

**LIBERATION THEOLOGY:
A PRODUCT OF THE COLD WAR**

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Foreword

Third World development and particularly African development has been my concern most of my adult life. Instead of constantly turning to the past and accusing the west for our misfortunes, choosing to be responsible of our own destiny and finding a vision or method of development better adapted to our cultures and needs is the best thing to do.

It is undeniable that many of the crimes committed in Africa and other Third World countries still have grave consequences on our lives today, but our painful history should enrich our personalities and strengthen our determination to succeed.

Since the late fifties and early sixties (period of the independence of most African states) many development policies have been applied under the capitalist system of production in order to promote Third World development but unfortunately, the situation is still the same and in some cases it has worsened. By definition the capitalist system is one where a few people own the means of production and others have to work for them. This means that a relative few exploit many for their own private profits. Most inhabitants of Third World nations are exploited in this relationship. Recently India and China have experienced tremendous economic growth, their G.N.P (Gross National Product) have tripled over the last ten years¹. Does this mean life is better for all Indians or Chinese? As Bertell Ollman writes in his book *How to Take an Exam and Remake the World*, every time the G.N.P is used to prove that a country is doing better one should ask if this economic growth is experienced by all the citizens.

Considering these facts, should Third World nations continue to rely on development policies set up by capitalist nations? Can they really expect to achieve any significant development within the capitalist system of production? Obviously, there is a conflict of

¹ The World Bank, "GNP per Capita" (2000), taken from internet site <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/TLSF/theme_c/mod13/www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/modules/economic/gnp/chart2a.htm> August 20, 2007.

interest between capitalist and Third World nations. Capitalist nations need to maintain a certain amount of poverty in Third World countries in order to keep them dependent.

Communism as imported from Russia did not really appeal to Latin American and African countries. The economic reality which created the communist movement in Russia was not the same in many Third World nations. Many critics believe that what Third World nations need is an alternative vision different from the capitalist vision of development.

Beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century, an alternative appeared in Latin America: “Liberation Theology” became an important social movement:

This thesis will analyze the origins and development of this movement.

I’d like to thank the following Scholars for taking the time to answer my questions and clarify their analyses: William Blum, Michael Parenti, Roberto Martinez and Laennec Hurbon.

I’d like to thank particularly Professor Bertell Ollman for taking the time from his busy schedule at New York University to explain to me his own critical analysis on Third World alternatives of development. My meeting with him in New York was of great help.

My contacts with the Haitian, Mexican and Peruvian Communities in New York was also very informative, providing many descriptions of their experiences with “Liberation Theology” in their homeland before their immigration to New York.

Professor Francis Feeley, whom I admire and respect for his great knowledge on world history and politics, has been the supervisor of this work. I’d like to thank him for his time and precious advice.

Last but not least, I’d like to thank my family for their moral and emotional support.

INTRODUCTION

For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

-Nelson Mandela-

“Neo-liberal capitalism produces a systemic pauperization which is its *raison d’être*. Hence the discourse of economic development...represents a tautology, or self-fulfilling prophecy of circular logic, since poverty is produced by the same economic system that is supposed to cure it.” Arturo Escobar², 1995

Colombian anthropologist and writer, Arturo Escobar, has pointed out that the capitalist system does not provide a uniform development. Its consequences on human, social, economic and environmental activities have been devastating for a large majority of the world’s citizens. Third World nations are the first victims of these failures in the capitalist system. Poverty and insecurity in those regions of the world have been growing despite the activities of numerous development programs and aid agencies. Indeed, most development programs are implemented by western nations, capitalist nations, the same nations which claim to “cure” poverty as Escobar remarks. If Third World countries cannot be developed under the capitalist system, then what is the alternative vision for their development?

“Liberation Theology” in the late sixties emerged from a religious and political context in Latin America. It’s a movement whose origins go back to the early 19th century and defines itself as the movement of poor and oppressed people. The Catholic Church in 1891 with Pope Leo XIII decided to support the poor in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* where he condemns Capitalism and its failures. “Liberation Theology” ’s main purpose as its name clearly mentions, is to free people, in particular the poor, from their oppressed condition and ultimately create an equal society.

Many other movements have tried to provide an alternative vision for a uniform economic development. The most famous of them is certainly the socialist movement which also gives priority to the poor and the working class. “Liberation Theology” was inspired by certain notions of communism and Marxist philosophy.

² Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. (Princeton: N.J, Princeton University Press,1995) 290.

Latin American “Liberation Theology” as an alternative for Third World development represents an original social theory. Unlike communism, this political philosophy emerged in agricultural regions of Latin America. It became an important movement during the United States’ campaign against “Communism” in those regions. Can “Liberation Theology” be considered a product of the U.S-inspired Cold War? Would “Liberation Theology” have occurred if the United States had not launched a campaign against Communism at the end of the Second World War? Does “Liberation Theology” represent a realistic alternative vision for Third World development?

In the first part of this work we will analyse the different stages of the evolution of “Liberation Theology”, from the early denunciations of the capitalist system by the Catholic Hierarchy to its establishment as a theological and social movement in the 1960’s. Indeed, from **Leo XIII** and his *Rerum Novarum* Encyclical in **1891**³ to the Second Vatican council in the 1960’s⁴, religious personalities have repeatedly condemned the capitalist system and its failures. The desire and the urge to establish a system with less social injustice has been the concern of many religious and political leaders. In this part of our work, we will create a chronology to delineate the development of this movement from the early stages of denunciation to the birth of “Christian Democracy” in Europe, and finally to Liberation Theology in **1968** at a time of revolutionary movements in Latin America. We will also attempt to analyse the political inspirations and the main objectives of “Liberation Theology” in this part.

The documents used here consist mainly of certain Encyclicals written by several Popes including Leo XIII, John XXIII, and Paul VI, to support poor Christians and condemn the

³ Rerum Novarum is an Encyclical published by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891. In the document, he talks about the situation of working classes and poverty. He condemns capitalism for not providing social justice to the people.

⁴ The second Vatican Council was opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. The council is an attempt to modernize the Catholic Church and redefine its role in bringing salvation to Christians on earth

harsh effects of the capitalist system. We will conclude Part I by analysing the writings of the first Latin American Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, Phillip Berryman, Jose Segundo, and Enrique Dussel.

After having described the different stages of evolution within “Liberation Theology” in the 1960’s we will turn in Part II to an analysis of the Catholic Church, its relationship with American Capitalism and describe the United States’ official reaction to “Liberation Theology”. The Catholic Church has indeed played contradictory roles as far as “Liberation Theology” is concerned. In a certain way, it contributed to the birth of the movement, but it was also one of its main opponents, along with the United States government.

The following questions will be considered in this part of our thesis: Why is it, that at specific periods in history the teachings and messages of the Catholic Church vary and are sometimes self-contradictory?

What were the possible causes of the change in the Catholic discourse on poverty? Why the sudden denunciations of the Capitalist system? In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII clearly says that “to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind.”⁵

Finally we will conclude part Part II by trying to answer the following questions: what did “Liberation Theology” really represent for the people, and for the established social and economic order? How did the campaign against communism contribute to the creation of

⁵ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) Paragraph 20.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/Encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html >, September 11, 2007.

“Liberation Theology”? What are the real reasons why the United States government and the Catholic Hierarchy were strongly opposed to Liberation Theology?

In the last part of this work we will consider “Liberation Theology” as a systemic alternative to Capitalism.

In doing so, explicit situations and examples that show how the capitalist system of production is not in harmony with any sustainable development will be given. The state of capitalism in the world will be examined in order to appreciate the extent to which capitalism has a hold on world economy and why it is really the main cause of world poverty and injustice. Finally at the end of Part III, the failures of development policies and the effectiveness of “Liberation Theology” with the example of Jean Bertrand Aristide⁶ will be discussed.

By way of conclusion I’ll point out that the United States’ campaign against communism in Latin America has contributed to the creation of “Liberation Theology” which is a strategy better adapted to the social, cultural and economic situations of Third World nations than Soviet Communism ever was.

In the appendices, reader will find six documents pertaining to our thesis, that “Liberation Theology” was the product of America’s “Cold war” against Communism.

<p>PART I: LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: ROOTS, METHOD, AND OBJECTIVES</p>

⁶ Jean Bertrand Aristide is a Liberation Theologian priest who has been Haiti’s President in 1996 and 2001. He has been the victim of two political coups during each term of his presidency.

"There is only one point of departure—a reality of social misery—and one goal—the liberation of the oppressed" – Leonardo Boff.

Guevara's Cross

*Christ, Born in Pampa
Christ of Guatemala
Christ of Guerrilla
Vengeful Christ, that chased the thieves from the Cuban temple
Christ crucified in Bolivia
And who in our souls lives
For eternity
Christ of freedom
Christ of peasants
And workers
The ball within their hearts
Christ of combatants
Men are what they do
And when you die
We resuscitate*

***Paul Laraque : La croix de Guevara, les Armes Quotidiennes, La Havane, 1979.
Translated by Author***

I- FROM RERUM NOVARUM TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY

A- From Rerum Novarum to Christian Democracy (1891-1896)

1- Context and Main Points of the Encyclical

“Wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this - that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine”⁷

In May 1891 Pope Leo XIII publishes his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It was an open letter addressed to all Catholic bishops. It discussed the relationships between government, business, labor, and the Church. It supported the rights of labor to form unions, rejected socialism and affirmed private property rights.

The need for the Catholic Church to intervene in the relationships between labour, government and business can be explained by the economic and social context of the 19th century.

The 19th century in Europe and the United States was a period of rapid economic and industrial growth. Industries such as telecommunications and railroads rapidly evolved and the economy was boosted. However this economic growth was achieved at the expense of the working class. In the first half of the 19th Century the working class in the newly industrializing countries of England and Germany suffered under many forms of exploitation. The old feudal restrictions⁸ which had fixed peasants in place on the land and limited their income had also guaranteed them a place to live. Even if they were not

⁷ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) 20.

<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/Encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html>, September 11, 2007.

⁸ Feudalism is a political and social system of medieval Europe, in which vassals received land from overlords in exchange for armed warriors and other services. Peasants lived and worked on the land owned by the nobles who did not have the right to remove them from the land without the consent of the peasant.

wealthy, they were often able to fend off starvation and homelessness simply because they had been born onto estates from which they could not be removed against their wills.

The dissolution of this old order meant that workers could be hired and fired at will and had to sell their labour for whatever the rate was--and that rate was determined by their competition with each other to work cheaply enough to gain them an advantage in the job market. Women and children were absorbed into the work force as well, often preferred because they cost much less than men. Living standards and educational levels declined in many areas. Very soon, workers found themselves in a situation of extreme poverty.

The workers were vulnerable; the industrials knew this fact and exploited the situation. Their financial insecurity prevented them from forming organisations to defend their rights. As Louis Meignen said in his book *Histoire de la Révolution Industrielle et du Développement*, "... repression exercised by firing employees, the fear of the established power, and the police did not allow any worker organisation to exist."⁹

One other aspect of the 19th century society is the role and the importance of the Church. It occupied a central place and was sometimes more powerful than governments. The Catholic Hierarchy was conscious of this fact, and with the rising poverty in the working class, Pope Leo XIII decided it was the duty of the Church to try and bring a solution to the situation. He considered "[...] that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class".¹⁰

⁹ Louis Meignen, *Histoire de la Révolution Industrielle et du Développement* (Presse Universitaire de France, 1996) 26.

¹⁰ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, (Vatican City: 1891) 3.
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/Encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html> September 10, 2007.

Even though the Catholic Church has always given a spiritual explanation to poverty, it now considers that it would be inappropriate to explain to all those workers living in miserable conditions that this was God's plan for them. Instead, the Pope clearly accuses the wealthy owners of capital:

[...] the present age handed over the workers, each alone and defenceless, to the inhumanity of employers and the unbridled greed of competitors... the whole process of production as well as trade in every kind of goods has been brought almost entirely under the power of a few, so that a very few rich and exceedingly rich men have laid a yoke almost of slavery on the unnumbered masses of non-owning workers.¹¹

The Pope accuses the capitalist system for its lack of social justice and its role in creating so much misery.

Leo XIII admitted the right of workers to form associations to protect their rights. The need for more social justice was clearly expressed, and this document is the beginning of innovations in the ideology of the Catholic Church; an institution which has usually been supportive of the ruling class.

Rerum Novarum laid the grounds for Christian Democracy, a political movement born in Europe at the end of the 19th century.

2- Christian Democracy

¹¹ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* 20.

Christian Democracy is a movement that tries to promote within a democratic and pluralistic society, a policy in conformity with the texts of the evangel, the social doctrines of the Churches and the works of great Christian writers.¹²

The movement first appeared in Europe in the late 19th century. Even though it took diverse shapes in different European countries, the main issues that all Christian democrats agreed on are “the alleviation of poverty, the welfare state, and if necessary the restraint of market forces.”¹³

They defend human rights according to the Bible and the evangel. It appeared as an original political movement in the 19th century where the economic and political environment had been bipolarised by capitalism and socialism. The innovation brought by Christian Democracy, is that the leaders of this movement considered religion as a source of inspiration for political action.

The first political party that identified itself as a Christian democratic party was born in France in **1896**. One of the great authors who contributed to the formation of Christian Democracy in France is Emmanuel Mounier.¹⁴

The movement rapidly spread through Europe and Latin America, especially in Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela and Brazil. Before the Second World War, a few Christian democratic parties existed in Latin America but their activities or actions were not very important.

However in 1964, the Democratic Party of Chile founded in 1937 won the Presidential elections with **Eduardo Frei**¹⁵. This victory encouraged many other Latin American

¹² Pierre Letamendia, « Démocratie Chrétienne », Internet site <<http://www.universalis-edu.com/corpus2.php?napp=&nref=E953141>> September 11,2007

¹³ Pierre Letamendia, « Démocratie Chrétienne », Internet site <<http://www.universalis-edu.com/corpus2.php?napp=&nref=E953141>> September 11,2007

countries and the exercise of political and social actions within the religious frame amplified.

B- From Christian Democracy to Liberation Theology in Latin America (1896-1964)

1- Political and Religious Context in Latin America in the 1960's-1970 and the Birth of "Liberation Theology"

The sixties and seventies in Latin America were a period of political and religious revolutionary change.

The **Cuban revolution** in 1959-60 was well under way with **Che Guevara** fighting for a socialist reform.

In 1972, 400 Latin American priests, nuns and laymen met in Santiago, Chile to launch the organization "**Christians for Socialism**". It's a religious political party where Christians confirm their association to a left wing party. When the Catholic hierarchy reacted against the movement, ED Grace, Editor of a "Christian for Democracy" European news service in Europe explained that "in many countries the Catholic Church is an ally of centre-right political institutions and shares their economic interests. Because of this

¹⁴. Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) was a French philosopher born in Grenoble. His books include *L'Affrontement Chrétien*.

¹⁵ Eduardo Nicanor Frei Montalva (1911-1982) was an important political figure in Chile. During the 1964 election, the CIA, fearing an Allende victory, moved to intervene in Chile's internal affairs by providing a financial support to Eduardo Frei who presented himself as a Christian Democrat.

political involvement, the Church is in no position to throw any stones at Christians voting for left-wing parties.”¹⁶

In Nicaragua in the late seventies (1979), the National Sandinista revolution inspired by General Augusto Sandino overthrew the dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty¹⁷ supported by the United States.

All these revolutions were prompted by the poverty and misery of the populations. There was a need for change, and the actual powers, usually accomplices of the International order of Capitalist rule, contributed to the exploitation of Latin American resources and labour.

Because of these revolutions, many military regimes were instituted with help from the United States in order to fight the Guerrillas and control the people and the natural resources. In the Cold War context, the United States could not afford to let socialist or communist governments exist in Latin America, a few kilometres away from its borders. Thus from the 1960's through the 1980's, many Latin American countries, were governed by military regimes sponsored by the US. **Che Guevara** and many other leaders of revolutionary change had international warrants issued against them. Even within the United States any person considered a member of the Communist Party was persecuted and sometimes imprisoned or simply killed. It was the case with **Angela Davis**, an African American who joined the Communist Party in 1968.

Paul Laraque a Haitian poet, whose country Haiti was also going through some major changes, writes an original piece of poetry in support to Angela Davis which describes the

¹⁶Penny Lernoux, *Christian for Socialism Challenge Catholicism and Communism*. Article published by the Nation (New York: 1976). Internet site<<http://www.aliciapatterson.org/APF001976/Lernoux/Lernoux03/Lernoux03.html>> September 11, 2007.

¹⁷ The Somoza Dynasty lasted from 1936 to 1980.

political context and the meaning of the revolutionary movements to the Latin American people.

There are words¹⁸

To Angela Davis, actually in judgement for the double crime of being communist and black

*There are words that shine
Like torches in the darkness of the forest
There are words that make the rivers rise
There are words that open the doors of history like a key
**There are words that bend the arc of revolution
And arm the people with the arrows of victory***

*There are words, sweet to our lips
Like a woman's mouth
And which go through our hearts like a love spear
White Christ or black virgin
The executioner are fiercely dressing your cross
**They want to cut the rose of hope
But can't turn off the sound of your voice***

*There are words
That heals the wounds
Caused by other words
There are words
As sharp as knives
Only actions realises the dreams of poetry.*

¹⁸ Paul Laraque, *Les Armes quotidiennes* (La Havane : 1979). Translated from French to English by Author.

This constant campaign led by the United States in Latin America against socialist and communist parties has pushed the rural citizens in those regions to look for a social doctrine that was neither capitalist nor exactly Communist.

The changes in the Latin American society were not only political but also religious.

The sub-continent is the Third World region where there's the highest number of Christians¹⁹ (see Appendices A&B). Some members of the 1972 organisation "Christians for Socialism" took part in the revolutionary movements.

Along with the active participation of Christians in the revolutionary movements, several other religious events contributed to the foundations of "Liberation Theology" in Latin America.

Forty years after *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI in 1931 wrote another Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, in which once again the question of social justice was the main issue.

He considered that in the late 19th century:

[...] the new kind of economic life that had arisen and the new developments of industry had gone to the point in most countries that human society was clearly becoming divided more and more into two classes. One class, very small in number, was enjoying almost all the advantages which modern inventions so abundantly provided; the other, embracing the huge multitude of working people, oppressed by wretched poverty, was vainly seeking escape from the straits wherein it stood.²⁰

In **1962** Pope John XXIII started the second Vatican Council which was officially closed in 1965. The main ideas of the council were the need to modernize the Church and the role

¹⁹ Fifty years ago, more than 90 percent of Latin Americans were Catholic with Brazil as the world largest Catholic community. See statistics on Christian population in the legend, figure 1&2.

²⁰ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno, On The Reconstruction Of The Social Order...*(1931): Paragraph 3. Internet site < http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/Encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html> September 12, 2007.

of bishops and priests in bringing social justice to the people. It brought a strong emphasis on ecumenism and a new approach to the world as explained in these words:

Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.²¹

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) is the Culmination of a process of “modernization” in the Catholic Church and of a “theology of development”. According to Elina Vuola’s interpretation of the Vatican II, the Church should defend Human rights, and authority lines within the Church have to be withdrawn in order to give more responsibility to the laity. The Church should also actively promote social justice as an integral part of its mission.²²

In 1967 another Encyclical by Pope Paul VI named *Populorum Progressio* critiqued the international economic order and even explicitly condemned the capitalist system for the social evils: “[It is a system] ... which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation”.²³

All these documents, from *Rerum Novarum* to the latest Encyclical show clearly that the Church had started a process where it appeared to be disassociating itself from the

²¹ John XXIII, Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965): Paragraph 2.
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html> September 11 2007

²² Vuola, Elina, *Limits of Liberation. Praxis as Method in Latin American Liberation Theology and feminist theology* (Finish Academy of science and Letters, 1997) 36-37

²³ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), Internet site
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/Encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html> September 12,2007.

capitalist economic and political order. Is it because they feared that with its failures the system was heading towards its own destruction, and the Church, if it keeps on supporting it might end up the same way? Could the capitalist system afford to lose such an old and important ally as the Catholic Church?

Well, the rest of the paper will bring answers to those questions but now, what we need to consider is that those changes in the political and religious environment paved the way for “Liberation Theology” to really establish itself in the late sixties.

2- Gutierrez, the Father of Liberation Theology

The ideas of the Second Vatican Council appeared as a sign to the Latin American priests and bishops. They understood they had a role to play in the modernization of the Church and in bringing social justice to the people. When the council was only condemning and accusing, they felt it was time to take things a step further.

At the Second Celam²⁴ Conference in Medellin in 1968, three years after the Second Vatican council was closed, “The bishops at the conference declared the situation of injustice to be a situation of **institutionalized violence** and the Church had been an accomplice in this situation.”²⁵ (Documents of Medellin 1969, pp.84-88)

²⁴ Celam stands for: Concejo Episcopal Latino Americano meaning, Council of Latin American Episcopate.

²⁵ *The Church in the Present-Day transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*, Medellin Documents, Vol 2, Conclusions, (1969): 84-88.

Poverty was the central theme at the conference, and the participants thought the Church should side with the poor in order to be more efficient in helping them. This idea was called the “Preferential option for the poor”; meaning the Church itself should become the Church of the poor.

After the Medellin conference, Gustavo Gutierrez published his book *A Theology of Liberation* in 1971. The concept of “Liberation Theology” was uttered for the first time in Chimbote, Peru by Gustavo Gutierrez himself in 1968.

He is considered the father of “Liberation Theology”, even though many other Latin American bishops such as Leonardo Boff²⁶ have also contributed with their writings to the establishment of this movement.

In his book, Gutierrez defines and explains the different roles of Theology. In the concept of Liberation Theology, the term theology should be defined as “**a critical reflection on historical praxis...**”²⁷ and it “must be man’s critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles.”²⁸

Theology as a critical reflection also refers “to a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community”²⁹

He then gives an original and interesting definition of what liberation should be. Indeed, Gustavo considers that the notion of development used as a solution to the situation in Third World countries is not appropriate and most development policies do not tackle the

²⁶Leonardo Boff was born in December 1938 in Concordia, Brazil. He is a theologian, philosopher and writer, known for his active support for the rights of the poor and excluded. His books include *Jesus christo Libertador-Ensaio de Cristologia critica para nosso tempo*, Petropolis, Vozes, 1972.

²⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York 10545: Orbis Books, Maryknoll , 1973) 15.

²⁸ Gutierrez 11.

²⁹ Gutierrez 11.

issue from the core. The notion “development” only takes in account economic figures and not the personal evolution of the individuals.

Liberation, on the other hand, brings awareness to the exploited citizens on their situation and they take action against the structures imposing poverty on them. They free themselves from their oppressed situation. The word *Liberation* “expresses the aspirations of oppressed people and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes.”³⁰

The word has a historical meaning since human beings have always freed themselves from different types of oppression and this concept implies that the person assumes a conscious responsibility for his own destiny.

The reason why the Catholic Church represents an appropriate source of inspiration for Liberation Theology is because the Bible in particular is seen as a source of liberation. In the Bible, “Christ is presented as the one who brings us liberation. “Christ the Saviour liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression”³¹. Christ has accepted humiliation to obtain freedom;

liberation theologian priests will only be following his footsteps in applying the “preferential option for the poor”. This means they would accept to leave the churches and go at the encounter of poor citizens in their environments.

In the name of the Bible, and in the name of Christ, Liberation Theology is legitimate to the Latin American people. More than normality, it becomes evident that it is the duty of the Catholic Church to help people free themselves from their oppressions and oppressors.

With the definitions of the different notions of theology and liberation, the concept “Liberation Theology” can be considered as a process where man takes responsibility for

³⁰ Gutierrez 36.

³¹ Gutierrez 47.

his won destiny by a critical reflection on his social, economic and cultural situation in respect of the word of the evangel. The aim of that reflection is freedom from oppression, all sorts of oppression which are sins according to the Bible.

Now that the definition of the movement is clear, what are the practical methods of Liberation Theology?

II- LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S POLITICAL INSPIRATION AND OBJECTIVES

A- Marxist Vision and Socialist Option

1- Marxist Vision

The Marxist philosophy was the one adopted by liberation theologians. They agree with Marx's famous statement: “ philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways- the point is to change it”³²

Most liberation theologians consider that their role is not to be theoreticians but practitioners engaged in the struggle to achieve society's transformation.

In order to bring about this transformation, they use a Marxist style class analysis which divides society between oppressors and oppressed.

³² Karl Marx, 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, edited by Engels and published in 1888.
Internet site < <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm> >
September 11, 2007.

This conflictual sociological analysis is meant to identify the injustices and exploitation within the historical situation. Marxism and Liberation Theology condemn religion for supporting the status quo by their inaction and legitimating the power of the oppressor.

The dialogue between Catholics and Marxism and the use of a Marxist style class analysis was facilitated by Pope John the 23rd in his 1963 Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. In the document he supported the idea “that the claim of truth in dogmatic matters should not be used to violate the respect due to persons; thus while doctrinally antagonistic, Catholics and Marxists as persons of good will could engage in respectful dialogue with one another”³³. Latin American priests were not the only ones who favoured this class style analysis. In France, in 1972 during the plenary assembly at Lourdes, the bishops declared:

The gospel law of love does not invite men to resign themselves to injustice...it’s a false theology of love that is invoked by those who would want to camouflage situations of conflict, to preach attitudes of collaboration confusedly, minimizing the reality of collective antagonisms of all sorts. Evangelic love demands lucidity in analysis and the courage of confrontations which allow progress really towards greater truth.

...Christians from various walks of life – workers, rural people, and intellectuals – express what they experience with the phrase “Class Struggle”. This expression represents for them a concrete situation which they have neither invented nor chosen.³⁴

³³ John 23rd, *Pacem Terris* April 11, 1963 taken from internet site <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/Encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html> September 12, 2007.

³⁴ *Pour Une pratique Chrétienne de la Politique* (Assemblée plénière de l’épiscopat français, Lourdes : 1972) Translation taken from Norman Ravitch’s book: *The Catholic Church and The French Nation*, (1990 Routedledge New York) 151

But unlike Marxism, liberation theologians found within the Christian faith, the means to bring liberation to oppressed people.

Even though liberation theologians used Marxist thought as a tool for social analysis, they argue that they are not opposing the ancient Christian tradition. They only adopt some tools of social analysis in the Marxist theory.

2- Socialist Option

As we said earlier in defining Liberation Theology, it is a movement that wants to bring social justice according to the teachings of the Bible. The priests and bishops thought they should be active and practical in helping the oppressed free themselves.

Liberation theologians have identified socialism as the political ideology that is best suited to their objectives. In association with a political movement, and one which was controversial in the 20th century, Liberation Theology as a movement encountered many critiques accusing the movement to ignore the religious grounds and engaging into politics. But as Gustavo Gutierrez says: “human reason has become political reason [...] “Nothing lies outside the political sphere...everything has a political colour. It is always in the political fabric and never outside of it that a person emerges as a free and responsible being.”³⁵

³⁵ Gutierrez 47.

Liberation theologians have often defended their positions in politics saying that doing politics is not their main objective but since human development can not be achieved outside the political frame, it is important that liberation theologians adopt a political ideology to help them achieve their goal.

However, in the international context of Cold War, they became a target for the United States which considered Liberation Theology an instrument of communism.

Indeed, after the Second World War, communism and capitalism were at conflict. Each ideology wanted to expand and promote its ideas in the world. In this fight to win more territories, the United States has managed to scare the American citizens on the supposed dangers of communism. The main difference between communism and capitalism is that communism is a “system of political and economic organization in which property is owned by the state or community and all citizens share in the common wealth, more or less according to their need”. Capitalism on the other hand is an economic system in which most of the means of production are privately owned, and production is guided towards private profit. (More elements on the Cold War and Capitalism will be seen further in the paper).

However, even though the ideological conflict between the United States and Russia was called the “Cold War” there were many human casualties of that conflict in Third World countries.³⁶ When liberation theologians declared their association with socialism³⁷, many

³⁶ The Vietnam War for instance was a “Cold War” conflict and thousands of people died during the war.

³⁷ Socialism is the stage between Capitalism and Communism. It builds upon the previous system (Capitalism) by nationalizing the "means of production" (i.e. corporations, resources, banks, etc.), but not by making everyone equal.

of them were arrested just like communists³⁸ were arrested in the United States during the Cold War.

Despite the persecutions, liberation theologians insisted that the socialist option was the best that would help them achieve their goals. Gutierrez believed “that a socialist system is more in accord with the Christian principles of true brotherhood, justice and peace... only socialism can enable Latin America to achieve true development...”³⁹

After identifying socialism as the method, the work of Paulo Freire⁴⁰ was essential in bringing critical education to the people. The priests and bishops who believed in Liberation Theology didn't just read the Sunday mass or take confessions anymore. They went to the villages, the cities, or towns to identify the needs of the people. They would then try to find practical solutions while educating these people in having a critical reflection on their situation. They created a model of Christian base communities⁴¹ different from the normal Church. Laymen were also used in this new exercise of the Christian Church.

³⁸Communism is the point where the state "withers away."

³⁹ Gutierrez 110-111.

⁴⁰ Paulo Freire is a Brazilian pedagogue who develops a philosophy of education that comes from modern Marxist and anti-colonialist thinkers. In fact, in many ways his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides a critical education based on the social, political and economic situations of the oppressed people.

⁴¹Christian base communities are a model of religious centres governed by Liberation theologian priests and usually located in the countryside.

B- LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S OBJECTIVES

1-Creating a "New Man"

That the movement was created as a reaction to the growing poverty is now evident. But is the fight against poverty the final goal of Liberation Theology? According to Gutierrez, the aim goes further than that. What liberation theologians hope to achieve is to create a "new man": Liberation Theology should lead to the "creation of a new man in a new society of solidarity."⁴²

This means changing the values of human beings in a way that the exploitation of others in order to obtain profit is no longer the main motive.

The capitalist society gives value to material profit and interest. A human person can only be valued according to the interest he or she represents for the society. If the capitalist society doesn't see any material interest in that person, if it is not possible to exploit that person and get something out of him, then the individual becomes valueless and an outcast. Capitalism and the pursuit of profit have shaped human relationships on all levels. What liberation theologians are offering is a new way to appreciate and value humans with the support of the gospel.

2-Religious and Socio-Political Change

Liberation theologians' objectives also include an innovation of the Catholic Church and a socio-political change.

⁴² Gutierrez 235.

When the bishops at the Celam say they want to be a “Church of the poor” this means among other things that the Church should renounce to living in luxury while the people it defends are living in an abject poverty. Liberation theologians believe that the orthodox doctrine of God tends to manipulate the image of God in favour of the capitalist social structure. They claim that orthodoxy has been dependent upon ancient Greek notions of God that perceived God as a static being who is distant and remote from human history⁴³. These distorted notions of God's transcendence and majesty have resulted in a theology which thinks of God as "up there" or "out there." Consequently the majority of Latin Americans and Third World citizens have become passive in the face of injustice and superstitious in their religiosity.

Liberation Theology stresses the belief that the mysteriousness of the reality of God is incomprehensible. God cannot be summarized in objectifying language or known through a list of doctrines. God is found in the course of human history. God is not a perfect, immutable entity, "squatting outside the world... He stands before us on the frontier of the historical future."⁴⁴ God is the driving force of history causing the Christian to experience transcendence as a "permanent cultural revolution" (Gutierrez). Suffering and pain become the motivating force for knowing God. The God of the future is the crucified God who submerges himself in a world of misery. God is found on the crosses of the oppressed rather than in beauty or power.

Any original theological vision tends, with the passage of time and through its own internal logic, to seek more formal expression. Liberation Theology always set out to re-examine the whole basic content of revelation and tradition in order to bring out the social and

⁴³ Hugo Assman, *Theology for a Nomad Church*, trans. Paul Burns. (London: Orbis Books, 1976) 87.

⁴⁴ Assmann 59.

liberating dimensions implicit in both sources. Again, this is not a matter of reducing the totality of mystery to this one dimension, but of underlining aspects of a truth that is particularly relevant to our context of oppression and liberation.⁴⁵ This process will bring about social change.

The absurdity of the actual interpretation of poverty in the Catholic religion lies in the fact that all these people dressed in wealthy gowns and living in rather wealthy conditions claim to understand the situation of poor people. In an ironic way they glorify this poverty and consider it a key to paradise. If living in poverty is really a VIP pass to paradise then why aren't all the priests and bishops living in poverty? Don't they want to go to paradise?

Liberation Theology hopes to change the teachings of the Church. These new teachings and new understanding of the gospel will create a "new man". A man who is aware of his material situation and knows he can do something about it; a man whose basic human values will be based on solidarity instead of exploitation. There shouldn't be oppressors or oppressed people but only people who collaborate, work together for their mutual well being.

This vision of a "new man" with new values is at the extreme opposite of the actual social political and economic order, thus the creation of a "new man" will definitely lead to political structural change.

⁴⁵ Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff, *A Concise History of Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis 1976) 95

CONCLUSION TO PART I

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII, concerned with the situation of workers during the 19th century industrial revolution wrote *Rerum Novarum*; an Encyclical which defends the poor workers and condemns the capitalist system for creating social injustice. The Encyclical is the beginning of a process of innovation within the Catholic Church that led to the creation of Liberation Theology in Latin America in 1968.

Liberation Theology as a religious and political movement defines itself as the critical reflection on praxis. Liberation theologians reflect on the way theory and practice can join together to bring social justice. Influenced by Marxism, they rely on social class analysis of society and adopt socialist methods in the practice of the movement. This practice led to the creation of Christian base communities where the role of priests and bishops is more active than what it used to be.

The main objective of this movement is to create a “new man” and to change the religious and political structures of the society.

**PART II: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AMERICAN CAPITALISM AND THE
UNITED STATES' OFFICIAL REACTION TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN
THE COLD WAR?**

My People

[...]

**Haiti can no longer be the world's private dancer,
begging at the corners of foreign policy,
while wallowing in the pool,
the basin of mental, social, political poverty.**

[...]

Some must have thought that we would cower and cringe,
but instead we took over their Brooklyn Bridge.
From all over the world we descended on Gracie Mansion in
New York City, to once again show the character and pride of
the people of Haiti.
We beat the voice of our drum for the deaf world to once again
hear, that we Haitian people did not have a fear
to fight like we did before
for independence and dignity in 1804,
dignity and respect, no matter what the price...
WE DID IT ONCE WE'LL DO IT TWICE!

Poem by Prosper Sylvain Jr taken from internet site

< <http://www.tanbou.com/2005/poetry.htm> > August 15th 2007

I- THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CAPITALISM

A- History of the Relationship between Capitalism and Religion

1- “The Preferential Option for the Rich”

The “preferential option for the poor” declared at the Celam conference by the Latin American bishops in 1968 is a revolutionary concept within the Catholic Church.

The Church has indeed always been more supportive and closer to the ruling and usually wealthy class than the poor. In the first centuries of its establishment in Europe, the Clergy had entertained privileged relationships with the noble and the Bourgeois. Priests and bishops were much more accessible to the wealthy middle class. In fact the poor and working class had been taught to consider GOD as a superior being and inaccessible. As a consequence the human representatives of GOD on earth acted in accordance with that idea. They had little contact with the mass and expected respect and adoration from the poor.

Members of the Catholic hierarchy usually live in comfort and luxury. The ancient and contemporary cathedrals and churches are usually exceptional buildings with exquisite architectures and very rich decorations. The Vatican Bank which manages the financial resources of the Catholic Church is a successful **and profitable** bank. By the 1990s, it had invested somewhere over US\$10 billion in foreign companies.⁴⁶ The institution was even involved in a money laundering scandal, a major political and financial scandal

⁴⁶ Charles Raw, *The Moneychangers: How the Vatican Bank Enabled Roberto Calvi to Steal 250 Million Dollars for the Heads of the P2 Masonic Lodge* (Harvill Press, 1992)48.

concerning the 1982 \$3.5 billion collapse of Banco Ambrosiano of which it was the **main share-holder**.

The Banco Ambrosiano was founded in Milan in 1896 by Monsignor Giuseppe Tovini, and was named after Saint Ambrose, the fourth-century archbishop of the city. Tovini's purpose was to create a Catholic bank as a counter-balance to Italy's "lay" banks, and its goals were "serving moral organisations, pious works, and religious bodies set up for charitable aims." The bank came to be known as the "priests' bank"; one chairman was Franco Ratti, nephew to Pope Pius XI. In the 1960s the bank began to expand its business, opening a holding company in Luxembourg in 1963 which came to be known as Banco Ambrosiano Holding.⁴⁷ Its main goal became secondary and the Bank's activity became comparable to any other bank: the pursuit of gain and profit.

The Vatican institution and administration is integrated into the capitalist economic system. The structure of the Vatican and its management clearly show a preferential treatment for the rich.

2- The Catholic Church: an Ally of the Capitalist System

Catholics interpretation of poverty has been favourable to the capitalist system, making the workers accept and even glorify their social condition. On many occasions the Catholic Church has made some confusing interpretation of certain notions in the Bible to serve capitalist interests or to assure its own survival.

⁴⁷ Raw 57.

It was the case during the colonisation when religion was used as an instrument to exploit the natives in Africa and especially in the Congo. This extract, taken from a communication given by the Belgium minister of colonies, Jules Renquin in 1920, shows how a conscious misinterpretation of the Bible can be made to serve certain purposes:

Dear bishops and compatriots, you are most welcome in our second nation, the Belgium Congo. The task that you are meant to accomplish here is a very delicate one and demands a lot of diplomacy. Dear fathers, you come in the Congo to Evangelise. But keep in mind that this Evangelisation has to follow our great principle: Every little thing you do, has to be done first and foremost for the interest of Belgium. Following that principle, you then understand that your mission is not to teach to the blacks how to know GOD. They know him already. They adore and worship their Gods, called NZRABE or MVINDI-MUKULU, and so on and so forth. They know that to kill, to steal, to lie, to insult...is bad. Let's have the courage to admit it: you did not come to Congo to teach them what they already know. **Your role is to make the administrative tasks easier for the industrials. This means that you will interpret the gospel in a way that serves best our interests in that part of the world.**⁴⁸

The minister continues by giving explicit examples of how the gospel should be interpreted:

[...] make sure our savages do not find any interest in the material resources that their soil abounds...Your knowledge of the gospel will help you **find the appropriate texts that recommend poverty and the love of poverty**. For instance: « happy are the poor for the kingdom of God belongs to them...Tell them that their statues are the devils works. Confiscate them and fill our museums of Tervurène of the Vatican.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jules Renquin, *L'avenir colonial Belge*, (Bruxelles : 30.10.1921), translated by author. <http://www.africamaat.com/article.php3?id_article=100> September 13, 2007.

⁴⁹ Renquin

When the bishops at Medellin decided that the Church should be the Church of the poor, they made poverty the central theme of the conference. The following questions needed to be answered: what is the biblical meaning of poverty? Isn't there confusion between spiritual and material poverty? What is the real cause of material poverty?

Gutierrez found two definitions to poverty: the first one is the dehumanizing lack of material goods, and the second one, the openness to God and commitment to solidarity.

According to him, there has been confusion on the meaning of the word poverty because the western theologians had spiritualised poverty. The first meaning of the word refers to material poverty which is the lack of economic goods necessary for a human being to survive decently. However, the Christian doctrine has "a tendency to give material poverty a positive value, considering it almost a human and religious ideal. It is seen as austerity and indifference to the things of the world and a precondition for a life in conformity with the gospel."⁵⁰ Is that what the Bible really means?

Gutierrez affirms that there is a clear explanation of poverty and its roots in the Bible and this explanation has nothing to do with the common interpretations. Poverty is a "scandalous condition inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to God's will."⁵¹

In the *New Testament* of the Bible, here is the description given to poverty:

The poor rise early like the wild ass,
When it's scours the wilderness for food;
But though they work till nightfall,
Their children go hungry.
[...]

⁵⁰ Gutierrez 289

⁵¹ Gutierrez 289

Naked and bare they go about their work and hungry they carry the sheaves;
They press the oil in the shade where two walls meet,
They tread the winepress but themselves go thirsty... (Job 24:2-12, 14)

This poverty that is described and condemned in the Bible has nothing to do with spirituality or fate. It is a condition caused by humans and the prophets in the Bible denounces it in these words:

You who make unjust laws
And publish burdensome decrees,
Depriving the poor of justice,
Robbing the weakest of my people of their rights,
Despoiling the widow and plundering the orphan... (Amos10:1-2)

In this passage poor people are described as victims of those who create social injustice. Poverty exists because some people are victims of others and the Bible acknowledges that. The poverty suffered by Latin Americans and other citizens of the world follow the same path as the one described in the Bible. Some people make the rules which create injustice for the masses.

In light of all those biblical references, we realise that the interpretation of poverty was not exact and it was in favour of the capitalist order.

B- Why the Sudden Reaction against the Capitalist System in 1891?

1- The Church: the Oldest Institution

The History of the Roman Catholic Church covers a period of more than two thousand years, making the Church one of the oldest continuously existing religious institutions in history.

If the Church has lasted so long, one of the main reasons is because it knows how to “market” itself in order to remain “alive”. It adapts its vision to the needs of people and the evolution of mentalities throughout history. Thus, the institution has convenient interpretations for different notions of the Bible in order to suit the need of different times.

It was the case from the 15th to the 18th century, during the age of discoveries in the western world. Explorations and acquisitions of new lands and wealth was the main activity. Slavery became a very profitable enterprise and most western powers exercised that commerce. The Church was an ally of the system. The Catholic hierarchy even found religious explanations to slavery.

The curse of Cham in Genesis 9:24 was often used to explain and support slavery. Cham one of the three sons (the two others are named Shem and Japheth) of the prophet Noah sees his father under the influence of wine lying naked in his tent. He ridiculed his father and tells his brothers who took the initiative to cover Noah. The incident makes it plain that Cham was, on this occasion, guilty of great irreverence. When Noah wakes up and hears of the conduct of his sons, he cursed the descendents of Cham, the Canaanites and blessed Shem, Japheth and their descendents in the following words:

Cursed be Canaan!
The lowest of slaves
will he be to his brothers [...]

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!
May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

May God extend the territory of Japheth;
may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
and may Canaan be his slave.

Genesis 9:22-27⁵²

In 1866 the Holy Office of the Vatican issued a statement in support of slavery. The document stated that:

Slavery itself...is not at all contrary to the natural and divine law...The purchaser [of the slave] should carefully examine whether the slave who is put up for sale has been justly or unjustly deprived of his liberty, and that the vendor should do nothing which might endanger the life, virtue, or Catholic faith of the slave.⁵³

Later in the late 19th century when slavery was on its way to being abolished and the commerce was declared inhuman, the Vatican again endorsed the role of the defender of slaves. After apologizing for its role in slavery, it went on to severely condemn the institution.

In 1917, the Roman Catholic Church's Canon Law was expanded to declare that "selling a human being into slavery or for any other evil purpose is a crime". Again in 1965, the Vatican II document, *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* stated:

Whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torture...whatever insults human dignity, such as...slavery, prostitution and selling of women and children...all these things and others like them are infamies

⁵² Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, *Bible* (New York:1995), *Genesis 9:22-27*

⁵³ B.A. Robinson, "Christianity and slavery" Internet site <http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_slav2.htm> September 12, 2007.

indeed...Human institutions...must fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and safeguard the basic rights of man under every political system.⁵⁴

The Catholic Church in order to survive is usually in harmony with the dominant institutions or policies even if the ideas defended by these institutions go against the original true ideology of the Church. In these cases the Church adapts or changes its moral teachings to suit the times.

In light of what is explained above, it is normal to consider that the strong and sudden denunciation of capitalism (which the institution has always implicitly or explicitly supported) by the Catholic Church first objective might not only be to provide more social justice for the poor but to protect itself and maintain its longevity. If that's the case, then from what does the institution need to protection from?

2- The Socialist Fear

Some social analysts such as Roger Aubert consider that “*Rerum Novarum* was inspired by a fear to see the Catholic workers join the socialist movement”.⁵⁵

The notion of socialism can be traced back centuries in various forms, notably among the earliest Christians and the model of monastic communism, with individuals owning nothing except what they collectively shared. But the roots of modern socialism lie in our period, in France, Germany and England during the period of the industrial revolution. Many 19th-Century socialists rejected the argument that the wealthy deserve their wealth because they have created it, instead believing that wealth is created by the working classes

⁵⁴ Vatican II Documents, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” Internet site <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html> August 20, 2007.

⁵⁵ Roger Auber, “Rerum Novarum”, Internet site <<http://www.universalis-edu.com/corpus2.php?napp=&nref=T302615>> August 15, 2007.

and wrongfully appropriated by the rich who benefit disproportionately from their underpaid labor. The earliest thinkers to be called "socialists" were the Frenchmen Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and François-Marie-Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and the Welshman Robert Owen (1771-1858).

With the emergence of the socialist movement and its teachings, many workers started to question their conditions. While capitalists recognise and exercise the right to private property, "socialists advocate a democratically controlled economy run for the benefit of all. The unfettered competition of capitalists is replaced by cooperation and the business cycle by planned stability. Often they believe that property should be shared in common, and private ownership of industry and land abolished"⁵⁶. This means that labor would take over and workers would get rid of owners of capital.

On the public ownership of the means of production advocated by socialists, here's Leo XIII's reaction in *Rerum Novarum*:

[...] the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights, inasmuch as each citizen will then get his fair share of whatever there is to enjoy. They are [...] emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community.⁵⁷

The Catholic Church reproduces the same hierarchy system as capitalism. In the capitalist system there's a relationship of hierarchy between capital and labor. If workers understand that they can do away with capital and private ownership as explained by socialists, the capitalist system is in danger and so is the Catholic Church.

⁵⁶Paul Brian, "Introduction to 19th century Socialism", taken from internet site <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/socialism.html> August 15, 2007.

⁵⁷ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) 4.

The socialists also recognise the right of individuals to organise and form associations in order to defend their rights.

In 1848 when Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, the socialist movement found its “Bible”.

The ideology of the *Communist Manifesto* and the teachings of the great thinkers responded to the aspirations and needs of workers in the 19th century. Marx thought that:

[...] larger masses of workers drafted into the industrial armies of capital, tormented by poverty and the insecurity born of the wild fluctuations of the business cycle would grow to be the dominant force in society and outnumber everyone else. Their pressure for radical change would inevitably lead to a confrontation in which the capitalist rulers of society would abandon all pretence of democracy and thereby become the targets of an irresistible armed uprising. Marx's notion of revolution was always one of the vast majorities of society seizing power from a tiny minority of capitalists for the common good of all⁵⁸.

After a few years, a large number of workers started joining the socialist movement in Europe. They started forming unions and demanding that their rights be respected. In the United States, the first trade union association, the Knight of Labour was founded in 1869 and 700,000 workers joined the organisation at its creation. Over the years the number of membership to trade unions grew sharply especially in England.

Since the use of violence in the socialist vision, is not always condemned if it is for a just cause, there was a real fear of an apocalypse by the capitalist system and the Catholic Church. The workers outnumbered the wealthy owners. Socialism with unions and workers organisations would mean more rights, better wages, the end of private property, and many other social justices that would definitely lead to the end of capitalism. The Catholic Church realises that there can be no social and economic development for all humans under the capitalist system. This growing poverty might lead to tensions and the Catholic Church's authority might be questioned. With the emergence of the socialist system, and

⁵⁸ Paul Brian, *Introduction to 19th Century Socialism*, taken from http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/socialism.html September 20, 2007.

the workers' positive reaction to it, the Church decides that it cannot continue to support the capitalist system.

This situation is at the origin of the change in the discourse on poverty. It no longer leads to paradise. On the contrary, now all humans have the right to live decently, with dignity on earth.

After *Rerum Novarum* the Catholic hierarchy became more supportive of the poor in its declarations and more critical of capitalism especially with John XXIII, Paul VI and Paul I. These innovations in the Church along with many social and political situations led to the creation of Liberation Theology as explained in the 1st part.

How did the United States, the first and strongest advocate of the capitalist system react to these changes in the Catholic teachings? Could it afford to lose the support of the oldest institution? What was its reaction to Liberation Theology as well?

II- The United States' Strategy and Reaction towards Liberation Theology

A-The United States Intervention in the Catholic Hierarchy

1- The CIA and the Catholic Hierarchy

The implicit or explicit support of the Catholic Church to Capitalism was an important tool in spreading capitalism. It was necessary for the US that the Catholic hierarchy share the global market and private profit ideologies. But more important of all, they needed the hierarchy not to develop ideas that would compromise the exploitation of resources and human beings. Unfortunately, the Vatican II with John XXIII in 1963 strongly condemned capitalism once again. Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) and Paul I (1978) also appeared to be individuals that supported the poor and defenceless.

The sixties and seventies were the hay-days of the Cold War and very soon these Popes that defended the poor or simply made declarations that condemned the exploitation of

poor people became targets of the United States. The biggest capitalist nation had to find a way to eliminate the “socialist” influence in the Church even if the Popes never really took any concrete action against capitalism.

In 1978, Pope Paul I was elected but his papacy only lasted 33 days! He was found dead in his room. Official account of the events is that of a natural death but certain circumstances surrounding the event, and the political views of Luciani led many observers and analysts to consider the hypothesis of an assassination.

In Davis Yallop’s book, *“In God’s Name: An Investigation into the Murder of Pope John Paul I”* the author speculates that the Pope was assassinated with a poison named digitalis. Many inconsistencies and contradictions as to the place and the circumstance of death also reinforced the assassination plot. The initial report issued by Cardinal Villot (Vatican secretary of state under Pope Paul I) said that the Pope had been found dead by sister Vicenzia and not a secretary⁵⁹. One report had him dead in his bathroom and another in his bedroom.

The possible motives for his assassination is the revolution the Pope was about to operate in the Catholic Church. He wanted to give a new direction to the Church and make the poor the centre of the institution.

Who would most benefit from the Pope’s death? Some members of the Catholic hierarchy feared a reassignment to less glorious positions but the United States also had a lot to lose if the Pope remained at the head of the institution. In the midst of the Cold War, any support to the poor and the working class was considered by the United States as a socialist or communist threat.

⁵⁹ Gregory Christiano, “The Mysterious Death of Pope John Paul I” Internet site < http://www.prose-n-poetry.com/display_work/10583/ > August 11, 2007.

Considering these facts, the hypothesis that the CIA in association with some members of the hierarchy worked together to assassinate the Pope cannot be ruled out. The election of John Paul II, a fervent anti-communist and his political commitment confirm this hypothesis.

2 - John Paul II, an ally of the US

John Paul II (1920-2005) born as Karol Josef Wojtyla in Poland, reigned at the head of the Vatican from 1978 to 2005.

He was a very active Pope and travelled the world; in fact he was the most travelled Pope in the history of the papacy.

His role was not only a religious one and during the Cold War, he actively contributed to the collapse of communism in his country Poland and in the world. Lech Walesa, the founder of the Solidarity worker movement that destroyed communism in Poland, credited John Paul II with giving Poles the courage to rise up: “The Pope started this chain of events that led to the end of Communism...Before his pontificate; the world was divided into blocs. Nobody knew how to get rid of Communism...”⁶⁰

During his papacy, the United States entertained closer and stronger relations with the Vatican. In 1984, Ronald Reagan established diplomatic relations with the Holy See and posted a U.S. ambassador at the Vatican. That link continues to this day.⁶¹

⁶⁰Martin Mikule, “John Paul II: the Pope who helped to overthrow communism”, Taken from Internet site <<http://www.radio.cz/en/article/65047>> July 23, 2007

⁶¹ Richard Benedetto, “US leaders have Warmed to Papal relations” , taken from Internet site <<http://www.mywire.com/pubs/USATODAY/2005/04/04/797028?extID=10037&oliID=229>>, September 12, 2007.

The United States could not have wished for a better ally at the head of the Catholic Hierarchy than a Pope with anti-communist beliefs. Whether the US had anything to do in the election of the Pope is not sure but that hypothesis cannot be ruled out.

With Liberation Theology being accused by the US of being a communist tool, the collaboration between the US and the Vatican to get rid of the movement was certain. Even though the previous Popes did not openly support or condemn Liberation Theology, none of them led an open and active campaign against the movement. The Catholic Church is known to be discreet in solving its internal problems and divisions. The priests or bishops that would get out of control would be called back to order in a quiet way. The institution protected its members. Unfortunately, it will not be the case with John Paul II, where an open war is declared against the Latin American liberation theologian priests.

B- Fight against Liberation Theology

1- Latin American Priests

The method used by the US and the Catholic hierarchy in trying to get rid of Liberation Theology, was the accusation of communism.

As mentioned earlier, Liberation theologians found in Marxism and socialism, the philosophical and ideological notions they needed to apply their movement.

In the Cold War context, the communist accusation was opportune. In 1979, at the 3rd CELAM conference, Pope John Paul II declares that “it is important to avoid ambiguities when Liberation Theology inspires itself of ideologies that are not coherent with the Christian vision of men, things and events.”⁶²

⁶² Charles Antoine, *Guerre froide et Eglise Catholique*, (Paris : les éditions du cerf, 1999) 282.

In 1980, just before the election of Ronald Reagan, a group of American Republican experts presented a list of proposition to Reagan for a “New inter-American policy for the eighties”. The document was called Santa Fé I. In the documents (Santa Fe I), the experts exposed the following ideas:

The Catholic Church is vital for the concept of political freedom...unfortunately the Marxist-Leninist forces have used the Church as a political tool against private property and the capitalist system of production by infiltrating the religious communities with ideas closer to communism than Christian belief...the United States foreign policy must combat and not only react *a posteriori* against Liberation Theology as it is used in Latin America by the liberation theologian Clergy.⁶³

In Latin America there was a campaign of discredit led by the CAL: the Latin American branch of the world anti-communist league. It's a movement financed by the United States and whose operations are coordinated by the CIA. “Liberation Theology was systematically discredited (by the CAL) and an amalgam was made between Liberation Theology, violence, communism, guerrillas...”⁶⁴

The CAL provided the CIA with information on Latin American communist priests. They identified the communists priests and demanded to the Catholic hierarchy “that those who have collaborated actively with international communism and with anti-Christian subversion namely Sergio Mendez of Mexico, Enriquez de Santiago of Chile...Rutilio Grande of Salvador...be removed from the Church.”⁶⁵

Some of the priests were removed and others simply assassinated like it was the case for Father Rutilio Grando of El Salvador assassinated in March 1977.⁶⁶

⁶³ Washington Council for Inter-American Security-Committee of Santa Fé, “A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties, (Santa-Fé Document, Internal Subversion: 3rd proposition, DIAL magazine, n°757, 1982), Internet site < <http://www.alterinfos.org/spip.php?rubrique40>> August 28, 2007.

⁶⁴ Charles Antoine 295.

⁶⁵ Charles Antoine 300

⁶⁶ See DIAL magazine, N° 370, April 7th 1977 on Internet site < <http://www.alterinfos.org/>> September 12, 2007.

After establishing very close links with the Vatican, the United States could now count on some members of the hierarchy to defend its position against Liberation Theology.

In 1983, Cardinal Ratzinger (The present Pope), then President of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith writes a document called "Preliminary notes on Liberation Theology" where he severely condemns and criticises the movement and Gustavo Gutierrez's book *Theology Of Liberation*. The main criticism made by the Cardinal is about the choice of liberation theologians to adopt a Marxist vision and the socialist option. On the notion of Class struggle accepted by liberation theologians and the preferential option for the poor, here's the Cardinal's criticism:

Love consists in the "option for the poor"; it coincides with opting for the class struggle. In opposition to "false universalism"; the liberation theologians emphasize very strongly the partiality and partisan nature of the Christian option; in their view, taking sides is the fundamental presupposition for a correct hermeneutics of the biblical testimony. Here, I think, one can see very clearly that amalgam of a basic truth of Christianity and an un-Christian fundamental option which makes the whole thing so seductive: The Sermon on the Mount is indeed God taking sides with the poor. But to interpret the "poor" in the sense of the Marxist dialectic of history, and "taking sides with them" in the sense of the class struggle, is a wanton attempt to portray as identical things that are contrary.⁶⁷

The Cardinal is one of the main figures who worked closely with the USA in trying to destroy Liberation Theology.

⁶⁷ Cardinal Ratzinger, *Liberation Theology* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, (Ignatius Press, 1984) <<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/ratzinger/liberationtheol.htm>> September 12, 2007.

2- Haiti

Never again shall colonist or European set foot on this soil as master or landowner. This shall henceforward be the foundation of our constitution.

Jean Jacques Dessalines, Former Slave and Haiti's Founding Father. (January 1st 1804)

There's one particular country in Latin America where the fight against the "subversion in the Church", the liberation theologian priests, and communism had nationwide consequences: Haiti.

Haiti's 193 year history as a country has been a turbulent one. Situated in the Caribbean southeast of Cuba, Haiti occupies the western one third of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. Today, with a population of approximately 6.5 million people in an area equivalent in size to the state of Maryland, Haiti is the region's poorest country.

Having achieved independence from France as a result of a slave revolt in 1804, the Republic of Haiti became the first independent nation in all of Latin America. In fact, besides Haiti, no other case exists where an enslaved people broke the bonds of slavery and used military might to defeat a powerful colonial power. But this independence resulted in Haiti's isolation in a world dominated by the European colonial powers of England, France, and Spain and in a hemisphere governed by slave holding societies. Haiti was

heavily ostracized by the European colonial powers and by the United States, all of whom feared Haiti's independence by slaves might spread to their holdings or shores.

After Haiti's first President Dessalines was assassinated in 1806 the country was ruled by a succession of Presidents who were either brutal despots or puppets of the United States like the Duvalier family. The Duvalier dynasty, François Duvalier and his son Jean Claude Duvalier reigned with terror, impunity and greed on Haiti from 1957 to 1986.⁶⁸

During this rule, a young liberation theologian priest by the name of Jean-Bertrand Aristide became a leading voice in the opposition and at the first free democratic elections held in 1990 Aristide won with a landslide of 67%.

Aristide is born on July 15th 1953. In 1968 he joins the Salesian seminary to become a priest. He pursues brilliant theological and philosophical studies in Israel and Canada⁶⁹.

Just when the United States was getting closer to the end of the Cold War, Bertrand Aristide, a liberation theologian, with his leftist ideas became a new threat for the USA.

The liberation theologian priest started a policy in favour of the poor and destitute. He was much appreciated by the population who nicknamed him "the little priest".

A vast campaign of education was led, the peasants were involved in the political life and there was a ray of hope that was born amidst the misery in that country.

Unfortunately, a few months after his election, he was overthrown by a military coup in September 1991 organised by the United States, France and Canada. He returns to power

⁶⁸ The Duvalier reign is best remembered through the "Tonton macoute". A repressive Presidential militia which terrorised the population and killed arbitrary any citizen. It is estimated that 60.000 people were killed by the macoutes. For more information on the Duvalier reign and the macoutes, see "*En Grandissant sous Duvalier*" by Frantz A. Leconte.

⁶⁹ For more information on Jean Bertrand Aristide and his political life, see *Haiti, Les Chaînes d'Aristide* by Christian Rudel. and "*Tout Moun se Moun*" by Jean Bertrand Aristide and Christophe Wargny.

in 1994 after a series of negotiations with the USA who urged him to apply a more liberal and capitalistic policy.⁷⁰

He was succeeded by his ally René Préval in 1996. Aristide won another landslide election victory in 2000, but once again a second coup was led against him on the night of 28 February 2004⁷¹. Since then, he has been living in exile in South Africa.

These political coups show the USA's determination to keep Jean Bertrand Aristide away from the power. This insistence is disturbing considering the fact that the country is extremely poor and doesn't really represent an enormous economic interest to the US.

The fact that Jean Bertrand Aristide is a liberation theologian priest with leftist ideas is an excuse. But does Haiti and Jean Bertrand Aristide with his so called leftist ideas represent such a threat to the US? Haiti is not comparable to the Soviet Union and doesn't pretend to expand its political views. Jean Bertrand Aristide is simply a priest trying to promote the basic social and economic conditions necessary for the well being of the Haitian people. Aristide does not dispose of an army or a secret service like Stalin or the leaders of the Soviet Union did. He doesn't belong to a political party and he is not trying to promote his political ideologies overseas. So why then this perverse commitment to crash a people that are already suffering from poverty and all the social evils it brings?

Jean Bertrand Aristide gives his analysis of the ongoing repression in his country and specifically the two political coups on his person during an interview given in February 2007:

What happened in September 1991 happened again in February 2004, and could easily happen again soon, so long as the oligarchies that control the means of repression use

⁷⁰ Aristide signs the Governor's Island accord in July 1993.

⁷¹ Noam Chomsky, Paul Farmer, Amy Goodman, *Getting Haiti Right this Time: The US and the Coup*, Internet site <http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Haiti/Getting_Haiti_Right.html> August 12, 2007

them to preserve a hollow version of democracy. This is their obsession: to maintain a situation that might be called ‘democratic’, but which consists in fact of a superficial, imported democracy imposed and controlled from above. They’ve been able to keep things this way for a long time. Haiti has been independent for two hundred years, but we now live in a country in which just 1 per cent of the people control more than half of the wealth.⁷²

When asked about the United States’ perverse interest in Haiti, William Blum an American author and critic of US foreign policy gives the following analysis:

The US can not let a Third World country successfully stand-up to Washington. It sets a bad example. There are many examples of this. As author Michael Parenti has observed: ‘It has been noted that the cost of apprehending a bank robber may occasionally exceed the sum that is stolen. **But if robbers were allowed to go their way, this would encourage others to follow suit and would put the entire banking system in jeopardy.**’⁷³ Someone with leftist politics like Aristide could not be allowed to get away with being arrogant towards the US, not because of any material investment or interest, but for the bad precedent it would set.⁷⁴

If Aristide did actually get away with defying the US and applying his liberation theologian ideas, it would put the capitalist system in jeopardy and people might realise that there is an alternative paradigm for Third World development. Could Liberation Theology be that Alternative?

⁷² Peter Hallard, “An interview with Jean Bertrand Aristide”, taken from Internet site <<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=55&ItemID=12166>>, September 12, 2007.

⁷³ Michael Parenti, *Against Empire* (City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1995) 49.

⁷⁴ Mail exchange with William Blum on February 16, 2007

Conclusion to Part II

The Catholic Church's reaction against capitalism and its injustices is a noble reaction. However we need to keep in mind that this reaction was prompted by a fear of the socialist movement and the need of the institution to remain in tune with contemporary situations in order to survive. Defending the poor and defenceless was a self-serving purpose for the Catholic Church which appeared to defend them in order to keep the workers from joining the growing socialist movement. Later on, many other Popes continued this ambiguous support to the poor. They would openly condemn capitalism but would never take actions or support the people that decide to do something about the system. The United States, fearing it might losing the great support it has always benefited from the institution decided to act. The death of John Paul I and the election of John Paul II are two situations in which the implication of the United States cannot be ignored. With John Paul II at the head of the institution the alliance between the Church and the USA to fight Liberation Theology was done in the same line of action as the fight against communism. The United States ongoing campaign against communism in Latin America and other Third World regions has strengthened Liberation Theology. Third world inteligencia considered that the movement was better adapted (than capitalism and communism), to the economic and cultural situations in those regions of the world.

According to Michael Parenti, "for the ruling class Liberation Theology was just as bad as Marxism, and was treated as such."⁷⁵

In Haiti when a liberation theologian priest comes to power in 1990, the fear that his example might be followed by other nations and finally be considered as a systemic alternative to capitalism pushed the US to conspire a political coup and keep a perverse hold on a tiny country already devastated by misery.

⁷⁵ Mail exchange with Michael Parenti, Mai 24, 2007

**PART III: LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A SYSTEMIC
ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALISM (FOR TIED WORLD
DEVELOPMENT)**

*Man's Reign*⁷⁶

You say democracy and I know it means Bolivia's pewter
Chili's copper
Venezuela's oil
Cuba's sugar
Raw materials and profits

You say democracy and it is Texas's annexation
The hold up of Panama's Canal
The occupation of Haiti
The colonisation of Puerto Rico
The bombing of Guatemala

You say democracy
And it's America to the Yankees
The rape of nations
Sandino's blood
And Peralt's crucifixion

You say Democracy
And it's the plundering of our wealth
From Hiroshima to Indochina
Everywhere you sow slaughter and ruin

Ubu of the robot's empire
You can let your Crows fly
From Harlem to Jerusalem
From Wounded Knee to Haiti
From Santo Domingo to Soweto
The people will brandish
The torch of revolution
[...]
The sentences of history are irrevocable
Asia always makes a bridge for Africa
The reign of the white man has ended on earth
And now begins the reign of the man on the universe

Paul Laraque, *Les Armes Quotidiennes*, la Havane (1979).

⁷⁶ Translated by Author

I- STATE OF CAPITALISM IN THE WORLD

A- The manifestations of Capitalism

1- A Concrete Conception of Capitalism

The industrial and capitalist system of production is one of exploitation, of human and natural resources. Many Third World nations with amazing natural resources are today classified amongst the poorest on earth. It's the case of Mali, an important gold producer⁷⁷. Niger is the third uranium producer in the world and its citizens live with less than a dollar a day⁷⁸. Many centuries before the slave trade, Guinea's rice production was enough to feed the whole African continent. The populations of Guinea had developed a technology that enabled them to produce an excellent rice quality. This technology was later exported to North Carolina with the slave trade⁷⁹. In the 18th Century, the North Carolina Colony was economically prosperous thanks to the rice exportation⁸⁰. Ironically, today the Guinean government has to import rice to feed its people.

Nigeria is one of the main African oil producers but its people still cannot have access to drinking water. In the exploitation of oils by multinationals such as Shell, Agip, Mobil Exxon, certain rivers which are the only water source of the population are contaminated and the citizens die of Cholera from drinking infected water. As Bruce E Johansen,

⁷⁷ "World Gold Producers", taken from internet site < <http://www.mapsofworld.com/minerals/world-gold-producers.html> >, September 2, 2007.

⁷⁸ Fodé Moussa Keita, *Niger : Uranium in the streets of Arlit*, Taken from internet site <<http://addax.wordpress.com/2007/05/26/niger-de-luranium-dans-les-rues-darlit-niger-uranium-in-the-streets-of-arlit/>> August 11, 2007.

⁷⁹ The contribution of Guinean technology to North Carolina's agriculture has only gained recognition 20 years ago though the works of scholars such as Professor Judith Carney and Dr Edda Fields.

⁸⁰ Christopher Ehret, "Languages as Historical Archives. Implications for agriculture and development", UN chronicle online edition 2007, Internet site < <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2003/issue4/0403p68.asp> > August 12, 2007.

professor of communication and Native American studies at the University of Nebraska

points out:

The 500,000 tribal Ogoni of the Niger delta in southern Nigeria have watched as their traditional fishing and farming livelihood has been laid waste by Shell Oil's extraction of oil, with full complicity of the national government, which has allowed large parts of the Ogonis' homeland to be ruined. The Ogonis' land has been contaminated not only by oil wells and pipelines, but also by gas flares that burn 24 hours a day, producing intense heat and chemical gas fogs that pollute nearby homes as they render farm fields barren and unproductive.⁸¹

Third World countries are poorer and more indebted today than they were thirty years ago.

Multinational activity has contributed a great deal to that situation as Michael Parenti explains:

Third World poverty and multinational industrial wealth are directly linked to each other. Large companies invest not to uplift impoverished countries but to enrich themselves, taking far more out than they ever put in. [...] Third World nations are neither “underdeveloped” nor “developing”; they are overexploited and maldeveloped.⁸²

The amount of natural resources in Third World nations and their poverty is an intriguing contradiction. However with a concrete conception of Capitalism one understands that these nations are in this situation mainly because of their natural wealth. Corruption, mismanagement, and bad governance are usually brandished by western nations as the main causes of Third World under development. But ultimately even if these nations weren't corrupted, if they governed themselves properly and managed their resources in a way that all citizens have access to education, health, and poverty is alleviated, would that be good for the capitalist system? Poverty is what holds the system together. If Third

⁸¹ Bruce E. Johanson, *Nigeria the Ogoni: Oil, Blood, and the Death of a Homeland*, taken from internet site <<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/IPEIE/Ogoni.html>> July 20, 2007.

⁸² Michael Parenti, *The Sword and the Dollar*. (St martins Press,1989) 17.

World nations manage their wealth or govern themselves in a way that is not profitable to Capitalist nations, wouldn't they retaliate by the use of military power to destabilise the governments?

Today, poverty is being experienced not only by Third World citizens. Capitalism is creating more and more social inequalities in the western world, a situation described by Noam Chomsky in *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many*:

The spectre of poverty and despair has become increasingly obvious to the middle and upper class (in the United States). You just can't avoid it as you could years ago, when it was limited to a certain section of town. This has a lot to do with the pauperization (the internal Third Worldization, I think you call it) of the United States.⁸³ (See Statistics 1 on page 83.)

In the United States and other developed countries Capitalism can be concretely conceived by the exploitation of employees.

Let's consider **Wal-Mart**, one of the leading US corporations with approximately 1.39 million US employees. The employees at Wal-Mart (US) are paid less than 8 dollars per hour. Most of them cannot afford health insurance while the company made more than 12.916 billions dollars profit in 2004⁸⁴. In 2001, sales associates, the most common job in Wal-Mart, earned on average \$8.23 an hour for annual wages of \$13,861. The 2001 poverty line for a family of three was \$14,630.⁸⁵

⁸³ David Barsamian & Noam Chomsky, *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many*, (Ordonian Press, 1993) 55.

⁸⁴ Wal-Mart, *Wal-Mart Reports Record Sales and Earnings*, Internet site <http://investor.walmartstores.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=112761&p=irol-newsArticle_print&ID=496687&highlight=> June 30, 2007.

⁸⁵ Business Week, 10/6/03, US Dept of Health and Human Services 2001 Poverty Guidelines, 2001]

A 2003 wage analysis reported that cashiers, the second most common job, earn approximately \$7.92 per hour and work 29 hours a week. This brings in annual wages of only \$11,948.⁸⁶

The average two-person family (one parent and one child) needed \$27,948 to meet basic needs in 2005, well above what Wal-Mart reports that its average full-time associate earns. Wal-Mart claimed that its average associate earned \$9.68 an hour in 2005. That would make the average associate's annual wages \$17,114.⁸⁷

Lee Scott, Wal-Mart's President and C.E.O. had a base salary of nearly \$1.3 million in 2005. In addition to his base salary, he had incentive payments of \$3,941,561, more than three times his base salary. His total earnings package, including long term incentive payouts, added up to over \$10 million⁸⁸.

While the majority of the employees live under the poverty line, the CEO earns more money than he could probably spend!

These different examples show a concrete vision of what capitalism is.

⁸⁶ Statistical Analysis of Gender Patterns in Wal-Mart's Workforce, Dr. Richard Drogin 2003
<http://investor.walmartstores.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=112761&p=irol-newsArticle_print&ID=496687&highlight> August 10, 2007.

⁸⁷ ["Basic Family Budget Calculator" online at <www.epinet.org> <http://www.wakeupwalmart.com/facts/>> August 12, 2007.

⁸⁸ Wal-Mart, *Wal-Mart Reports Record Sales and Earnings*,
<http://investor.walmartstores.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=112761&p=irol-newsArticle_print&ID=496687&highlight> August 24, 2007.

2- Capitalist Domination of the World Market

In the late 1980's the United States declared the war against communism was over.⁸⁹

Officially the end of the Cold War began with the coming to power of Gorbachev and ended with the fall of the U.S.S.R. What does this really mean?

Capitalism and communism are fighting to spread their influence in as many countries as possible.

When the United States won the Cold War, this meant that more countries were open to capitalist rule, the world market and the communist influence is no longer important. (See Appendices C,D,E).

In Europe the end of the Cold War, was marked by the collapse of the Berlin wall. The USSR broke up and the east European countries proclaimed their independence.

In Africa many communists' heads of state had to flee into exile and make way for capitalism and world market.

In Benin we experienced 17 years of Marxism Leninism under Mathieu Kerekou. During those years, the economic situation was unbearable due to economic embargos imposed on the country. And to prove that a communist rule does not bring prosperity, the capitalist nations poured investments in the neighbouring country, Togo.

This contrast made the Beninese citizens doubt of the efficiency of communism and many of them fled the country to reside in Togo.

In the early seventies, the global market economy was well spread around the world. Multinationals grew in number and in size. They were implanted on every part of the globe. Over the last three decades, revenues of the top 200 firms have jumped 10-fold,

⁸⁹ See Cold War maps in Appendices.

from around \$200 million to over \$2 billion⁹⁰. In 1960, of the top 200 multinational companies, 127 were U.S.-based.

With the course for private profit and gains in modern times corporations have been moving to the parts of the globe where they would get the cheapest labour and raw materials in order to maximise their revenue: it's the globalisation which Noam Chomsky considers "...a fancy way of saying that you export jobs to high-repression, low-wage areas -- which undercuts the opportunities for productive labour at home."⁹¹

Corporations have become so powerful that they overrule most governments. They buy off senators and law makers in order to have law decisions voted in their favour; as Chomsky says: "we now have an international economy and we're moving toward an international state creating a new imperial age with a de facto world government."⁹²

At this stage, it would not be an exaggeration to consider that the world is ruled by corporations. In the documentary the "Corporation" directed "by Jennifer Abbott"⁹³, we see that the corporation, which is a moral human being, can be compared to a psychopath.

Many capitalist advocates argue that this economic system is the only one possible; it's the best system available. The only problem is that it has created more poverty than any other system and it is still producing poverty. Third World countries are the first victims even though in recent times, capitalism is also producing structural poverty in the developed world and in the USA in particular.⁹⁴ Economic and social development is certainly not possible for Third World nations with the capitalist system. A closer look at

⁹⁰ John Cavanaugh, Frederic F. Clairmonte, *From Corporations to Conglomerates*, The Multinational Monitor, 1882 Annual Report Monitor, January 1883-Volume 4-Number 1

<<http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1983/01/cavanaugh.html>> July 23, 2007.

⁹¹ Barsamian & Chomsky, *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many* 85.

⁹² Barsamian & Chomsky 42.

⁹³ *The Corporation* is a 2003 Canadian documentary film critical of the modern-day corporation.

⁹⁴ See Appendice F.

Third World development policies and institutions will help us have a clearer understanding of the issue.

B- Third World Development Policies Objectives

1- Recipient Country Objectives

After their independence in the sixties, most Third World countries relied on the goodwill of development policies to help them create an economic and social environment favourable to human development.

The countries truly believed and trusted the financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to provide adequate loans at reasonable rates in order for the countries to develop.

The basic expectations of Third World nations are the promotion of education, agricultural autonomy and an adequate health system. After more than 50 years of independence, agricultural autonomy is still a utopia in most Third World nations. This is simply because one of the main conditions associated with loan and aid is the promotion of export-based products. Most Third World nations have always practiced a non-export agriculture that provided them with food autonomy. Third World governments who had to impose this new type of agriculture on their peasants due to the conditions of Aid, have often met a certain protest on the part of the peasants.

It was the case in Haiti where the peasants who refused to comply with export based agriculture were forced out of their lands by the Duvalier Government. In 1984, over 200 peasants are massacred at Jean-Rabeau after demonstrating for access to land⁹⁵. Most Third World nations who benefit from loans and Aid find their agriculture dependent on

⁹⁵ Laennec Hurbon, *Comprendre Haiti*, (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1975) 33.

export-based products usually bought at ridiculously low prices fixed by the developed countries. As a consequence, they have never reached agricultural autonomy and depend on importations to feed their population.

More than 70 per cent of Third World citizens are still uneducated, and 30% women still die giving birth because there's no adequate healthcare.⁹⁶

Development policies and investments have not promoted any development. It only helps to create a divided society where a minimum of people benefit from the investment and the majority live in extreme poverty. These investments "maldevelops" the recipient countries according to Michael Parenti: "...private foreign investment does not develop Third World countries, it maldevelops them...a host country might experience high rates of growth while its income distribution does not improve and even deteriorates",⁹⁷

2-Donor Country Objectives

Most development policies are implemented by the countries creating poverty and therefore these policies are not always applied in the interests of the receiving countries but rather to protect the economic and political interests of the donor countries as Raymond Mikesell explains in *The Economics of Foreign Aid* concerning the case of the United States:

The idea of public responsibility for promoting individual welfare [...] to all American citizens is gradually being expanded to include the people of the world. However, by and large, governments deal with other governments and when Nasser pursues policies inimical to those of the United States, the debate over whether or not surplus wheat shipments to the United Arab Republic shall be terminated rarely if ever includes a reference to that country's poverty stricken fellahin. Thus, by denying aid to people who live under governments which are believed to constitute a threat to the security of

⁹⁶ Anup shah, *Poverty Facts and stats*, Internet site <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp> September 4, 2007.

⁹⁷ Michael Parenti, *The Sword and the Dollar*, (St martin's Press, 1989) 21

the United States, the United States is somewhat parochial in its broad humanitarian objectives.⁹⁸

There is obviously a relationship between economic assistance and the creation of a political and social environment which will support the political and security objectives of the donor countries. For them, economic assistance or development policies are only a way to reach national security objectives which has nothing to do with the well-being of the citizens of poor nations. We are forced to acknowledge that in most cases, the political and social environment which supports the objectives of the donor countries are not always the best for the actual development of Third World nations.

Usually the aid given by the United States to Third World countries for their “development” are investments which the US recuperates in the form of purchases imposed on the recipient country as explained by Michael Parenti in the *Sword and the Dollar*:

... (In most foreign aid contracts) the recipient country must sign an agreement with the Agency for International development (AID) that commits it to come up with a certain amount (usually 25 percent) in matching funds for any aid project. American monies are allocated often with the express condition that they be used to buy American goods transported in American ships at American prices.⁹⁹

When aid is given in those conditions, three fourth of U.S assistance money remains in the US. Aid administrator Peter McPherson confirms: “two-thirds of what we give, comes back in 18 months in the form of purchases”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Raymond Mikesell, *The Economics of Foreign Aid* (Transaction Publishers, 1983) 7.

⁹⁹ Parenti, *The Sword and the Dollar* (St martins Press, 1989) 27.

¹⁰⁰ Parenti 27.

As far as aid agencies or financial institutions are concerned, they work closely with the developed countries so the same situation is also true in their cases. The aid or loan they give Third World nations are assorted with conditions which in the end always favour the developed nations. In this case, shouldn't Third World countries try to find alternative methods for their development?

II- LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A SYSTEMIC ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALISM

A- Criticism to Liberation Theology and its Development Today

1- Criticism and Failures

In the late 1980s and 1990s Latin American Liberation Theology was subjected to several criticisms, both by those sympathetic to its basic point of view and those who were not. Among the sympathetic it aroused protest from religious leaders of other Third World regions, Asia and Africa, which saw it as too narrowly focused on economic patterns of wealth and poverty, with insufficient attention to issues of cultural and religious discrimination.

These groups began to develop what they saw as a fuller Liberation Theology suitable to their own histories. Liberation Theology was also criticized by women, indigenous peoples and blacks for being too male and European. In May 2006, the Liberation Theologian Otto Maduro, professor at Drew University in the United States made an auto-criticism of Liberation Theology during a conference in Porto Alegre at the international forum of

Liberation Theologians. He acknowledges among other things that the movement was patriarchal. He suggested that feminist theologies of liberation should be incorporated in Liberation Theology¹⁰¹. He also declared that "Liberation Theology should take into account the non-Christians of other Third World nations". Liberation Theology according to him has "locked itself within the Christian religion and has not been able to acknowledge and understand other ways of thinking, praying, loving and having faith."¹⁰²

Environmentalists also complained about the lack of attention to ecological issues. Some liberation theologians, such as Leonardo Boff, sought to incorporate these additional perspectives in his writings. All these developments enriched Liberation Theology with fuller and more diverse perspectives.

However, other critics favouring more traditional power hierarchies in the Church and society attacked Liberation Theology as "horizontalism," as failing to observe the separation of transcendent heavenly matters from earthly ones. Some called it "Marxist," as if this label would automatically refute it for those socialized to the phobic toward anything called "Marxist." In 1990 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, these critics were quick to declare that Liberation Theology was "over," a passing aberration whose day was done with the end of the communist option.

The movement was seen as having doomed itself by placing its hopes on a socialist-type of revolution. As socialism was now discredited as a viable option, so was Liberation Theology. The fall of the Soviet Union was seen as the triumph of the American capitalist

¹⁰¹ Otto Maduro , *Theologie Latino-Americaine de la liberation: Une Autocritique*, <http://www.alterinfos.org/spip.php?article765&var_recherche=th%E9ologie%20de%20la%20lib%E9ration> July 21, 2007.

¹⁰² Otto Maduro, *Theologie Latino-Americaine de la Liberation: Une Autocritique*, <http://www.alterinfos.org/spip.php?article765&var_recherche=th%E9ologie%20de%20la%20lib%E9ration>, July 21, 2007.

system of global development as the only viable economic order. Liberation Theology was declared to have lost any credible vision of an alternative, more just economic system.

2- Liberation Theology Today

Today, Liberation Theology has enriched itself of all the criticism and pluralism. It is now a fuller and more complete movement which corresponds to the aspirations of all the poor and oppressed of the world, no matter their sex or their religious belief.

Many liberation theologians priests were killed during the seventies due to their supposed alliance with communism. This fact has served as a leçon to the new generation of liberation theologians who have learned how to be discreet in the application of their doctrine. This discretion has led many observers to suggest that the movement was dead.

The United States and the Catholic Hierarchy still oppose strongly the movement. With Cardinal Ratzinger a strong anti-liberation now at the head of the Catholic Church, the theologians know, that it will be difficult for them to vehicle their ideas. In March 2007, the Vatican decided to censure some of the writings of one of the most outspoken proponents of Liberation Theology, father Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit theologian from El Salvador. The books condemned by the Vatican were written in the 90's and are titled: *Jesus the Liberator* and *Christ the Liberator*. The Vatican considers that the books contain statements that are “erroneous or dangerous and may cause harm to the faithful”¹⁰³. Leonardo Boff considers that this decision “would mark a resurgence of Marxist theology in Latin America.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ John L. Allen Junior, *Vatican censures Sobrino*, Internet site <http://ncrcafe.org/node/975>, September 12, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ John L. Allen Junior, *Vatican censures Sobrino*, Internet site <http://ncrcafe.org/node/975> September 12, 2007.

Boff also asserted that “Liberation Theology is alive and well in Latin America, Asia and Africa, although the controversy surrounding its tenets has lessened in recent years.”¹⁰⁵

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, Liberation Theology has adapted itself to the social and religious contexts. Liberation theologians hold an international forum each year to discuss of the new challenges to the movement. As the liberation theologian Maurice Barth explains: “Liberation Theology is not a school, but a contextual spirit, which evolves according to the time, place and events.”¹⁰⁶

The Christian base communities (religious centres different from the traditional Church) still exist in many Latin American countries, and are even more present in other parts of the world, adapted to the local religions and cultures. Even though the term Liberation Theology is not often used, the message is still advocated through the “preferential option for the poor”.

Now that the search for an alternative to the capitalist system of production is more pressing than ever, Liberation Theology presents itself as the best alternative possible for Third World development.

B- Liberation Theology’s Effectiveness

1- In Theory

With its main objective being the “creation of a new man” (See part I) Liberation Theology presents itself as an alternative that can emancipate humanity from the idolatry of capital. No human construction, even the supposedly neutral and objective ideal of exchange-

¹⁰⁵ “Ex-priest says silencing of father Sobrino will reanimate Liberation Theology in Latin America” taken from Internet site < <http://www.Catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=8887> > August 20, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Maurice Barth, « La Théologie de la Libération Aujourd’hui » Taken from Internet site http://www.alterinfos.org/spip.php?article423&var_recherche=maurice%20barth , September 1, 2007.

value, can ever legitimately oppose itself to human use-value, which is the actualization of human community, the embodiment of the idea of God.

Along this idea, liberation theologians advocate for the collective ownership of the means of production as a necessary foundation for any human development. As Diez-Alegría writes:

The Christian ideal is a classless society, which does not mean a uniform society. What it means is a society in which, instead of 'classes', there are only functional social 'groups', the differences between them being non-discriminatory (they are maintained substantially on a horizontal line and are not based on privilege)¹⁰⁷.

In short, liberation theologians argue that true development in Latin America and in the Third World can never be achieved within capitalism. The development policies have not been effective and are only another way of maintaining Third World nations in a state of dependence favourable to the west. They point out that neo-liberal economics degrade the worker, perpetuate power inequalities between states, fragment community, and alienate society from the true meaning of human values.

Therefore, Liberation Theology posits that true development occurs within the revolutionary process of social praxis whereby private property is abolished, worker's self-management is established, and economic planning is fully democratized.

Accordingly, the preferential option for the poor becomes the answer, for it is the poor who have been objectified, examined, exploited, studied, managed, and manipulated within the discourse of development. By addressing and being addressed by the poor as subjects rather than objects, a dialogue of love emerges in that someone is brought out of

¹⁰⁷ José María Diez-Alegría, *I Believe in Hope*, (New York: Garden City, Doubleday and Co. 1974) 47

anonymity¹⁰⁸. For liberation theologians, true intersubjectivity with the poor ultimately mandates radical and revolutionary action to change the current social relations of development so that these relations reflect the unity of humanity as God's creation.

2- Liberation Theology in Action

Of all Latin American countries, Haiti is the only one where a liberation theologian became a head of state. It is the poorest country in the region, thus the place where Liberation Theology was more needed and called for by the people. The people in Haiti expected a lot and could identify more with the concept than any other Latin American state. The country's specific history and relationship with other nations bring a new meaning to the practice of Liberation Theology. Haiti was and still is in many regards the utmost representation of a Third World nation. Its history, the specificity of its people and the social and economical situation of the country explains the importance of the analysis of Liberation Theology and its manifestations in Haiti.

To accept Liberation Theology as a systemic alternative to capitalism for Third World development, it is essential to consider what it has achieved from 1968 to this day. Of course, with the different opponents to the movement and several liberation theologians priests being killed in the 70's and 80's, it didn't have room to fully express itself but the little it has been able to achieve considering the circumstances should be known and be an example.

I mentioned earlier that Jean Bertrand Aristide, a liberation theologian priest became the President in Haiti in 1990 and in 2004. He didn't last long either but as a liberation

¹⁰⁸ Gustavo Gutierrez, *Renewing the Option for the Poor In Liberation Theologies*, (New York: 1974) 102.

theologian priest and later as a President, he was able to achieve certain things. In July 20th 1986, he founded an NGO “Lafanmi Selavi” meaning, “Family is life”. The aim is to provide a shelter and an education to street children. He received international support from organisations such as Caritas and important personalities such as Danielle Mitterrand (former France’s President François Mitterrand’s wife) and her association France-Liberté. The new role of priests which was to get closer to poor people and meet them in their everyday struggle instead of waiting for them at the Church led many priests and Jean Bertrand Aristide to become educationists, social workers. Their help has changed the lives of thousand of poor Latin American people. After the Duvalier reign, the “street children” phenomena amplified in Haiti. Father Aristide and many other priests came to their rescue. In July 1991, it was estimated that at least a third of Haitian Street Children had been an intern at Aristide’s Association “Lanfanmi Selavi”.

The Base Community Churches, (CEB, ecclesial base community) one of the main instrument of liberation theologians have provided the people with an environment where they could discuss their problems, compare their situations and try to find practical solutions.

Although other various forces have played into the shaping of opposition in Latin America, to some extent Liberation Theology has set the conditions under which social forces could organize themselves in Haiti and in other Latin American countries. The arising of the Landless Farmer’s movement in 1979, the constitution of the Worker’s Party in 1982 as well as the union CUT in 1983 were to some extent stimulated by the emergence of the movement.

Liberation Theology has brought a large contribution to the political life of many Latin American countries like Brazil where some actual ministers were former members of Liberation Theology.

All in all, Liberation Theology has been able to change in a positive way the social, political and economic environment of Latin American countries.

CONCLUSION TO PART III

After the end of the Cold War, the capitalist influence in the world has greatly increased. Poverty and social injustice is becoming more and more frightening. The situation in Third World nations is a real aberration and a paradox considering the natural wealth those countries abound.

While more people are living in poverty, the corporations' profits have jumped ten fold over the last thirty years¹⁰⁹. The gap between rich and poor is constantly growing.

The development policies which are supposed to bring a solution to the problem have turned out to be another means of manipulation and exploitation. Indeed, how is it possible that the same system that produces poverty and relies on it can honestly claim to cure it?

In this situation, the ideology of liberation appears as a much better vision for Third World development. The ideas developed in Liberation Theology respond to the needs and aspirations of people who are living in these parts of the world. Over the years, Liberation Theology has been the object of criticism by its supporters as well as by those who opposed the movement. Liberation theologians have been able to make use of those criticisms and today, the movement has become more complete and able to adapt to the religious and social structures of Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

¹⁰⁹ John Cavanaugh, Frederic F.Clairmonte, *From Corporations to Conglomerates*, The Multinational Monitor, 1882 Annual Report Monitor, January 1883-Volume 4-Number 1
<<http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1983/01/cavanaugh.html>> July 23, 2007.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

*“The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it
fall.”*

-Ernesto “Che” Guevara.-

The situation in Third World nations is not a fatality, and what we need is a different approach to our development; one which is not imposed or suggested by capitalist nations. Indeed, these nations in their quest of power and glory at any cost have deprived Asia, Africa, and Latin America of everything from natural wealth to their cultures and civilisations. As long as this quest for power continues and private profit remains the main motive of their economic system, Third World leaders and citizens should not trust the leaders of capitalist nations to help them come to terms with their present situation.

Poor nations should avoid taking loans from international institutions. They should also avoid letting western nations explore their soils and exploit their natural resources. Keep those resources until they have the necessary infrastructures to exploit their own resources. They could then fix their own price. Third World citizens need to understand that their wellbeing can only be achieved by themselves and no one else. No organisation, NGO will ever bring the appropriate solution they need.

Liberation Theology offers this systemic alternative to capitalist exploitation. It tells Third World citizens that they are the masters of their own destiny and that their present situation is not the will of GOD as it is often said by some Catholic Church officials. According to liberation theologians, Poverty on earth has never been a precondition to life in heaven. This misinterpretation was simply done to serve certain purposes. Liberation Theology teaches third world citizens the conflictual situations which puts them at odd with other social classes.

From a series of negative critic within the Catholic Church Liberation Theology came into existence as a positive social and political movement to which Latin American and other Third World citizens could identify. It corresponds indeed to the main aspirations of these people which include freedom from oppression.

Liberation Theology has been criticized and its members suffered imprisonment especially during the Cold War. The United States with the help of the Catholic Church under John Paul II did all they could to destabilise the movement and its members. Haiti, a country where a Liberation Theologian priest (Jean Bertrand Aristide) became President in the early 1990's has paid a high price for trying to liberate itself from the capitalist rule.

Today, the failures in the capitalist system are great and most observers agree that an alternative is needed. The experience of Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti shows that an alternative is possible. The United States did all it could to depose the Liberation Theologian priest from political office twice, in 1991 and in 2000. It is clear that the US cannot afford to allow other countries to be inspired by Haiti and discover that an alternative is possible.

Liberation Theology, because of its spiritual origins will be much adapted to Third World nations whose citizens are still very attached to spirituality. In Benin for instance the Voodoo¹¹⁰ is still the main cult and in many other African states, the authority of cults and spirituality is often more important than the law. Ancient Indian spirituality and traditions are something that is so admired by the world that today many western citizens do not hesitate to adopt Hinduism.

With all these cultural and spiritual similarities, Third World nations need to share their experiences of development in order to enrich Liberation Theology. They would then achieve independent development and at the same time make a genuine contribution to a new world culture and global civilisation.

¹¹⁰ The Voodoo is a traditional cult in Benin that was exported to Brazil, Haiti and other Latin American countries during the slave trade.

APPENDICES

A.

Religious Adherents per percentage of World population

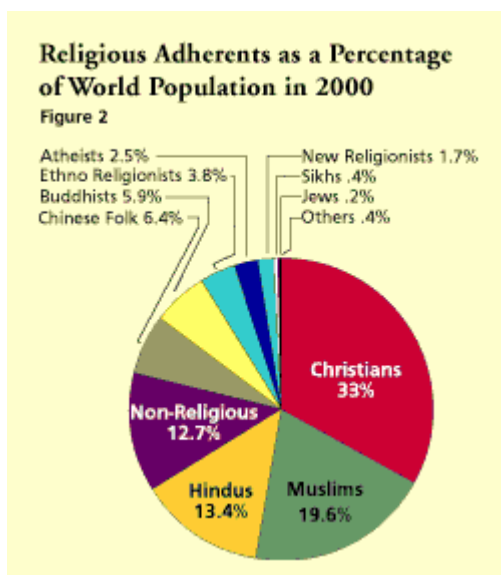


Figure 1: Image from the U.S. Center for World

Mission

Sources: [Mission Frontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org)

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm>

The figure show that the majority of world citizens are Christians.

B.

Top 10 Largest National Christian Populations

Rank	Nation	Number	Percent
1	USA	224.457.000	85%
2	Brazil	139.000.000	93%
3	Mexico	86.120.000	99%
4	Russia	80.000.000	60%
5	China	70.000.000	5.7%
6	Germany	67.000.000	83%
7	Philippines	63.470.000	93%
8	United Kingdom	51.060.000	88%
9	Italy	47.690.000	90%
10	France	44.150.000	98%
11	Nigeria	38.180.000	45%

Source for these Christian statistics: Ash, Russell. *The Top 10 of Everything*, DK Publishing, Inc.: New York (1997), pg. 160-161; *December Advance Newsletter*, 1996, Kainos Press;

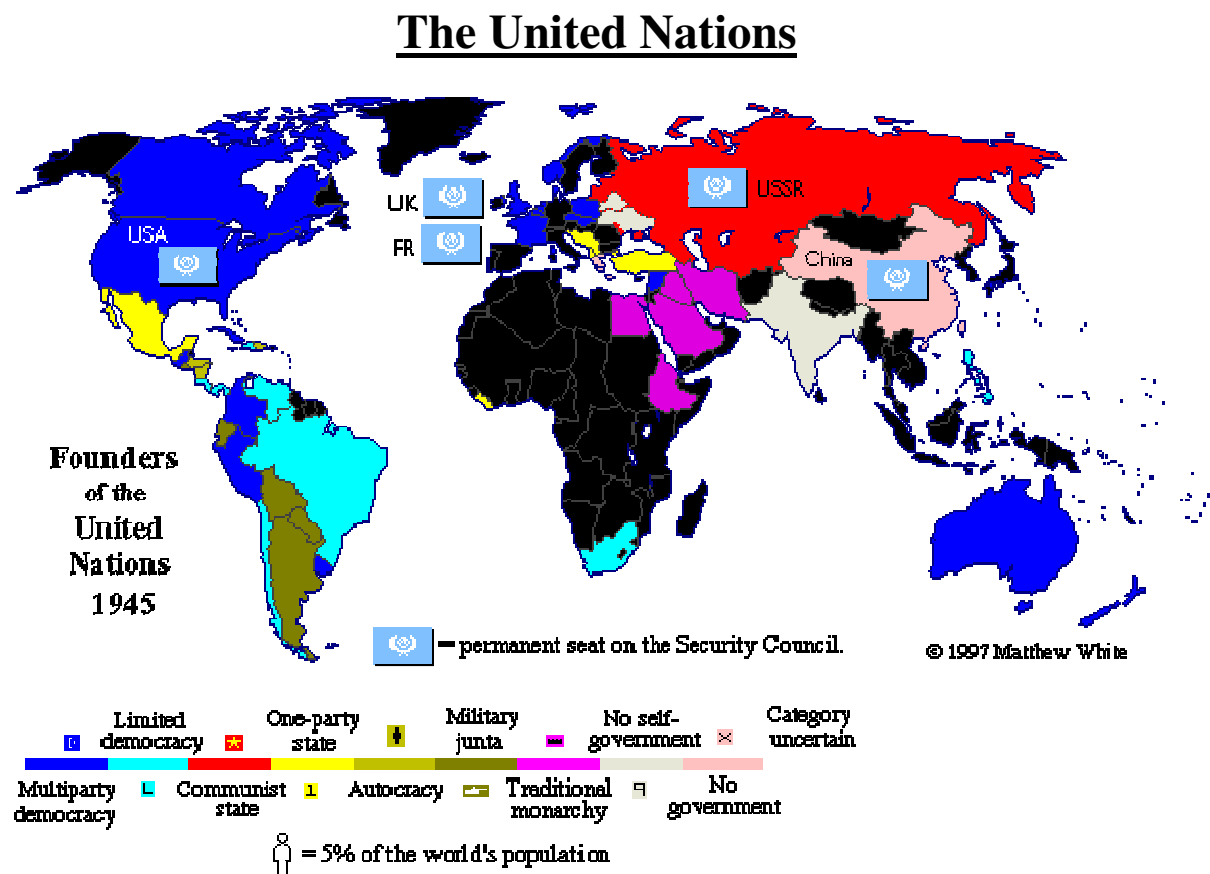
The table show the importance of Christianity in Latin America.

C.

Map 1

World Map of Political Regimes from 1945 to 1990.

(Mentioned in **Part II**, Capitalism domination of the world).



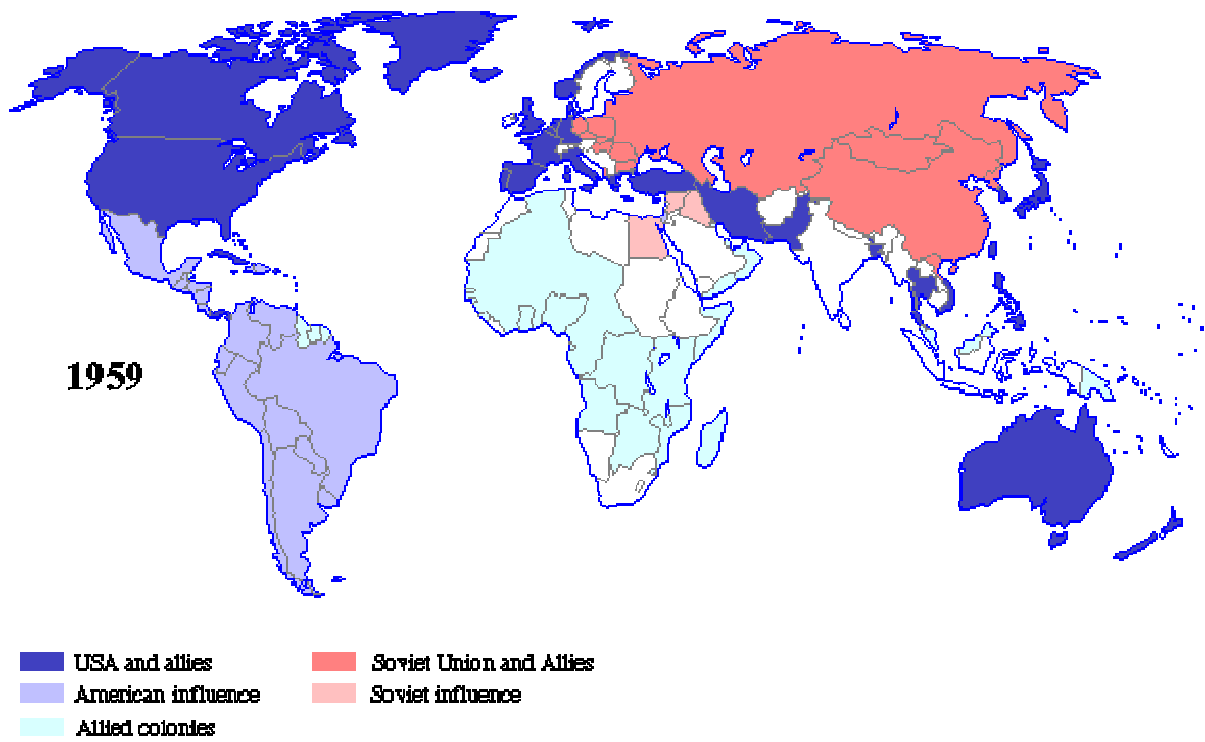
Last updated December 1998

D.

Map 2

The Cold War

1945-1960



Contemporary Context:

After the Second World War the United States and its allies decided to form an alliance to avoid the spread of the communist influence. It was the beginning of the Cold War. The Organization of American States was founded in 1945 to coordinate the foreign policy of the Western Hemisphere, while all the principle nations of West Europe and North America were joined into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1947.

Across the south of Asia, two more American alliance systems, CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) and SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), were established to contain possible Soviet expansion southward. By 1959, most of the non-Communist World had promised to be *anti*-Communist as well.

There were still holes in the pro-American defence perimeter. Many of the recently released Asian and African nations decided to explore an independent foreign policy instead. Neither Soviet nor Western, they considered themselves a Third World which would rather not get dragged into other people's quarrels. Of course, the superpowers tried to win these nations by economic and military manipulations. They were happy to gain another piece on the chessboard.

Less visible are the internal struggles within the nations on the map. The two superpowers, usually financed rebels to any government that was not under their influence; this resulted in many civilian casualties.

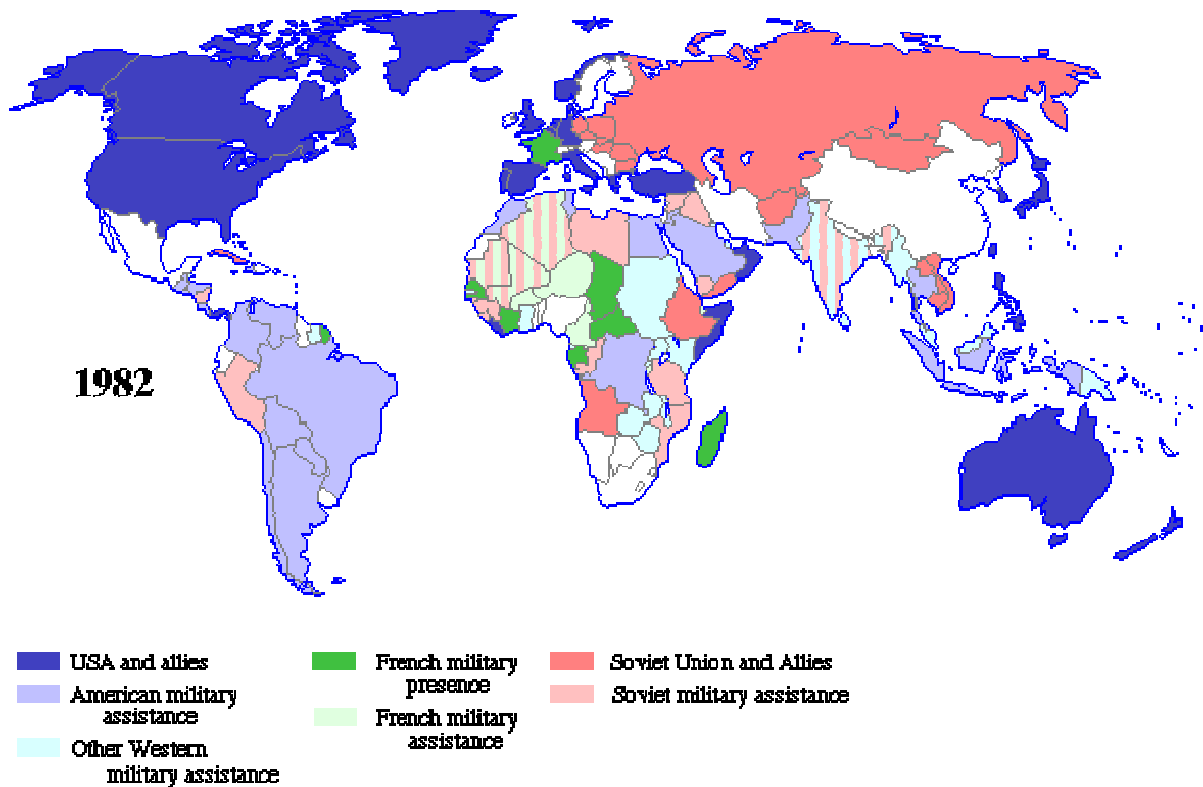
Sources: <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/coldwar1.htm>, August 12, 2007.

Last updated November 1997

E.

Map 3

Cold War 1960-1991



Contemporary Context:

The alliance system began to unravel in 1959 when Communist insurgents came to power in Cuba, gaining their first foothold in the Western Hemisphere and setting off a chain reaction of crises which came very close to bringing about a full nuclear exchange between the superpowers. A more visible result of the various Cuban crises is that hemispheric unity was shaken as several Latin American countries, mainly Mexico, decided that snubbing Cuba was not worth the risk and maintained diplomatic and economic relations despite the objections of the United States.

A more substantial defeat for the Americans came with the fall of Indochina to the Communists in 1975. This region was not exactly vital to American interests, but because the United States had fought a major war to prevent this from happening, the stakes were high, and the defeat was horribly demoralizing.

The replacement of the pro-American dictatorship in Nicaragua by Communist rebels also depressed American confidence, as did the fall of the pro-American Shah of Iran in favor of a vehemently anti-western theocracy. In fact, because the Americans had begun the Cold War riding high with so many nations in its corner, just about every subsequent change of regime anywhere in the world sank American influence just a bit lower. By the mid-80s, it appeared that the US was clearly losing the Cold War.

Appearances were deceiving. While the Western economies prospered despite the military build-ups, the cost of maintaining a massive military machine was crippling the inefficient Soviet economy. The attempts at reform came to little, too late, and in 1989, the Soviets were forced to cut loose their East European satellites. In 1991, the constituent republics of the Soviet Union declared their independence and the Soviet Union ceased to exist altogether. The Cold War was over.

- **Selected Sources:**

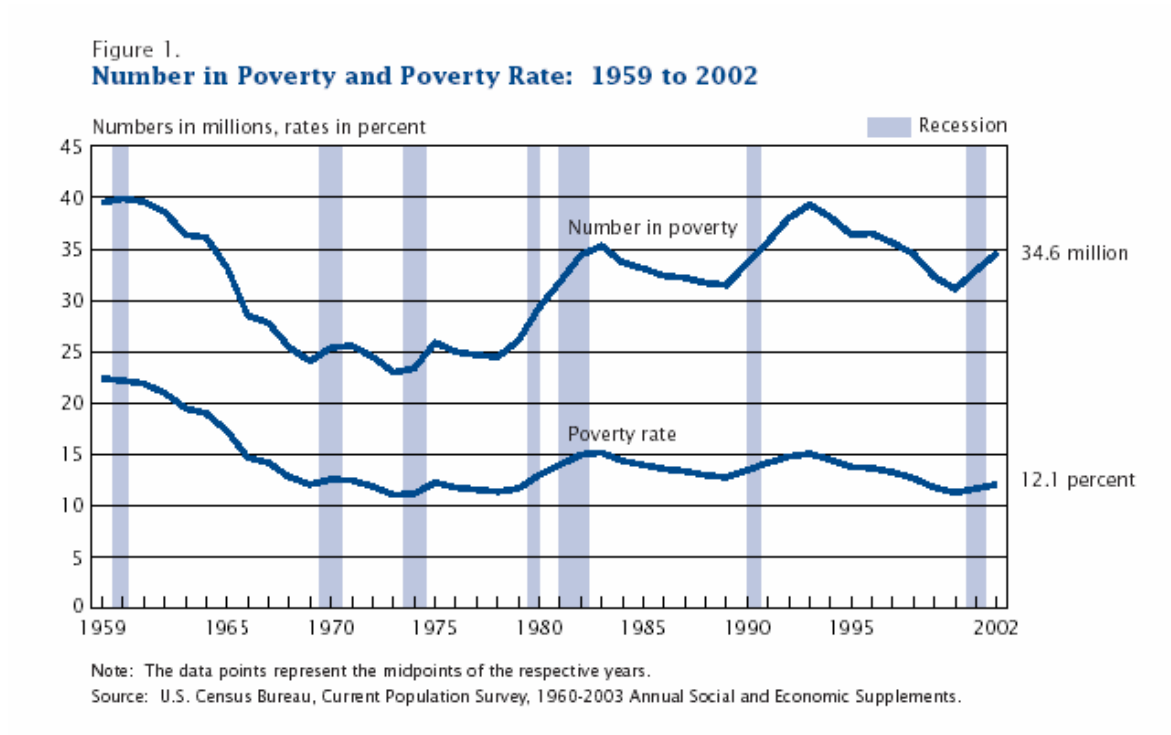
- Kidron & Segal, *The New State of the World Atlas* (1984)
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- <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/coldwar1.htm>

Last updated July 2000

F.

Statistics 1: Poverty in the United States

Sources: US Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-222.pdf> , September 11, 2007.



Statistics I shows the number of poor and poverty rate over time, beginning with 1959 (the first year for which poverty data are available), and labels which years had recessions. Poverty rates have tended to peak just after a recession.¹¹¹ After the most recent recession, the poverty rate peaked in 1993.

¹¹¹ According to the National Bureau of Economic Research Inc., the most recent recession began in July 1990 and ended in March 1991.

How the Census Measures Poverty

Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor.

If a family's total income is less than that family's threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered poor. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and does not include capital gains and noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

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