; nonetheless, although it has grown, it does not serve to drive the rest of the economy because it has not been sufficiently integrated with other sectors and is highly dependent on imports. It is necessary to **find ways** to diversify manufacturing and agro-industry which support medium-sized and small businesses, meet the basic needs of the population, increase society's technological capacity, and promote fairness and sustainable growth.

- Labour policy

The prevailing economic forces tend to compete internationally by lowering labour costs and paying poor wages. It is necessary to **promote fair strategies** that bring about competitive insertion into the markets by developing people's qualifications and creativity and by changing the business image into the image of a genuine work community.<sup>5</sup> And this must be included in a context of overcoming unemployment and under-employment.<sup>6</sup>

- Foreign debt

The Holy Father invites us, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus, to make **the Jubilee of the Year 2000** an opportune moment to consider "reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt."<sup>7</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the foreign debt severely limits the potential for equitable and sustainable development from Mexico all the way to Chile. We cannot overlook this aspect of international justice which preys on the daily life of the popular majorities and remains a constant concern to the Church. There is a clear need to contribute to the introduction of well-founded proposals for Latin American and Caribbean governments and societies to position themselves to negotiate the cancelling of a significant portion of the debt, especially that portion incurred by the abrupt hike in interest rates. And the portion of the debt that cannot be cancelled should be reviewed to assure that its servicing not jeopardize public spending. Further, it is imperative to help formulate alternatives so that all our countries face this common problem together on the basis of joint research and a shared awareness of the dimensions of the problem and its repercussions in the daily lives of the poor.

- With the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

Beginning with the initiative of the Center of Concern in Washington, rigorous proposals have been brought forward by our fellow Jesuits throughout the continent, and the challenge is to **advance their study and discussion**.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Centesimus Annus*, n.32.

<sup>6</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* n.18.

<sup>7</sup> *Tertio Millennio Adveniens*, n.51.

With respect to the United States economy, we should contribute to dialogue regarding the decisions that most affect Latin America: financial system, institutions, multinational corporations. The private financial sector should be studied very carefully by our universities and social centres. This sector is mobilizing billions of dollars that concentrate credit in rich countries and produce destabilizing effects in the principal Latin American economies.

#### 6.5. Overcoming the crisis in society

As described earlier, the crisis in our societies has an historical origin and a multiplicity of causes, and today these are augmented by neo-liberalism. By the same token, we cannot overlook basic elements of the common good when we attempt to propose alternatives to the neo-liberal political economy.

- Building civil society

"The Church, whose mission we share, exists not for itself but **for humanity**" (GC 34, D.2, n.3). Affirming their Christian roots and respecting the autonomy of secular realities, our communities of solidarity should put themselves at the service of the collective citizenry in building up the public domain. This is all the more urgent wherever the pressure in our countries increases towards silence and the disappearance of civic responsibility for solidarity and the common good (GC 34, D.3, n.7).

- Revitalizing the political vocation

In order to overcome the crisis of governability, restore dignity to public service, and put economic policy and markets under social control which protects the common good, we must **contribute to the education of men and women with a political vocation**. In this way, they can dedicate themselves to building up of States which ensure the dignity of all citizens and show care for the poor.

- Transforming the State

We should contribute to an **interdisciplinary study** that clarifies the role of the State as an important agent in an alternative model of sustainable, equitable, and people-centred development; a study that offers alternatives to the neo-liberal concept that would reduce the State to a minimum. Successful examples of contemporary development are characterized by an effective and efficient government role in prioritizing goals and expenditures, imposing restrictions and distributing losses; the State plays a significant role in strategic projects and the appropriate administration of the goods that everyone deserves.

- Developing a public ethics

Keeping in mind that neo-liberalism subordinates moral conduct to the market and produces destructive effects in the community, we must contribute to the establishment of **a public or civic ethics** from our perspective as followers of the Lord Jesus who is ultimately our moral law. In this task we are simply citizens together with others, believers and non-believers, responsible for establishing moral values relevant to a profoundly changing reality. Without such values our societies cannot survive and ensure the fulfilment of all their members. In this effort along with many others we will be educators concerning life, the search for truth, justice, human rights, the struggle against corruption, peace, and safeguarding the integrity of creation.

This ethical task has **a more profound dimension** for us as Jesuits. To wit, to seek apostolic strategies whereby our dialogue about the policies of the economic system bring the perspective of the Gospel to the heart of cultural experience: where we find or reject God, build or destroy the meaning of humanity and of nature, welcome or impede the Kingdom. This is the place for deep discernment where we must insert ourselves with lucidity, understanding and freedom, and work with others to build new social relationships of transparency, justice and solidarity.

With an Ignatian attitude of seeking the more universal good and as a concrete task we must endeavour **to reach the conscience** of economic and financial decision-makers so that their technical determinations have positive effects in **transforming the culture of poverty** and death into a culture of **shared life**.

#### 6.6. A Latin American perspective

In all these reflections it is important to look at Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole. This territory, with its **shared cultural and spiritual roots**, has been depicted as a mosaic of nations with different destinies. To look at things this way in the future is not possible. It would mean tying ourselves to a past that is over.

What this **Latin American unity** means, we still do not know. But the process in that direction is rapid, vigorous and irreversible.

It is very difficult to progress in this direction if we lose sight of the international dimension (GC 34, D.3, n.23). Therein lies the importance of deepening the **dialogue** and sharing tasks among fellow Jesuits, between Jesuits and lay people with whom we work, and among our institutions.

Such a vision must lead us to a **continental solidarity**, a lucid solidarity that allows us to dialogue with our colleagues in North America in order to undertake joint studies and pursuits, to propose alternatives to problems such as those of multinational corporations that compete on the basis of low wages in our countries and harm workers in both parts of the continent. We must unite when misery prompts *latinos* to migrate to the United States and Canada; when the North sells weapons to our countries and fratricidal violence intensifies as a result, and war becomes one more reason for the displacement of people beyond their borders; when the pension funds of U.S. workers are invested in volatile Latin American financial markets; when, even in the United States and Canada, social solidarity decreases and poverty is on the rise; when halting the spread of cocaine and heroin is possible only by working simultaneously to diminish demand in the North and supply from the South.

The problems have various connotations and different interests in one part of the continent or another. The moment has come for Latin American Jesuits, themselves united, to join with our fellow Jesuits in North America so as to shoulder together common pursuits in all their complexity for the good of the human community of the continent at whose service we are in the Church.

## 7. CONCLUSION

We want seriously to take up **the promotion of justice** that flows from our faith and deepens it according to the changing needs of our peoples and cultures, according to the particular characteristics of the historic moment on our continent (GC 34, D.3, n.5). Men and women will always be menaced by avarice for wealth, ambition for power, and an insatiable quest for gratification. Today this threat is embodied in neo-liberalism, tomorrow it will find other ideological expressions, and other idols will appear. We have always been called in the Church to contribute to the liberation of our brothers and sisters from human disorder, and this is where we will stay in a ministry of service to all, by the side of our friends the poor, as did our Friend the Lord Jesus (GC 34, D.2, n.9).

We want to preserve the best of the inheritance of two decades of "casting our lot with the poor."<sup>8</sup> To do this, we want to multiply "**communities of solidarity** at the grass-roots and non-governmental as well as the political level" (GC 34, D.3, n.10). To strengthen human rights work and the accompaniment of traditionally excluded sectors: indigenous people, peasants, urban slum dwellers in the big cities, displaced persons and refugees, women, the elderly, those with addictions and AIDS, and abandoned children.

**We invite all our Provinces** to begin a process of study and discernment on neo-liberalism, poverty and the breakdown of our societies, a process that affects all our apostolates and tasks, in order to confront this reality. We think that communities of solidarity may be a privileged instrument for this undertaking.

After a reasonable period, each of our Provinces will present the results of this spiritual, intellectual and practical effort. These results will be studied and analyzed by the Provincial Superiors with the assistance of the social coordinators in order to continue combining our efforts in a continent-wide perspective.

This entire undertaking will go ahead in coordination with the Social Apostolate Initiative of the whole Society of Jesus.

Mexico City, November 14, 1996

+ + + + +

---

<sup>8</sup> César Jerez Seminar, *Los Neoliberales y los Pobres*.

# FAITH and JUSTICE in FORMATION AFRICA and MADAGASCAR

Peter Henriot, SJ.

Formation is in function of mission. Clarity about the mission — gained from reflection on the deepening and expanding of our understanding of faith and justice and from noting the context of our work here in Africa and Madagascar — should lead to clarity about the formation that must be provided for young Jesuits. Formation is the overall topic, here, specifically, the relationship of faith and justice to formation. I hope to focus attention on some priority areas for formation policy in the Assistancy.

The Faith and Justice Coordinators, meeting in Nairobi in February 1996, felt that the faith and justice mission does not in fact seem to be central to the formation process. Why did we feel this to be the case? Conversations with younger Jesuits seemed to show lack of information or lack of interest regarding this topic. Our review of curriculum in the formation process did not find the mission given a central place. Examining the life-style, the pastoral exposures, and the opportunities for work and studies did not reveal much of a priority for solidarity with the poor and confrontation of structural injustice. And finally, the background paper<sup>9</sup> prepared for this meeting in Yaounde made no explicit mention of mission nor of the formation aspects related to faith and justice.

Our feelings about past and present formation may not be well-founded or may be disputable. What is important at this point, in the midst of discussions that hopefully will lead to decisions on policies, is to propose practical orientations that will have consequences for the future. And that is what I will try to do now, presenting seven points that appear to me to be important guides for the formation process.

1. **Community:** GC 34 speaks several times of forming communities of solidarity in seeking justice in each of our different apostolates (D.2 n.9, D.3 nn.10,19). I must admit that I am not sure what this means precisely, but let me presume it to include the following two points relevant to formation. The first is that formation is much larger than what happens in houses of formation and what *formatores* do. Young people entering the Society pick up very quickly what the real commitment of the Province or Region is to the mission, as revealed not simply in documents and exhortations but in personal witnesses, life style, practical ministries, plans and priorities. Here our sense of communal involvement with faith and justice, and clear community support of this mission, are the strongest formative factors. Formation is the responsibility of the whole community of the province or region: a Jesuit, old or young, who does not appreciate this fact has effectively placed himself outside the community.

The second point relates to just treatment being a lived experience of the young men in the Society. Feelings of discrimination, exclusion, being ignored or put down, and of one's own culture being under-valued — whether or not these feelings may be accurately grounded in reality — must be effectively addressed if we are to have communities of solidarity that form Jesuits for the mission of faith and justice. This is where the issue of "inculturation" within our communities comes up.

---

<sup>9</sup> Major Themes from the Collated Responses to the Questionnaire on Formation, Hekima, January 1996.

A repeated point in many discussions has been the issue of "ownership" of the Society by the younger Jesuits in formation and the need to overcome the "us/them" syndrome. This is certainly a perennial problem of what sociologists might call "inter-generational transmission of values." But the problem is heightened in the Society in this Assistancy where racial and cultural differences often mark the generation distinctions. Who has the greater responsibility to try to overcome these differences and distinctions? I would suggest (from what I readily admit is a limited personal experience of the issue) that the greater responsibility lies with those of us who are older and frequently from a foreign culture. But I must also call attention to the need to address, in terms of implications for faith and justice formation, the challenges that come to a community from ethnic and language differences among the young.

2. **Commitment:** Formation for the faith and justice mission is a matter of conversion as much as of content, a conversion to follow Jesus who proclaims the Kingdom of justice and peace. Thus, an authentic Ignatian spirituality of justice must be instilled in the formation programme, one which encourages and supports the *laborare mecum* in the African context. Spiritual direction, retreats, liturgies, faith sharing, etc., should all strengthen this spirituality in our young Jesuits. A spirituality of justice provides a foundation for the commitment to the hard discipline and sacrifice our mission requires. It builds a basis for the discernment necessary for effective pursuit of justice in a complex world. It strengthens a hope in the consoling power of the Resurrection, so necessary in order to overcome, especially these days, the desolation of "Afro-pessimism."

Without this conviction grounded in a spirituality of justice, there are many problems and distractions faced in forming people for faith and justice work. My impression is that at least some of the challenges experienced in formation programmes relating, for example, to poverty and life-style issues, come from a lack of clear commitment to follow Jesus who is poor, with the poor, and in the poor.

This leads me to paraphrase the question of Matthew 16 and ask: "Who is the Jesus to whom novices are introduced during the Long Retreat?" Do I exaggerate or over-simplify by suggesting that some Jesuits do not know as a companion in the apostolate the historical Jesus of Luke 4, Matthew 25, or John 13, but only an abstract Jesus, a warm and consoling friend disengaged from the struggle to build a Kingdom of justice and peace in today's world?

3. **Conviction:** A Jesuit is convicted in his opinion or convinced of his stance or confident with his position when he has a solid intellectual grasp of what he is about. I believe that both philosophy and theology contribute substantially to that conviction about our mission. A review of the curricula of Arrupe College and Hekima College shows me courses that certainly would strengthen a Jesuit's intellectual grasp of elements relating to the faith and justice mission.

The danger, of course, is overload: yielding to the temptation to introduce yet more and more material into an already too-tight schedule. That is why there must be an integrating character to the studies, tying together the formal and informal input from novitiate to tertianship, rather than presentation of discrete, unrelated content and experience. Moreover, my concern would be that some courses – e.g., political philosophy or the social teaching of the Church – might be viewed only as electives or as seconds in the ranking of courses in relation, for example, to Philosophy of God or Ecclesiology.



A systematic review of the course of regular studies in the Assistancy could be important, to evaluate what relates specifically to formation for the mission of faith and justice. Much very excellent course work is offered, but there may be need for (i) more integration over the years of study, (ii) more contextualisation to the contemporary situation in Africa and Madagascar, and (iii) more relationship to practical pastoral experience.

4. **Competence:** Effective involvement in the mission of faith and justice requires skills of socio-cultural analysis and knowledge of the basics of inculturation and dialogue. This level of competence means at least a literacy in social science that enables Jesuits to understand the structural dimensions of political, economic, social and cultural realities. The great structural changes occurring today in Africa – political democratisation, economic liberalisation and cultural transformation – profoundly affect the people with whom we would share the Good News. Without adequate training in a basic understanding of these phenomena, we are unable to contextualise our message, unable to make it, in the words of the African Synod, credible, relevant and effective.

Beyond a basic social science literacy for all (demonstrated, for example, in the way one reads the newspapers, watches television, engages in intelligent conversation and pursues specific topics), we also need at least some young Jesuits to be designated early for specialisation in the social sciences. This is necessary in order to provide the expertise that people in the Church and in the wider society look to the Society in Africa to provide. Issues such as the ethics of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP), rising numbers of refugees, the socio-economic-political impact of AIDS, etc., need competent analysis for effective response.

Here a problem has to be faced, which I have heard young Jesuits speak of repeatedly. How early should "professional" training (e.g., graduate studies in social sciences) be pursued? Some of the young Jesuits feel ill-treated when their requests for special studies are turned down. Some of the older Jesuits feel well-cheated when they learn of men leaving the Society soon after securing good degrees. Something has to be worked out as clear policy at the Assistancy level. We will have to take some calculated risks in order to build a solid resource of trained, competent young Jesuits in the near future – the trained and competent elders among us are not getting any younger!

5. **Compassion:** The documents of GC 32, 33 and 34 refer to the need for closeness to the poor in order for our faith and justice mission to be alive. During their formation, says GC 34, young Jesuits should be in contact with the poor, not just occasionally, but in a more sustained manner (D.3, n.18). Of course, this call applies not only to young but to all Jesuits, since solidarity with the poor is solidarity with Jesus. A result of this closeness to the poor – "accompanied by careful reflection as part of the academic and spiritual formation and ... integrated into training in socio-cultural analysis" – is a passion, a fire, an unrest, a zeal, an enthusiasm to be about the work of faith and justice.

I must confess my own disappointment in encountering any Jesuit, young or old, who does not feel anger at the exploitation of the poor or passion about the injustices wreaked by personal and structural injustices. When I read a United Nations report on the declining educational levels of young women in Africa resulting from the imposition of ESAP, or review the cost of the "food basket" that my office estimates monthly for families in Lusaka, or speak to the parishioners in my outstation about their disillusionment with the politics of the Third Republic of Zambia, my face flushes, my heart pounds, my blood boils! Provided that high blood pressure doesn't ruin my health, this is a grace I pray for. I believe that formation for the mission of faith and justice must aim at developing a social anger and passion among young Jesuits. This anger and passion needs to be focused, of course,

to be effective. I feel that this is related to what Hugo Rahner describes as central to Ignatian spirituality, the virtue of *caritas discreta* – a burning love focused by true discernment.

6. **Congruence:** We all realise that there must be a harmony and consistency between our life-style as Jesuits and our commitment to the mission of faith and justice and a sensitivity to the poor. But this is surely a difficult topic to bring up, and an even more difficult task to follow through. Nevertheless, it is the test of our authenticity. The setting and life-style of our houses of formation should not be incongruent with what we profess, or who will believe us? Certainly not the young men being formed! As GC 34 noted, "The life-style of Jesuit communities should bear credible witness to the counter-cultural values of the Gospel, so that our service of faith can effectively transform the patterns of local culture" (D.4, n.28,2).

At our Nairobi meeting the question of location and style of both Hekima and Arrupe came up for discussion. Isolation from the real lives of the majority of the people we are called to serve can be a serious block to our mission of faith and justice. We may not be able to move our houses. But can we move our hearts, by taking practical steps to overcome economic and cultural isolation among the young? Will this meeting on formation develop any guidelines in this area of life-style?

7. **Celebration:** The last of my "c's" refers to the emphasis within formation programmes that I feel should be placed on liturgical and festive celebration of our mission of faith and justice. Surely our liturgies should embody the struggle of society around us where Christ suffers with the impoverished and oppressed people. There is no contradiction between an inculturated liturgy and one that lifts up the justice issues. Indeed, as Jean-Marc Ela and other African theologians have reminded us, inculturation without liberation is a dangerous distraction from the power of the Gospel. Many of our liturgies are too devotional, personal, sweet. Bad liturgies can be alienating and can perpetuate a body/soul dichotomy. We need to celebrate the Christ of history in our midst.

There is also need for festive celebrations within our communities that strengthen the bonds of Jesuit brotherhood and encourage our mission together. Simple, meaningful celebrations enable and empower. Those of us from outside Africa and Madagascar have much to learn about inculturated feasts! Surely they have a place in effective formation for the mission of faith and justice.

Peter J. Henriot, S.J.  
Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection  
P.O. Box 37774  
10101 Lusaka  
ZAMBIA

+ + + + +

## SOCIAL APOSTOLATE INITIATIVE, 1995-2005 INTERVIEW

**Fernando Ponce, S.J.**<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Fernando Ponce, S.J., coordinator for the social apostolate in the Ecuador Province and studying political science in Paris, interviewed Michael Czerny, S.J., Social Justice Secretary at the Jesuit Curia in Rome.

**Fernando Ponce** Jesuits have recently begun talking about a "social apostolate initiative." What is it about?

**Michael Czerny** Let me repeat key points from the article in *Promotio Justitiae* 64 (June 1996), but whoever already knows about it can skip to the next question. The Initiative is meant to help us discover how the Society of Jesus generally, and the social sector specifically, are called to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to society in the early 21st century, in the light of our universal mission as defined by GC 34.

The principal question guiding the reflection seems a simple one, posed by a person of good will but without our background:

"How do you Jesuits in social ministry bring the Good News to society? – Please describe your vision, the work you do, the life you lead" (complete answers could lead to *Characteristics of Jesuit Social Apostolate*).

While answering the main question, there are two others which can also be spelled-out and elaborated on their own:

"How do you Jesuits analyze and interpret society in all its relevant dimensions, e.g., economic, political, cultural, media, religious?" → *Elements of a Socio-cultural Analysis for Jesuit Ministry*.

"How do you evaluate your social projects of research, action or development?" → *Points for Evaluating Jesuit Social Projects*.

Throughout 1997, small groups of Jesuits in each Assistancy have been working on the questions, especially the first. The resulting drafts are supposed to reach the Social Justice Secretariat by early 1997 so that, in March, a preparatory group [see next article] named by Father General can prepare for the International Congress to be held in Naples in June.

F.P. But what problems, or felt needs, lie behind the renewal you propose? What is it supposed to achieve? Why this initiative? Why now?

M.C. The simplest answer is that, in the vast social area, we can neither carry on as we have been doing for several decades, nor shut down for months to review everything. So the Initiative began soon after GC 34 and runs into the new century. It's supposed to "shake up our routines and re-align our objectives in the current world situation, with a view to renewal," in the words of a national coordinator. Here are some reasons for doing it:

<> More than twenty years ago, GC 32 committed us to the promotion of justice as an absolute requirement in serving the faith. How have we done that? what have we learned? We are ready to take stock, and we also need to.

<> Everywhere in the world, society itself is changing – radically and rapidly and relentlessly. How do we Jesuits and colleagues comprehend what's happening in the vast area called "society" which is the proper locus of this multi-faceted apostolate?

<> In 1995, GC 34 not only reaffirmed the service of faith and the promotion of justice, but added dialogue with cultures and religions as integral dimensions. How do these fine ideas fit together, in practice, in reality, in social ministry and other ministries? in community life? in spiritual life?

<> Decree 4 struck many (both Jesuits and others) as very prophetic and maybe too radical. But the notions of social change and social justice are **less** current now, **less** fashionable, than they were in 1975! By contrast, the rather soft-spoken Decrees 2 to 5 of GC 34 are actually very counter-cultural, very radical; they seem very sound; but they are more suggestive than programmatic.

Jesuits serving at various points in the social field are genuinely concerned by major issues like these – maybe not on a daily basis, but in a background or underlying way – and are the first to perceive that the social apostolate needs serious review and re-thinking. That's what the three questions are meant to stimulate, by getting us to face the experiences, difficulties, doubts and possibilities to which the questions point.

In June 1997, delegates from all Provinces and Regions, some 150 Jesuits, are invited to work together for a week at Naples. If we can agree on certain *Characteristics, Analysis* and *Evaluation* (surely it won't be easy to agree, on a world-wide basis), this should help to orient and renew and stimulate our social ministries in the early decades of the years 2000, sort of like *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* and *Ignatian Pedagogy* are doing for the apostolate of education.

But even without world-wide agreement, the sharing of vision and approach and spirituality on a regional or Assistancy basis will already be a great accomplishment. To me it seems well-worth the try, and I have the happy impression of not being alone in such hope.

F.P. The Social Secretariat at the General Curia has been promoting this initiative. How can you assure that it is not imposed from above or pushed at all costs or disconnected from Jesuits working in the field?

M.C. The Curia doesn't have a social centre which undertakes projects or acts on behalf of the Society, but a secretary who tries to help, first of all Father General, then Jesuits and colleagues in the social field, and finally other ministries, communities and formation in the Society.

The Initiative and its questions and its methodology come out of my formation (interdisciplinary studies in Chicago), experience (social justice ministry in Toronto, human rights work in El Salvador) and three years 1992-1994 helping to prepare "the promotion of justice" theme for the General Congregation. So the Initiative comes mainly from what I've learned in the field.

"Imposed from above and pushed at all cost and disconnected..."? Of course there is a risk!

But at many meetings since July '95 (Rio de Janeiro, Prague, New Delhi, Madrid, Manila, Brussels, Caracas, Czestochowa, Nairobi, Washington, ...) the Initiative seems validated when Jesuits and colleagues – many, maybe not all, or not all in the same degree or manner, but anyway many –

discover their concerns reflected here, and share hope that something good will come of it or affirm that some good already has.

F.P. Talking about "social apostolate" seems out of date — not many people today believe that society can be changed. The last ideology to have tried such a thing lies in total discredit. So, how do you convince us that the *aggiornamento* of this apostolate isn't an exercise in nostalgia on the part of Jesuits whose energies would be better dedicated to other ministries?

M.C. Grand talk about structural change does sound inflated, utopian and nostalgic. Our world is both post-modern and savagely primitive, inter-dependent and yet fragmented. Whether society is really more complex, or whether we are more aware of its complexity and the velocity of change, the fact is that everyone working for human dignity and social justice seems prone to doubts, fatigue, disappointment, pessimism.

Many concede that society needs to be changed in order to protect human dignity or promote greater justice. Believers and other motivated persons reach out to the marginalised and the suffering nearby, and in solidarity with the poor far away; we speak of insertion, the preferential option for the poor, people's movements and solidarity. What seems real, though, are local, small-scale efforts.

In nearly every Province, there are Jesuits involved in activities like these: social centres of research and/or action; worker priests, social workers or prison chaplains; Jesuits who accompany the excluded or marginalized or exploited, who live and/or work with the poor, the unemployed or labourers, the homeless, street children, aboriginal or indigenous people, Dalits or Tribals, gypsies or travellers, those addicted to alcohol or drugs or living with HIV/AIDS; JRS and others working with migrants or refugees; etc., etc.

But do countless local gestures, in themselves of the greatest human and religious significance ... or do countless grass-roots movements, with their many set-backs and occasional triumphs ... add up to achieve structural change for the better? Are structures really within the power of citizens, including Christians and especially the poor, to transform? And do all our different activities coalesce, somehow, into a coherent apostolate, a social sector within each Province?

My hope is that, rather than get stuck in discouragement or take refuge in something like clericalism or spiritualism, we can help each other to go deeper, draw nearer to God's people especially the poor, become humbler, hear His call and see our way a bit clearer. The Initiative is already helping Jesuits to pray together, to assemble what we have learned, to discover what we do not know, to find and face hopefully the right questions.

F.P. Some remember the **Survey** of Father Arrupe's time, others think of *Characteristics of Jesuit Education*, and we've all had experience of Province plans. What can you do to make sure that, unlike many other plans, this Initiative doesn't end up on paper only?

M.C. Implementation is sometimes very frustrating. A General Congregation can't really get into specifics, while a concrete work, a community or even a Province is often hard pressed to rise above its daily details. So between the generalities of a GC and the reality "on the ground" there is this need for planning and implementation, and the Initiative proposes to fill it by producing instruments of reflection called, tentatively, *Characteristics*, *Socio-Cultural Analysis* and *Evaluation*.

In every Province, there are Jesuits and colleagues working in other ministries of the Society who ask, "What concretely does it mean to serve faith and promote the justice of God's Kingdom in education, pastoral work, or spirituality?" Others ask, "Are there connections between *cura animarum* and social action – or are they mutually-exclusive ministries?" With Decree 4 our entire mission became inescapably social in its implications, but this does not wipe out the specifically **social** apostolate or make it redundant. Those working explicitly or full-time in "the social" have something to offer to fellow Jesuits and co-workers in other ministries.

"Offering something" means **dialogue**, and so the purpose of the Initiative is to open up dialogues with four different groups:

- Jesuit members of the social sector itself, so as to renew every form of social apostolate and attract new Jesuits to it;
- non-Jesuit colleagues, co-workers and employees with whom we wish to share our vision and service, to whom we owe a clear account of the roots, goals and approaches of Jesuit social apostolate;
- fellow-Jesuits and colleagues working in all other ministries, to improve cooperation and to implement our one mission more thoroughly;
- young members of the Society considering their future apostolate and planning their studies, as well as candidates thinking over a possible vocation to the Society.

F.P. What do you hope will happen next?

M.C. Soon after Naples a first-draft *Characteristics* should appear in both written and video form ... and later maybe some *Socio-Cultural Analysis* and *Points for Evaluating*. I hope that these new instruments will circulate widely among Jesuits and non-Jesuit colleagues, be used effectively, be put to the test at the local level, in many Jesuit works and communities, in every Province from mid-1997 on.

I imagine workshops organized around *Characteristics* involving those with whom we share our mission of faith doing justice ... meetings of Jesuit and lay staff working in one particular sector like Education or Spirituality, or two sectors together like Parish and Social Action ... Jesuits and colleagues in human rights, Christian Life Communities, indigenous or tribal ministry, popular education, media, chaplains....

At such meetings, there'll be some way of collecting the comments and criticisms, so that at the Social Justice Secretariat, with international help, the feed-back can get incorporated into the drafts. If all goes well, Father General hopes formally to promulgate a first edition of *Characteristics of Jesuit Social Apostolate* in late 1999. And then it goes on through 2005 and beyond, because "characteristics" are neither law nor definition, but continuing questions and principles of renewal.

F.P. And so, *en bref*...

M.C. *En bref*, the Initiative is neither surveying nor planning. It's a great floating *carrefour* where we can all meet at the waning of this 20th century of high-speed social upheaval. It's a chance to bring our prayer and experience and reflection together, in dialogue and mutual exchange, and this should ready us to do better at bringing the Good News to society in the 21st century. So I hope, indeed so I already see, thanks be to God.

Fernando Ponce, S.J.  
15 rue Raymond Marcheron  
92170 Vanves  
FRANCE

November, 1996

+ + + + +

## THE PREPARATORY *COETUS*

On March 17th a communal morning prayer in the Byzantine chapel of the General Curia opened the week of deliberations of the group or *coetus* of Jesuits charged by Father General Kolvenbach with helping to prepare the Naples Congress (June 1997) within the process of the Social Apostolate Initiative of the Society of Jesus.

It was a week of searching in common, at once intense and calm, and it began with an analysis of the materials sent by the different Assistancies.

Michael Czerny who was watchful in his responsibility for the entire process, and Giacomo Costa joyful and fresh as he helped with all organization and prayer and his guitar — they had carefully laid out the first steps we took on the first day so that, the rest of the time, we could blaze our way together.

The first task we concentrated on was the material sent in by all the Assistancies. In that material was to be found the raw material which contained, on the one hand, elements which define our social apostolate and, on the other, the broad concerns that drive that same apostolate. These two aspects, the characteristics and the great problems, along with the agenda, are what had to be combined into one event in Naples.

The group set itself to collaborate in building: reading blended with the drafting of basic documents; conversation about the agenda, with deep discernment in common prayer and daily Eucharist.

A shared image of the meeting at Naples slowly began emerging. The challenge of such a gathering of 150 Jesuits from all over the world, which at first raised doubts and worries in us, became familiar bit by bit and attractive. We visualized Jesuits at Naples grouped to study the great dynamics of our characteristics as marked by moving through these fundamental questions: where and with whom do we do our social apostolate (context), why do we do it (motivation and spirituality), how do we do it (method and via). And the plenaries we programmed to work each morning on a central theme: global economy, justice and culture, faith and justice, religion and social commitment, our Ignatian charism and the struggle for justice and the tone or morale of our work today.

During the *coetus'* week of work, just like any group of Jesuit companions involved in a conversation of communal discernment, each of us went through his own process of inner clarification through lights and shadows. And in a calm, demanding rhythm, we all experienced long hours together of frank, powerful and transparent clarification, in an environment of careful listening and sincere

*Promotio Iustitiae* 67 (1997), 70

willingness to seek the best for this process of the Society's Social Apostolate Initiative, which we all consider immensely important.

God granted us to meet as a group of companions who, though not knowing one another ahead of time, formed from day one a mutually complementary team and hammered out together a common language that let us achieve a deep feeling of security in the task entrusted us – a viable and convincing Naples – and of friendship in the Lord.

Each one left his mark on us: Joseph Daoust (DET) attempting a framework for a reading of the problems of economic injustice and poverty, as evenhanded and respectful of the differences as possible. Fernando Franco (GUJ) organizing the theme of culture and religion in order to contextualize the struggle for justice and counter western simplifications. Josep Miralles (TAR) situating us within the complex horizon of continuous changes which transform both the outer world and our inner reality. Chukwuemeka Orji (NIG) with his passionate references to the faith from which surges the struggle for justice and his rigorous contribution of biblical references. Thomas Giblin (HIB), a young man's challenge to the whole Society to take the commitments of the struggle for justice seriously and his own care to articulate each of our steps coherently. Joel Tabora (PHI) with a passion to lift the Society's morale and take up its task as a body. Francisco de Roux (COL) promoting dialogue between the various worlds, first and former-second, third and fourth, with the hope of solidarity.

The morning of our second-to-last day we spent in discussion and deliberation with Father General's Assistants. The experience was satisfying, sharing an outcome that had already attained a certain solidity, and exchanging correctives, challenges, insights and suggestions in a collaborative, constructive spirit.

Ahead of us, just a few weeks away, lies Naples. Not just a possible event any more, but a fact with a high probability of moving us along significantly in this process of strengthening and articulating our following of the Lord until we actually throw in our entire lot, with and for the marginalised and the poor, so that the world might believe.

Michael and Giacomo, who have borne the whole burden of the day, now approach the hour when they will have to accept that what was up to them has been done, and it only remains for them to leave in the hands of God that He do the rest, so that Naples be an event of the Lord.

March 25th, 1997

+ + + + +

## **FIFTY YEARS among the PEOPLE of HONDURAS**

We address the people of Honduras, especially in the departments of Yoro and Colón, where the Church of Honduras entrusted us with a territory. We thank you for such great favours received



during these fifty years, the greatest of these the fact that you opened your doors to welcome us and, little by little, converted our hearts.

We beg your pardon for not being up to so great a grace which God has showered through you upon us, frequently refusing to shed affections, concerns and interests which do not fit in our mission of serving the faith and promoting justice within a preferential option for the poor, as the Latin American bishops have many times asked us.

We ask your help to continue in this titanic struggle against the forces of evil, personalized in increasing poverty, in social corruption, in political falsehood and the manipulation of religious beliefs. They are enormous forces backed by the structures of worldwide globalization which, like the heaviest mountain, can only be removed by the pure faith of the poor and of those who do their utmost for their cause. Help us with your prayer, with your company, with your friendly criticism, with your consolation and encouragement, for we are weak and sinful earthen vessels.

With the help of God Our Lord, we promise you to continue trying to build a new society where God reigns and not money or power or even the Church; where work is the cornerstone of the building; where equality shines through social relations; where to be in charge is to serve: where poverty of spirit is lived as a new way of enjoying things, of relating with nature and of listening to women's point of view.

Finally, we invite you to join us in celebrating with great joy this golden jubilee in which we recall the close love and service which have united us to you. We are aware, finally, that for all we still have to love and to serve, fifty years are as nothing.

Ricardo Falla, S.J.  
Apdo. 10  
El Progreso, Yoro  
HONDURAS

October, 1996

+ + + + +

*Jesuits in Dialogue: the interreligious dimension* is a new newsletter published by the new Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue (JSID). The secretary, Father Thomas Michel, sees the newsletter "primarily as a channel for exchanging information among Jesuits and offering a forum for the sharing of views" on all matters related to the interreligious dimension of our Jesuit mission. *Promotio Iustitiae* extends hearty congratulations and a warm welcome to this our youngest sister publication at the Curia. If you would like a copy of issue 1, please fax the JSID at +39-6-687.5101, or send an e-mail to [interrel@sjcuria.org](mailto:interrel@sjcuria.org), or write to JSID at the address on the cover of *PJ*, indicating the language (English, French, Italian or Spanish) you prefer.

The Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) publishes *Promotio Iustitiae* in English, French and Spanish. If you would like to receive *PJ*, you need only make your request to Father Socius of your Province, while non-Jesuits please send your mailing-address (indicating the language of your choice) to the Editor.

*Promotio Iustitiae* is also published electronically in English on the World Wide Web. If you have access to the Internet you can find *PJ* in the faith-justice section of the Jesuit page, at:

[http://maple.lemoyne.edu/~bucko/sj\\_pj.html](http://maple.lemoyne.edu/~bucko/sj_pj.html)

Note that the character between the j and the p is an underline, not a dash. You need to reduplicate this address exactly in order to access the page. Once you find it, be sure to create a bookmark so that you can easily find the current issue of *PJ*.

If you are struck by an idea in this issue, your brief comment is very welcome. To send a letter to *PJ* for inclusion in a future issue, please use the address, fax number or e-mail address on the cover. The re-printing of articles is encouraged; please cite *Promotio Iustitiae* as the source, along with the address, and send a copy of the re-print to the Editor. Thank you!

**Michael Czerny, S.J.**  
**Editor**