

# Promotio Iustitiae

**The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice**  
Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ

**Social Research: Role and Recommendations**  
Ambrose Pinto SJ, Fernando Vidal

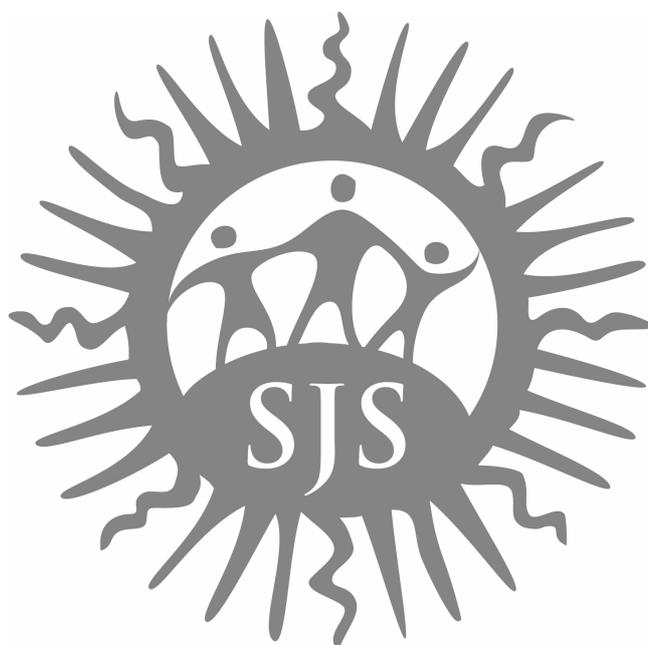
**Interviews: General Congregation 35**  
Ando (JPN), Costadoat (CHL), Follmann (BRM), Irudayaraj (MDU),  
O'Hanlon (HIB), Rémon (BML), Romero (BET), Wiryono (IDO)

**Documents**  
Christian Abitan SJ and Arturo Sosa SJ

**Review: Heredia's *Changing Gods***



**Social Justice Secretariat**



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## EDITORIAL

**A**s I write these lines the 'development world' is celebrating the decision of the Madras High Court in India rejecting the appeal of pharmaceutical giant Novartis against the constitutionality of India's patent law. The multinational had challenged an Indian law that allows the country to refuse a patent for a product that is only a slight modification of an existing one. The case strikes me not only because it is relevant for the benefits it will bring to HIV patients but also because it exemplifies admirably what globalisation is all about: positively and negatively.

Let me start from what the famous American columnist Thomas Friedman calls the 'flatness' of a globalised world (*The World is Flat*; 2005: New York, Farrar Straus Giroux). The process of globalisation has made technological diffusion much easier; opportunities to use the latest innovation are distributed much more evenly now than, say, 30 years ago. The world has become flat, sans frontiers.

Created in 1996 through the merger of Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz, and with operations in 140 countries, a giant like Novartis can face stiff competition from much smaller Indian companies that are able to produce generic medicines at much lower prices. The development of bio-technology is today open worldwide to bright talent without distinction. At the same time, these opportunities created by the openness of technology and the re-location of production are not devoid of serious dangers: 46 million cell phones had to be removed from the market because their batteries were defective, and 25 million toys have been taken away from window-shops because they were using toxic paint.

This characteristic of globalisation is a frontal challenge for us Jesuits. It exposes us to open competition with talent from all over the world. Talent and skill can be used for similar 'apostolic' purposes: education, human care and development. The world of 'charity and justice' has also become flatter and more open. In addition, we are exposed to an increased sensitivity to quality standards. We run the risk of our 'products' becoming so obsolete and irrelevant that there is no need even to remove them from the stall; the stalls and churches that were full yesterday are today virtually empty.

Things are obviously not so simple and comparisons never quite exact. But if we are to face globalisation squarely we need to stop putting the blame on our 'customers,' or to see the present as an unfortunate deformation of a glorious past. Take one example. The phenomenon of emerging religious sects and the accompanying movement of mass 'conversion' can only be fully grasped in the context of a flat religious world. The conclusion seems to be that if the levels of our 'apostolic' talent, the quality of our *magis*, and the degree of the intellectual quality of our ministries, continue to decline, we seriously risk losing ground together with a certain desirable bite and belligerence.

There is another side to the Novartis story. The global campaign against Novartis has been carried out by nearly half a million people around the world. This motley crowd of campaigners, citizens of this globalised world, is made up of large international NGOs like Oxfam and Care, and Christian ecumenical platforms like the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance; it comprises ordinary churchgoers, HIV patients, competent medical personnel, astute media-campaign managers and, above all, people with the skills and means to use information technology for building powerful networks. Advocacy is the key word here.

The phenomenon of globalisation has made possible the use of networking for advocacy; one may even say that the linkage between international civil society and advocacy has been one of the main results of globalisation. For us Jesuits who believe in the universal character of our apostolic mission and identity, advocacy represents a golden opportunity to influence global decision-making; it creates the space where Jesuits and lay people, intellectuals and activists, North and South can be integrated.

We are not starting from nothing. Jesuit Refugee Services has started seriously to venture into this field. The latest campaign on child soldiers has succeeded, after a huge effort, in engaging the public mind. Other international efforts at networking and advocacy have faced obstacles and ultimately failure. We are still reluctant and suspicious of organisations that crisscross the well-defended frontiers of provinces and Assistancies. We are still facing the obstacles of a well-entrenched and subtly hidden provincial parochialism. One of the questions that GC 35 will have to decide is whether we want to become truly universal, more adept at establishing fluid channels between 'head' and 'feet', and more open to harnessing the potential of solidarity communities formed by Jesuits and lay people committed to the Kingdom.

The theme of globalisation will surely ground all the discussions of GC 35 like an unseen but determinant structure of meaning. In his informal talk on the vicissitudes of the Faith-Justice dimension of our charism, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach comments, in the last part of his informal talk, on the crucial opportunities and alternatives that globalisation will offer the Society of Jesus. This is a theme that is very dear to him. The challenge is not devoid of contradictions: increasing income inequalities and rising technical opportunities for all. The way to solve this paradox may lie in an *'agere contra'*, in spreading this flatness (we may even call it solidarity), to struggle determinedly against all sorts of false distinctions, politically invented dualities, fomented schisms, and supposedly unbridgeable civilisational gaps. In this flat world they will prove untenable in the long run.

In his reminiscences of General Congregation 32, Father General examines the implications of the famous sentence, "service of faith; promotion of justice." I am sure that each one of us would pick up from his analysis some aspect or other that is more aligned to our respective presuppositions. Acknowledging

my own bias, let me make a choice. For me the most challenging insight is his call to understand the two parts of the sentence, the 'service of faith' and the 'promotion of justice' not as two parallel ways of life, as two different ways of being a Jesuit, but as dimensions of one single truth. He makes it clear that the term '*diakonia fidei*' binds inseparably faith in the Lord and service to human beings. If Ignatian spirituality has an incarnational quality, then our mission is to be *diakoni*, or go-between persons. The love of God ought always to be expressed in deeds.

Embedded also in the challenge of globalisation is the role of social research, and the quality of our intellectual life in the social apostolate as well as in the Society at large. This was one of the themes that the annual meeting of Assistancy Coordinators discussed. Following the tradition of the previous year, a group of lay persons engaged in social research participated in the meeting which was graced by the contributions of two experts. A brief bio-data of each participant has been included in this issue. We are also presenting the contributions of the two experts, one Jesuit, and the other lay, who highlighted the importance of research in their papers and described the main elements characterising modern as well as Jesuit research.

Besides the special contribution of these two experts, lay participants presented the lights and shadows of social research in the various Conferences. Lack of space makes it difficult to share the richness of this material with our readers, but the presentations will be made available on our website for all those interested. On the basis of these local experiences, the group prepared a document on Social Research in the Society of Jesus, and this has been published here in this issue. The fruit of a painstaking and hard won consensus, it touches briefly on the main characteristics of Jesuit social research, its crucial importance and develops more extensively a set of recommendations presented to Fr. General. Given the complexity of the issue and the concomitant large needs of personnel and money involved, the group felt that the development of social research policies and the laying out of effective planning is better done at the Conference level. Participants also discussed some social themes selected by the Preparatory Commission of General Congregation 35. A summary of the main conclusions was sent to all Coordinators with a request to share it with the Moderators of the Conferences.

As an aid to reflection on the challenges facing the Society today, we are publishing in this issue and the next of *Promotio Iustitiae* a set of interviews with Jesuits from all over the world. This is a modest and limited attempt to introduce our readers to the various contexts in which Jesuits live today and to the different perspectives and expectations they have regarding General Congregation 35.

The questions asked to the contributors are presented in a box at the beginning of the section. These Jesuits are asked, first, to describe the main changes that have taken place in the last 10 years that call for a change (new

discernment) in our apostolic strategy; second, the main strengths and weaknesses (limitations) of the Society of Jesus in the region/country during these years; and third, to select the most urgent task facing the Society and the next General Congregation.

It is impossible in the short space of an Editorial to summarise the 'spirit' and the content of the interviews. Some phrases have caught my imagination powerfully. I quote them in the hope that we can read or pray over them as one prayerfully passes the beads of a rosary, or as one repeats a sacred mantra. They may help us to discover traces of that transcendence which remains inextricably anchored in the joys and sorrows of people all over.

*The Society needs to return to its mystical focal point, to its preoccupation with justice. This will be possible only when the Jesuits enter into an effective and continuous contact with the poor, and learn from them the meaning of justice in these times...*

*We need more humility...It is necessary and urgent to restart the practice of establishing a cordial dialogue with the Bishops and other ecclesial forces having different theological, spiritual and pastoral orientations. This is an aspect affecting the universal Society.*

*As I see it, the Society is still too provincial – which is rather surprising considering that we live in an age of unmitigated globalisation. It's about time the Society began to celebrate growth and new dynamism rather than mourn its numerical decline. The novice who enters the Society in Africa should be a source of rejuvenation for the Society of Jesus in Europe or North America.*

*Before the new forms of expressing religious faith we are invited to leave aside our colonial mentality that tends to reject them, to open ourselves to dialogue, to pay attention to the other and to mutual fraternal acceptance*

*We need to keep up and develop a spirit of resistance vis-à-vis the dominant model, a fundamental hope rooted in the Gospel.*

*The future of apostolic partnership with others seems to be the most urgent task [...] General Congregation 35 has to produce concrete recommendations for the new General.*

Let me end this rather long editorial by recommending to you the special review of a book by Rudi Heredia SJ on the issue of religious conversions in India. Anyone interested in the topic of India and more generally on the issues of inter-religious dialogue and religious fundamentalism will find the review and, even more so, the book, stimulating.

Fernando Franco SJ

# FATHER GENERAL

## The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice Reminiscing about the Past and Looking at the Future

Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ  
Informal talk at the Meeting of  
Assistancy Coordinators  
Friday, 11 May 2007

### Introduction

I am very grateful for the opportunity this morning to thank you all personally for coming to Rome to discuss and reflect on important matters concerning the social apostolate. I thank Professor Vidal not only for his presentation this morning but also for the long article on social research. I would like to express my special gratitude to all the lay partners representing the various continents of the world who have come to this meeting. It is also an appropriate moment for me to acknowledge the significant work you do towards establishing a more fair social order in the world; your personal convictions and your professional skills play an important role in many apostolic works of the Society of Jesus. This meeting acquires a special significance in that it takes place before the General Congregation (GC) 35. We count on your input.

In your deliberations you have dealt with the issue of social research in the social sector and in the Society of Jesus; in view of the forthcoming GC 35, you have also reflected on and discussed some important themes regarding our mission in a globalised world. I am sure your discussions will help the deliberations of the coming GC. As you all are aware, the next GC will have its first session on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2008. One of the most important tasks of the Congregation will be to accept my resignation (that is my hope!) and elect a new General of the Society.

In the light of this, I would like to share with you a few personal experiences and reflections of the past years on the Faith-Justice dimension of our charism. I also wish to outline some future challenges facing the Social Apostolate. I do not pretend to give you a historical account; I happily leave that task to the historians. Nor do I intend to present an exhaustive academic discourse on the issues of Faith and Justice. You have the specialists on that among you.

### Social commitment from the beginning

Let me then be an ordinary witness of what I experienced in the Society just before and after General Congregation 32. As you probably know, I attended GC 32 but spoke not a single word. I must confess that during the Congregation I discovered a new issue. I was, like many others, in (if I may use

the title of a famous mystical work) *The Cloud of Unknowing*. After the Congregation I was responsible for carrying out the social commitment of the Society.

Let me also affirm something else: the social involvement of the Society did not begin with GC 32; it started with Ignatius of Loyola. This fact is confirmed by none other than Benedict XVI in his first Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. In the concluding section, Ignatius of Loyola and others are specifically mentioned as one of the “lasting models of social charity for all people of good will” (no. 40). We should not forget that the Spiritual Exercises, the inspirational source of the Society, has, together with the famous rules for discernment of spirits, a set of rules to distribute alms to the poor (*Spiritual Exercises*, 338-344). For Ignatius this ‘social concern’ was ‘connatural’ with our vocation as Jesuits. For Ignatius we cannot call ourselves Companions of Jesus without sharing his preferential love for the poor. From the very beginning Jesuits have behaved in this way. As you also know, he wrote to the theologians attending the Council of Trent that they should spend *three days a week* in a hospital helping the poor or visiting those in prison. The first Jesuits who landed in Latin America were quick in going to the prisons to celebrate Christmas with the jailed. Ignatius himself, as you know, was active in this field. He was actively involved in improving the social order and customs in his hometown of Azpeitia.<sup>1</sup> Even today he is still known for the work he did in Rome.

All that has been well recorded by, for instance, John O Malley, who lists the categories of people touched by the social concern of the Society.<sup>2</sup> We have to acknowledge, however, that Ignatius spoke the language of his time, a language that we cannot use today. He counsels the poor to be happy because they can receive money from the rich and provide an opportunity to the rich to be good! What we can hold on to is that this insight and concern of the old Society was carried over the years, and then, little by little, developed into our present understanding of our charism. The Society of Jesus, like the Church, has become aware of the revolution spoken of by Karl Marx: the problems of the poor are not to be addressed by charity, but through demands that justice be done.

### Remembering General Congregation 32

Let me return to some of the things that happened at GC 32. To my own surprise I was elected to the Congregation. I came from the Near East where I had lived most of my life. In the province of the Near East, it was very clear, as in many other provinces of the Society of Jesus, that Jesuits were mainly *educators*. The image of the Society of Jesus was that its main and authentic

<sup>1</sup>John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (1993: Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.168. Chapter 5 mentions the “pluriform character of Jesuit engagement with the works of mercy” and lists the following: peacemaking, hospitals and prisons, ministry of the dying, ministry to prostitutes, Jews and new Christian Confraternities and the Marian Congregation [Editor's note].

work was education. Even today we have in that province a University, colleges and high schools. People's expectations of the Jesuits identified them with the educational apostolate. I would like to mention that Jesuits in Egypt started a whole network of village schools, very similar to the network of *Fé y Alegría*. In spite of opposition, we also started work with the Palestinian refugees. We have always been present in prison-work.

Let me add, however, that this type of apostolate was easily forgotten and not recognised as a typical Jesuit work. As a French Father used to say, it was considered to be the personal "*oeuvre*" (work) of some individual Jesuit or other. In the Middle East, the idea of struggle against unjust structures was always linked to the burning issue that exists down to this today: the rights of the Palestinian people. Any and every political action, even speaking about justice, was immediately considered as leftist, Marxist, and fomenting political turmoil. Christian churches, however, were well known for their charity work. In the Middle East, we always said that Muslims teach us faith because they pray in public five times a day; Jews teach us hope because they are still expecting the Messiah; and we Christians teach everybody charity.

The document of the Synod of Bishops in 1971 on 'Justice in the World' makes clear the stand the Church took at that time:

*Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or what is the same, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.*

It is therefore, quite evident that before GC 32 the Church was involved in the struggle for justice and in the transformation of the world. The problem with this text is that, first, nobody knew exactly what this meant in concrete terms, and, as far as I know, nobody was asking about the consequences that the Synod's declaration would have for the Church herself. The second problem, one that still remains, is this: 'action for justice' has always been considered the responsibility of the laity. What then does the term 'Church' mean in the text quoted above? One of the interpretations is that priests, religious men and women are also called to a social commitment for justice.

The Synod was not the only element that prepared us for GC 32. When Father Arrupe went about with his Assistants preparing for the Congregation he did not speak about a social sector. He spoke clearly about the fact that all the works of the Society should be re-thought in the spirit of what today we call the promotion of justice. Father Arrupe did not speak about suppressing pastoral activities, educational institutions, spirituality centres, but he wanted all the work carried out by the Society to be influenced and re-thought by the social thinking of the Church. Mind you, this was a Church that was herself not aware of the impact of the Synod of Bishops. Probably all this shows that the Society before GC 32 was also living in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. We can admit

that there was reluctance in the Society to change; this is quite normal for a big institution of this kind. I do not believe that everybody attending the General Congregation was convinced that we should take up this new issue of justice and this new challenge. There was also the opposite view of those who thought that, apart from justice, all other work in the social sector was not for Jesuits but for the Sisters of Mercy; later this sentence was changed to “the sisters of Mother Teresa.”

I want now to touch on the most famous expression that came from GC 32 (D 4, n. 2): “the Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice.” I have the impression that this expression is also understood as “a Faith that produces Justice,” or as “a Faith that does Justice.” The following text confirms this interpretation:

*The mission of the Society today is the priestly service of the faith, an apostolate whose aim is to help people become **more open toward God and more willing to live according to the demands of the Gospel**. The Gospel demands a life freed from egoism and self-seeking, from all attempts to seek one's own advantage and from every form of exploitation of one's neighbour. It demands a life in which the justice of the Gospel shines out in a willingness not only to recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights. It demands an openness and generosity to anyone in need, even a stranger or an enemy. It demands towards those who have injured us, pardon; toward those with whom we are at odds, a spirit of reconciliation. [...] It is by this that we know that the promotion of justice is an integral part of the priestly service of the faith. (GC 32, D 4, n. 18. Author's emphasis).*

I am a linguist and for us words are important because they mirror our experiences. I would like to say something about the expression “service of faith and promotion of justice”. Let me note right from the beginning that from a linguistic point of view it sounds like a typical *slogan*: saying the maximum with a minimum of words, inspiring profoundly with very few words. We can ask ourselves what the meaning is of these words. We should never forget that every time we use one word we do not use other words, and this opposition between what is used and what is not used makes the total meaning of a word or an expression.

### **Service of Faith: *diakonia fidei***

This expression concerned with ‘faith’ reminds us effectively of the whole of our past history and of the whole tradition and purpose of the Society. The word was coined by the Society of Jesus in 1540: “the defence and propagation of the Faith” (*Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, 27 September 1540). Note that the term used by GC 32 drops the word ‘propagation’, something which has also happened to the name of one of the Vatican Congregations when in 1988,

under John Paul II, the name 'Propaganda Fide' became 'Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples'.

It was proposed at GC 32 to use the expression "proclamation of faith". The expression was not accepted because it might connote imposing something on others, and this is not what the Holy Father John Paul II wanted to convey. He often repeated the observation that we should never impose but *propose* our Faith as our Lord did according to the Gospel. The Congregation accepted, however, the term "service of faith". We need to remember that the term 'service' comes from the Greek *diakonia*, and hence the expression "service of faith" has to be understood in terms of *diakonia fidei*; this is something we easily forget.

The Vatican Council used three Greek words which sum up its new orientation: *koinonia* (the Church's communion), *kerygma* (proclamation), and *diakonia* (service). We need to explore further the meaning of *diakonia*. We translate the word as 'service', and that is certainly a correct translation. The real meaning of *diakonia*, however, is what today we would call a service performed by "a go-between person" or mediator; someone who goes between two persons for the sake of doing a service to both. For example, in the Greek of Plato's time, when the emperor sent someone to the people with a message, the person was called *diakonos*, a deacon. *Diakonos* could also be the person going between the kitchen and the table: bringing the food from the cook to the people who were eating. It needs to be stressed that the full meaning of *diakonia* is not only to serve at table but also to be the "go-between person." He is the person sent by someone to do something for another person, and we are not right in dropping this connotation of *diakonia*. This meaning is still present in the use of the term *diakonia* in the Acts of the Apostles. When the Apostles no longer had time to serve at table they appointed deacons to bring the food from the apostles' table to the people's table.

This meaning of *diakonia* is crucial to capturing the true meaning of the expression 'Service of Faith'. We are not just serving at table, we are not just serving the poor, but we are serving the poor in the *name* of Someone who asks us to serve all these people, and that is repeated in the GC 34:

*The Risen Christ's call to us to join him in labouring for the Kingdom is always accompanied by his power (D 2, n. 7).*

Our service is not just *any* response to the needs of women and men of today; *any* response will not do. The initiative *must* come from the Lord labouring in events and people here and now. So that makes the 'Service of Faith' really a matter of being companions with the Lord. The initiatives come from him and the work is done according to his way of proceeding, as Father Arrupe never tired of repeating. It is a pity that this dimension, this connotation of the expression 'the Service of Faith' has been lost. When this happens you face difficulties because this service then becomes merely

professional or philanthropic work. The work, the 'service' loses the link, the connection with the one who sends us to do this, and that is the Lord Himself, who not only spoke but *did* Justice. This about the Service of Faith.

### The Promotion of Justice

The last GC 34 expressed our mission by reminding us that "we are servants of Christ's mission" (D 2, n. 1). The colonial and imperialistic tone of the term 'mission' may have been one of the main reasons why GC 32 never used the word 'mission'. Let me now say something about the second part of the expression: 'the promotion of justice'. As far as I know, the expression 'promotion of justice' is, as we say in German, a *fremdkoerper*, that is, a linguistic rarity. We are familiar with it because the word 'promotion' is used quite often in language of sales and marketing. If you go to a department store there are weekly promotions of, let us say, a soap, or of something else. At the time of GC 32, many asked themselves: what is the meaning of 'promotion' of justice? Combining 'promotion' and 'justice' appeared very artificial. Promotion also means putting somebody in a higher position. We say: 'he has been promoted'. But what has this to do with justice? Why was this chosen? As such, it is quite a 'mild' expression.

The reason was that the Congregation wanted to avoid a *violent* expression, though actually it should have been, in the terminology of John Paul II, "the struggle against unjust structures of human society." And though we started a war against injustice in the world, the expression 'struggle' was not used.

I know that in Latin America, the Spanish expression *lucha por la justicia* (struggle for justice) is much more frequently used than 'promotion of justice'. I guess that the term 'struggle' was also associated with 'class struggle', suggesting a highly exclusive action, and thus the word 'promotion' was chosen instead. We should not forget that the term 'promote' has a positive meaning. To promote something can also mean a very well planned campaign to create a better and more just world. It was quite clear that the Congregation did not want to use words like charity, mercy, and love. Neither philanthropy nor sustainable development were used. And finally they came up with the word justice, a well-planned strategy to make the world just, and this in the light of the *diakonia fidei*, that is, doing it because we are sent to labour with him.

I think it is good to say that the word justice is very ambiguous. Is it juridical justice, social justice, evangelical justice, the justice in the Letters of Saint Paul? I have the impression that GC 32 voted unanimously for the term 'promotion of justice' because of the ambiguity inherent in the word 'justice'. For some it referred to socio-economic justice; others believed it referred to the 'justice of the Gospel'. Both groups voted in its favour for different reasons. Thanks to a sort of linguistic ambiguity, a theme very important for my master Noam Chomsky, the term justice was approved.

Let me touch briefly on the decision of the GC 32 not to use the term 'love'. We should not forget that even Saint Ignatius was weary of using this word. Before his conversion he had read so many love stories that he was very careful in using the term 'love'. The consideration on the three degrees of humility (*Spiritual Exercises*, 165-168) is in fact a consideration about three ways (degrees) of loving God.<sup>3</sup> Ignatius is so reluctant to use the word 'love' that he introduces the term 'humility'. When Ignatius is constrained to use the word 'love', he explicitly states that he is not referring to some kind of feeling, a few beautiful words, but to concrete *deeds* (*Spiritual Exercises*, 230). He also used the linguistic construction 'loving and serving' (*amar y servir*) to emphasise that love, to be true, needs to be incarnated in deeds.

On this score, GC 32 was in the line with Ignatius' intuition and coined the expression 'promotion of justice' as a concrete incarnation of love. This was also the feeling of John Paul II. Father Arrupe may have gone a bit too far when, at one moment, he said that justice was the sacrament of love because, thanks to its incarnated expression in an action for justice, love becomes a reality, it acquires a real presence. John Paul II also stressed that using only the word justice is dangerous, because we can be 'just' in ways that can be very unjust. Let me remind you that the inhabitants of this city, Rome, know already the expression *summum jus summa iniuria*" (the most outreaching justice can become unjust). If we speak about justice we should not exclude the Justice of the Gospel but neither should we exclude socio-economic justice. We need to keep the linguistic ambiguity in the terminology of justice.

### The pitfalls of dualism

I want to touch on an interesting issue arising from the expression 'service of faith, promotion of justice' that GC 32 coined. In linguistic terms, the expression is known as *parataxis*, the juxtaposition of clauses or phrases without the use of coordinating or subordinating conjunctions.<sup>4</sup> The use of this linguistic form may give the impression that we are talking about two *parallel* ways of living our charism. This made it even more difficult for the Holy See to approve the document (D 4). It could be interpreted to mean that the Society of Jesus was moving in two different ways, living a 'double life': the life of faith and the life of justice. If I remember correctly, the long text was finally voted and approved by a tired assembly. Many amendments were accepted to express the same thing in different ways like 'faith through justice' or 'faith in justice'. These expressions underline the holistic approach and avoid considering the two expressions as parallel.

<sup>3</sup>*Esercizi Spirituali*, Pietro Schiavone SJ, p. 138

<sup>4</sup>As in *It was cold; the snows came*. <http://www.bartleby.com/61/63/P0066300.html>

The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language defines 'parataxis' as "Coordinación de elementos del mismo tipo gramatical o igual función sintáctica" (coordination of elements of the same grammatical type or similar syntactic function) [Editor's note].

I must also confess that later on it became clear that the problem was not a linguistic one. A, let us say, 'radical' implementation of GC 32 stressed the dualistic approach. At one time, a large province was divided in two vice-provinces: one vice-province was committed to the service of faith with schools, colleges, retreat houses, and parishes; and the other vice-province was committed to the promotion of justice. Scholastics were sent only to the second vice-province and not to the first. We have to realise that this division has existed among us. All this may also explain the reaction of the Pope. Some even said that we would be better off as a secular institution rather than a religious order. As a secular institute we could dedicate all our energy to professional, and technical work without all this 'superstructure', to use Marxist terminology, of Faith and Justice.

We need to acknowledge that the problem was real; that the implementation of Decree 4, was, at times, incomplete, slanted and unbalanced. I believe we have overcome this situation and this is a grace though some may feel that we have watered down the radical impact of GC 32. I also think that in the Society there really was a tension between two groups. On the one hand, there were those who felt that ultimately our life as Jesuits should always be concerned with what happens in the next life, that is, in heaven, and that we should not be too busy with getting things right on earth. Others, on the other contrary, believed that what is expected of us is reflection and analysis of the social, economic problems of the world. Once we have a better world, according to this second group, we will think about the service of Faith.

### Looking at the future

We know where we stand today by studying all the postulates that have reached Rome from the various Provincial Congregations all over the world. It is a sign of a real social awareness in the Society when we discover that more than 65% of all the postulata are outward-looking and do not deal with inward problems of the Society of Jesus. They are concerned with the needs of the world today; they feel that in some way or another we are challenged by what is going on in the world today, and by what is expected from us as Jesuits in our actions with all our partners. The list of people we are supposed to help according to the wishes of the Provincial Congregations is quite long: outcasts, refugees, indigenous people, people on the move, and so on.

It is interesting to compare this list with the one of the first Jesuits, which can be found in John O'Malley's book.<sup>5</sup> Let us remember that if we speak about all these categories of people, we need to make painful choices. With all that we have received from the Lord in the form of experience, of possibilities (and they are important), our means are still limited and so choices have to be made. This

<sup>5</sup>The list comprises peacemaking, hospitals and prisons, ministry of the dying, ministry to prostitutes, Jews and new Christian Confraternities and the Marian Congregation. *The First Jesuits*, op cit. p. 168 [See footnote 2. Editor's note].

is a very painful operation and it will have to be made at the next General Congregation.

Two issues seem to be new themes in the coming Congregation: the importance of culture and the theme of ecology. The last General Congregation spoke about inculturation, about the need to bring the message of the Faith according to the existing cultures. The crucial role of culture extends today to all our apostolates including social service and action. We have become aware that some international organisations, while designing development programmes, also impose a certain pattern of meaning and thinking which goes against the culture of the people whom they are supposed to serve.

The issue of ecology came up in GC 34. Ideas at that time were not very clear; as a result the Congregation followed the normal procedure in these cases: ask the Superior General to write a letter about it; and the Superior General wrote a letter presenting a document to the whole Society.<sup>6</sup> It is clear to us that we approach this topic in a different spirit from that of Saint Francis. He spoke of loving the birds and God's creation, whereas we see the issues affecting the environment as a social issue, in the sense that the effects of ecological imbalances affect primarily the poor, and future generations. We are eating up the energy that our children will need in the future.

In a way, we have always known that we live in a 'broken world', but we have become more aware of the urgency and seriousness of this brokenness. We also feel that by bringing all these postulates, Jesuits are asking that we change our life-style, our spirituality and our way of proceeding. It will not be easy to formulate all this in a concrete manner. Your help in this matter is most necessary. I would not be very happy if we end up with a beautiful declaration about environment without saying anything about its implications. We all complain about climate change but we are not ready to do anything. Well, I have come across an example: the Anglican Bishops had to go to Germany to celebrate a commemoration for Luther and they preferred the train to the plane for ecological reasons. I can see that some of you are smiling and thinking that thanks to the Eurotunnel they were able to do it! For us, the question remains: will the concern about the environment be translated into something practical? Will it really affect our lifestyle, or our way of working?

Let me add that the coming General Congregation will also face the strong theme of globalisation. Postulates have insisted on the negative impact: rising inequalities, insistence on excessive profits, development that makes the rich richer and poor poorer. I do, however, believe that for us Jesuits the positive impact of globalisation is very important.

The coming General Congregation will certainly be asked to clarify once more the option of the Society: the Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice. It will also take up the task of providing a more clear understanding of our mission, a mission in the name of the Lord, because we are sent by Him.

<sup>6</sup>"We live in a broken word." Reflections on Ecology. Social Justice Secretariat, *Promotio Iustitiae* 70 (1999).

Social commitment and social conscience are the constitutive dimension of the Society of Jesus. Through an incarnated spirituality like ours, and an inculturated intellectual apostolate such as ours, both have integrated today, more peacefully than in the past, the social dimension of our mission.

The main issue remains: the implementation. So many Provincial Congregations have said that 'we don't need more documents; we need to implement'. But I am sure once more that a large document will come out from all the themes we have.

The needs are so numerous and overwhelming that they can easily paralyse our best intentions, and that is also one of your difficulties. Our means to face all these needs are limited. We can have only some impact on the 'structure of evil', according to the expression of John Paul II. The General Congregation representing the universal body of the Society is called to accomplish the objective of making a choice. One more reason to prepare it well in meetings of this kind as you have done during these days - days for which I am, in the name of all the Jesuits, very grateful.

Thank you so much!

# SOCIAL RESEARCH

## The Importance of Social Research<sup>1</sup>

1. Strengthening social research in the Society of Jesus and more particularly within the Social Apostolate (sector, ministry) has become an important priority in responding appropriately to the needs of our times, which our mission calls upon us to do. All of us who have gathered here in Rome – Coordinators of the Social Apostolate, and Jesuit as well as lay persons engaged in social research – have reflected on the opportunities and the obstacles in the path of social research in various Assistancies all over the world. We have also discussed some successful case studies in detail and deepened our understanding of the range and depth of social research carried out in many social centres, social institutes and Jesuit Universities. The hope these have generated in us touches us deeply; it is a hope that overcomes by far the difficulties and challenges many research projects face today. We also strongly feel the need to re-organise our work, pull our forces together, and integrate the efforts made in the university and the social sector to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a globalised world. Though our specific circumstances and contexts vary, we all share the same vision, and we strongly feel we are part of an apostolic body at the service of Christ's mission: the service of faith doing justice (CG 34, D 2, n. 1).
2. We are aware we live in a complex, exciting and simultaneously dangerous world. More than ever, we need today the wisdom of Ignatian discernment and the help of solid analysis to ground our apostolic choices. In our contemporary culture, it is crucial to learn how to look at the world (Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 106) so as to understand the diversity of cultures and beliefs; the new social divisions and exclusions; the outstanding examples of solidarity; the scenes of war and the attempts at reconciliation; and finally, the tragedies and joys, the despair and consolations of women and men who are searching for meaning and relevance. Social research is an important instrument to help us discover the signs of the times in this complex web of structures that characterise our world today. Social research, with its scientific rigour, contributes significantly to diagnosing reality and offers alternative strategies that may guide our apostolic projects.
3. Fostering social research in the Society is imperative in a world in which the production of scientific knowledge and the formulation of public policies are subordinated to the often unknown interests funding and

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<sup>1</sup>This text was approved by all participants at the meeting of Assistancy Coordinators in Rome (7-13 May 2007) to discuss the situation of Social Research in the Society of Jesus.

sponsoring research. We need to ensure that our social research is in line with our mission of a faith that does justice. We live in a time crisscrossed by contradictory forces and shaped by constant changes. A new information and communication society is spreading that may possibly make for more participative ways of deliberation and decision-making. At the same time, a prevailing dominant culture of pragmatism frequently leads to extremist positions of 'relativism' or 'fundamentalism'.

4. These changes affect all dimensions of our life: while we are led to discover new meanings in this global reality, new identities and subjectivities are being formed. Persons and institutions are urged to find their own identities and this encourages processes of self-reflection but also, in some cases, self-centredness. While social needs favour the creation of multiple networks, economic neo-liberalism produces numerous cases of exclusion that weakened and diminished public services fail to address. Civil society demands greater social participation and invites all to a great global solidarity. We live in a society facing greater risks both at the individual and community levels. While obstacles tend to divide us, new opportunities are multiplying rapidly.
5. Amidst this increasingly complex reality, social research ought to play the pivotal role of helping each apostolic sector or activity to become more aware of the situation in which it operates and the effects it generates. Current, fast-changing trends force us to review and change our policies regarding knowledge and the intellectual apostolate. Our reform will only succeed if it abandons old isolationist practices and adopts a cooperative and universal way of proceeding. Those institutions that remain isolated run the risk of falling prey to particular and narrow interests, and in some cases, to neo-liberal concerns. If Jesuit social research does not explicitly commit itself to the service of Faith and Justice it runs the risk of being subverted and, possibly, corrupted in certain cases.
6. Though social centres share the view that social research should be guided by our commitment to justice, they often encounter serious financial difficulties, and some may yield to the temptation of accepting funds from sources that compromise the direction and objectives of Jesuit social research. We also feel that we are responsible for ensuring that the abundant resources for education and research that we Jesuits have flows into one integrated apostolic project.
7. We call on the many social centres engaged actively in social action to go beyond mere activism and "assistentialism" and foster more holistic models of social action that incorporate social research as a fundamental instrument of Jesuit social action.

8. It is also crucial that trained Jesuits who can undertake direct action and social research and have an appreciation of the intellectual apostolate continue to be appointed to the Social Apostolate. We recognise that Jesuits and lay partners need to become aware of the importance of a rigorous (theoretical and practical) social formation.
9. The sharing of the last days has convinced us of the Society's effort to carry out its commitment to social research and the intellectual apostolate in the various Assistancies. We have realised that there exists in Jesuit social centres and institutions a tradition of applied social research that supports transformative action, and is capable of maintaining a healthy autonomy, pursue an independent agenda and develop its own methodology in its commitment to justice issues. Attention to programmes of accompaniment and social insertion, establishment of linkages with social movements, insistence on scientific rigour and the defence of a critical approach, all these are traits characterising Jesuit institutions engaged in social research. They explain the high levels of credibility and public recognition that social institutions have attracted. Another positive sign has been the increasing participation of lay colleagues in research work committed to the mission of the Ignatian family.
10. We have also become aware that different Jesuit social research projects have consolidated a Jesuit model
  - combining research and action, quality and relevance;
  - generating a type of knowledge at the service of a Faith doing Justice;
  - favouring a comprehensive look at reality including personal and structural components;
  - searching participative models where researchers insert themselves in the social reality, and victims as well as popular groups are present in social research;
  - living at the cross roads of history;
  - fostering dialogue with other cultures, popular religious traditions and movements;
  - accepting the need for a multi-disciplinary approach that includes philosophy, theology, theoretical and applied research; and
  - searching for ways of improving communication and dissemination through journals and the web, and establishing linkages with centres for advocacy and lobbying.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

11. We strongly recommend that during their formation Jesuits and collaborators become familiar with social research, both theoretical and applied, so as to respond better to the Ignatian call to develop a “learned ministry” (GC 34, D 26, n. 18-20), and secondly, to acknowledge “the distinctive importance of the intellectual quality of each of our apostolic ministries” (GC 34, D. 16, n. 1).

### TO CONFERENCES/REGIONS

12. Given the complexity and interconnectedness of the social issues confronting us we believe that recommendations on the development of social research can be more fruitfully considered at the level of a Conference (or Region).
13. Under the authority of the Moderator/President, a (five-year) **Strategic Plan** should be prepared **for strengthening and developing social research** in the region and in the provinces in a complementary and integrated manner so that it also becomes a tool for discernment and apostolic decision-making.
14. On the basis of the experience gained on some ongoing projects, we suggest that this strategic plan needs to consider the following areas/dimensions:
  - 14.1 Selecting **common priority themes/areas**, given the specific needs, challenges and strengths of each region; the themes chosen should integrate a theological, philosophical and ethical dimension.
  - 14.2 Setting up **team/s of researchers** composed of Jesuits and other partners, so that Jesuit Universities (Colleges), Social Institutes, Social Centres and Coordinators of the Social Apostolate can collaborate either institutionally or individually under an agreed upon Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This may entail a re-organisation of the research activities of the social centres in the region.
  - 14.3 Encouraging the development and strengthening of a **few specialised social research centres or institutions in the region** (Conference), which, wherever appropriate, may be placed under the care of its Moderator/President. These centres need to establish clearly defined linkages with all the social centres in the region or Conference.

- 14.4 Ensuring that, while Jesuits are encouraged to get involved individually in social research, such initiatives are **integrated within the overall research plans and priorities** of the Conference and the Provinces.
- 14.5 Exploring the feasibility of setting up **independent social institutions within a University**; we know from experience that this type of organisational arrangement keeps the centre faithful to the apostolic priorities of the Jesuit mission while maintaining, at the same time, rigorous research standards.
- 14.6 Promoting the establishment of a **scientific advisory body** or council for social centres and a **social advisory body** or council for academic institutions engaged in social research.
- 14.7 Starting a **regional (Conference) pilot research project** under a protocol specifying objectives, time-frame, and the various responsibilities.
- 14.8 Fostering **close relationships between social researchers and the victims of injustice and exclusion**; this includes strengthening immersion programmes that already exist in many Jesuit institutions of higher learning.
- 14.9 Preparing a **planned programme for the formation** of Jesuits and other partners in social research; this would imply the appointment of Jesuits to do doctoral studies in social sciences, the provision of facilities to those engaged in social research to interact with other researchers in the region and outside, and facilitating the acquisition of language skills.
- 14.10 Establishing **independent sources of funding** for social research; one possible way is to encourage the development of a special "*corpus*" built with the contributions from the 'apostolic funds (*arca*)' of each province.

#### TO THE SOCIAL JUSTICE SECRETARIAT

15. Facilitate **the dissemination of information regarding the research plans developed by various Conferences** (regions) and, whenever appropriate, propose **overall policy guidelines** for strengthening and developing social research in the Society of Jesus. For implementing the above it seems necessary to

- 15.1 **collaborate very closely with the Secretariat for Higher Education** (Intellectual Apostolate) in the elaboration of common plans and projects; collaboration with other Secretariats should also be encouraged;
- 15.2 **foster communication and dialogue**, on a formal basis, with the (future) **Council of Presidents** (Moderators) on matters related to social research;
- 15.3 explore and facilitate **linkages at international level** between Jesuits and partners engaged in grassroot social interventions, research centres and advocacy;
- 15.4 contribute to the development of **fund-raising capacities at the Jesuit Curia** in Rome for social research projects; and
- 15.5 **strengthen the infrastructural facilities at the Secretariat for Social Justice**, including the development of a system of information and interaction (website) appropriate to the needs of social research.

## Social Research in the Society of Jesus: a Regional Overview<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

During the Social Apostolate Coordinators' meeting in Rome, participants heard and saw presentations from around the world about the state of social research done in social centres and other institutions related to the Society of Jesus. The recommendations that emerged from these presentations have been gathered in a document for the whole Society and published in this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae*. The following summary of the presentations provides an overview, Assistency by Assistency, of the work currently being done.

The three kinds of activities in which social centres and other institutions are engaged (regardless of the topic researched) are (1) research, i.e. data-gathering, analysis, monitoring, reflection; (2) formation, i.e. training and capacity building, preparing human resources for assuming responsibilities for social transformation; and (3) social action, i.e. participating with people in their struggle for rights, freedom and dignity through concrete actions such as advocacy, networking, protest and legal aid.

### Social Research in Africa (Elias Omondi SJ)

The African Assistency has 23 social centres, few of which are engaged in social research. A number of high-profile projects however have been undertaken in the recent past or are currently being carried out. In Zambia the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) has collaborated with Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre in a social research project on the impact of Genetically Modified Organisms on the agricultural sector. Every year, both JCTR in Zambia and Jesuit Hakimani Center in Kenya conduct research on the Basic Needs Basket, highlighting the cost of living among the poor. CEFOD in Chad does research in oil and land issues, and CEPAS in the Democratic Republic of Congo in issues related to mining and governance.

### Social Research in East Asia and Oceania (Rowena Soriaga)

Social Centres with a commitment to social research can be found in Australia, Philippines, Micronesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, China/Taiwan and Japan. They cover a very broad range of topics. Some of these are: conflicts, war rehabilitation and human security; sex trade; migration; governance issues; business ethics and corporate social

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<sup>1</sup>The text has been prepared by Uta Sievers from the various presentations made at the meeting of Coordinators in Rome, May 2007 [Editor's Note].

responsibility; impact of 'modernity' on indigenous cultures; poverty, land and resource allocation and rights; asset creation and sustainable livelihoods; natural resource planning and management; disaster management; impact of climate change; and methods for facilitating dialogue and influencing policy.

### **Social Research in South Asia (Virginus Xaxa)**

South Asia has the largest number of Social Centres in any Assistency: 102 in all, of which a minority (21 centres) are engaged mainly in research, 80 in social action and 74 in social formation. Social research undertaken by the centres has revolved primarily around marginalised groups. These are dalits (the former so-called "untouchables"), tribals (indigenous peoples), women and, to some extent, Muslims. The focus has predominantly been on rural areas. In the context of urban areas, the focus has been on slums.

### **Social Research in the United States (Frank Bernt)**

Social research is well-represented in academic settings throughout the US. There are three stand-alone centres (the Center of Concern, the Woodstock Institute and the Heartland Institute). Virtually every one of the 28 universities has at least one centre or institute devoted to social research, and many have several such centres. The issues that are being researched in these centres include racism and poverty, human rights, global issues, immigration, health care, restorative justice, rural issues, violence prevention, faith and public life and corporate law. In addition, there are several networks of social research institutions, including the Jesuit University Justice Network, the Jesuit University Migration Network, the Humanitarian Relief Network, and the Jesuit Conference Office of Social and International Ministries that coordinates the Social Apostolate in the USA.

### **Social Research in Latin America (Mauricio Archila)**

Fifteen social centres in seven countries have replied to a survey of all centres in Latin America and confirmed their involvement in social research. The main research areas at these social centres are urban and rural development, ethics, social movements, human rights and ecology (especially in Brazil).

### **Social Research in Central Europe (Andreas Gösele)**

Social Research happens mainly in three centres: the Nell-Breuning Institute, part of the Sankt Georgen School of Theology in Frankfurt, the Institute for Social and Development Studies (*Institut für Gesellschaftspolitik*), part of the Munich School of Philosophy, and the Catholic Social Institute KSOE

(*Katholische Sozialakademie Österreichs*) in Vienna. Substantial research has also been undertaken within the context of JRS (Berlin and Munich).

### **Social Research in Eastern Europe (Robin Schweiger)**

In the Eastern European Assistancy, there is one social centre, OCIPE, in Warsaw (Poland), but social research activities are carried on at the (Jesuit) Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb (Croatia) and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Slovenia. JRS is also active in Croatia, Romania and Ukraine. For the future, there are plans for a new department of Political Science at the University College "Ignatianum" in Krakow (Poland) which will collaborate with the local Social Centre, and for an Institute of Social Studies with branches in Krakow and Wroclaw, both of which will be doing social research.

### **Social Research in Southern Europe (Nacho Eguizabal)**

Four universities in Spain are involved in social research, each with one or more of their institutes or faculties. Four journals publish social research articles in the Assistancies – *Fomento Social* (Spain), *Cristianisme i Justícia* (Spain), *Aggiornamenti Sociali* (Italy), *Economia e Sociologia* (Portugal)) – and there are eight social centres in the Assistancy. In addition, there are six NGOs that work in international development cooperation and are linked through the Red Xavier. They also conduct research the outcome of which is published through websites and printed reports.

### **Conclusion**

Although in some Assistancies the research institutions are more thinly spread than in others, financial concerns haunt most of those mainly or exclusively doing research. The temptation is to do well-paid research funded through external commissioning, where the client also sets the research agenda. This cannot however be the way forward and alternative sources of funding have to be found. In addition, research has to be better coordinated among institutions to avoid duplication and competition. Another challenge to a number of institutions in all Assistancies is that viable social research requires a critical mass at the social centre. In the absence of such a critical mass, the research hinges primarily around a particular individual, his or her expertise, experience and competence. With the departure of that individual from the centre, social research suffers a set back.

As a response to these two and other similar concerns, as well as to obstacles to the free pursuit of social research in Jesuit institutions, a set of recommendations have been prepared and published in this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae*.

## The Role of Social Research

### Ambrose Pinto SJ

#### What is Social Science Research?

**S**ocial science research engages with social issues through in-depth analysis of the social, economic and cultural dimensions of communities and of individuals who comprise them. The quantitative method in social science research depends on quantifying social phenomena through questionnaires, statistical data and surveys; its conclusions are based on numerical data. The qualitative method concentrates on personal experiences and the meaning of social phenomena; its inferences are based on interpretation. Social science research involves the people being studied in a profound way; they alone can provide both the information and the meaning and are as essential to research projects as the social science expert.

Social research is interaction between evidence and ideas pertaining to people and their lives. Ideas help social researchers to make sense of evidence, and researchers use evidence to extend, revise and test ideas. Social research thus attempts to create or validate theories and ideas through data collection and data analysis. New theories too can evolve and the old ones modified as a result of evidence. Research can be pure and applied. Pure research has not much application to real life, whereas applied research attempts to influence the real world. That is why much of social research needs to be of an applied nature. Applied research connects researchers and collaborators to broader conceptions of the social system. But given the fact that cultures differ and given that all social research is about society, community and people, in a word, about cultures, it is not easy and at times impossible to arrive at universal generalisations about a class of facts that are applicable to the entire world. Social sciences deal with people and people respond to reality differently.

Of course, there are facts researchers observe. Observation means it has been seen, heard or otherwise experienced by researchers in one part of the globe or the other in specific situations. From the facts theories can be evolved. Concepts or ideas are the basic building blocks of theory. Social research involves testing these hypotheses to see if they are true. To sharply divide the discipline of research into empirical and normative is a distortion. While it is not difficult to agree that normative is value-laden, it is difficult to accept the empirical as value free. Theory that has no basis in experiential knowledge is no knowledge for social researchers. And hence research needs both normative and empirical processes. Social Science research cannot base itself entirely on the assumptions and methodology of the natural sciences. It has to become imaginative, creative, transformative and a school of consciousness.

### **Characteristics of Social Research**

A meaningful research that is aimed at transformation of communities should have the following characteristics:

- (i) Substance must precede technique: the focus should be relevant social problems. Urgent social problems require techniques that help us to grasp substance and respond to realities so that there can be social transformation.
- (ii) The language used should avoid excessive abstractness so that we can reach out to the real needs of humankind.
- (iii) Social research can never be neutral. We need to be aware of our priorities and values and the alternative for which social research can be used.
- (iv) The role of social research is to protect the values of civilisation. It must address a number of urgent social and economic problems like hunger, poverty, violence, racialism, communalism, regionalism, wars and the like.
- (v) A researcher has a responsibility to put the results of his or her work into action in reshaping society.
- (vi) Our Universities and Social Centres cannot stand apart from the struggles of our day if they are to be relevant to the people whom they serve and need to include social analysis and research in their curricula. Social research helps to prioritise academics and action in the Social Centres and Universities.
- (vii) Research needs to be participative. In participative research the people would have a voice in studying themselves and their situations.

In sum, social research is an invitation to become scientifically conscious of the community around us and to fulfil our obligations towards society.

### **Participative Research**

It is important to involve disenfranchised people as researchers in the pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival. Knowledge becomes a crucial element in enabling people to have a say in how they would like to see their world put together and run.

Participative research is people-centred and promotes empowerment through the development of common knowledge and critical awareness, both of which are sometimes suppressed by the dominant knowledge system. The local community thus can be made active partners in identifying the problems, selecting research approaches, gathering data, analysing the data and determining how research findings can be used to benefit themselves or their communities. The "outside" researcher and the "inside" respondents can become partners. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is based on action and usually done with those who have some control in society, for example teachers and managers.

Finally, all meaningful research should lead to action and policy formulation.

### **Social Science Research Today**

Unfortunately, social science research today is driven by market considerations and data is manipulated and tailored to fit specific agendas. For example, those who push for greater trade have the need to convince the world of the welfare gain of free trade. They are liable to push the market access argument while trying to black out the issue of agricultural subsidies. Another example: the frightening report of scientists on Climate Change was diluted to serve the interests of certain powerful players.

The other major threat to people-centred research is from rightist regimes and governments. Here there is hardly any research being done, but facts are manufactured and propagated as scientific truths. Several Universities in India have programmes in Astrology, Yoga, Vedas and a host of other dominant areas and concepts to provide legitimacy to ruling regimes in states. The following points about the status of social science research in India today may be relevant:

- (i) Quality research is confined to institutions meant for research rather than found in educational institutions
- (ii) Research with most funding (e.g. the World Bank) reflects the definite bias of the funding agency. Ministers of states fund research that aggrandizes their agendas.
- (iii) Indian research institutions do little for the researcher.
- (iv) There is little critical independent research.
- (v) Indian research institutions centralise powers in their directors. There is little autonomy or delegation and this prevents all-round growth of the institution and its people.
- (vi) There are numerous surveys but very little conceptual work.
- (vii) Overseas funding from donors has given researchers wider exposure and improved quality in many cases.

### **Recommendations**

- (i) Research institutions should make use of all available techniques. They must raise the question 'Who constitute the focus of our work and why do we focus on them'?
- (ii) While the Social Centres need to establish linkages with Colleges and Universities for effective research, Universities and Colleges should make research a priority.
- (iii) There is a need to establish an independent corpus for research work. Without a minimum of economic security, researchers cannot be expected to turn out quality work.

- (iv) In light of the changing times we need to establish research cells both in our educational institutions of higher learning and in Social Centres. These cells should go for participative research wherever necessary and work closely with the people.
- (v) There is an urgent need to generate more funds, produce useful work and to train good researchers who beyond mere surveys and are capable of conceptualising.

Research cannot be an exercise of the experts but a work of the people among whom we work and live. Research with the people also calls for right attitudes of heart and mind so that one may identify oneself with the people and their concerns.

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## Social Research and Social Action in a Globalised World<sup>1</sup> Fernando Vidal<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

**S**ocial Research is progressively getting a central role in Social Action and Justice Advocacy. The new trends of our era have stressed the importance of influencing policy, and more specifically, policies regarding knowledge formation and dissemination in Jesuit Social Action.

### The questions

This paper<sup>3</sup> was written in response to a request by the Social Justice Secretariat (Rome) to present an 'expert' opinion on the situation of social

<sup>1</sup>I thank the Jesuits Higinio Pi, Julio Martínez and Josep Buades for the comments made to a draft of this paper. [The text of this paper is an edited version of a longer article in Spanish. Editor's note].

<sup>2</sup>Fernando Vidal Fernández (Vigo, 1967) is Professor of Sociology and guide for Ph.D. students in the Department of Sociology at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid. He is member of the Christian Life Community, has participated in different social, cultural and political projects, and conducted research on neo-modernity, social exclusion, civil society, voluntarism, poor, children, immigrants and the family for different public and private institutions of Spain, and published ten books. His latest work (forthcoming September 2007) is *The Agenda of Research about Social Exclusion and Development in Spain* (to be published by Fundación FOESSA, Madrid).

<sup>3</sup>The writing of this paper has been a long process. I wrote first a draft with my own ideas about the topic, but I thought that it would be interesting to contrast these ideas with Jesuit documents dealing

research and social action. In answering this request I deal with two sets of issues. The first deals with the relevance of research for social action and how our era of globalisation has shaped the model of social research. The second includes other issues like the possible re-institutionalisation of social research in social action.<sup>4</sup>

### Social Research and Neo-Modernity

The phenomenon of “globalisation” is the most emblematic characteristic of our times. This present era is made up of six structures and their study is relevant to the issue of social research. Before reviewing these structures briefly it may be useful to develop a historical perspective. Around 1949 the process of modernity was blocked by a critical movement called post-modernity which lasted 30 years. Its goal was to review the basis of our civilisation. Since 1979 a new era has emerged and it has been called ‘second modernity’, ‘advanced modernity’ or, simply, ‘neo-modernity.’ It appeared as a reaction to the deep changes brought about by post-modernity, for example, Vatican II, the big welfare state, the new civil rights, international multilateralism. Neo-modernity has been supported by famous intellectuals like Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Baumann or Manuel Castells. It hopes to resolve some of the problems thrown up by postmodernism.

Neo-modernity can firstly be characterised by the fashioning of a *new socialness, or sociability*. The structure of this new sociability is shaped by the interaction of three dynamic processes: *network formation, globalisation and informationalism*. We are referring, therefore, to a new way in which we are getting socialised.

*Network formation* uses a network of separate points linked by voluntary and active relationships. It is a new way of cooperating. The most important step in networking is not creating a website but rather forming a group based on certain codes for cooperation. A non-cooperative group with a website is useless. The new rule of networking is voluntary and synergetic cooperation rather than prescriptive dependence. Such voluntary and synergetic cooperation through the group’s codes creates social rules that are changing lives and relationships by creating new social spaces like chat rooms and websites. The main problem is that in this new way of socialising, if you don’t get into your own groups, you will be alone.

*Globalisation* refers to the fact that daily life is being globalised. It is not only an economic trend or a way of forming political alliances, but a new social

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with this theme. As a result, I read the articles of *Promotio Iustitiae* from 1994 onwards. This article owes also a great deal to the essay I wrote on Social Work and Jesuit Universities -a reflection on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the course on Social Work at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas of Madrid. Finally, I wrote a final text which I submitted to the Secretariat before the meeting.

<sup>4</sup>This re-institutionalisation involves the networks, the new corporative projects, the governing of research alliances, the agenda of issues included for study in the formation of social researchers and other actors like young Jesuits, the financing and the publication.

structure changing every point of our ordinary personal lives. It offers a new way to become universal in our ordinary life. The risk is that only the rich will be “universalised” and that it will become an ‘ordinary’ way to dominate.

*Informationalisation* (a term introduced by Manuel Castells) refers to the new source of productivity, legitimacy and development by continuous improvement in the ways of collecting, working with, and making use of information. The computer revolution is only one component of this revolution. We are referring here to a new ‘hermeneutical’ way of influencing and understanding reality by changing the methods of communication, deliberation and decision making in our organisations. It creates a new model of relating inside organisations (businesses, families, cliques of friends, political parties, labour unions, universities, churches, etc.).

*Neo-Liberalism* is the second characteristic of neo-modernity and we may describe it by noting four elements: the primacy of the financial side of the economy; the new re-organisation of productive work (for example sub-contracting and de-localising production); the creation of new identities, and the promotion of new types of social exclusion. Business looks to overexploit raw materials, workers and consumers. To exploit the consumers is to alienate their identities: they do not consume because of their needs but rather they consume every product of a company because they IDENTIFY with the virtual soul of this company. Furthermore, the most important companies are not productive industries but financial and investment groups (for example, mutual funds). Profits are made not in steel factories but in speculative markets. The new model of social exclusion has the goal of removing every person in the world from their roots, of displacing them, of rendering them temporary and itinerant workers. The objective is to achieve more flexibility and less resistance to economic changes.

The creation of *reflective subjects* is the third characteristic and refers to the fact that people always have more freedom to decide on their values and beliefs. This phenomenon has been described by various names: ‘standard individualism’ (Beck), ‘the demise of social capital’ (Putnam), ‘the fluid community’ (Baumann) and ‘reflection’ (Giddens). Everyone is called upon to build his/her own identity; to take responsibility for his or her own beliefs. The problem is: should you build your identity by yourself or with others? Is reflection only a narcissistic self-reflection? What is the role of authority in this process? Can we forget the authority of the victims?

The fourth characteristic of neo-modernity is the promotion of a *Neo-Pragmatic Culture* as a reaction against the libertarian and progressive reform of the institutions during the 70’s. The institutional crisis of the 70s left many confused and a new pragmatism was promoted in the areas of policy, culture, religion and economics. The simultaneous rise of fundamentalism is not casual. Though some may believe that fundamentalism expresses an opposite tendency to pragmatism, it is actually a function of pragmatism. This Neo-

Pragmatism has diminished the role of rational and charismatic ideologies and increased the role of traditional rationality. Its objective is not truth but power. It seems to say: "All right, we are not capable of explaining the foundation of the family, but it is a useful concept to live by."

A *society at risk*, the fifth characteristic, refers to the fears and accompanying dangers besetting this new society: fear of not getting future pensions, fears derived from the effects of overusing natural resources. Past structures may have had less likelihood of achieving spectacular successes, but they also were less likely of making grave and serious mistakes.

Finally, the *new command of solidarity* refers to the call for a more integrated social participation and solidarity. The emergence of civil society in the shape of the 'third sector' is a clear indication of a new consciousness.

In conclusion, this structure of neo-modernity shows the increasing unity between the issues typically linked to material solidarity and those linked to meaning, awareness or faith. Without meaning there is no solidarity and without solidarity there is no meaning. The response from justice needs to be a unified one, joining meaning and solidarity. This unintended linkage between the materiality of justice and the importance of meaning and faith may help us in understanding our mission today.

### **The role of social research vis-à-vis neo-modernity**

In the light of these challenges thrown up by neo-modernity, social research faces the following important challenges.

*New ways of organising research.* The new structures of sociability described above demand other ways of organising institutional research. From the network logic, we should generate a research that is more inter-sectorial, more participative, and more synergetic. Globalisation demands global research actors. Social research, as a way of challenging the core of knowledge generation and dissemination, becomes a strategic issue. For this very reason, social research needs to touch the very foundations of knowledge by engaging simultaneously philosophical, theological, sociological, biological and other dimensions of science that have hitherto functioned in as separate disciplines.

*New epistemological framework.* We need to allow wisdom to emerge; this will not happen if we operate with different knowledge systems. Life, and to that extent social movements, question the results of social research. Personal and local demands raise their urgent questions of livelihood and meaning to social researchers. This strong sense of reality breaks the useless game of separating wisdom and science. Science has its own rules of verification, but in reality it operates within the wholeness of wisdom. Neo-modernity is looking for an integrated vision, and this logic compels religions, sciences, traditions and ideologies to participate in a complex and necessary dialogue.

*Increasing need of research.* The demand for social research comes from the spread of 'reflectivity', and the emergence of a risk society. Digital newspapers

have frequent web polls and they are a sign that people want to know, even if at times it may appear superficial. Besides, our 'risk society' demands more social spaces for public and personal deliberation. The fragmentation and lack of cohesion within social groups demand an extra effort to raise the levels of consciousness. The present social fragmentation resembles a process of desertification: when land loses grass, and the roots fixing it, then slowly land turns into sand dunes. Many of our communities have become deserts and we need to create barriers to protect them, nets to strengthen the roots and use new ways of improving its fertility. Research can set up these barriers, provide these spaces and create symbolic capital.

*Becoming aware of the traps facing social research.* Before setting up our policies to foster social research in this new age we need to be aware of some of the most important traps into which research has fallen. Let me enumerate a few:

- Science as power. Social research is a powerful instrument to legitimise or criticise public policies. Multinationals have set up their own research agencies to defend their interests. On the other hand, the campaign against child labour has benefited from globally done research and information.
- 'Clientelism' operates among social researchers, what some have called the 'mafia of the mind'. There are interest groups (many of them linked to political parties) that finance their own media (TV, journals) and form a network of intellectuals that serve and protect their interests.
- Imposing the agenda for research. Determining the agenda of research is frequently dictated not by corruption but by the lack of financial means. Though the University makes available certain grants for research, the 'big budgets' for applied and pure research come from large foundations associated to interest groups. These dominate the big research projects.
- The 'closeness' of scientific circles. Social researchers are easily absorbed in the internal life of universities: pressures to publish, competition to climb up, and power struggles to attain some positions. They may end living in a kind of 'underworld' of intrigue and incessant battles. Research across departments becomes almost impossible. The tendency is to foster individualism, and a complacent affiliation to a bourgeois way of life.
- The temptation to be neutral. There are many researchers that want to adopt a kind of 'purist' attitude; they want to remain neutral in the face of clear polarisations in society. A lot has been made of this neutrality. Often it is another way of avoiding the call to confront and critique unjust knowledge structures.

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### SPECIAL INVITEE

**Peter Bisson SJ** (CSU): Designated director of the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice, Toronto; Canada.

## Questionnaire

- (1) How would you describe the situation existing in your country (region)? What are the main changes that have taken place in the last 10 years that call for a change (new discernment) in our apostolic strategy?
- (2) What are the main strengths and weaknesses (limitations) of the Society of Jesus in the region/country over the last 10 years?
- (3) As “servants of Christ mission,” what is the Lord asking the Society (and hence General Congregation 35) today? What is the most urgent task? You may consider the following aspects:
  - Our mission
  - Our identity
  - Our government (or our way of proceeding)
  - The future of apostolic partnership with others
  - Our communities

### JAPAN

Ando Isamu SJ

(Q. 1) It is difficult to assess the overall situation of Japan nowadays, but let me offer a few considerations that may be of relevance in other regions also. The last 10 years have been a period of substantial changes and new challenges in Japanese society. The dark atmosphere that seems to pervade everything is largely a creation of the mass media.

Politics and economics remain at the forefront, influencing all of Japanese life. The traditional multi-party system, with the Liberal Democrats always on top, is gradually giving way to a more confrontational two-party system. Ideology doesn't count and the only difference is in pragmatic policies. There is a general tendency to the 'right' and to stress legislation and control at almost all levels to make a strong Japan under a strong government leadership.

The economy has emerged from a long recession and serious corporate debts. Strong national policies were implemented to strengthen big banks and major companies as well as to foster competition, and followed the standard global patterns of reducing personnel, thereby making substantial changes in the 'employment for life' tradition which has been the practice throughout Japan. As a result, the number of people deeply in debt has increased, the numbers of part-timers has grown considerably, labor unions have been dismantled and thousands of 'freeters' (young people doing business at risk by themselves) have been created. Suicides, largely for economic reasons, were over 35,000 a year during the last few years.

The Japan-US Security Pact signed in 1951 has been strengthened and, as a consequence, American military bases continue to be established on Japanese soil,

especially in Okinawa. This Treaty is, in fact, the basis of the whole economic system in Japan because it assures a free market for Japanese products in the US and gives Japan free access to the international society. Japan still holds a pacifist constitution but, because of this Treaty, cooperates with the US in Iraq and has started to build an anti-missile international defence system to fight international terrorism that is, in fact, aimed at North Korea and China.

Strong rivalry and strain mark relationships with neighbouring countries, mainly China and South Korea, rooted the past, in historical issues of colonisation and unfinished war reparations, but also in matters of trade and acquisition of natural resources, among others.

The religious map of Japan is quite complex. According to national surveys done by the Office of the Prime Minister, most Japanese consider themselves Buddhists and Shintoists at the same time. There are about 1,800 'religions' in Japan now, mostly founded after World War II and one among them, Christianity, claims about 0.8% (less than 5 million followers) of the total population of 127 million. One of the leading characteristics is ambiguity regarding religious belief. Religious dialogue is practically non-existent and religious indifference is the common practice in general.

The Catholic Church, although small, enjoys the classical structure of all developed churches. The biggest development is the high growth in the number of Christians during the past years as a result of Catholic migrant workers from Latin America, mainly Brazil and Peru, and from Asian countries, especially from the Philippines. At present, there are probably around 900,000 Catholics in Japan, more than half of whom come from foreign countries. They fill our churches on Sundays and have sometimes shocked our local Japanese Christians with the introduction of different liturgical practices and languages. While Japanese Christians are becoming increasingly 'grey,' these foreigners are young and full of vitality. On the other hand, the large presence of foreigners unable to read Japanese, or even speak it, creates a difficult communications gap, and the fact that they are 'workers' creates a different atmosphere in our churches in urban centres. In many cases the lack of proper official documentation of foreign Catholics provokes misunderstandings among Japanese Christians.

Starting in the year 2000, a few dioceses began to establish pastoral programmes to reorganise and re-invigorate the process of evangelisation at the diocesan level. Tokyo Archdiocese started the process in March 2003. The results are ambivalent, but the priority tasks requiring immediate attention are three: (1) training of lay people; (2) supporting foreign Catholic believers; and (3) supporting people afflicted with mental illness. Such efforts aim at 'renewal' in confronting new problems alive in urban Japan.

The Japanese Jesuit Province made a projection plan several years ago that focused on the decline of active personnel, due mainly to the advancing age of available Jesuits, with the consequent weakening of Jesuit institutions, especially in the field of education. The plan, which dealt largely with administrative issues rather than the actual changes taking place in contemporary Japan, did not accomplish the substantial changes required.

## (Q. 2) Strengths

The Province continues its efforts to maintain the many educational institutions it holds, keeping up the image that Jesuits are strong in education. With regard to the pastoral field, the second largest Jesuit involvement, the trend is towards pastoral blocks or in-group pastoral services. Retreats or spiritual seminars are conducted within a limited sphere. The social apostolate has a visible presence in the Province as a group, but with very few Jesuits fully involved. Quite a few Jesuits offer pastoral (sacramental) services to foreign migrant workers on Sundays. And finally, the fact of being a fully international province is a great asset for us in Japan.

## Limitations

As is to be expected, the decline in the number of Jesuits with little hope of getting many vocations in a non-Christian environment is a point of weakness, one that forces institutions in particular to take a different orientation. Nevertheless, they are able to handle the processes that are needed.

Jesuit communication at a horizontal level is not our strength. The tendency is to adopt inward-looking approaches in each institution; a general lack of creativity and mobility prevails. This may be because the Province is highly institutionalized. The 'greying' of many elderly Jesuits transmits an attitude of remaining comfortably in our works. Jesuits in urban centres, especially Tokyo, live quite apart from the lives of most ordinary people and are hardly involved in the ordinary struggles of ordinary people. This is also a concern regarding our young scholastics. They are few and too guarded; the stress seems to be on theoretical studies, distanced from ordinary people.

Jesuits in institutions perhaps discuss among themselves the Jesuit identity of the institution they run, but there are no questions raised about this at the Province level. The inevitable result is a clear lack of interest and diminished Jesuit solidarity.

Involvement with the poor, advocacy and human rights awareness, the promotion of justice and peace, interest in preserving a safe environment, migrant foreign workers, jobless and homeless people are issues not really connected to Jesuit life. These are fields where, maybe, some Jesuits work privately, but Jesuit institutions, mainly educational, are not involved in any way. The image we Jesuits have in Japan is certainly not in this line of involvement.

(Q. 3) I do not dare to speak on other people's behalf. Nevertheless, I would like to express it in the following way. Basically, it comes to what the Lord said, "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world..." (Mt. 5, 13-16) and ordered them to anoint "with oil many who were sick" and cure them (Mk 6,7-13). In order to do that we need to know the needs and the suffering of people, to get close to them.

Our task here is a task of "pre-evangelisation" and of being Jesuits at the service of the people. People should count first. As a minority we should act in solidarity

with many others, whether or not they are Christians. Institutions have power and Jesuit institutions could be of great assistance to the powerless on the fringes of society. This is not the case now. And the problem and challenge are that it has never been the case.

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## CHILE

## Jorge Costadoat SJ

(Q. 1) I cannot speak about the region. Neither is the social area my specific field. I am more engaged in university and intellectual work in general. I will write only about my country, Chile, and I do that certainly as a Jesuit interested in, and concerned about, the social apostolate of my province.

I see three aspects of the social apostolate. Direct charity, so strongly emphasised in the encyclical *Deus est caritas* of Benedict XVI; the promotion of justice, especially important to change an unjust world; and the mission of the Society in relation to these two aspects, that is, in relation to the faith perspective which helps us to understand them, and, finally, in relation to the mystique which should imbue our Jesuit life, the body of the Society, and our vocational outreach.

Regarding the first aspect, the social apostolate has experienced extraordinary growth. Just last night (I am writing in June 2007), after a 15-day publicity campaign, *Hogar de Cristo* [Home of Christ] signed up 50,000 new partners who will make a monthly donation.

*Hogar de Cristo* now has some 650,000 partners in Chile. It is the largest work of social assistance, charity, and human promotion in the country. Every day it serves 45,000 people in its 800 programmes (children, youth, street people, the terminally ill, people with drug dependencies, infants, the elderly). Its very existence is an unmistakable sign of the kingdom. The “poor” person, who for us is Christ, has a home in Chile, and all Chileans know this.

Another major work is INFOCAP (Institute of People’s Education and Training), which gives vocational training in basic work skills to very poor people. In this case the accent on holistic human promotion is even stronger than in the previous example. And, what is most interesting, INFOCAP has recently opened itself up to the education of labour-union leaders.

*Un Techo para Chile* [A Shelter for Chile] has had an explosive growth in recent years. It brings together a significant number of highly trained volunteers, offering basic dwellings to people with nowhere to live, who have been occupying land illegally. *Un Techo* gives these people, inhabitants of more than 400 shantytowns in Chile, temporary houses built of very basic materials and helps them to organise

themselves in a struggle for permanent housing. It is interesting to note that this struggle has spread to various countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

There are various other works in the province of Chile. Some of these are similar to those already mentioned: *Techo para Cristo* [Shelter for Christ], *En todo amar y servir* [To love and serve in everything], *Fundación Esperanza* [Foundation Hope]. .... Some of them are carried out through parishes and schools. Other works are difficult to classify and should perhaps not be included in the social apostolate - for example, the mission among the Mapuches begun some ten years ago in Tirúa. In this case the concern for social promotion is as strong as the concern for the inculturation of the Gospel.

Nevertheless, the greatest deficiency is that very little is done for the struggle for justice. The magazine *Mensaje* is an outstanding but lone example in this regard. For more than fifty years it has dealt with the problems of structural injustice in society. It does not confine itself to social problems but is also open to other areas (culture, art, religion, politics). But, even though its readership is growing, the province is not doing enough through this.

It is paradoxical to think that we Chilean Jesuits are not keeping up with people like Fernando Vives, the spiritual director and mentor of Hurtado, who was exiled on two occasions for his firm support and promotion of labour unions. Not that Jesuits in the early twentieth century were comfortable with the ideas of Vives. But among us today we do not hear of anyone who has included among his final vows a special one of dedication to "the service of the poor" that will closely resemble Christ "whose acquaintance and day-to day conversation were with those of ill fortune."

(Q.2) The main strength of our province is having Alberto Hurtado. Our Chilean saint took the province out of the schools and moved it to the social arena, making that a priority focus: he created *Hogar de Cristo* and founded the Chilean Labour Association and the magazine *Mensaje*. These were his work projects, but there is something even more important. Hurtado breathed into the province his "social sense." He set the province in a new direction with new works, but above all, he set it on the path of Vives. "The poor person is Christ," he said, indicating where it was necessary for us to find God and showing us how to carry out his will. Another well-known expression of his which has inspired Chilean Jesuits for years is that of asking oneself periodically: "What would Christ do in my place?" - especially regarding poverty and injustice. It is evident that the works he founded attack the social problem not only in its effects but also at its root causes. Alberto Hurtado called for a conversion of heart among his contemporaries, asking them at the same time to struggle to change social structures. And since both had Christ as their ultimate motivation, his own mystique, a social mysticism, became contagious in our province. Hurtado was a "social mystic."

But we also have weaknesses in our social apostolate. I would say that the first one has to do with a certain crisis in the present mission of the Society, a crisis that is not unique to Chile. I am convinced that the post-conciliar expression of our mission as "the service of faith and the promotion of justice" was right on target. It

is in solidarity with the least that the universality of Christianity is seen to be a reality or not. Nevertheless, this formula has become more and more worn out. The world has changed. Probably the meaning of “justice” 35 years ago was not quite what it means today. Perhaps the worst thing is that today we do not know exactly what is unjust. We know its signs, a thousand kinds of misery. But how does one attribute the responsibility for this to structures of which no one is taking charge? We are told that the phenomena of misery and exclusion are provoked in the long run by sub-systems, which regulate their own way of functioning with a force almost impossible to counter.

Here is where most of our lack of hope seems to lie. A very serious question is asked by those who would carry out social change and, by the same token, by those in the social apostolate. If the Social Doctrine of the Church, which Hurtado promoted in an incomparable way, presumed that society, as a work of freedom, could be changed by freedom even in its structures, today the world imposes itself upon us with such force that no one, not even the great powers, can say what can change its course. The expression, “the service of faith and the promotion of justice,” is very valuable in terms of naming our mission, but we must recognise that we do not really know how to make this concept operative. In addition, we must keep in mind that the complexity of evangelising a pluralistic world has required us to invest effort in the inculturation of the Gospel and inter-religious dialogue.

In recent decades the Chilean province has experienced a turn toward the cultivation of spirituality. The renewal in this field has been extraordinary. A very fine Centre of Ignatian Spirituality has been developed; various ways of making the Spiritual Exercises have been offered. Jesuit scholastics have learned to give the Exercises very early in their training. But the same scholastics have not had any clear reference point as to what *working against injustice with a faith motivation* may mean. At the time when it was necessary to confront the dictatorship of General Pinochet, the Chilean Church could clearly name what injustice meant in this country. But now that democracy has arrived, we Chilean Jesuits, along with others, find ourselves suddenly in a situation in which our mission has become a little strange to ourselves.

The other change (and this one is worrisome) has been that of an institutional growth, which demands much energy but sometimes at the cost of the prophetic quality of our vocation. The large institutions (for example, the new Alberto Hurtado University and the social works already mentioned) need enormous resources in order to function. These resources are often obtained from people who do not want to see the Jesuits committed to the social struggles of the poor. This can well be called the vicious circle of the social apostolate. The greater our social service of charity, the more difficult it is for us Jesuits to engage in the struggle against injustice. The fact is that we are doing infinitely more for charity than for justice, which means that we are not giving prophetic witness of the Gospel. This being the case, our collective identity becomes unclear.

I think that in the rest of the Society there is also a lack of “social discourse” which could help us to articulate meaningful social action. We do not have a clear idea of what to do to bring out the justice consequences of our faith because there is

little theoretical clarity about the name of injustice in our time and, even more serious, about the ways of overcoming injustice. All of which is very serious if the promotion of justice is to be an integrating element of our mission because, if we lack clarity about it, we will not know where to go, and those who are considering entering the novitiate will find no reason to do so.

(Q.3) I believe that, if we go to the basics, the Society should unite faith and justice by deepening its option for the poor.

The Society needs to recover the mystical focus of its concern for justice. This will be possible when the Jesuits, through an effective and assiduous contact with the poor, learn from them what injustice is in these new times and take lessons from them in how to believe in God and how faith in God moves people to be in solidarity with the victims of that injustice and to change the structures which produce it, even within a limited radius of action. If we do not feel in our own flesh the pain of injustice, if we do not cry out with the poor to God for his intervention in history, we will continue on the path of the large institutional works which are taking us to insignificance. The things we do are many. Too many! But it is not clear that these are the things that must be done, nor how numerous they should be. They are paid for by our silence before the great ones of the world. And silence is making us soft and bourgeois.

Nevertheless, what is new is what some have discovered throughout these last few years: that nothing important will be done unless it is in union with the primary agent of the social apostolate – the poor and the victims of injustice. There will be other agents who in quantitative terms will be able to bring about much change. But if these changes are not made with, and from, the standpoint of the agent who knows personally through his/her faith that what he/she is living is not the will of God but rather the opposite, then there is always the risk of self-deception. With regard to the Society, the risk is of ultimately losing all the fervour and “apocalyptic” passion of Jesus for the coming of the kingdom.

Real contact with the poor – the traditionally poor and the newly poor – should give Jesuits enthusiasm to venture out and to search for new ways to struggle against injustice, to find solutions that show, like a lantern in the darkness, the way to that fraternal kingdom of the sons and daughters of God which will find its fruition at the end of ages. There cannot be any Jesuit social apostolate which is not the prolongation of the messianic and prophetic activity of Jesus. Only the struggle against injustice as carried out by its own victims will help Jesuits to believe as the poor believe and thus to give testimony of the world which God really wants.

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**BRAZIL**

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**Views, Perceptions and Analyses:  
 Directions of our social mission viewed from Brazil**

**Introduction**

An unmistakable fragrance of hope and life gently wafts out and greets the passer-by from the luxuriant red roses blooming exuberantly in the little garden of the Jesuit house, next to the Oscar Romero Pastoral Centre where our six companions from the Central American University - UCA - and their two lay workers were killed in 1989.

For anyone who approaches, the sensation is one of treading *sacred ground*. Those rose bushes suggest a sacred manifestation similar to the *Burning Bush* of which the Book of Exodus speaks.

It was an unforgettable pilgrimage! I am a member of the Province of South Brazil, and am writing this short article under the impact of this recent visit to the places that witnessed the assassination of Mons. Oscar Romero and our Jesuit companions in San Salvador, Republic of El Salvador. We were a group; I was with my companion Coordinators of the Social Apostolate in Latin America and the Caribbean. An aura of silence and respect fell upon us all as we went to these places and our eyes rested on photos and personal objects belonging to each of these, our brothers and companions, so criminally slaughtered. We listened to the explanations of the sister who was our guide and “guardian angel” of the Oscar Romero House-Museum. As we accompanied Fr José Maria Tojeira, Rector of the UCA, I began to see in the silent faces of my companions an expression that was a blend of grief and joy, so right for the crucial and decisive moments that mark each of us for life.

I have in daily life often seen the same “silent face” repeated in some of my companions.... The strong impact of the memory of the Salvadoran martyrdoms, tremendous for all Jesuits, should help to enlighten us and direct our replies to the challenges that face us today in fidelity to our mission. Many questions and doubts, which I collected in different forms, have been raised and become especially real as GC 35 draws nearer. The purpose of the present article is to “bring together” some of these questions as a contribution towards reflection for all. I propose to look at a series of views, perceptions and analyses collected in the form of informal reflection in shared daily life with some Jesuit companions<sup>2</sup> during the first semester of 2007. They reached a highpoint during the inspiring 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Social Apostolate Coordinators for Latin America and the Caribbean.

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<sup>2</sup>I am grateful for the excellent contributions of Fr. Hilário Henrique Dick SJ (Youth) of Fr. José Odelso Schneider SJ (Cooperativism), of Fr. Carlos Alberto Jahn SJ (Communications) and of Fr. Inácio Neutzling SJ (Instituto Humanitas Unisinos - IHU). I am also grateful to the group that came together in the XVII Meeting of Coordinators of the Social Apostolate in Latin America and the Caribbean, in San Salvador, July 2007.

**Looking for changes and tendencies**

The views, perceptions and analyses relating to the present situation are different and varied. In the contributions I collected for this present reflection, I distinguish five quite distinct, though not necessarily exclusive, approaches. It is important to mention them briefly here because they can help in mapping the most common views, perceptions and analyses among Jesuits. Some view, perceive and analyse the current situation through the glass of Jesuit institutional stress. Others view, perceive and analyse the current situation through a lens that questions Jesuit adaptation and inoperability. Still others underline the traces of a growing loss of human sensibility and solidarity and the increase of disrespect and fanaticism. Opposed to this last group are those who take account of new ways that illustrate new forms of developing humanism, solidarity, recognition and dialogue. Finally, there are those who view, perceive and analyse the present situation through the lens of the great change in our present epoch, the great socio-economic and cultural transformation of humanity in global terms.

If these five positions were identifiable in the course of conversation in our lives together, the collective model of viewing, perceiving and analysing was also very clear when, for example, the Coordinators of the Social Apostolate in Latin America and the Caribbean met. The attempt was made, on the one hand, to take note of the advances or signs of hope and opportunity for improvement in development, justice and democracy. On the other hand, these were in direct contrast with persistent problems and reversals that seemed to us to be effects of an economic model of exclusion impoverishing an ever-greater number of people. All this was seen and analysed in terms of political, economic and socio-cultural life; the attempt was to reflect on the aspects noted in a dialectical relationship between local and global. At the same time, an effort was made not to ignore the various Latin American and Caribbean political models. The effort continues, not always sufficiently deep and consistent, to refer our findings to the huge process of epochal transformation through which humanity as a whole is passing.

The questioning and challenges for the mission of the Society of Jesus are the common ground of these views, perceptions and analyses. A few brief practical points could help our reflection. Based on the different positions outlined, I shall try to indicate briefly some of the more relevant points that illustrate the radical nature of our Mission, and pray that the blood of the martyrs will help to make our ground fertile.

It has been almost 25 years since we in Brazil lived under the terrible state of military dictatorship. Many other Latin American countries have had a similar experience. I begin however by focussing attention on the recent activities of state apparatus in Brazil, especially with respect to policies of social assistance. A certain kind of social liberalism marked the Brazilian governments of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the new century. Public policies geared towards constructing citizens and based on the juridical-legal apparatus have surprised religious institutions, most of them with the status of philanthropic bodies,<sup>3</sup> leading

<sup>3</sup>In Brazilian legislation, philanthropic entities are exempt from paying certain taxes to the State, but must, with due resources, practise Social Assistance to the economically poor and needy.

them to adapt to the new movement. There has certainly been great progress in improving public services, creating an important opportunity for a higher degree of professionalism and public transparency in our actions.

Linked to this first observation is the great decay suffered by private educational institutions, caught up in the savage competitive whirlwind of “educational businesses” that turn teaching into a purely lucrative affair. What should be done to ensure that the approach of the Society of Jesus’s Mission does not sadly succumb to this perverse process? What should we do so that our efforts are not reduced to activities that disgrace us, wear us down and distance us from our Mission rather than effectively contributing to it? In spite of the expressive effectiveness of some traditional educational institutes, the perception is afloat that we are not always making the best options. Some of these perceptions are related to the fact that we need to be a strategic presence in effectively promoting Justice.

We also need to pay attention to the great vitality of society and make space for sighting new horizons outside traditional institutions. In Brazil in recent years, despite suffering, the interventions of the State as well as of civil society and non-governmental organisations have lessened somewhat the impact of these traditional institutions. Social movements such as, for example, the Movement of the Landless, have also achieved a high degree of visibility and importance. Equally, we ought to speak of organisations and Afro-Brazilian movements while discussing social insertion and of many other movements too. How has the Society of Jesus, in its Promotion of Justice Mission in Brazil, maintained a connection with this “world” and helped to change it?

But even with a State apparatus which is improving and becoming clearly professional, and a civil society with many well organised sectors, we live at a time when, more than ever in Brazil, basic ethical standards are being increasingly abandoned; we live in a visible culture of corruption, violence, impunity and opportunism, especially among politicians. The result is an inevitable and progressive contamination of the whole social framework. Improvement in public policies of social assistance does little to alter the picture for the poor and miserable, whose number grows with an ever-higher index of social inequality.

At the same time as we experience a booming escalation in information technology; running vertiginously towards an “internet culture,” we witness a terrible insecurity in work. Under continuous pressure to make contracts for undefined periods, individuals feel increasingly isolated; their opportunities for work and collective organisation are precarious indeed.

In contrast to this wave of pessimism so pervasive in the reflections, we cannot fail to perceive the “new possible world” bubbling up everywhere in society. In Brazil, especially in recent years, we have noted clear signs of a new way of existing and being in the world. The six sessions of the World Social Forum (four of which took place in Brazil) are a clear witness to this many-sided new way. There is a great effervescence of new sensibilities, resulting in part from the acceleration of information technology and access to knowledge. Methods to create personal solutions at all levels from the economic to the religious have become increasingly easy and available. This effervescence is found more especially in racial, sexual and

religious organisations, for instance, among groups of women, youth, the elderly, homosexuals, all affirming themselves and asserting their place in society. In Brazil, special attention should be paid to recognising cultural diversity, to the search for dialogue between different groups, and the official recognition of religious pluralism.

However, what should claim our attention even more is the fact that, beyond peculiarities in Brazil, we are part of a huge process of epochal change which the world is experiencing; humanity is undergoing a massive socio-economic and cultural transformation in global terms. It is imperative that our reflections are open to this reality; this is a condition for getting right the challenges of our Mission and our questioning in the most effective way. The new technological revolution expresses itself at different levels or planes, which are interrelated in a mutual manner. One can find it at the level of cybernetics with the conquering of space and the creation of a sort of "sixth continent" (virtual), which is everywhere, yet in no place. One may find it in a planetary economic system with the affirmation of profit at a global level, supported by the voraciousness of international financial power escaping all controls. Finally it can be found at the level of biogenetics with the affirmation of "homo creator", in place of "homo faber," making possible the creation of new forms of life.<sup>4</sup> We are all contemporaries of the great technological revolution taking place, and the effectiveness of our Mission depends on the degree to which our views, perceptions and analyses, focussing on national or regional realities, take account of this important dimension as well.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a note in the report of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Coordinators of the Social Apostolate already referred to, which celebrates with joy "a growing presence of cultural dimensions in the way we Latin Americans give an account of our own reality." This leads us to recognise the emergence of many new cultural expressions, including ways of living the faith, and especially, it helps us to view, perceive and analyse our reality in greater depth and consequence for our mission.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses among us**

In Brazil the new political situation has caused a serious decline in the social work of the Society of Jesus. We are not quick to understand the new moment and, in this new politico-institutional situation, return to a kind of social work that was correctly seen in previous decades as mere assistance. Social works, centres of social action, day nurseries, places for social assistance, supplementary courses and emergencies seem to be our main replies to the new challenges. This is our greatest weakness. Add to this a decline in our numbers, a great dispersion in the works, and the lack of a joint plan at national level.

Our strength could be our capacity to use our resources in a focussed and planned way, to read the signs of the times, scrutinising the new forces and

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<sup>4</sup>Inspired by Ilya Prigogine (Nobel Prize for Chemistry, 1977) who speaks of three divisions: numerical, economic and genetic.

possibilities emerging from the new social, economic and cultural reality of the epoch-making change through which we live. We need to rethink the social Mission of the Society at a national level and illuminate all our social actions with a consistent and common policy.

**What do we need to do?**

In the first place, it is necessary to pose this question: how can we rediscover, in a new and creative manner, the inspiration of the Centres for Social Research and Action - CIAS? In other words, social research, the analysis of society in its complexity, must be taken up again. We must create new instruments capable of dealing with the complexity inherent in the present situation so as to envisage a social action that is not merely subsidiary, still less, dependent on or driven by the State.

Linked to this is the basic question of training “new” social agents. We have good structures for this. We also have an excellent opportunity for fruitful collaboration with existing initiatives such as Programmes for Formation in Faith and Politics of the CNBB (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops) at a national level, and, at a Latin American level, the Network of Political Formation of the Social Centres. This could be one of our strengths.

A closer connection with the Universities would be a good thing. Perhaps in this respect it would be good to strengthen the outreach of the Instituto Humanitas Unisinos - IHU (at UNISINOS, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil), and other similar initiatives.

The new configuration of reality demands clarity from us regarding priorities so that our resources can be put to the best use. This implies that we cannot continue thinking only in terms of the ‘Province’. An urgent need is new structures of government which visualise a Jesuit acting responsibly in a network with other organisations, not necessarily Jesuit or church-affiliated. They should be capable of addressing issues at local, national, regional and global levels in a creative and dialectical manner.

Three points deserve special mention in our choices: (1) In general, the young have many new questions, and are pointing to new ways. What is the real concern and presence of Jesuits among the young? Could it be that we are deficient in transmitting knowledge in our educational institutions and that we have very few good educators of the young? 2) Brazilian society, including the Society of Jesus in Brazil, is socially cut off from those of African race. Here is an important opportunity to make an institutional contribution towards bridging this gulf. 3) In a world marked by tendencies to affirm religious fundamentalism and radicalism, the current religious effervescence in Brazil challenges us to become apostles of inter-religious dialogue. We need to be aware that in our situation this is one of the best ways to promote the full exercise of citizenship and cultural democracy. Faced with new expressions of religious faith, we are invited to leave behind instinctive rejection and our colonial mentality and open ourselves to dialogue, attending to others and brotherly recognition.

## Final words

Our current weaknesses and lack of preparation can be no alibi for acting like ostriches, hiding our heads in the sand when in danger so as to “guarantee” security. Much less should they be pretexts for closing doors and consigning to history a clear and wise definition of our Mission and Identity. A deep relationship between the Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice, together with the Cultural and Inter-Religious Dialogue inspiringly articulated in the Society’s recent history, has been passed on to us. Not to recognise this would be to relegate to the shades of a recent, badly-understood past one of the clearest traditions, relevant for our days, handed on and inspired by our Father Saint Ignatius. May the blood shed by so many people and our own companions keep us from closing our eyes and doors to the sad reality of a culture of violence and a perverse dehumanisation which devastates us. It is in this complex situation of inexplicable dehumanisation that we are called to exercise our Mission and express our Identity. However fragile or weak we may feel, we are called to place ourselves fully at the service of this Mission, with the rich spiritual inheritance left to us with much intelligence and wisdom.

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## SOUTH ASIA

## Jebamalai Irudayaraj<sup>1</sup> SJ

God acts in history but human beings manipulate her story. The present history of humanity is distorted by injustice and inequality. Our human community is divided on the basis of race, caste, colour, class, gender, to say nothing of language, religion, region, culture, but the main distortion is clearly the existence of two explicit classes: the rich and the poor. Statistics show that more people are impoverished daily while a handful of people attempt to garner all the wealth of the world. The poor are pushed to the periphery and further victimised while the powerful rich exercise enormous control.

### The South Asian context

South Asian Jesuits work in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka; in Bangladesh and Pakistan they have a very thin presence.

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South Asian people comprise the largest population of the world's poor. Malnutrition, unhygienic living conditions, poverty and illiteracy plague their existence; decline in agriculture and spiralling debts push farmers to suicide. Developing countries today experience the serious consequences of environmental pollution and toxic nuclear wastes dumped by developed countries. The vast majority of the South Asian peoples are denied their basic social, economic, cultural, religious, linguistic and political rights. Globalisation, far from pulling down the walls of hatred and discrimination, further aggravates these divisions.

Pressurised by G8, World Bank, WTO, IMF and MNCs, the various governments of South Asia are toeing the line set by these world institutions at the cost of its citizens. This is a case of **displaced policies and priorities**.<sup>2</sup> The South Asian region is known for the complexity of its multi-layered society where differences have been used to foment **growing conflicts** in the region.<sup>3</sup> Large numbers of people in the region live as refugees and displaced persons. The demolition of the Babri Masjid (Dec. 6, 1992) and the communal carnage at Godhra, Gujarat (Feb. 27, 2002) are only indications of growing communalism. National and multinational companies exploit cheap labour, and the media can be manipulated. Terrorism, ecological degradation, cultural erosion and consumerism are other major problems confronting South Asian societies. There is violence against women, caste discrimination and social exclusion of Dalits (worse than racism), the denial of '*Jal, Jungle, Jamin*' (Water, Forest, Land) to *Adivasis* (indigenous peoples). Unemployed and unorganised youth, child labour, and denial of human rights add to the multiple issues affecting the vast majority of the oppressed sections of South Asia.

At the same time, a remarkable social awakening has been silently taking place in an emerging civil society. Various indigenous people's movements, people's organisations, and non-governmental organisations working for such people have created space for alternatives even in the political arena. The troubles of the oppressed of South Asia are fore grounded by these people's movements in a variety of ways ranging from seminars and demonstrations to research and publications. The emerging networks of the oppressed add energy to the continuous struggle for life-giving alternatives in each South Asian country.

### How do the South Asian Jesuits Respond?

Innumerable peoples' initiatives and movements emerging in 1975 and after took a stand against oppressive social structures, classes and castes. Influenced by Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation, "Our Mission: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice", the preferential option for the poor became a priority for

<sup>2</sup>At the last Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh proposed the innovative idea of a 'Car Rally' with the aim 'to promote increased connectivity' among the people of this region. The annual budget of all South Asian countries for defence has increased steadily and the budget for basic needs and services decreased in proportion. It is obvious that the welfare state is withering away in South Asia.

<sup>3</sup>Some of the reasons leading to these conflicts are differing religious, linguistic and ethnic identities; radical nationalistic fundamentalism, clashing cultures and territorial disputes; dictatorship; criminalized politics; corruption; and scarcity.

provinces and individual Jesuits. In the last two decades, Jesuits in all ministries, particularly in education and social action, have come up with corporate policies and **collective strategising** to give concrete expression to their vision and mission in the form of action plans.

An evaluation of the South Asian social apostolate's activities resulted in concrete action plans (1999) and a document brought out by the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) entitled "Walking with the Poor" (2000). The first South Asian Assistancy Assembly of Jesuits was held at Mumbai in 2001. Around 170 delegates reflected on the theme "Loving and Sharing of the Good News in South Asia Today". Issues of particular concern in South Asian Countries were widely discussed. The Assembly acknowledged 'the creative movements of the Spirit in the struggles and aspirations of the poor, in the symbols and scriptures of other faiths and in the diverse cultural expressions of our people'. With a call to Jesuits for renewed commitment, it brought out an 'Action Statement' in the areas of Pastoral Ministry, Education, and Social Action with specific reference to Dalits, Adivasis, Women and Youth. Accountability structures and new modalities were also proposed for the Provinces, Zones and the Assistancy to facilitate the implementation of the action plans. In a similar way, a statement on 'Asian Jesuit Identity' (2004) by JCSA rediscovered the identity of Asian Jesuits in and through our commitment in mission.

Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) took the lead in responding positively to the fourth World Social Forum held in Mumbai, India, for the first time. They floated SAPI (South Asian Peoples' Initiatives) in 2004, providing a platform for many movements of oppressed groups to fight collectively under one umbrella against the evils of globalisation. The *Social Action Response* has been reflected in very concrete programmes.<sup>4</sup> Social institutes have started a number of programmes to protect the interests of oppressed communities.<sup>5</sup> Besides lobbying and advocacy some Jesuits are involved in scientific research activities in collaboration with national and international human rights organisations.

The educational apostolate of some provinces has come up with vision and mission statements and policies that implement concrete actions like appointing staff and admitting students in educational institutions from disadvantaged communities.<sup>6</sup> The proposed Xavier University for the whole of India could be a

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<sup>4</sup>SAPI believes in, and promotes, a democratic, egalitarian, secular, pluri-cultural society through collective thinking, research and action with and on behalf of the marginalised communities of South Asia. Besides actively participating and creating greater impact in the World Social Forums and India Social Forum of 2006, SAPI has initiated different struggles and campaigns on such issues as the National Dalit Policy, Right to Information Act and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act at the state, national and South Asian levels.

<sup>5</sup>They have done so through programmes of legal aid and advocacy, human rights and media centres. Education in human rights is gathering momentum in our institutions to foster a culture of respect for the dignity of the poor.

<sup>6</sup>The Jesuits educational ministry in South Asia openly declares that it prepares students for active participation in the service of others, while manifesting particular concern for the poor. Jesuit educational institutions have started functioning as institutes with a difference - 'management institutes with a social face' through their extension programmes -and by building bridges between competition and efficiency on the one hand and the Christian values of compassion, competence and solidarity on the other.

milestone in laying down a path from college to village. The Jesuit Pastors of South Asia (JEPASA), in its second Convention (1997), gave an assurance that Adivasis and Dalits have a claim on our pastoral services and urged Jesuit Pastors to animate people's movements to ensure that women have a relationship of equality and mutuality with men.

Responding to growing religious communalism the ministry of Interfaith Dialogue in South Asia offers hopes of harmony and some Interfaith Dialogue Centres have been initiated in the Assistanacy. Although JRS South Asia started its work in 1984, from 1990 onwards it articulated clearly its threefold mission of '*accompanying, serving and pleading*' the cause of the refugees.<sup>7</sup> When the sudden and catastrophic tsunami hit the seashores of Sri Lanka and India on December 26, 2004 the response of the Jesuits was immediate, their relief and rehabilitation activities in India and Sri Lanka proving to be extremely effective.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of the JCSA statement known as the "Kathmandu Statement", which reformulated the Mission of South Asia, Jesuit formation was required to have a new paradigm. Formation, which was previously isolated and separated from mission, is now more integrally geared for, and in, the mission. This shift offers a new formative pedagogy which reorients the formatores and the formandi and restructures the process from 'Formation for Mission' to 'Formation in Mission'. The Final Report and the Recommendations of the Formation Review Commission (1992), which was accepted by the JCSA, emphasised the importance of this integrated formation.

### Strengths of South Asia

These trends show that in the context of South Asia, Jesuits have brought many meaningful, challenging, effective and relevant changes in almost all ministries. The changes reveal the real strength of the Society of Jesus in South Asia.

A *focused option* is one of our chief strengths in South Asia. The preferential option for dalits, adivasis, women, unorganised youth and workers, children, minorities and displaced persons is at the heart of all we do, and is effectively implemented in all apostolates through our corporate policies and new structures. Our option leads us to deepen our mission's focus further by searching out the most marginalised communities from among the oppressed peoples.

The pluralistic cultures of South Asia notwithstanding, we are united in spirit in our innovative, pioneering responses to the demands and needs of the poor and the marginalised. It is worth noting that the number of Jesuits from the oppressed community continues to be on the increase.

Most South Asian Jesuits are highly resourceful, qualified, and personally committed. These multi-task-oriented men are convinced of the option of the

<sup>7</sup>JRS is currently involved with Sri Lankan refugees in India, Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka, it gives more attention to the formation and education of refugee students to make them self-reliant persons assured of their intrinsic worth.

<sup>8</sup>Every Jesuit institution in the affected Provinces responded to the situation in one way or another. Jesuits have now moved on to the next stage of imparting employment-oriented skills to students and young survivors of the tsunami with assistance from various skills development centres. Coordinated interventions were made during earthquake, floods and drought at various times.

Society, something made possible by the holistic formation given in and for the Mission.

### Limitations

To begin with, we are too given to remaining stagnant in our institutions. We tend to rest on our laurels, content with the routine way of doing things.. **Institutions become an end, not a means.** The Ignatian Charism of 'availability' to any ministry has diminished among us and 'careerism' is replacing 'availability'.

Misplaced loyalties lead to a lack of confidentiality and transparency among us Jesuits. We lack the 'care-frontation' attitude, that is, not avoiding confrontation but doing it with care and sensitivity. This has resulted in character assassination, rumour mongering, anonymous letters, back-biting, bitterness and wasting time and energy on petty issues. Worst of all, it makes us insensitive to the needs of our people.

There is a growing tendency in the region to form 'groups' on sectarian lines, on the basis of caste, tribe, region and language. This is reflected in the appointments of officials of the Society of Jesus and even in formation. These groups emerge as fora with the view to acquiring more power and authority, and exercising control over resources of the bigger institutions of the Society. The Society also reflects what is happening in the world outside in the form of two distinct classes of Jesuits: people who have institutional power, influence and money, and others who have none, a situation that triggers feelings of envy and jealousy among us. The union of Jesuit minds and hearts is at stake, leading to superficiality in our relationships and collaborations.

In the process of maintaining undisturbed the status quo, we are losing creative and intelligent Jesuits. Individual freedom and unaccounted responsibility take priority over 'our way of proceeding'.

Formation in Mission has declined to the level of a few exposure programmes. Even these programmes depend on the interests or whims and fancies of the local formators. Participating in the life and struggles of the oppressed now seems to be viewed as a negation of 'intellectual' formation!

Except for SAPI and its activities, social action in many Provinces seems to have reached a plateau, largely due to lack of committed personnel and indifference at the Province level in allocating adequate personnel and resources. The recommendations of the document "Walking with the Poor" of JCSA have rarely been taken seriously by any Province in South Asia. Jesuits who work for justice and human rights tend to be individualistic and opposed, it would appear, to these very values in their personal lives. The 'Action Statement' of the South Asian Assistancy Assembly (2001) addressed serious and challenging issues, but so far there has been *no follow up action*. Our urgent task is to establish structures of implementation and accountability within the governance of the Society.

## Urgent Tasks

*Re-defining our Apostolates* according to the signs of the times should be a priority for South Asian Jesuits. The irreversible processes of globalisation and technology are homogenising cultures and economies, uprooting local identities and pushing the marginalised to the periphery of the market economy—in a word, creating social exclusion. It is a challenge to us to enter into the technological and electronic world of today and creatively counter its demonising effects, using them instead as tools to empower the poor of South Asia.

We need to *build solidarity platforms in all of our apostolates*. SAPI is one example in the social action sector that needs to be followed in other sectors.

*Inter-ministerial collaboration* within the Provinces and in the Assistancy should be encouraged and strengthened. We need to implement ‘apostolic planning’ for the Assistancy as a whole as well as the Provinces.

In the pluralistic context of South Asia, our educational institutions need *innovative initiatives* and forms of advocacy based on scientific research to counteract globalisation’s impacts.

For quite some time, ‘Lay Collaboration/Partnership in our Mission’ has been part of our deliberations. We need to *include our lay partners in all apostolic commissions* and incorporate them at the level of policy, planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of all our apostolates. Furthermore, we must ensure that women are participants in all our collaborative apostolic ventures.

We need to form *smaller communities of Jesuits* to avoid unnecessary power conflicts and to develop effective functioning of our missions.

Recognising the diversity of our ministries and the serious challenges posed by global challenges, we need to ensure that those being formed undergo a formation based on personal care and accompaniment.

## Conclusion: prophetic global response

According to the latest statistics (Jan. 2007), there are 4,018 (20.9%) Jesuits in South Asia, that is, one fifth of Jesuits are from this Assistancy. The whole Society has the right to expect and demand more from the Jesuits of South Asia. Is it not our duty to go beyond our boundaries and join hands with creative global responses in the process of empowering the poor? Is it not our responsibility to promote international solidarity networks and to commit ourselves prophetically in our context in collaboration with the oppressed poor of South Asia?

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## IRELAND-WESTERN EUROPE

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Just over 90 years ago, in 1916, the novelist James Joyce, in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, located his hero Stephen Dedalus in a Jesuit school in Ireland with the following words: 'Dedalus Class of Elements Clongowes Wood College Sallins Kildare Ireland Europe The World The Universe'. In what follows, for the most part, the parameters are more modest: they extend to Ireland and Western Europe.

### The Existing Situation in Ireland and Western Europe

Over the past 15 years or so, thanks to the economic phenomenon popularly known as the Celtic Tiger, Ireland has become an increasingly prosperous country. More disposable income, almost full employment, and considerable net immigration are but three of the main characteristics of this new state of affairs. There is a palpable sense of self-confidence in this new Ireland. Problems persist – relative inequality remains stubbornly high, there is more vicious, violent crime (often associated with the lucrative drug trade), there is need for a social dividend (in terms of improved public and social services) to accompany the economic one, and there is a certain adolescent giddiness observable in the flaunting of new wealth. At a deeper level many commentators have pointed to a certain cultural and moral vacuum, a loss of meaning, accompanied by higher suicide rates: is wealth all that life is about? to what does one now turn in seeking the deeper values which might ground the notions of happiness and the good life?

This newfound prosperity has come at a time when organised religion, in particular the influence of the Catholic Church, has declined considerably. No doubt this is partly due to the rather late Irish encounter with Modernity and the Enlightenment, an experience with which the rest of Western Europe has long been familiar. But perhaps more significantly, it has been due to the loss of moral credibility suffered by the Church in the context of the awful revelations of clerical sexual abuse, in particular of children. To this one might add the more general sign of the times in Western Europe of secularisation and Post-Modernity – so that even while spirituality remains a staple of our fixed daily menu, it seems that institutional religion is becoming increasingly the *a la carte* choice of fewer and fewer. In this context, as elsewhere in Western Europe, the Church struggles to find its voice in the secular, public square. In different ways throughout Western Europe the prevailing liberal culture has sought to banish this voice to the private realm, and the Church in Ireland, with its loss of self-confidence, has often seemed, in the past decade or so, to comply resignedly with this trend. At a time when Habermas and others are beginning to speak of the dawning of a 'post-secular culture', can the Churches rise to the challenge of initiating and sustaining a conversation between Christianity and a context that is predominantly affluent and suspicious of organised religion? Can the Catholic Church in particular subject its teaching on sexuality and gender to a more rigorous critique by the *sensus fidelium*, thereby becoming a more credible partner in this conversation with the surrounding culture?

Of course Islam does fearlessly, if often naively, address the surrounding culture, with its conviction that religion must influence every aspect of life, private and public. The small Muslim population in Ireland has increased significantly over the last few years, and even if, for the most part, they are discreet in their public utterances, still their presence, in the context of wider European and world developments, raises the question of religion and society in a fresh way that can act as a catalyst for Christian engagement.

There are, in addition, many other immigrants to Ireland from a wide variety of countries and other religions (recent Census figures showed that immigrants now represent about 10% of the population of the Republic of Ireland), so that we are now faced with, for us, the new challenge of developing an integrated, diverse society. Lurking under this issue, of course, is the reality of European and indeed worldwide migration and immigration, not to mention the more fundamental and scandalous question of the skewed, grossly unequal relations between the so-called developed and developing worlds.

Many of the issues I have mentioned – affluence, secularisation, Islam, immigration, relations with the rest of the world – are common to other parts of Western Europe, even if the particular form of the issue in question remains proper to the respective national context. Altogether unique in Ireland, however, has been the peace process in Northern Ireland, with its astounding culmination last May 2007 in the establishment of a power-sharing Executive government between traditional archenemies Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party of the Reverend Ian Paisley. No doubt there will be many hurdles ahead, but this has been a good-news story of enormous proportions, lessons from which may well have further, widespread implications.

Finally I note the ‘elephant in the room’ question for Ireland, for Europe and indeed for our whole world: how does one marry economic development with environmental sustainability?

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Jesuits**

In a letter to the Province in November 2006 the Irish Provincial John Dardis wrote: ‘At this stage in our history, with one novice and one scholastic, we have the least number of scholastics in training of all Jesuit provinces worldwide’. Our numbers, then, are declining sharply, and the median age of the Province is around 70 years of age. Vocations are hard to come by. We have suffered the loss of a significant number of younger Jesuits in the last few years. And in a general sense one may say that this trend of fewer numbers and increased age-profile is shared by all the Jesuit provinces of Western Europe.

At the same time, also in common with the rest of Western Europe, there is a stout resilience evident among Jesuits in Ireland, not to mention a spirit of adventure and openness to new projects. Jesuits go about the daily round with commitment. There is great life and sometimes innovative outreaches in areas like spirituality, social justice, the apostolate with young adults, JRS and international networking. A traditional apostolate like secondary education has taken on board

the dimension of justice in an impressive way and is also engaged in sharing the Ignatian ethos with lay colleagues. The apostolate of philosophy and theology at the Milltown Institute is engaged in a hopeful struggle for institutional viability. Our pastoral sector is committed and often vibrant, while in communications there have been original and exciting developments through the use of new IT resources, which have helped considerably to improve communication within the Province and its friends as well as boosting our media profile *ad extra* so that the crucial strategic importance of communications in effecting change has become more evident. There are impressive efforts by Jesuits and colleagues to help consolidate and complete the peace process in Northern Ireland, as well as to bring some of its fruits to other troubled areas of our world.

It remains true of course that, given our numbers and age profile, we are in a moment of crisis with regard to the future of Jesuits in Ireland and Western Europe. Some of this crisis is undoubtedly due to a question of identity: the Jesuit 'brand' no longer seems to have the same attraction as it once did for young men of ability and generosity. The reasons for this are complex and, for the most part, well rehearsed. I would suggest one reason among many that does not often get mentioned: it seems to me that as long as clerical celibacy remains such a controverted issue within the Church, and as long as celibacy is required by the Church for priesthood, then there will remain a certain blurring of the identity of the Jesuit priest.

It remains true that our primary Jesuit concern must be the coming of God's kingdom and not our own institutional survival. In this context, if we are to transform our crisis into a *kairos*, a time of opportunity, we need to invest seriously in the formation of lay colleagues. I have mentioned that this has been happening for a while in our colleges in Ireland. Now the Provincial has established a new 'Partners in Mission' office at the Curia, headed by a lay woman, in order, *inter alia*, to promote a more comprehensive Ignatian formation of our many loyal and gifted lay colleagues. This process needs to include the formation of Jesuits too, in terms of being able to work in partnership with lay colleagues, an aspect of the lay-Jesuit relationship that we Jesuits sometimes take for granted and therefore overlook. In this context too, we need to take seriously the issue of gender: this remains in Western Europe a sensitive area, particularly in the ecclesial ambit, susceptible to what is often an unconscious dimension of injustice and misunderstanding. It is too easy for a male organisation, with the best will in the world, to have a blind spot here.

### **What is the Lord asking of the Society, of GC 35, today?**

It seems to me that most of the issues raised above have been well addressed in Congregation documents from GC 31-34. The link between faith and justice, widened and deepened in GC 34 by the addition of culture and inter-religious dialogue, remains of foundational importance. It may well be, then, that what seems like a general, pre-Congregation consensus that what is needed is not more documents but rather implementation, is correct. Not however that one would

want to 'stifle the Spirit' in terms of what the Congregation might want to say: and when such a large group of international Jesuits gets together over the prolonged period of a General Congregation there is probably no fear of that!

In terms of content it would seem that the environmental issue and relations with Islam have assumed new significance since GC 34, and so it would not be a surprise if the Congregation wanted to guide us in those areas. It might be prudent in relation to Islam to locate the discussion in the more general context of inter-religious dialogue: both theologically and politically it would seem that Christian-Muslim dialogue has a lot to gain from that wider context.

In terms of the implementation of previous Congregations I would refer in particular to the notion of 'communities of solidarity', mentioned many times in GC 34. In our globalised world, when problems cry out for trans-national solutions, we have so much potential in the Society for mobilising global communities of solidarity. We are an international organisation, we have competent lay colleagues at all levels of civil society, and so we have the means to tackle problems across national and Province boundaries in a cohesive, multi-disciplined and focused way. This will involve ongoing lay formation of the kind already adverted to. But it may also involve stronger inter-Provincial, inter-Regional, inter-Assistancy, inter-Conference cooperation and even modes of government within the Society to complement the more traditional hierarchical chain of command from General through Provincial and local Superior to man-on-the-ground. There has of course been much experimentation with such cooperation and with new modes of government over the years since GC 34 and a lot of 'on the ground' experience. One thinks in Europe of cooperation between Provinces, of joint meetings of Assistancies, of agreed initiatives on Jesuit Formation, of organisations like OCIPE and JRS and networks like Scribani, of involvement in international Jesuit networks like IJND, of the two Polish Jesuits coming to Ireland to work with the immigrant Polish community, of the bringing of the fruits of the N. Ireland conflict-resolution process to other global trouble spots - and so on. Might it now be opportune to review what has been learned and, in function of a more efficacious global mission, take the next quantum leap in that direction? The conventional secular analysis speaks of the need in our globalised world for more robust international institutions: we in the Society have a wonderful opportunity to actualise the potential of our own charism in this respect.

Many of our Society documents also speak about 'apostolic discernment in common'. I don't underestimate the difficulty of this. Prayer can be used to dull the mind and to soften the edges of necessary conflict in ways that are unhelpful. Nonetheless - and perhaps this is particularly so in a Europe whose secularisation has affected Jesuits as well. Prayer and liturgical celebration can open us up to the liberating perspectives offered by the presence of God in our world, and open us up to each other in new respect and acceptance. The international Social Sector meeting in Santa Severa in September 2005 (cf *PJ89*, 2005/4, 5-10) seems to have been a powerful example of one such exercise of apostolic communal discernment. Can the Congregation encourage us to engage more habitually in this exercise?

## Conclusion

There is a wonderful freedom in being rooted in God's love and call to us. The resulting desire and delight, that divinely caused *jouissance*, is what draws us in our mission to follow the Son, in service of his Kingdom. It is this foundational anchoring in the harbour of God's love that allows us to set out into the deep, whether this be in the resilience displayed by the Curia in Dublin after the gutting of the Provincialate by fire last Good Friday, in the courage with which the Society in Europe is asked to face the challenges of that continent, or in the trust and hope which will surely be given to the delegates of GC 35 in their discernment of the Lord's call to the whole Society in the years ahead.

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## NIGERIA-AFRICA Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator SJ

(Q. 1) Responding to this question requires taking a global view. By that I mean to speak of Africa as a region, but keeping in mind the diversity of peoples, cultures, languages, and countries that characterise this continent. We should avoid generalisations and oversimplifications. For far too long Africa has remained merely a continent of opportunities, possibilities, and potentialities. In the last 10 years we have seen more protracted attempts to realise the promises of this continent. This has come in the form of failed political democratisation, disastrous economic restructuring, ambivalent cultural regeneration, and violent social realignment. Despite its best-laid plans, Africa remains better known to the rest of the world through its catalogue of miseries. General Congregation 34 voiced this concern when it labelled Africa as an "ocean of misfortunes." It makes no sense rehashing the familiar litany of woes by which Africa and Africans are named by the rest of the world. An African proverb says that the horns of the cow are never too big for it to carry. Against all odds, the continent has managed to confront, even survive, its numerous problems and challenges.

Viewed from a more creative perspective, these crises, real though they are, also proffer genuine opportunities for discerning our apostolic mission as Jesuits. This will entail adopting a new pedagogy of discernment; new in the sense that it looks at our continent and at our world by transcending a facile listing of woes (even if done contemplatively in the manner of the *Spiritual Exercises* 'Contemplation of the Incarnation', nos. 101 - 109) and aims at an active engagement in the revival and renewal of the fortunes of Africa (in the manner of the 'Call of the King', *Spiritual*

*Exercises*, nos. 91 – 98). Speaking of how we formulate our apostolic strategy, I believe that the changes and crises of recent years present us with a real *kairos* moment; they call for a new way of reading the signs of times with fresh eyes, with hope, and with courage.

(Q. 2) It is not easy to separate the fortunes of the Society of Jesus in Africa from that of the African church. Observers are unanimous in recognising that this church represents one of the important emerging ‘centres of gravity’ for the universal church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The growth of Christianity in Africa is staggering. One is permitted to conclude that, of itself, this phenomenon of growth embodies a quest for new meaning at a time of debilitating crises. Africans continue en masse to seek the face of the God of life; they seek the God of the risen Christ.

In the light of this realisation, some would say that one of the strengths of the Society in Africa lies in numbers. But we should understand this to mean that the Society in Africa carries the promise of a generation approaching full blossom. Despite disturbing accounts emerging from some ‘older’ regions of the Society, Africa counts as one region of the Society that continues to record a sustained growth in the number of Jesuits – 1430 at last count! The offshoot of this phenomenon is that in several provinces of the African Assistancy we find that the majority of Jesuits are still in formation. While this generation may be youthful, it comprises Jesuits who ardently desire to play key roles in the service of the Society’s mission, that is, to serve the greater good and to serve where the needs are greatest. In a word, the present generation of African Jesuits burns with passion to “Go, set the world aflame!” They recognise the urgency and gravity of the needs existing where they serve.

Unfortunately, however, the limitations of the Society in this region also appear to mirror those of the continent and the African church in general. These weaknesses can be summarised in simple terms: chronic lack of resources stalls goodwill and apostolic boldness; dearth of visionary leadership hinders creativity and innovation; and negative perception by the rest of the world, including some Jesuits, fosters patronising attitudes and marginalisation. The time is ripe for change!

(Q. 3) Generally, in the light of where the Society of Jesus finds itself today, particularly in Africa, we need to rekindle our apostolic creativity. Too often our actions have not always matched our rhetoric. Countless decrees, letters, and declarations sound hollow in the face of complacent attitudes – all too settled, too ordinary, and too narrow! Whatever happened to the spirit of GC 31 that roused many of Ours to heed the ‘Call of the King’, even to the point of making the ultimate sacrifice in the service of faith and the promotion of justice? We live in an age that challenges us as Jesuits to focus our apostolic energy on the issues that haunt the world’s population – ecology, development, equality, peace, justice, human rights, and other similar issues. We cannot continue to operate from the margins of church and society – timid, self-conscious, and frightened, like the disciples in the Upper Room. We are companions summoned to set the world

aflame in the service of Christ's mission. Our identity as Jesuits needs to match the reality of our insertion into a global reality.

I believe that Saint Ignatius would have revelled in the idea that the world is a global village. From an Ignatian viewpoint that would mean an opportune space and moment to serve the greater and more universal good by imagining new ways of serving and loving more by deeds than by words, as the *Spiritual Exercises* reminds us (no. 230). Our identity needs to empower us to see ourselves as Jesuits acting and thinking both locally and globally, in tandem. This has practical consequences. Such awareness would call us to form global partnerships based on friendship (Ignatius spoke of "friends in the Lord"), solidarity, and mutuality.

As I see it, the Society is still too provincial - which is rather surprising considering that we live in an age of unmitigated globalisation. It's about time the Society began to celebrate growth and new dynamism rather than mourn its numerical decline. The novice who enters the Society in Africa should be a source of rejuvenation for the Society of Jesus in Europe or North America. We are a global society, and our government and communities should live this reality. I do not see how we can avoid taking this path in a rapidly globalising world.

In a word, for us to claim the epithet 'servants of Christ's mission' we should, at the same time, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to labour as architects of a new hope for a continent, a world in dire need of redemption, depth, and new meaning.

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## **BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG      Marcel Rémon<sup>1</sup> SJ**

(Q. 1) The Jesuit Social Apostolate in francophone Belgium and in Luxembourg at present faces several challenges, of which the chief is certainly the disproportionate discrepancy between the needs of society and the human means available to the Province for satisfying them.

Certain fields of the social apostolate, though traditional, are a burning reality: working with the homeless and the underprivileged, accompanying those in prison and helping people on the move. In fact, the polarisation in European society grows deeper and the underprivileged have less and less prospect of emerging from their plight: successive generations of families in difficulties; neighbourhoods that are marginalised, even ostracised; excessively severe punishments (every offence, even minor ones, often the expression of social dysfunctioning or a failure in integration, brings a prison sentence, itself far from effective).

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Other preoccupations are more recent or have taken a new dimension. The questions thrown up by immigration in the larger sense are well known: those without identity papers, dialogue among cultures, issues of cultural integration, closed centres, forced repatriations, Europe the fortress ... Religion puts in an appearance in problematic social relations, particularly (but not exclusively) in the relations between Islam and secular or 'non-religious' public institutions such as the wearing of the veil, the influence of radical Islamism in prisons and neighbourhoods, the multiplication of churches and new sects among the immigrant communities. Political authorities, often taken unawares by this, ask for interlocutors familiar with intercultural and inter-religious questions. The question of a sustainable development is of prime importance. It is about changing our way of living in common in order that all, including the future generations, may enjoy, freely and equitably, the riches of the earth.

European society is ageing and certain reactions rooted in fear come to the surface. This is certainly understandable but has grave consequences for certain sections of the population. The Church in Europe is also ageing and takes an increasingly sacramental path; priests, given their decreasing numbers, have to focus on service to the practising community. The new Christian communities often have a social and charitable dimension, but this is almost always enclosed in a strong pastoral vision. The political and institutional aspect of the fight for justice hardly comes across. The Society of Jesus is equally affected by these spiritual and ecclesiastical developments.

(Q. 2) As for the social commitment of Jesuits, several points need to be emphasised, some positive, others more sobering. First of all, one has to recognise the real attachment of Jesuits to the social dimension of their vocation. This is manifestly rooted in the Spiritual Exercises where each person is called to follow a humiliated and despised Christ, but also in the companionship of persons wholly involved in the fight for more justice and more dignity in the world. Several figures have marked, and are still marking, the identity of the Province: Arrupe, Cardijn, Egide Van Broekhoven, Jean Vanier and Joseph Wrezinsky.

Another observation is the sharp decline in the number of Jesuits sent on either a fulltime or part-time basis to the social apostolate. Even if the proportion of Jesuits in the social sector has not really decreased in 25 years (+/- 6% of Jesuits who are less than 65 years), there are presently only six Jesuits under the age of 65 assigned to the social apostolate, while in 1983 they were thrice that number. The same is true of communities of insertion: there were six in 1983 and today there are only three.

In spite of this weakness in human resources, the Province has two institutions in the social sector: JRS/Belgium that is accountable to the two Belgian provinces (BSE et BML), and the Social Centre Avec. Lay people collaborate with these two institutions, which are constituted as autonomous associations according to Belgian law. JRS/Belgium will soon become one. These two institutions are situated in Brussels, in one of the Society's houses, which also houses Pax Christi and Justice and Peace. The Province is also present in prison chaplaincy, the pastoral care of

people on the move, the pastoral care of ordinary families via the Movement 'ATD-Quart Monde', and in the movement called 'the Sappel' which is an ecclesial movement for people drawn from socially disadvantaged or poor contexts, and the community of the Poudrière, which is related to the Emmaüs community of Abbé Pierre. The age of the Jesuits working in these apostolates is a matter of concern.

The third observation is more subtle; unlike the first two it is not based on clear evidence. The younger generation of Jesuits who entered the Society in the last fifteen years, in addition to being fewer in number, is characterised by not wanting to be confined to one sector alone. I do not wish to enter into a sociological analysis, but young Jesuits ask insistently for the pastoral or even priestly dimension of their mission. This can surely be explained by the crisis situation the Church was in at the time when they entered the novitiate. The social apostolate often appears to them as too indirect (or implicit) a way of living their faith; even as a way of life, too secularised. However, one can say that the social apostolate has integrated the pastoral dimension more and more (to include popular pastoral care, inter-religious dialogue, questions of meaning) without losing its own identity, which rests on solidarity lived with the marginalised. Let us hope that the social apostolate regains its attractiveness among the young Jesuits in our Province.

In the face of these observations, the Province has to discern its priorities, be it in terms of human, financial or institutional resources. One is at once aware of the difficulties, for the needs are many and the forces weak. An increased collaboration with the laity, as well as the search for external funds, are areas being explored, which is not to say that are going to provide a complete solution. Actually, sending Jesuits to the social apostolate is essential so that the Society, as a body, may be able to live in real solidarity with the disadvantaged and keep intact the desire to follow Christ, poor and humiliated. This desire must be incarnated in specific missions if one does not wish our discourse to remain an empty shell. Solidarity cannot be accomplished simply in a secondary or in a part-time manner. One plunges into solidarity with the marginalised and this involves the whole person.

How do you see the future ? Are you pessimistic or optimistic ?

Several Jesuits, in the social apostolate and elsewhere, regret that the Society no longer concretises the preferential option for the poor; does not make the promotion of justice a priority. They suggest that the social sector is often treated like a poor relation when the Province has to send a young Jesuit to mission. To be more precise, we may say that provinces privilege institution, and specially those managed by Jesuits, because closing, abandoning or leaving an institution is always a traumatic experience. Conversely, not replacing the presence of a Jesuit in an inserted community living in a poor neighbourhood or in a prison ministry provokes less reaction inside and outside the Society. This analysis does not do full justice to the government of the Province for the reason that, in its view, certain solidarities and faithful commitments are top priority. A feeling of weakness and vulnerability however does bother Jesuits of the social apostolate: what will tomorrow consist of?

Without wishing to make a long speech or a spiritualising interpretation of what is being lived in the Jesuit social apostolate, one must recognise that it is not in very good shape and that it is going through a period of desolation. Let us look at the larger society, the Church or the Society of Jesus. We are experiencing a progressive weakening of some fundamental and institutionalised solidarities at the expense of a reinforced individualism or emotional solidarities. We do not pretend that the social apostolate is better than, or above the other types of apostolates. But social commitment is no longer in vogue, and in the face of dominant trends, one can ask whether we are not mistaken in our struggle, and whether we are not perhaps extra-terrestrials or a species on the verge of extinction.

But I remain profoundly optimistic; a very realistic optimism I would say, rooted in the conviction that social commitment, though weakened and at the receiving end, is more than ever necessary in the global context of increasing individualism. Through fatalism or powerlessness the world is gradually getting accustomed to situations unworthy of humanity: the deaths of large numbers of applicants wishing to cross over to Europe, the Darfur situation, living conditions of those without legal papers, and the list goes on. Voices have to be raised to denounce this in every possible way. I hope that gestures of solidarity will forge links. In this time of desolation, we have to remain firm in the hope and conviction that one day the walls will fall, that life will be stronger than death.

What is the most urgent task ?

I do not think of one task in particular, but of an attitude, a stand to be taken in the direction of commitment to, and solidarity with, our brothers: generating and maintaining a spirit of resistance in the face of the dominant model; a fundamental hope rooted in the Gospels; resisting in hope, somewhat like the prophets, in spite of the small number, despite periods of revolt, of solitude and doubt.

For me, the link between the social apostolate and faith in Christ is primordial. It is perhaps to be found less in a pastoral approach of social commitment than in its profound rootedness in the way Christ acted and lived: the salvation of the world came not through arms nor through power, but through a child, a frail man, a crucified man. It is this hope that comforts us in our commitment to the weakened. Where humanity is weakened, there resounds the call of Christ to build the Kingdom; there is found the strength of weakness; there is lived the companionship of Christ.

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## BETICA (SPAIN)

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I send these notes “in fear and trembling;” you are asking for a lot in these questions... An authoritative and complete response is beyond me. This is a good time to recall the saying of Theresa of Jesus: “Always, with difficult things, ...I go with the language of “it seems to me ...”.

(Q.1) In Spain we live complacently in a self-satisfied society, with objectives and priorities that are markedly individualistic and immediate, mundane and hedonistic. Starting from an economic state of abundance, we tend to move towards the immediate satisfaction of our desires and whims. Everything can be bought because we have the means to buy; everything is allowed: in the “kingdom of freedoms” we have won, “it is forbidden to forbid”; this ‘prohibition’ generates a permissiveness that questions the validity of norms and values, which are seen to be constraints on individual liberty.

Despite the deepening insertion of our country into Europe, sensitivity to global problems (such as the poverty of most of humanity, armed conflicts that lay waste many regions of the planet, environmental issues and the depletion of scarce resources) is found only in a minority of people and is not reflected in the decisions and movements of mainstream society, including the dominant political parties. There are obviously some exceptions, most especially, specific movements and actors of civil society and collectives inspired by Christianity and by other “remembering communities.”

The phenomenon of rapid and growing immigration is changing the landscape of Spanish society. The pace at which it is growing and the numerous problems that growth generates are not being adequately assimilated. We are moving rapidly towards a multicultural, and multiethnic society; it is not certain that the host society is ready to adapt to this new scenario.

In such a context, there is little openness to Gospel values and to Christian humanism. Life goes on, turning its back on transcendence; the great existential questions are ignored and there is no place for God in that horizon. This leads to a relative insensitivity to the problems of the rest of humanity, of our poor brothers and sister and of all who suffer for widely different reasons.

The political polarisation of the country, exacerbated to the extreme limit by the media, contaminates the social harmony and the life itself of the Christian community. A so-called “culture of tension” has overtaken the political and social scene, raised to a level of verbal controversy far beyond what is really experienced by most people in Spain who live ordinary lives without these fomented tensions. This atmosphere of nervousness also negatively affects relations between the hierarchical Church and the present socialist government; the latter is perceived mainly by the former as too secular, laicist and hostile because it promotes values and enacts laws contrary to Christian morality and, supposedly, hinders the exercise of religious freedom.

There exists in Spanish society a growing indifference towards the Christian message and Christian values, towards the Church as an institution and towards

the positions taken by the hierarchy. The media transmit an overwhelmingly negative image of religion in general and of church agents in particular. For the most part they ridicule and denigrate church statements on social or moral questions without any thought of a calm and mature dialogue on the subject.

On the other hand, and this is related to what has been said above, we have not learned how to “europeanize” our souls with this project of common life in a pluralist, laicised society, far removed from the National-Catholic model that was abandoned during the so-called “political transition” of the late 1970s. We lack civic maturity and are rarely engaged in concrete instances of dialogue. The Church gives the impression of being bitterly disappointed, bruised and alarmed by the massive abandonment of religious practice and by the fact that so many people have lost the feeling of belonging in the Catholic Church. As a response the Church seeks to recover former areas of social and political influence instead of seeking new forms of presence more in line with its real and effective status as a “cognitive minority,” as is the case in most of the countries around us.

The Catholic community in Spain still enjoys significant gospel vitality in its many manifestations and forms of presence. Nevertheless it finds itself excessively fragmented into tendencies and movements with spiritualities, theologies and pastoral practices that are not just diverse, which is obviously desirable, but divergent and even contradictory and polarised.

The Spanish Church in its journey does not convey the image of a community that seeks and transmits above all the God of Jesus –with diverse charisms but unity in faith; it does not inspire a desire to join in this search and announcement. The attitude of “condemnation” dominates over that of “healing.” Discrediting wins out over dialogue. There is a lack of tolerance, fraternity and magnanimity. One might say that we Catholics (in general) transmit more the “no” of Christianity than the great “Yes” of God in the person of Jesus the Lord.

#### (Q. 2) Strengths

Many Jesuits, young and old, live their vocation with generosity, fidelity and self-giving; they bear witness to their love for Jesus in the Church. Many old, even very old, brothers are a treasure, for in the midst of their weakness they demonstrate the most beautiful following of the Lord. Community life has been made simpler and more fraternal; the levels of communication have increased.

The Society continues to have a relatively important ecclesial and missionary presence in Spanish society as a whole and in Andalusia and the Canary Islands in particular [Betica Province]. It has a number of apostolic platforms (numerous educational institutions, publications, parishes, faith-culture centres, retreat houses etc.). It draws to itself many lay collaborators of quality who identify, to greater or lesser extents, with the mission of the Society and bring a growing level of commitment and responsibility to the works mentioned above. In many institutions, particularly schools (at all levels), a notable effort is being made to make the evangelising mission explicit, inserting it into the heart of their actual activities, not as an artificial add-on to day-to-day tasks.

The social perception of the Society in the secularised and anti-religious context to which I have referred is relatively positive; we are seen as an institution capable of dialoguing with the modern world and, in particular, with the “frontiers” of unbelief, intellectual life, youth, and “progressive” forces. This image is a mix of myth and reality.

On the whole, the body of the Society in Spain and in the Province gives an impression of unity. Despite certain tensions, to which I will allude in the weaknesses, there are at present no divisions of the kind we were familiar with in the not too distant past. We see a uniformity of criteria in superiors, the Provincials in particular, under the coordination of the Provincial of Spain.

What stands out is the growing activity of the Spiritual Exercises in their various modalities, with a strong adequate focus on the Ignatian charism. The reaffirmation of this apostolic means, conceived in order to “help souls” at the deepest level, is one of the best news items of recent times.

### **Weaknesses**

In Spain generally, and in the Bética Province in particular, we are an ageing community without demographic replacement. The paucity of vocations will condemn the Society, in strictly social terms, to a marginal and irrelevant role in the medium term, let us say ten years.

On the other hand, the number and size of our institutions (above all the schools) weigh us down and oblige us to make a superhuman effort to maintain them with an acceptable level of professional quality and an evangelising “ethos.” Despite praiseworthy efforts to sustain the work of these institutions by balancing the reduced number of Jesuits with increased participation of lay people at all levels, we still feel obliged to work too much. It is not easy to guarantee the missionary and Jesuit profile of the works, given the shortage of Jesuit companions.

Our communities run the risk of becoming “bourgeois,” of settling into a lifestyle in accordance with its surroundings, with high levels of consumption, comfortable living quarters and, (with a few exceptions) far removed from the less fortunate neighbourhoods. We spend far too much time watching television in our houses. Our community life is at risk of losing such fraternal vigour as it has, and reproducing instead the nervous reflexes of society in general. Not a few companions hold radical, polarised political positions, which in some cases make community life difficult.

Some of us Jesuits who are still active transmit an image that is far from attractive, the reasons for this being various. Our life-style shows little sensitivity to the environment or ecology; our mood and temper are subdued and unenthusiastic; we tend to speak too little about God; we tend to emphasise the task at the cost of the inspiration; we lack leisure and availability to be with people, to live near them, to listen to them and to feel in solidarity with their joys and their sorrows. Recognising the complexity of this issue, we may perhaps relate it to the shortage of vocations.

More in our practice than in our discourse, one detects a fall in our social sensitivity, in our effective commitment to the most needy – whether near or far. One may say that after the “boom” of the preferential option for the poor – at least on the level of declarations – derived from GC 32, there has been a backtracking in recent years. Perhaps as a reaction against certain unilateral tendencies, not a few young Jesuits, probably those more bent on pragmatism than ideologies, appear less inclined to commit themselves to experiences of insertion among the poor or to specific social action projects.

Relations between the Society and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in general terms, are not satisfactory. Misunderstandings and tensions, arising from disparity of objectives or assumption of radical positions, have exacerbated the relationship.

(Q. 3) The question seems to ask me to write a pre-GC 35 decree! We already have enough texts which express the direction Society must take in the context we have described. I believe that what we need are precisely not new approaches or new decrees. Almost everything has been said ... Let us put them into practice and let us live in accordance with what we say we are. I have been asked a question, however, and by way of an answer I shall make a few remarks.

It seems to me that our identity is defined by our mission: we are –in the last analysis – what we want to be. “Tell me what you want to be and I’ll tell you who you are.” Well then, we wish to be “Servants of Christ’s mission”; we exist for that purpose; Ignatius and the first companions founded us to fulfil this mission.

Everything revolves around the Latin expression “*curet primo Deum*” of the Formula. We need to be passionate and joyful witnesses of the living God in Jesus of Nazareth. We should be known as persons moved inwardly by a “deep personal love for Jesus Christ.” We should acknowledge “that we are sinners and nevertheless called.” We are bearers of hope and sensitive to the joys and pains of our brothers and sisters – even if we are few, even if we are ageing. We must get used to our ‘smallness,’ our littleness; to being mustard seeds; to feeling strong in the midst of our weakness. We must put our hope only in the Lord and less in the means, in institutions, in power. Today in particular, the mission calls us to be more humble and less self-sufficient, as a community, in the Church.

Should we not review our marked intellectualism and individualism, our excessively austere liturgies and lack of joyful elements in our liturgical celebrations, our permanently critical spirit, our frankly secular appearance and lifestyle? Though these and other characteristics of our life undoubtedly have positive effects, they also contribute to create a style which is not explicitly evangelical.

We urgently need to recover a disposition to enter into cordial dialogue with the Bishops and with other Church leaders of different theological, spiritual and pastoral orientations. It seems to me that this is an aspect that affects the universal Society. In spite of the injustices, errors or arbitrary acts that “the other side” may have committed, we must recover, it seems to me, a greater affective resonance with “the true spouse” of Christ; we need to be more present in various and diverse ecclesial fora. I wonder if we could possibly reconcile a little better the required

prophetic freedom with prudence and respect for the appropriate forms in our relationships with the Bishops.

Perhaps the Society as a body, and more particularly individual Jesuits, ought to work more concertedly and collaborate more generously with other actors in the Church. We need to be humbler and less self-sufficient; to give fewer lectures to others and apply the Gospel, saying to ourselves: "take the beam out of your own eye."

We must continue to insist on the rediscovery of the Exercises as the main treasure of our spiritual heritage. Nobody would deny that today spiritual conversation, personal direction, "person to person" dealings, which are so favoured precisely by the inspiration and method of the Ignatian Exercises, are more necessary and opportune than ever.

Community life ought to be more stimulating and attractive; it should manifest more our condition of witnesses to the risen Lord in a secular society. A little more austerity, shared prayer and recreation, discussion of the essential, and fraternal correction would not do us any harm. Let the "interior law of charity and love" be a reality. Such a community may well awaken a vocation or two, maybe more.

In the particular context of Spain, I will share a recent suggestion from the Justice and Peace Commission of the National Conference of Religious of Spain (CONFER):

*"faithful to our vocation and following the invitation of the gospel of Jesus, let us question our sentiments, attitudes, postures and behaviour in this social moment, let us contrast them with the Gospel and with the non-violent, and reconciling action of Jesus of Nazareth; let us strive towards a conversion of our private or institutional attitudes in the heart of our communities and in our dealings with society; in this way we may be able to help re-establish everywhere an attitude of serene confrontation and of possible dialogue."*

I do not feel capable of suggesting proposals concerning governance. Certainly it could be structured better, and some changes would probably have to be introduced in that regard; but it seems to me that the problems of the Society at present are not precisely governance problems.

Original Spanish

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## INDONESIA

**Paul Wiryono P SJ**

(Q. 1) The multidimensional crisis haunting Indonesia since 1998 has thus far remained unresolved. I use the term “multidimensional” because the crisis not only pushed Indonesia’s economy into a gigantic morass of international debt, but also resulted in an uncontrolled spread of corruption. It led to a paralysis of law and order and an increase in conflicts characterized by violence (three thousand people killed, 1,2 million displaced, many thousands of houses, church buildings and mosques burnt or damaged). The crisis has been worsened by the upswing in unemployment (27% of working population unemployed), an increasing number of those living under the poverty line, indecisiveness on the part of government, and moral apathy on the part of the common people. Two different factors caused this crisis. The first factor was external: the effects of the South East Asia currency crisis starting from Thailand in 1997. The second factor was internal: the long-term culture of corruption in the government, along with cronyism and poor management.

Looked at from one perspective, no significant change has taken place in response to the situation of crisis described above. But from another point of view, the successful process of political reforms has meant that people have more freedom to express their opinions, local governments get more autonomy, central government is more open to critique, and democracy has more space in which to grow. Considering this new situation, the apostolic strategy of the Indonesian Province of the Society of Jesus has been be one of strengthening the on-going “conscientisation” process that started soon after the crisis. The Indonesian Jesuits believe that bringing the deeper issues to the consciousness of the people will enable them to solve their problems in the long run. By deeper issues I mean issues related to the roots of the crisis. This strategy has been developed through the establishment of a crisis centre attached to the office of the National Bishops Conference in Jakarta. It promotes the use of inter-religious dialogue to solve conflicts in Maluku, Lombok, Poso, Aceh, Sampit, West Papua, and other places; setting up collaborations and networks to implement concrete actions in the conflict-ridden areas, and using mass media and educational means such as seminars, workshops, trainings and courses for “conscientisation” purposes.

Besides this crisis, Indonesia within the last five years has suffered a great deal through bombings by terrorist groups in Bali, Poso, Jakarta, and other places, through the tsunami that hit Aceh and Nias causing more than a hundred thousand deaths and devastating the entire area, and through the Yogyakarta earthquake that killed about 6 thousand and caused heavy damage in two districts: Bantul and Klaten. The apostolic strategy chosen by the Society of Jesus as well as the Catholic Church hierarchy has been to strengthen inter-religious dialogue and the concrete collaborations developed since the 1998 crisis. The Society of Jesus has used the structure of JRS (which has a presence in Indonesia) as an effective apostolic instrument to meet the urgent needs caused by these terrible disasters, and has been able to make inter-religious collaborations stronger than before among the young volunteers.

(Q. 2) The main strength of the Society of Jesus in Indonesia is related to the individual Jesuits who have been able to work closely with our Muslim brothers. Some of them are Julius Kardinal Darmaatmadja SJ, Mgr. J. Sunarko SJ, Ig. Sandyawan Sumardi SJ, Ig. Ismartono SJ, Frans Magnis Suseno SJ, FX. Mudjisutrisno SJ, FX. Danuwinata SJ, and several younger Jesuits at Driyarkara Philosophy School in Jakarta and Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta. They were able to facilitate inter-religious dialogue and helped collaborations to run smoothly, especially with moderate Muslim groups.

The other strengths are: (i) the large number of alumni of our Jesuit High Schools and Higher Education Institutes spread throughout the country, some of them holding high positions in government as well as in industry and business; (ii) the lay collaborators who practise a kind of Ignatian spirituality in their life and apostolate, and (iii) the continuous involvement of Jesuits in the formation of diocesan priests, woman religious leaders, and lay leaders.

The main weaknesses or limitations of the Society of Jesus in Indonesia are related to the decline in number of those interested to join the Society; to the wide variety of apostolic works entrusted to the Jesuits by the local bishops; the rather poor sense of apostolic priority; the shorter life spans of native Indonesian Jesuits, and the lack of spiritual formation for our lay collaborators. The large variety of works entrusted to the Society by the Archbishop of Jakarta and the Archbishop of Semarang puts many Jesuits in a kind of recycling system of mission. Many native Indonesian Jesuits between the ages of sixty and seventy years have died possibly because of the exhausting nature of their works.

(Q. 3) For me there are two aspects that the General Congregation 35 is expected to reflect on more deeply: (1) our mission closely related to our identity, and (2) the future of apostolic partnership with others. In the light of the decreasing number of Jesuits in many parts of the world, the future of apostolic partnership with others seems to be the most urgent task. The General Congregation 35 needs to produce concrete recommendations for the new General.

We need to strengthen our belief that the future Church that God wants will be a Lay-Church. The Society of Jesus enriched by Ignatian Spirituality has to prepare the road leading in this direction.

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## The Movement of "Change" in Benin A Plea for the Development of a "Sociality" Christian Abitan SJ

Africa has often presented an image of itself as a continent in decay. Beyond the alarming signs of great poverty and political instability, some claim to discern the symptoms of a more radical evil, rooted in patterns of behaviour and in a world vision incompatible with political and economic development.<sup>1</sup> They claim to explain in this way the surprising paradox of the persistence, in Africa, of almost rudimentary ways of life, despite the numerous exchanges between Africa and the civilisations of Europe and North America. After decades of commerce with the western world, the Dark Continent still lies in the doldrums, and remains the scene of a number of evils that have names: floods, epidemics, rebellions and famines; retrograde forms of leadership such as dictatorships, amateur politics and poor management. All this leads one to believe that the "cradle of humanity" is stifling the humanity that remains there.

Nevertheless, one senses that not everything in Africa remains totally static. If some of its states still remain hostage to powers whose legitimacy and social projects are doubtful at the very least, some others are already following a promising socio-political path. Thus one may notice that the political landscape and atmosphere in the Democratic Republic of Congo is happily being transformed. After a long period of war, pillage and flagrant violations of human rights, this giant of central Africa is on the way to becoming a democratic success thanks to the recent elections. Moreover, its neighbour, Rwanda, is no less well off. Even if the profound wounds caused by the 1994 genocide are still in evidence, one gets the impression that Rwandans take their future seriously ...

And what of the people of Benin, whose democracy has so often been held up as an example? The least we can say is that this continual international good report does not distract them from their challenges which are still immense. After a long struggle to recover their freedom and democracy, the Beninese people perceived the limitations of a "starving man's freedom," and passed from one electoral criterion to another. Thus, unlike Mathieu Kérékou who was recalled to power to consolidate peace and democracy, Mr. Yayi Boni was elected rather to assure the economic development of the country. Under his vigorous leadership, the Beninese want to set out on the conquest of economic goods, and give their country an attractive power distinct from peace and political stability.

However, does not this vast movement of economic transformation, undertaken by the new regime, run the risk of a certain illusion and a perilous fixation? Should the struggle for material well-being thus undertaken by Yayi Boni not be transcended, to become a site of concern for each Beninese about his country and his compatriots? The Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas would definitely be in agreement. His economic reflection, which nourishes our own reflection, assigns to

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, the striking analysis sketched by Jean-Paul NGOUPANDE in his *Racines historiques et culturelles de la crise africaine* published by Editions du Pharaon (Cotonou) in 1994.

money a mission other than the selfish search for well-being. For him money should become the possibility of mutual concern for the people to whom one relates. This “sociality” proposed by the Jewish philosopher resonates better, it seems to us, with the expectations of the Beninese, who wish for more than a development in numbers and macro-economic data.

### “Change” in Benin: supremacy of the economic

The political debate in Benin is democratic, but for the moment uni-polar. The power in place has almost no opposition. The democratic model which already exists in Mali is all the same not widespread. But it is a matter not so much of a lack of opposition as of a popular euphoria. Indeed no opponent would fare well in Benin in the present context of great economic expectations and of fascination with the president. On the contrary he would tarnish his own image, until the Beninese return to a more moderate enthusiasm.

Indeed the long-awaited change, formerly preached by politicians with little credibility, suddenly seems to be coming to pass. A general audit of key services of the republic and of certain major companies is underway. Already, individuals suspected of “economic crime” are being brought before the tribunals. The man who accomplished the financial *tour de force* of these decades, that of purchasing the old SONACOP<sup>2</sup> with its own funds, is from now on settling accounts with the national economic brigade. Furthermore, gasoline flows freely once again, while the producers of white gold receive their due after a long period of dissatisfaction and slack. Finally, great projects are in sight: construction of a highway between Cotonou and Bohicon,<sup>3</sup> the installation of interchanges in Cotonou and Porto-Novo, construction of a new airport in Cotonou, the building of a modern residential area in Cotonou, the construction of a resort in Fidjrossè, etc. Paradise will never again be far away!

But the development strategies are as old as most modern nations! The president of Benin is certainly aware of that. His many years in faculties of economics and his long experience in African and world financial institutions must have given him a sufficiently clear view. He knows moreover that reality is often much more complex than it is in books, in examination question papers and in student labs.

### Complexities of a purely economic approach to development

In the recent history of the struggle for development, four approaches followed one another without much success. The first was that by which a glittering promise was made to a colonised people: that their happiness would reside in achieving **independence**, a sovereignty which would shield them from western interference.

*“(…) For a long time the colonised peoples saw in their political domination the sole cause of their unfavourable economic situation and they made independence the key to*

<sup>2</sup>The national petroleum distribution company.

<sup>3</sup>A city in the middle of the country.

*development. Recent experience has shown how political independence, if it is a necessary condition of development, by itself resolves few economic problems and notably how little it modifies the situation of economic dependence.”<sup>4</sup>*

But the ideology did allow the African elite of the time to accede to control of business.

The second approach was that of **public aid to development**. To this end hundreds of millions were injected into underdeveloped economies, without giving, in most cases, the expected fruits. Without structures of control and sufficient prior studies, this aid often landed in the pockets of a small minority.

*“Financial aid, government spending, portfolio investments, military spending coming from outside, how would these not have an inflationary effect in an underdeveloped economy? The fundamental problem of the international economy remains the old problem of fund transfers. Without appropriate structures of reception, this problem will not be resolved.”<sup>5</sup>*

But the lesson had been learnt. The management of public affairs had to be put in order. **Programs of structural adjustment** were the proof of that, at least according to the declared intentions. In order to discipline the greedy elites of underdeveloped nations, it was believed necessary to liberalise government enterprises, reduce the size of the bureaucracy and fix economic objectives in the medium and long terms. Today many economists and other researchers question the pertinence of these so often unpopular measures. For the standard of living has not improved considerably since that time. But for all that, must we infer the slyness of financial institutions? Perhaps not. Perhaps the sought-after needle of economic development is hidden once again in a haystack, which calls the partners in development and especially the leaders of underdeveloped countries to a new effort and, if possible, the definition of a new paradigm.

Some people consider that a **holistic approach to the problem** may be more relevant, even more fruitful. Under-development should therefore cease to be an exclusively economic problem and become a phenomenon involving anthropological, psychological, historical and even religious dimensions.

Should we not perceive at the base of these repeated failures the fascination over the Third World exerted by the western model of development? The industrial revolution, the radical financialisation of life, as well as economic globalisation – would these not be the demons that haunt the spirits of the poor of the Third World and drag them toward the only way, the enveloping totalitarian path of the West, paved with money, work and pleasure? Such a path, to the extent that it is governed and controlled by the new economic forces, the “new powers” of the planet, is it not already in itself a dead end, at least when one seizes it like a lifebelt?

<sup>4</sup>Jacques Freyssinet, *Le concept de sous-développement*, Paris, Mouton, 1966, p. 25

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* (Preface, x).

### **A fearful burden: the “New masters of the world”**

To be fair to the peoples of the Third World, we must recognize that they are often subtly manipulated. Indeed a good dose of ideology often accompanies the success of paradigm states, notably the ideology of the supreme power of money. Production and consumption have become the obligatory way of progress, and pre-defined indices serve to measure them. The contemporary world has replaced the mechanical metaphor inherited from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with the economic and financial metaphor.

*“From now on, everything must be regulated according to the criteria of ‘president market’, the ultimate panacea. In the first place are new values: profit, benefits, profitability, competition, competitiveness. The ‘laws’ of the market replace the laws of nature, or of history, as the general explanation of the movement of societies. There, also, the strongest prevail, in all legitimacy. Economic Darwinism and social Darwinism (constant appeals to competition, to selection, to adaptation) impose themselves as it self-evident.”<sup>6</sup>*

And the economist Michel Beaud notes that *“money rules; we dedicate more care and more intelligence to its care than we do to assist people in difficulty in the world. More than ever it becomes in our societies the criterion, the guide, the supreme value; it fascinates and blinds.”<sup>7</sup>*

Now in this movement where money inebriates, the majority of people and nations is still the least served, so we fill them up with ever more subtle ideologies.

*“[The large economic and monetary institutions,] throughout the planet, by their financing enrol to the service of their ideas, numerous research centres, universities and foundations, which in turn refine and spread the good word.”<sup>8</sup> (...)*

Likewise,

*“almost everywhere, faculties of economics, journalists, essayists, and finally politicians, take up the principal commandments of these new tablets of the law, and by means of the mass media, repeat them ad nauseum; knowing full well that in our mass-media societies, repetition equal proof.”<sup>9</sup>*

The result is immediate: the ordinary mortal is convinced that his happiness resides in the accumulation of money; and everyone nourishes the hope that the forces of economic globalisation will favour him one day. Thus one loses sight of the fact that at the heart of the new civilisation built around economic globalisation, state power itself, often perceived as the final resort against structural injustices, no longer belongs to the politicians. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy have already understood this:

<sup>6</sup>Ignacio Ramonet, *Nouveaux pouvoirs, nouveaux maîtres du monde* (Québec: Musée de la civilisation, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

*"In the traditional vision of imperialism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the players have a homeland and share out the world, competing behind their States. Ultra-imperialism is the expression of the domination by the capital of transnational firms, the global oligopoles. In the absence of a transnational State, these oligopoles still shelter behind national States, making use of them in one way or another, but they transcend them. They dominate international institutions like the IMF, the WTO or the World Bank, which are tools in their hands enabling a renovation of the mechanisms of domination and exploitation of the collection of societies."*<sup>10</sup>

Will marginalised societies not be stunned to discover that they have been taken hostage by the forces of money, and that their political leaders whom they freely elected continually suffer a subtle "hold-up", and thus find themselves bound hand and foot despite all their good will? Ignacio Ramonet rings the alarm:

*"Do those who, in France and elsewhere, take part in interminable electoral jousts in order to conquer power democratically, know that in this turn of the century the power has gone elsewhere? that it has deserted these precise places delimited by politics? Don't they run the risk of quickly showing off their powerlessness? to be forced to change tack, to retreat, to deny themselves? and to notice that true power is elsewhere? out of reach?"*<sup>11</sup>

Against such impasses we need more than a vast economic development worksite. Since money becomes the paradigm *par excellence* and tends to overshadow individuals and nations, human dignity would consist not in escaping from it but in drawing from it more than money itself. Thus it is not the abolition of the big construction sites of development that we should praise; we should not urge our leaders to abandon economic discipline. Rather, it is a matter of a break in the very heart of this struggle for material well-being; and it is at this level that the convictions of Emmanuel Lévinas concerning economic reality become for us full of meaning.

### **Money: source of injustice and of profit-sharing**

Faithful to the philosophical movement called "phenomenology", Emmanuel Lévinas works out a "return to the things themselves", that is to say, a return to reality in its most immediate and least manipulated. And what does the philosopher perceive in this meditative return? Above all, the unrefined man, what he calls "the living one". That is every one of us, to the extent that we place ourselves in existence "as a totality, as if he occupied the centre of being and were the source of it, as if he drew everything from the here and now, wheresoever he is placed or created. For him, the forces that pass through him are already assumed – he experiences them as already integrated into his needs and his enjoyment."<sup>12</sup> The living one is the

<sup>10</sup>Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *Le triangle infernal. Crise, mondialisation, financiarisation*, (Paris: PUF, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Ignacio Ramonet, *Nouveaux pouvoirs, nouveaux maîtres du monde*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous. Essai sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris: Grasset, 1991), p. 25.

subjectivity which has not yet escaped from the demands of necessity. It is the infant which remains within each one of us and who wants everything to be obvious. But as soon as the living one experiences a certain privation, he experiences that the things which he lives by and enjoys as if they were part of himself, only exist as belonging to others. From that moment, he begins to think. Thus, *“thought begins with the possibility of conceiving a freedom outside of my own. Thinking a freedom outside of my own is the first thought. The world of perception manifests a face: things affect us as if possessed by others.”*<sup>13</sup> The rising up of unrefined man is therefore fundamentally his entry into economic relationships.

Having become a thinking being, the subjectivity must thus confront the other as the possessor of that which he needs to give substance to his life. It is therefore always guilty or innocent vis-à-vis another, and thus susceptible to suffering the consequences of harm caused to others. That means that economic justice is no accident. As soon as man becomes aware, willingly or not, of his social partner, he is already under the aegis of the economic law. That is why there is never an absolute one-on-one; there is always and already a third party who invigilates the equity of interpersonal relations. This third party reminds the protagonists of this fundamental maxim: “All persons are equal before the law.” If the other possesses some goods of nature and of civilisation of which I am in need of them, a certain equality must be sought, at least a will to give to each one what he needs in order to live. In other words, justice is “the common ground,” while injustice consists in shirking, in whatever way, this common ground.

However injustice may go much further. One can evade the common ground for a time; the third party will always be there to remind the subjectivity of its obligations. But one can simply annihilate the other, whose mere presence gave the common ground all its meaning. This is possible thanks to money which permits one to corrupt the other, to take possession of his will so that he is one with the subjectivity, which only looks out for what it wants. To threaten the life of one’s social partner is not so profitable, for a murder is nothing but a simple substitution of one partner for another, given that we cannot live alone on the earth. What is more profitable is to suppress the other while preserving him in appearance, make him into an “alter ego” in the literal sense of the term. Thus, unlike the violence of arms which cannot capture the will that it seeks to dominate, “(...) *true violence preserves the freedom that it coerces. Its instrument is gold, violence is corruption.*”<sup>14</sup> In other words, “*injustice (...) is possible through gold which forces or tempts, an instrument of cunning. The injustice by which the “I” lives in a totality is always economic.*”<sup>15</sup> That is to say that injustice in itself has an economic face and has the name of money. How then can we allow this latter to reign as absolute master? Humanity would then lose its dignity and its character. However, the exception proving the rule, it remains possible to use money altruistically. In other words, man is not irreparably bewitched by the clinking of coins and rustling of notes, to

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibidem.*

the point of being unable to disobey them! This is what Emmanuel Lévinas recalls in his text titled "Sociality and Money."<sup>16</sup>

### **Beyond the economist fever: concern for others and for the motherland**

As we have shown, the economic relationship tends to constrict or alienate the other. In it, the "I" dispossesses the other from his good and exposes itself to the judgment of the third party, which comes to limit the subjectivity since it assesses one by rational, pre-established principles. Economic justice itself and its adjutants, which are the purification of finances, the production of increased wealth and the equitable distribution of it, are therefore unsatisfying for human dignity. The economic relation and its regulation fail to honour the human person suitably. It must be transcended by individual and collective acts of concern, of sacrifice, of pure gratuity. This suggestion is not utopian, since money itself can contradict itself by making possible this pure gratuity. The ascension of humanity toward thought, and thus toward economic relations, is only one existential stage. It must end in the *construction of a "life in common,"* that is to say of a sociality in which each one cares for the other, and perhaps as well for the great "us" which is the Nation.

Our conviction is that the paradigm of economic efficiency, which now moves and fascinates the Beninese, will bear fruit and unleash the de-spiritualising horns and traps of the "new masters of the world" if they carry, as a backdrop, the paradigm of sociality. Emmanuel Lévinas has helped us express that. The few ideas of his to which our study has referred had only one project: the prevention of all reductionism in thought and in action. For freedom and human dignity would be confined with impunity in any economic relationship, no matter how just and benevolent. *"In money this inter-human proximity, transcendence and sociality can never forget that which already crosses it, from individual to individual, stranger to stranger: the transaction from which all money proceeds and which all money revives."*<sup>17</sup>

What good would it be for the Beninese to live in an eldorado if the sense of living together came to disappear – do we not already denounce the tendency of Beninese to look out only for themselves? What would be the good of Doctor Yayi Boni's great projects if the concern for others surrendered definitively to individualism and self-centred success? What progress can we hope for from such vast construction sites if well-being is understood only as the pure satisfaction of needs<sup>18</sup>? Would the country not fly apart at the slightest identity crisis, just like Ivory Coast? The economic ills which henceforth attack President Yayi Boni, namely economic crime, haphazard management of State businesses as well as feeble economic productivity, do these not have their roots elsewhere than in the economic soil?

<sup>16</sup>LEVINAS, Emmanuel, « Socialité et Argent » in *les cahiers de l'Herne*, 1989, pp. 134-138

<sup>17</sup>Emmanuel Levinas, *socialité et argent*, p. 135.

<sup>18</sup>The Japanese produce and export abundant economic goods, but consume very little. Thus they keep their distance from the schemes and economic forecasts of competing states!

Besides, the world financial powers, be they of North American, European or Asian<sup>19</sup> origin, are so powerful that we could not attack them head-on. President Yayi Boni himself knows that economic relations are rarely philanthropic. We have already seen fire coming out of nowhere and setting fire to states that had wanted, at some moment in their history, to regain full control of their resources or to govern themselves with respect to these. Economic appetites, like every human appetite, are not content with a partial satisfaction. To provoke them by inciting partners to invest in one's house is at the same time to impose a constant vigilance to ensure that the increase in wealth thus created is for one's own benefit as well. Now it is possible to cultivate certain values of gratuity among the Beninese themselves: valuing one's neighbour, sense of investing for the advance of the homeland and for the good of generations to come, the love of work well done, acute awareness of the scarcity of goods and the parsimonious management of them, etc. If the foreign investor can only risk his holdings in expectation of greater interests, the patriot may go as far as to give up his life for the Nation and for his brothers and sisters. It is therefore urgent to foster patriotism in Benin through education. In reality it is a strong awareness, shared by all, of a common heritage that is to be managed and preserved, and not only a feverish and wise economic strategy, which will favour the full flowering of human societies.

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<sup>19</sup>Yayi Boni's interest in Asian countries is very noticeable. But it would be difficult to prove that that Asia wishes us more good than the West.

## The Venezuelan Political Process 1998-2007

Arturo Sosa SJ

**L**ike all political analyses, particularly those dealing with complex and dynamic political processes, this paper, while both biased and imperfect, seeks to systematically examine and contribute to the evolution of the Venezuelan political process.<sup>1</sup>

In doing so, this analysis places the Venezuelan process within the global and Latin American contexts. That is to say, it examines whether this process represents a real alternative to the global or Latin American political experiences pointing towards a future world; whether this alternative political model will be capable of meeting the needs of humanity as we enter this new period of history.

### Background to the political process of a revenue-driven country

I briefly outline below the economic model under construction in Venezuela. In essence, it appears a lot like state capitalism, with the peculiarity that this is a cash-rich state, derived from the production and sale of a non-renewable natural resource, oil. This significant quantity of money flowing into the national coffers bears no relation to the productivity of the economy, extremely high percentages of which are allocated to public expenditure, with much smaller amounts put into public investment. The Venezuelan state distributes income rather than redistributing socially productive wealth, and uses the distribution of income to mitigate social differences.

The private sector is tolerated, but is not considered to be an important part of the country's economic development strategy, and therefore does not participate in the distribution of income (except for political reasons), nor in the decision-making process. This non-participation notwithstanding, it is an important generator of productive employment.

What direction will the Venezuelan economy take in the next few years? In the next few years, the Venezuelan economy will enter a *period of sustained growth*, more than 4% per annum above the rate of inflation, maintained by high oil prices and state policies distributing the abundant oil income, especially through 'las misiones' (the Social Missions).

Over the last five years the price of Venezuelan oil has continued to increase. In 2006 it increased from 53.72 US dollars a barrel in January to 64.09 in July before dropping to 50.49 in November. This year (2007) the average price is expected to oscillate between 45 and 48 US dollar a barrel, even though the budget approved by the national parliament estimates the price of oil at 30 US dollar a barrel. This price, rather than being an estimate, is a way of increasing government discretion in the management of oil revenue. Even though there are structural reasons to believe that there will be a drop in global oil prices in 2007, changes in the political situation in the Middle East or global climate may offset such a fall. Oil production

<sup>1</sup>This is a summary of the article of the same name by Arturo Sosa SJ. The full article can be found on the Social Secretariat website [www.sjweb.info/sjs](http://www.sjweb.info/sjs)

in Venezuela, far from recuperating, has continued to fall, currently fuelled by production cuts on the part of Strategic Corporations (Asociaciones Estratégicas). On the other hand, the Venezuelan state oil company (PDVSA) plans to increase oil production from the present 2.7 to 5 million barrels a day. With foreseeable oil prices and production volumes, a fiscal crisis is unlikely. On the contrary, the state may increase public expenditure while respecting agreements undertaken by the government.

This interventionist tendency (increased role of the state in the economy and in every sphere of life) is bound to tighten the noose around the private sector. Consequently, without minimum political and legal guarantees safeguarding resources, private investment in medium and long-term projects will continue to stagnate. Economic analysts warn that inflation rates in 2007 will be very difficult to control.

It is globally accepted that the present socio-economic development model has caused social exclusion, but the major criticism and doubt regarding this model is the gigantic mass of poor people – the poverty crisis and the destitute. About the model the following points may be made:

- It has set the issue of social justice to one side
- Latin America is the continent with the most unequal distribution of wealth
- The “Washington Consensus”, the specific policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have failed. Military dictatorships have failed. Populist policies have failed.
- Countering these failures calls for a change in political direction in search of a better standard of living for all. This approach will require more imagination than is exhibited in the putting of everything under state control and basing all our development on increasing oil income.

After eight years of the Hugo Chavez government, the structural causes of poverty continue to exist.

- Before citizens can live on the income of their own productive employment, the economy needs to be restructured to overcome the causes of poverty. However, in Venezuela the lack of productive employment is directly related to the insignificant levels of productive investment, both private and public.
- Although there has been an increase in family incomes, particularly among the more socially disadvantaged, this is due to the distribution of oil income.
- On the whole, the distribution of income in Venezuelan society continues to favour the 30% non-poor of the country.

It appears from all this that the criterion guiding the decision-making process throughout these eight years has been the need to retain political control of the country.

## Establishing political hegemony

One requires an insight into Venezuelan politics to understand its political process.<sup>2</sup>

**The ascendancy to political power (1998-2002).** The electoral triumph of December 1998, the convocation of a legislative assembly, the approval of a new Bolivarian Constitution and the beginning of the reorganisation of the state placing the national government at the centre of all action, are the key aspects of this first phase. *Chavism* starts by trying to acquire revolutionary legitimacy, seeking to give its political project a unique identity. The ideas underpinning Chavism began to take shape in alliance with other sectors of the international and national political left, when Chavez and his military colleagues were young. It was initially designated Bolivarian, and more recently, 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.

**The consolidation of political power (2002-2003).** Overcoming the attempted coup by a section of the opposition in 2002 was an opportunity to consolidate Chavism in political power, beginning with the purge of both, the armed forces and the PDVSA. Even though no one single definition encapsulates the Chavist project, a listing of its key features provides us with an outline.

*Nationalist Statism.* The state associates itself conceptually with the nation, its people and civil society. A state under the direct control of a centralised executive authority in the hands of the president of the republic is a political statist regime. Only that which is under the control of the state is trusted or receives state support.

*Revenue-maximising Statism (Rentismo estatista).* This is a state with an independent source of significant resources, such as oil income. It has the ability to intervene in the economy promoting an endogenous development model, promoting joint management in large companies and establishment of cooperatives and social production companies (EPS) in small and medium industrial and agribusinesses. This revenue-driven (*rentista*) and paternalist state has traditionally been the model of government in Venezuela throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially under military regimes. It reinforces the relationship it seeks to replace between a state which is "rich" and a country that is "poor." This paternalism creates a relationship of dependency between people (particularly the poorest), organisations and the government. It is a relationship that hinders the development of the people as citizens, and obstructs the establishment of social and political citizens' organisations which could help develop independent individual political citizens served by the state, instead of the masses hindered and exploited by the state.

*Militarism.* The regime is characterised by the dominant role played by the military in the design and implementation of principal public policies. It is organised in

<sup>2</sup>We have summarised discussion of the periods (1998-2002), (2002-2003) (2004-2006) in order to focus on the last phase: Towards 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism (from the general election of 3 December 2006)

such a way as to facilitate direct control by the commander-in-chief, the president of the republic. The dividing line between the military and civilian spheres of life is erased. The militarisation of society becomes the core objective of public administration and the model of organisation of civil society for political, electoral and productive participation. Society is militarised to the point of establishing numerous military "reserves", composed of state employees and ordinary citizens. It is distinct from the type of militarism known in Latin America in the past and from the "government of the armed forces" established in Venezuela between 1948 and 1957. It is a "new military doctrine" which seeks to adapt to the asymmetry of the global balance of power and assigns the military a role in economic and social development.

***Political Populist Movement (Massification).*** This comprises a political organisation with a broad social base headed by the leader of the project, and encourages a distinct personality cult. Chavism promotes a vast network of social organisations in distinct areas of economic and social activity, heavily dependent on the state. Its structure is pyramidal; at the apex is the president of the republic, the head of the state and the leader of the project. These organisations (the Communal Councils, the Bolivarian Circles, Electoral Battle Units, the Francisco de Miranda Front and the Social Missions - Concejos Comunales, los Círculos Bolivarianos, las Unidades de Batalla Electoral, el Frente Francisco de Miranda y las Misiones sociales) make up the civil-military network.

***Participative direct democracy.*** The form of democracy apparently proposed by Chavism is plebiscitary. Reminiscent of the definition of "democratic Caesarism" given to us by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century positivist intellectual, Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, it is the will of the people expressed in, and for, one person, who shares their wishes and always acts in their best interest. There has been a systematic endeavour to "correct" the democratic culture inherited from the party system based on principles like representative governance, rule of law, the political alternation of political parties in government, and equilibrium of power between independent public authorities.

***Internationalist.*** The discourse of Chavism is internationalist. It seeks to be democratic, nationalist, pro-integration, anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation and pro-third world. This nationalism opposes North American imperialism for not respecting the sovereignty of nations and turning globalisation into an invasion by capitalism of all spheres of life, disregarding in particular those from the so-called third world. This view favours the integration of Latin American peoples, not only economic integration in the interest of the owners of capital, but also ideological integration favouring a multiple-polar world seeking political alliances in what would possibly be a more equitable trade-off. In practice, the regime seeks political alliances with governments opposed to the United States and maintains commercial relations based on the global market system, while preserving the United States as its principal trading partner.

**The Transition (2004-2006).** From this process emerged a government without any need of allies. It neither enters into discussions, nor negotiates with social actors, regardless of whether they come from within or outside the system. Within Chavism there are no consultation mechanisms outside the president's inner circle, which can change at any moment. The rest follow the lines he sets and take orders from the president's office. No other political or social actors are involved in the decision-making process, not even moderately independent allies seeking to meet common objectives. The government only establishes unconditional relationships.

In quest of political domination, Chavism has undermined academic activity. The distortion of history and cultural memory, an all-pervasive control of education and strong political pressure all tend to reduce publicly-funded research and frank scientific debate.

For Chavism, it is also important to control the social media. In recent years the mass and social community media have taken polarised positions, propagating two visions of society which represent the extremes of both factions. The government developed and approved a parliamentary act on the social responsibility of radio and television, an act that grants itself powerful instruments to increase its control over the media. It keeps up a latent threat to rescind the operating concessions granted to broadcasters. In other areas, it has established a network of social media (newspapers, radio and TV), particularly at grassroots level, responsible for publicising the government point of view on every issue, big or small.

Chavism creates a dynamic that brings us to the point expressed by Fernando Mires: a left-wing without a right-wing, or with a very precarious right-wing, could succumb to the temptation of expropriating all the power, which would inevitably result in its own negation as left-wing.<sup>3</sup> Hence the necessity to escape from this enclosed sectarian and ideological space that Chavism imposes on all intellectual debate. Where are the thinkers and ideas of the Chavist revolution that allow us to have such a debate?

It has not eradicated corruption. On the contrary, new forms and networks of corruption with the participation of new political actors have been created.

Ideological and political sectarianism have become the norm in all actions and at all levels of government and state.

There have been no improvements at the level of public sector transparency. Maintaining a climate of political confrontation creates a situation whereby acceding to requests for accountability is seen as giving ammunition to the enemy.

Violence in public discourse, as well as in other spheres, has become the norm in Venezuelan politics. The language of war has replaced that of politics. Will war end up replacing politics and dialogue?

### **Towards 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism (December 2006 onwards)**

Twenty-first century socialism has never been clearly defined. It cannot be identified with any historical thought and its theoretical foundations are very diverse.<sup>4</sup> Verbal and practical descriptions of the system vary between the Cuban

<sup>3</sup>Fernando Mires, "Latin America and its political trends. Electoral year 2006," *International Perspectives*, no. 12, June 2006, 2.

and Chinese models. Both maintain strict political control over society and directly manage the economy. H. Chavez has attempted to endorse his originality by using the “pre-socialist” thought of Simon Bolivar and Jesus of Nazareth, trying to use the cult of Bolivar and the religion professed by the majority of the population that votes for him to his own advantage.

Hugo Chavez and the government read the electoral results of December 2006<sup>5</sup> as a mandate to continue down the road towards 21<sup>st</sup> century Bolivarian socialism. For a large part of the population which voted for him, “socialism” simply means economic growth and social programmes which assist the most disadvantaged section of the population, and they see Chavez as “one of our own”. One imagines that his next step will be to reduce political space of the “activist” section of the opposition to a minimum,<sup>6</sup> completely ignoring them while appearing not to, transforming “political dialogue” into a sham rather than establishing real channels of communication, even less in processes of political negotiation.

After the December 2006 elections, the time was considered right to establish the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, amalgamating all the political forces that unconditionally support the regime. Even though the majority of pro-Chavez parties accepted this plan, some have resisted the idea of a “united party” of the revolution., Among these are the Community Party of Venezuela, PODEMOS, and the Nation For ALL.<sup>7</sup> They justified their dissent by citing the democratic plural nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism and the failure of single party regimes.

They proposed the establishment of a vast pro-government movement comprising “constituent” assemblies. These assemblies would guarantee the participation of Chavist grassroots in the development of an ideological manifesto of 21<sup>st</sup> century Venezuelan socialism, as well as the election of the leaders **at all levels** in a transparent, plural and democratic process. On the other hand, President Hugo Chavez outlined the “motors” that drive the construction of 21<sup>st</sup> century Venezuelan socialism:

- Enacting a sort of “primary” (basic) legislation which would allow him to issue decrees without having to go through parliament, even though he has a guaranteed majority.
- Constitutional reform to establish the Socialist Republic of Venezuela; this “comprehensive and profound” reform has not yet been proposed.

<sup>4</sup>The characteristics outlined above of the Chavist regime form a part of this description of 21<sup>st</sup> century Venezuelan socialism.

<sup>5</sup>Hugo Chavez was re-elected for another 6 years with 62.84% of the vote. His principal opponent, Manuel Rosales, supported by the majority of the opposition, obtained 36.9%.

<sup>6</sup>Despite the predominance of Chavism, the opposition groups that decided to participate in the electoral processes and politics in general were referred to like this. Other, smaller, opposition groups think that it is an authoritarian regime which can only be met with resistance.

<sup>7</sup>The parties aligned to Chavism that expressed doubts about the appropriateness of the unitary or united party brought in most votes, after the Fifth Republic Movement, ensuring the re-election of Chavez. Faced by a resurgence of public discussion between Chavist parties about the agreement, H. Chavez insisted on the establishment of a new party of the revolution, naming an organising committee (headed by the vice president of the Republic) and allocating a period of nine months for its establishment.

- The educational programme '*Moral y Luces*' (morality and lights) -words that refer to a well known expression of Simon Bolivar-, which will foster a vast process of public education in its broadest sense. The government is conscious of the importance of transforming education into an instrument of revolutionary awareness. In the field of higher education, the government considers it important to take control of the public universities, particularly autonomous universities in which it has not secured much space. At the same time, it is establishing a parallel system of higher education.
- The new distribution of power throughout the country grants central government more control over decisions made by local government authorities. The balanced application of power requires a territorial reorganisation based on principles of distance, volume and size.
- The revolutionary explosion of communal power, transforming Communal Councils (organised through Citizens' Assemblies) into the source of decision making by the population. This in turn transforms the Communal Council into the body dedicated to planning and action on behalf of the people, with resources transferred directly from the state.

#### Impact of these policies on Venezuelan society

According to this line of reasoning, an increase in demand for state services is predictable. Unsatisfied demands generate an increase in the number of protests, to which the government could react repressively. Even though the tone of political discourse has been lowered, the issue of the security of citizens, tensions on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, social security and Latin American integration have all been swept under the carpet.

The social media is another interesting priority of political groups. The government will continue to try to control it with all the means at its disposal, particularly by increasing the number of community and regional broadcasters in the hands of government supporters.

An authentic public radio and television service would have to offer tailored services to each stratum of society, without discrimination, based on socio-cultural needs. Moreover, it would have to be managed independently of government or other powerful economic or political interests. It is incumbent only upon a democratic state to meet three obligations: guarantee unconditional (political) funding, supervise the quality, and protect pluralism and ensure protection against discrimination of citizens, groups and minorities.<sup>8</sup>

Equally, the opposition receives a volume of votes which represent a significant group of society in disagreement with the government's electoral agenda and with the 21<sup>st</sup> century Bolivarian socialism project. It has therefore to work to take advantage of the momentum of a successful campaign so that the unity accomplished in the elections becomes the seed of an alternative movement.

The opposition needs to agree on a shared vision of the country that it can put

<sup>8</sup>Diario *El Nacional*, Venezuela, 18 February 2007, p. A5.

forward, and also the democratic means to achieve it. It needs a political plan of action to counterbalance the public policies put out by the government, beginning with active participation in constitutional reform and debates on key legislative proposals (education, international assistance<sup>9</sup>...). This has to be undertaken in the absence of a conducive climate and a government willing to partake in political negotiation.

In the face of Chavism, the so-called "democratic opposition" should honour its name and distinguish itself from all voices and groups convinced of the futility of the democratic process and means. Within the latter, the idea of using force is becoming more popular.

### **A commentary on the situation of the Catholic Church**

The Venezuelan ecclesiastical authorities do not appear ready to get actively and positively involved in the present political situation in Venezuela. The Episcopal conference is dominated by feelings of fear caused by uncertainty about the future, and overcome by the phantom of a political regime, like the Cuban, which restricts the presence and work of the Church to a minimum. This puts the Church on the defensive, causing it to lie low, and view the government as a gigantic threat with which it has to come to an agreement in order to survive.

The number of lay expert advisors in different specialised fields has diminished notably, weakening the consistency of Episcopal opinions in various distinct areas such as theology and pastoral care. In the field of education it has not developed a fluid relationship with the Venezuela Association of Catholic Schools (AVEC), which would facilitate the establishment of a shared strategy in an area of such importance and interest for the Catholic Church.

In addition, one must note with pain the poor social and political training of Bishops and the Clergy. The majority of them do not even want to hear about what is happening and react more emotionally than rationally, as would befit their role in society. The social circles frequented by the hierarchy and priests greatly influence their political responses and opinions.

There are hardly any real points of contact between the Church authorities and the government. Those that do exist take place regionally rather than nationally. The government presents the image of a divided Church, portraying a peoples' Church in conflict with an oligarchic Church, similar to what happened in Central America in the 1980s.

Cardinal Urosa has demonstrated an astonishing ability to remain calm in the face of government attacks and has insisted on the need for respectful dialogue between the Church hierarchy and the government. The same approach was pursued by the Apostolic Nuncio, Monsignor Giacinto Berlocco.

The life of religious Orders in Venezuela is also very scattered; these orders are focussed on the problems and works of each congregation. The role of CONVER-Secorve (the Venezuelan Conference of Religious - the Venezuelan Commission of

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<sup>9</sup>In Peru, at the beginning of Alan Garcia's presidential mandate, a similar law was recently approved. A precedent in Latin America put forward by a government more right-wing than left-wing.

Justice and Peace of the Joint Secretariat of Religious) has weakened and its commitment to common projects and works of the Church and religious has diminished. The apostolic and witnessing presence of religious among the poor has been reduced. Like the rest of society, members of religious congregations are politically polarised.

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## Conversion in India Suguna Ramanathan<sup>1</sup>

**Rudolf Heredia**, *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, New Delhi, Penguin, 2007. pp 386.

*This review was initially written for Indian readers, but realising that the readership would be different with Promotio, I began by clarifying some terms and ended by writing more than I had anticipated. I need to state clearly at the outset that I am an Indian and a Hindu. My connection with the Christian faith goes back a long way. Educated in the 1950s at a Church of England school in Mumbai, I heard readings daily from the magnificent King James Bible, sang hymns from The English Hymnal, and took Scripture as a subject for my school-leaving examination. I was deeply drawn very early on to Christianity and the figure of Jesus Christ. Much later came the link with the Jesuits. From 1970-2002 I taught English at St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad, and also, for some time, at Premal Jyoti, the seminary opposite the college. I have no words to describe my inwardness with the Society of Jesus and my relationship with the Jesuits; they have become in some sense my family.*

**T**he timing of the volume under review is precisely right. The issue of religious conversion in India today is a weapon in the hands of political parties which need to prove either their secular credentials or their cultural nationalism, while in the larger world phrases like the 'clash of civilisations' and 'the axis of evil' point to seemingly irreconcilable differences. This meticulously researched volume takes us through the historical process and sociological repercussions of encounters between different religions in India, and the problems surrounding the issue of conversion from one to another. Important as this study is to Indian readers in the Indian context, it is also, I believe, of unique interest to readers in the West, particularly to Western religious, in its articulation of the bewilderingly complex Indian religious scene. Fr Heredia, as a Jesuit, is convinced of his evangelical calling, but he illuminates the complexity caused by entrenched religious positions, perceptions of changing demographic contours and colonial history.

The religious diversity of India can be mind-boggling. Which major faith, with the exception perhaps of Confucianism and Shintoism, has not found its way to these shores to become part of the cultural tapestry here? Conversion to proselytising religions has gone on for centuries. Till about 40 years ago this was not seen as a problem. But now it is. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called for a

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debate on conversion in 1998,<sup>2</sup> and some states have passed (or revoked) 'Freedom of Religion' Bills to restrict this 'changing of gods' process.<sup>3</sup>

I have begun by putting last things first. Heredia begins by quoting Nehru who, when asked by Andre Malraux 'What is been your greatest difficulty since Independence?' replied 'Creating a just society by just means, I think... Perhaps too, creating a secular State in a religious country.' The Indian Constitution is evidence of the effort that went into determining the creation of that secular State. The word 'secular' carries a slightly different charge in India; it is not the binary opposite of 'religious' but connotes a rejection of bias against any religion and the equality of all. This was Nehru's vision. Himself a Fabian Socialist for a while, he was not religious in any traditional sense. He simply wanted the different religions to be on the same level, treated with respectful indifference by an impartial State and judiciary. But by the time we were well into the sixties the groundswell of resentment against conversion from Hinduism, which is not itself a proselytising religion, had begun.

As I write this review I wonder what sense the Abrahamic religions (Karen Armstrong's phrase for Judaism, Christianity and Islam) can make of India's dominant religion, Hinduism, with its proliferation of myths, gods with a thousand names (*sahasranaama*), elaborate philosophy, no central creed and its undeniably discriminatory social practices. Theologians have been more comfortable with Buddhism; here at least there is a founder and an articulated creed. But Hinduism? Theology is precluded because the transcendent remains unnamed, unknowable, leaving nothing to be said. In the place of theology, there is only philosophical inquiry and a vibrant mythology. The gods are both there and not there, present if you need to be consoled, but ready to merge into the formless transcendent for the intellectualising seeker. An ancient Rg Vedic hymn, pondering the origins of creation, asks 'Who really knows?'; then says 'He who is in highest heaven, He surely knows'; then adds 'Or again, maybe He does not know.'<sup>4</sup> There is here a clear recognition that all one can do is stutter: *tat tvam asi* (That thou art). That is all. One understands how puzzling this must be to those brought up in the Semitic faiths, where such a degree of uncertainty about God is unacceptable. This philosophical premise coexists with a plethora of deities imagined in multiple forms whom one may turn to if one so desires. Written into this is the understanding that there is no single way to Truth; no belief in one single form or decree. Proselytising is thus irrelevant. Islam and Christianity (which rest on the entirely different assumption

<sup>2</sup>This was said in the course of a visit to the Dangs district in Gujarat, a tribal area where there had been an attack on Christian churches. Vajpayee, Prime Minister at the time, is the gentler, more moderate face of the right wing Bharata Janta Party (BJP), which was then in power at the Centre. At present there is a coalition government at the Centre in which the secular minded Congress and the Left are partners, while in the state of Gujarat, the BJP is still in power.

<sup>3</sup>The Freedom of Religion Bill was first passed in the state of Tamil Nadu (it was subsequently rolled back); it has been passed in the state of Rajasthan, while in Gujarat it awaits the signature of the Governor. The Bill requires any person wishing to convert from his/her faith to another to report to the local government official before conversion; it prohibits the use of force, fraud and 'allurement' by the converters. Mass conversions in particular are suspect. Conversions from Hinduism to Buddhism do not require such scrutiny, as Buddhism and Jainism are officially regarded as offshoots of Hinduism (though not, it must be noted, by the practitioners of the said faiths). Muslims constitute roughly 18 per cent and Christians two per cent of the population.

<sup>4</sup>*Nasadaya Sukta*, Rg Veda X, 129.

that history was changed by the appearance of a single figure incarnating Truth), Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and the animistic beliefs of tribal groups, also make up the religious fabric of the nation.

It seemed necessary to give this drastically simplified picture to highlight the context in which Fr. Heredia lives and moves and has his being. It is to his eternal credit that he has set aside the usual non-comprehending position adopted by (Western) Christians, examined Hindu religious thought, appreciated its inherent and extraordinary inclusiveness at a time when the rise of right wing fundamentalism has left liberals aghast, and, acknowledging in his Preface 'the exclusiveness of some specifics of Christian beliefs', sought to carry forward what he calls 'positive universalism.' (xii).

At the heart of Fr. Heredia's study is an event (should we call it a parable?) that epitomises the problem in India. He tells us that after Vatican II a group of Catholic bishops went to Rishikesh and the Divine Light Ashram of which Swami Chidanand was then the Acharya.<sup>5</sup> In search of inter-religious dialogue, the bishops believed that this would be the place to make a start. They asked Swami Chidanand to speak to them. All he said was: "Brothers, I have only one question to ask you: are you as willing to be converted to us as you expect us to be willing to be converted to you?" Whereupon, says Heredia, there was silence and confusion (p.253). The ungainsayable fact is that the problematic position of religions that believe in conversion vis a vis those that do not admits of no easy solution. The one believes that it is a duty to spread the Word; the other, waking up to the fact that its culture is under threat, resists strongly, through legislatures and, sadly in some cases, through violent attacks.

Conversion occurred on a large scale in ancient times when a ruler converted, for instance, Ashoka in India or Constantine in Europe. It may happen when an old meaning system breaks down; it may spread by the sword, or it may spread through missionaries who, persuaded of the truth they possess, want to pass it on; or conversion may be the recourse taken by an oppressed community to recover a sense of self-worth. The degree of agency on the convert's part will vary accordingly. What is true is that conversions based on vision and experience of the kind St Paul had on the road to Damascus are rare.

Fr. Heredia begins with history. Setting the scene with a reference to 'the enduring encounter between living religious traditions which India so uniquely affords' (p.46), he traces in a chapter titled 'From the Past to the Present' the paths by which these different traditions have come to occupy their present positions in this country, recording the political compulsions that accompanied and governed their fortunes. He points to religious nationalism as a weapon used to resist colonialism, and notes the rise of a nationalism more Hindu than Indian (p.93) among the Hindu Right even in Nehru's cabinet. He tackles head on the changes in culture and demography that conversion may bring about, but asks whether or not the convert has the right to free herself of a stigmatising identity. He mentions the Niyogi Report of 1956 against conversion in Madhya Pradesh, and remarks that no mention is made of Niyogi's

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<sup>5</sup>*Acharya* means learned preceptor.

own conversion to Buddhism, following the example of Ambedkar (p. 81),<sup>6</sup> who was arguably the most famous convert from Hinduism in contemporary India

Two questions are thus seen to haunt the conversion issue: The first is this: what is to be done when what the evangelising party sees as duty, the non-proselytising party sees as invidious social change for political purposes? The second is whether a person has the right to choose, to escape from a humiliating identity and embrace another, in which case evangelisation is a duty.

Why might one convert? Ideally it would be because one is convinced of the sacredness and truth of what is being preached. Can mass conversion of a group occur through persuasion of precisely this, or is such conviction possible only through personal encounters? Mass conversion of a group generates suspicion that political considerations lie unacknowledged below the religious move. This cannot however be explained away so simply if the group in question is an oppressed group desiring a new identity. That desire has to be respected even if it comes mixed with a desire for economic benefits, better schooling and improved social position. Opponents may speak of the need to protect the group from fraud and allurements; supporters will speak of equality and freedom as expressive of the love of God. The fact that missionaries often position themselves on superior ground helps no more than the fact that 'custodians' of the culture being addressed react out of rage at being denigrated.

What of personal individual conversion? Fr. Heredia writes a chapter titled 'Personal Journeys' --four case studies of religious quest in an attempt to foster self-questioning and a readiness to listen to the concerns of others with sympathy. The figures are Ambedkar (whose conversion to Buddhism was for political liberation); Gandhi (who read the Christian scriptures with admiration and affection); Ramabai (a brahmin Sanskrit scholar who converted to the Church of England, an unusual step for a Hindu woman in the nineteenth century); and Nivedita (Margaret Noble, an Englishwoman who converted to Hinduism). Of these Ambedkar himself converted to Buddhism only months before he died though his quarrel with Hinduism had begun long years before, a fact that suggests the difficulty of *converting*, actually turning from one to another. Ramabai had a tortuous and complex relationship with not only her Hindu past but also her Anglican superiors who did not or could not answer her questions. Sister Nivedita's conversion to Hinduism was based, as she herself admitted, on great tides of personal love for Swami Vivekananda after his electrifying address at the Parliament of religions in Chicago (p. 210). She went to the extreme of espousing a Hindu national consciousness in which critical gender issues like child marriage and *satis* were subordinated to nationalism. These examples, shedding light on the disruptive influence of conversion, indicate Fr Heredia's honest facing up to an uncomfortable truth - that conversions based on personal conviction have tangled roots and are fraught with tension.

Of the four cases, Gandhiji's experience is treated in great detail and sympathy. Holding him up as an example of a person open to all cultures, yet rooted in his own

<sup>6</sup>Dr B.R Ambedkar, himself an 'untouchable' or dalit, was the undisputed leader of dalit assertion in India. The chief architect of the Indian Constitution, he converted to Buddhism a few months before his death as a protest against oppressive social practices sanctioned by Hinduism.

(calling for *atmaparivartan*, change of soul,<sup>7</sup> not *dharmantar* or change of religion), he attributes his well-known opposition to conversion to 'his fundamental faith in the adequacy of each religion for all those born into it' (p 173). He notes that for Gandhi, 'even oppression within one's religious tradition was not a sufficient reason for abandoning it. His response was to reform it' (p 179). Deep and equal respect for all religions, loving service to the last and least (p.173), and an ongoing spiritual quest marked his understanding of religion. His close friendship with the missionary C. F. Andrews notwithstanding, Gandhiji was wholly embedded in his own tradition, the worth of which he stressed as he led a nation under foreign rule towards freedom. To the beauty of the story of that man of sorrows acquainted with grief, to the essence of the Sermon on the Mount, Gandhi fully opened himself, but he never gave up the notion of *rama rajya*; he simply equated it with the Kingdom of God. If the extent of Gandhiji's knowledge and love of the New Testament comes as a surprise, what is not so surprising is the fact that he advised Verrier Elwin, the missionary-turned-anthropologist, to give up conversion activities. Heredia returns to Gandhi's model of inter-religious encounter at the close of his book.

To the vexed issues of conversion, social change and the rise of religious nationalism Heredia offers the following, not altogether satisfactory answer.

*A constructive approach would be to create an encompassing unity, larger than the community, which will contain and restrain both, sectarianism and fanaticism within a just, democratic, secular state. (p. 123).*

But does this really work? Britain's policy efforts towards building a multi-cultural society have exactly this aim, but even a strong political will seems unable to deal with the complexities engendered by subterranean resentment, overt racism and social exclusion of a subtle kind. Granted India has a much longer history of multi-cultural living, but once political forces enter the religious picture, the colours change. Heredia points to the homogenising process currently overtaking Hinduism in the name of cultural nationalism; its capaciousness, he suggests, is under erosion in an agenda that seeks to emphasise differences, not reconcile them. Political forces in the last 35 years have been set on hardening the edges of this decidedly amorphous culture, drawing boundaries around the nameless and formless, using mythology to stir up atavistic loyalties and garnering votes. The discovery that religious imagery can arouse passion was eagerly seized on by political forces, and fundamentalism, so alien to a religion that has no central logos (something Derrida would appreciate), reared its head. It is no coincidence that opposition to conversion activities comes mainly from members of the 'upper' castes, who watch the empowering of the converted 'lower' castes with dismay and reluctance.

If proselytising is one tricky problem that emerges from this study, the other is caste, that blot on Hindu social life. Caste dies hard. The memory of caste is so strongly embedded in the Indian psyche that nothing, not even conversion to another religion, seems capable of eradicating it from the minds of those at the top of the pyramid; an endowed sense of superior identity that comes free with birth is

<sup>7</sup>*Metanoia* comes closest as a translation.

clearly not easily discarded.<sup>8</sup> Thus the social arrangements to ensure not only the economic survival of the group but unaltered power sharing continue to plague the consciousness of even those who want to be morally good, or, for those who fight shy of such language, politically correct. The egalitarianism decreed by Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam could not counter, have not countered, this practical arrangement of inherited occupation – primarily a social and economic arrangement, but sanctioned over a thousand years ago by the *shastras*<sup>9</sup> of brahmin commentators, still considered authoritative sources. For a religion that has no central book, no church, whose gods are themselves, according to mythology, not of the highest brahmin caste, the rules of purity and pollution are pre-eminently social rules, having little to do with transcendental realities.<sup>10</sup> That the egalitarian creeds offered by conversion cannot dissolve them either is evident from the discrimination faced by dalit Christians, dalit Sikhs and dalit Muslims in the faiths to which they have converted,<sup>11</sup> discrimination that comes from their fellow converts. Heredia takes account of this when he remarks:

*Addressing the humiliation and oppression of caste will require more than religious change, whether by conversion or reform (p. 238).*

Going on to contested issues in all religions, he sets against Hinduism's inclusiveness its basic apathy towards social inequalities and its new found intolerance of other religious faiths; against Christianity's egalitarianism its sense of the elect, and against the rich ethnic diversity of Islam its homogenising tendencies. Pan-Islamic fundamentalism as an international phenomenon, he says, is a political reaction against the aggression of the modern western world. (p.283). This willingness to interrogate each religious tradition, showing how the cultural and political overgrowth blocks a pure central vision of the good, is admirable. Heredia

<sup>8</sup>Caste is an occupational group into which one is born, a marker of identity in a hierarchical social order. What makes it so difficult to step away from is that it has a quasi-religious sanction reified by Brahmin commentators of the third century of the Common Era. Brahmins, anxious not to lose their secure place at the pinnacle of the caste pyramid, and prevent encroachments on their hereditary occupation as priests, set out a set of highly discriminatory rules to safeguard 'purity' and avoid 'pollution'. Economic and political considerations lay at the bottom of these rules, but their authority remained unchallenged, with few exceptions, till the twentieth century. The link with religion is governed by social practice as determined by brahminical i.e. priestly decree. The gods themselves, it may be noted, are not Brahmins; Krishna, for instance, is a Yadava,, a tribe now classed among Other Backward Classes. Entry to temples was traditionally denied to dalits, the lowest in the caste ladder. The government made the ban on temple entry a punishable offence soon after Independence in 1947. The Dalit Atrocities Act now empowers the dalits to seek legal redress if verbal or physical abuse is directed at them. It may be noted that the dalits now have a political party, the Bahujan Samaj led by their leader Mayawati, a woman who is now Chief Minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh.

<sup>9</sup>Authoritative texts

<sup>10</sup>In a poignant tale (not mentioned by Heredia) a 'low caste' devotee called Kanakadasa is not allowed to enter the Krishna temple in Udipi but has to stand outside to catch a glimpse of the idol through a back window. Legend has it that the figure of Krishna turned so that his profile could be seen by Kanakadasa, and the figure in the temple retains that stance to this day. The gods themselves could not, or would not, or did not, change these arrangements.

<sup>11</sup>For example, the provision of separate cemeteries for dalit and non-dalit Christians in the state of Tamil Nadu.

argues for an open space, a common ground which alone can go some way towards exploring, if not resolving, differences in a spirit of good tempered dialogue -- an imperative in a multi-religious country like India as well as in an increasingly multicultural world.

Fr. Heredia is sensitive to the radical discontinuity that comes with conversion, that wrenching pulling up of roots and the puzzlement that goes into making the history of another group one's own (What, one might ask, has the prophet Amos to say to a congregation in Nadiad or Villapuram?<sup>12</sup>). He admits too that 'conversion unsettles group boundaries and threatens the status quo' (p. 122). But he says unequivocally that those converting also have rights that needs must be respected. He asks 'Should borders between religious communities be porous or sealed?' (p. 145). The answer seems to lie in the liminal space between two grounds: fear that conversion may destroy a community's unique cultural identity (p. 147), and the wish for an open, inclusive understanding of religion (p. 145). Acknowledging that legislation can partially restrain antagonism between communities, he says that conversion puts tolerance within and between communities to the test. If opponents to conversion are called upon to be tolerant, the proponents of conversion must in turn show respect for the vulnerability of the groups they seek to convert. The limits of tolerance, he goes on to say, must be set up within a regime of human rights (p. 315). Dialogue alone (on the lines of Habermas's 'right speech situation'?) can bring about a rapprochement. Coining an effective phrase, he calls for 'religious disarmament' as a prerequisite for meaningful dialogue. In his concluding chapter, a section on Faith and Reason offers eleven *sutras* (or aphorisms), and admits that 'our underlying presuppositions are not subject to reason so much as socially derived from the "unconscious ideologies" of the status quo and fundamental options of vested interests.' (p. 339). In the light of this, does his 'solution' of a global, universal ethic appear plausible? As a model for reality, I would say, yes. But when I consider how our days are spent in hardening positions and refusing to listen to one another, I wonder. The world appears to be tilting away from disarmament of any kind, religious or otherwise.

Finally, a word about the style. Such lucid English, used with such a sense of the rightness of phrasing is rare indeed. Language such as 'In this uncertain and unforgiving world, religion becomes a place of refuge...' (p. 99) points to a sensibility that is alive to more than meets the analytical eye.

The fact that Fr. Heredia, a Jesuit sociologist, does not overstress the fact that missionaries come with 'good news' which they want to share, a transcendental truth located in a single person in history, is a sign of his refusal to be partisan or defensive, of his sensitiveness to other claims, and his desire to find a way of co-existing without rancour. His approach is that of a social scientist, not of a theologian; his case is argued through reason; at the same time there is recognition that there are reasons of which reason itself knows nothing. He pleads with passion for a common global ethic (p. 145), for whatever can enhance human dignity (p.137), for an 'overarching commonality' (p. 345). Rudolf Heredia handles the subject with

<sup>12</sup>Nadiad is a small town in the state of Gujarat, Villapuram in Tamil Nadu.

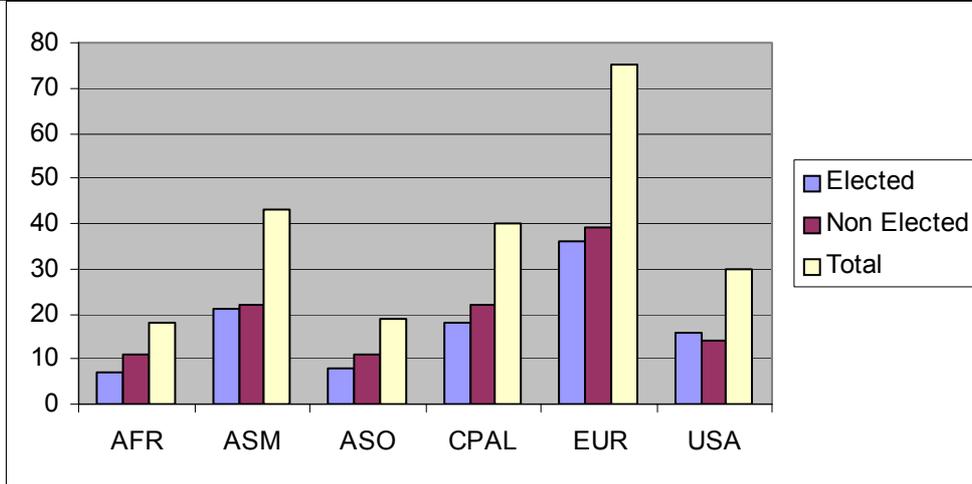
great sensitivity and understanding. If ever there was a sane voice that went beyond clichés to offer a model of dialogue for these turbulent times, this is it.

A sane attitude; such a sane, beautifully modulated voice. A pelican in the wilderness? I hope not. If we want to survive, if we want our immensely rich cultural tapestry to remain intact, we need to read this book.

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# Review

| <b>GENERAL CONGREGATION 35</b>   |             |             |            |                    |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------------|
| Conference                       | Elected     | non-elected | Total      | % of total members |
| Africa and Madagascar (AFR)      | 7           | 11          | 18         | 8.0                |
| South Asia (ASM)                 | 21          | 22          | 43         | 19.1               |
| East Asia (ASO)                  | 8           | 11          | 19         | 8.4                |
| Latin America and Caribbean CPAL | 18          | 22          | 40         | 17.8               |
| Europe EUR                       | 36          | 39          | 75         | 33.3               |
| United State of America USA      | 16          | 14          | 30         | 13.3               |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>106</b>  | <b>119</b>  | <b>225</b> | <b>100</b>         |
| <b>% of total members</b>        | <b>47.1</b> | <b>52.9</b> | <b>100</b> |                    |



| <b>APOSTOLATE- WISE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS TO THE GENERAL CONGREGATION 35</b> |             |             |             |            |            |            |            |            |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Conference   | Education   | Formation   | Gover.      | Pastoral   | Social     | Spiritual  | other      | Total      |
| AFR  | 4           | 4           | 10          |            |            |            |            | 18         |
| ASM  | 8           | 3           | 21          | 3          | 6          | 1          | 1          | 43         |
| ASO  | 5           |             | 12          | 1          |            |            | 1          | 19         |
| CPAL   | 7           | 6           | 24          | 1          | 1          | 1          |            | 40         |
| EUR  | 11          | 9           | 41          | 2          | 5          | 5          | 2          | 75         |
| USA  | 8           | 5           | 14          | 1          |            | 1          | 1          | 30         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>43</b>   | <b>27</b>   | <b>122</b>  | <b>8</b>   | <b>12</b>  | <b>8</b>   | <b>5</b>   | <b>225</b> |
| <b>% of total</b>  | <b>19.1</b> | <b>12.0</b> | <b>54.2</b> | <b>3.6</b> | <b>5.3</b> | <b>3.6</b> | <b>2.2</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Note:** These figures must be taken only as indicative. There are many members who may be engaged in more than one apostolate

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