

SUPPLEMENT TO PROGRESSIO

**PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES**

HORACIO DE LA COSTA s. j.

**LIBERATION OF ALL MEN:
OUR COMMON OBJECTIVE**

SUPPLEMENT N° 2 * NOVEMBER 1973

**PROGRESSIO * C.P. 9048 * Borgo S. Spirito 5 * 00100 ROME * ITALY
ENGLISH - SPANISH - FRENCH EDITIONS; EDITOR: JOSE GSELL**

... the WORLD FEDERATION OF
... held at Augsburg (Germany) from
... The theme of this Assembly was: "The
... Life Communities: a community at the service of
... liberation of all men".

The purpose of this paper is to pose four questions, and by trying to define their scope, bring out their implications, and summarize some of the thinking that has been done on them, to be of some assistance to this Assembly in seeking and finding its own answers to them. The four questions are these:

1. Why should the Christian Life Communities be at all concerned with such a problem as the "liberation of all men", and concerned to such an extent as to make it their "common objective"?
2. Granted that the "liberation of all men" is a concern of the Christian Life Communities, how, in what way, by what method can they arrive at an understanding of the nature, scope, and demands of this common objective?
3. Does the search for a better understanding of this common objective bring to light alternative ways of attaining it, and if so, what are these options?
4. Clearly, the "liberation of all men" is not a task which the Christian Life Communities can accomplish by themselves, but only in collaboration with others. What, then, is the specific contribution they can make toward its accomplishment, as communities? as life communities? as Christian life communities?

I

I believe the answer to the first question will depend on whether you find the "liberation of all men" compatible, as a common objective, with the General Principles of the Christian Life Communities.

That it is a prime objective of the Christian Life Communities to serve God by serving men, by serving all men, is clear, because explicitly stated: "... to give ourselves always more generously to God in loving and serving all man kind in the world of today" (GP n. 1), and again, "we work in a spirit of service to establish justice and peace among all men" (GP n. 7).

But is the notion of liberation subsumed in the notion of service? It would seem so, for the Christian Life Communities engage themselves "to work together with the whole People of God for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all men" (GP n. 2). In fact, this work for human liberty is not left vague and undifferentiated but is particularized as liberation in the social sense: "work for the reform of the structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims of all forms of discrimination" (GP n. 7).

These passages from the General Principles leave little doubt that liberation, the liberation of all men, not only in an internal or purely spiritual, but also in an external or social sense, can be counted as a common objective of the Christian Life Communities. Not only can, but must be so counted, for it appears to be one of the elements by which the very identity of the Christian Life Communities is constituted.

But we cannot stop here. If we do, we shall have arrived at a merely nominal or notional acceptance of a common objective, superficially satisfying, perhaps, but of little value as far as action is concerned. We must go further, then, and inquire as to what precisely is signified by "li

beration of all men". What content, what levels of meaning do we give to this term? To answer that question we must ask a prior one. How do we find out?

Is there a way, a process, a method whereby we can begin to realize, and increasingly realize, in our hearts as well as in our minds, just what the liberation of all men is, not in the abstract but "in the world of today" (GP n. 1) and "in every area of life" (GP n. 3)? Is there a way, a process, a method whereby we can begin to perceive, and ever more clearly perceive whether this work of liberation is an authentic expression of that "interior law of love... which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts" (GP n. 2), an authentic "response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live". (GP n. 3)? This is the second question proposed for our reflection.

* * * * *

* * *

*

II

The phrase just quoted from the General Principles gives us a possible point of departure. What the Christian Life Communities wish above all to do is to respond "to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live". Christ, then, calls to us not only from the pages of Scripture, not only from the depths of our own hearts, but from within the world in which we live. How does he do that?

He does it, Vatican II tells us, through the aspirations and longings of mankind (Gaudium et spes, n. 4), especially those that are seen to be recurrent, widespread, and deep. Father C. G. Arévalo puts it this way ("On the theology of the signs of the times", Philippine Priests' Forum Iv/4 [December 1972], 21-22):

The only way God speaks to us, short of direct revelation, is through our desires and aspirations. And therefore, if there are great, widespread, positive desires going through mankind this is, interpretatively, the voice of God. Because this is the only other way outside of direct (public or private) revelation that God can manifest his mind and his will to us. Therefore, by searching out the great desires of men, we find out what is the movement of God's plan made manifest to us... It is through the aspirations of man that we come into living contact with the plan of God.

Scripture itself is proof of this, for Scripture is not only doctrine but history. In it, God teaches us, reveals himself to us, calls us not only by instruction or command but by event, by what happens in history. According to Fathers Sigmond and Cosmao ("Phenomenology and the theological evaluation of change", In Search of a Theology of Development [Sodepax, 1969], p. 111):

It is in history itself, in the wonders that [God] works in order to deliver his people, in the movement of empires that he provokes in order to call his people to conversion, that God manifests and reveals himself. It is sacred history, and its interpretation by the prophet, which expresses the will of God and makes it known as it unfolds . . .

The place occupied by history in the Revelation is not merely occasional or instrumental. It is part of the body of the Revelation. It is a dimension of the Word of God. The Word expresses itself and is carried out in history, which is its language.

This applies, strictly speaking, to history as unfolded in Scripture, to sacred history. It is suggested, however, that it applies equally well to secular history, for of secular history too God is Lord. In fact, Cardinal Roy, in a recently published statement ("Reflections on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the encyclical 'Pacem in terris' of Pope John XXIII [11 April 1973], p.75") sees the history of mankind continuing through our own time as being in a sense a continuation of sacred history, since "biblical and messianic history. . . according to the New Testament continues from the Resurrection of Christ until his second coming, the Parousia." Fathers Sigmond and Cosmao therefore rightly conclude that "this overlapping between the Word of God and a history marked by change is illuminating in the search for the meaning of a history in which change is becoming a salient characteristic" (ibid.), that is, the history of our own times.

How, then, are we to find out where, "from within the world in which we live" (GP n. 3), God is calling us to action? By attentively examining the great movements in the collective consciousness of mankind, and discerning where in these movements the Spirit of God is at work. In the consciousness of mankind - that must be emphasized. The focus of our discernment must be not so much on the external changes taking place - industrialization, urbanization, de colonization, marginalization - though these must be taken into account, but rather on the widespread human desires

and questionings which arise because of these changes (cf. Arévalo, op. cit. p.17).

It is here that we must look for the "signs of the times". The phrase, as we know, is Christ's: his gentle rebuke of the experts who forecast the weather with confidence but could not perceive that the Kingdom of God was upon them. "In the evening you say, 'It will be fine; there is a red sky', and in the morning, 'Stormy weather today; the sky is red and overcast'. You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times" (Mt 16.2-3). And it was John XXIII who, with rare insight, reminded us that we, in our turn, are called upon to discern from the signs of our times where the Kingdom of God is being built today. That is why, as Vatican II says, "the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel," so that "in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 4).

But how do we scrutinize, how do we interpret the signs of the times? Cardinal Roy, in the statement referred to (*ibid.*, p. 74), suggests that

for Christians. . . interpreting history through the signs of the times means asking themselves whether events, accomplishments, and currents of opinion that make themselves felt represent or not an enrichment of human nature, which is always perfectible and which completes itself by developing in time. Since human nature is created by God, the question arises in this form for Christians: Is the new event the image, or the caricature of human nature? The method of the signs of the times, therefore, consists in the first place in discovering correspondences and resemblances.

"Correspondences and resemblances", that is to say, patterns. It is in the recurrent patterns, the dominant themes in the aspirations and questionings of contemporary man that we will find where the Spirit of God is at work (cf. Arévalo, op. cit. p. 21).

Here, I would suggest, is the methodology we seek: the methodology of the discernment of spirits of Saint Ignatius, but extended now, extrapolated, from the movements within the consciousness of the individual to the wider stage of the movements within the consciousness of mankind. It is a methodology more and more widely used in the Church, and by the teaching Church itself: Vatican II, the popes, the bishops. And here, in very rapid summary, are the recurrent patterns, the dominant themes that its application seems to disclose.

1. First, a crisis of change; or, as Teilhard de Chardin would put it, a "critical threshold" reached by the very rapidity of the changes man has induced in his planet and in himself:

Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence, we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation. (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4).

2. Then, as man extends his dominance over nature, a demand for wider participation in the benefits of that dominance; a demand for a society that, in the vision of John XXIII, would be along the following lines:

. . . an ordered and hierarchical society, with a place for each nation and each nation in its place. From the bottom to the top, from the individual to the 'public authority of universal competence', society forms a pyramid of intermediate bodies founded on the 'principle of subsidiarity'. Each one - individual, basic community, or state - makes its active contribution, with respect for authority and in the service of the common good. Governed by a bill of rights and mutual duties, society is animated by a common will. It is a so

ciety of participation (Cardinal Roy, op. cit. p. 46)

3. This in turn leads to the demand for wider participation in responsible freedom: the assertion on the part of individuals and nations of the right to self-identity and self-development:

A demand made by the man of today: a greater sharing in responsibility and decision-making. This legitimate aspiration becomes more evident as the cultural level rises, as the sense of freedom develops and as man becomes more and more aware of how, in a world facing an uncertain future, the choices of today already condition the life of tomorrow. (Paul VI, *Octogesima adveniens*, n. 47).

. . . a consciousness of enhancement of personal worth with regard both to the whole man and the whole of mankind . . . is expressed in an awareness of the right to development. The right to development must be seen as a dynamic interpretation of all those fundamental human rights upon which the aspirations of individuals and nations are based. . . By taking the future into their own hands through a determined will for progress, the developing peoples . . . will authentically manifest their own personalization. And in order that they may cope with the unequal relationships within the present world complex, a certain responsible nationalism gives them the impetus needed to acquire an identity of their own. (Synod of Bishops, 1971, "Justice in the World", pp. 9-10).

4. An enchanting prospect; but what is the actual fact? A widening gap between rich and poor, between the powerless many and the few endowed with almost total power.

Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources, and economic power. Yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens is still tormented by hunger and poverty, while

countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before today has man been so keenly aware of freedom, yet, at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance. (Vatican II, Gaudium et spes, n.4) .

Ancient divisions between nations and empires, between races and classes, today possess new technological instruments of destruction. The arms race is a threat to man's highest good, which is life; it makes poor peoples and individuals yet more miserable, while making rich those already powerful; it creates a continuous danger of conflagration, and in the case of nuclear arms, it threatens to destroy all life from the face of the earth. (Synod of Bishops, 1971, "Justice in the World", p. 7.)

5. Hence, the emergence not of the society of assent envisioned by John XXIII, but of a society of dissent:

Although the world of today has a very vivid sense of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial, and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce everything to ashes. (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, n. 4).

6. Dissent, therefore; frequently accompanied by violence. But that is not the worst of it. The worst of it is an increased awareness of violence, and within that awareness a creeping conviction that violence is not only desirable, it is inevitable.

This violence is everywhere, in countries that are not at war and in all social bodies . . . It takes many forms. One notes today physical violence, which places at risk the life or material liberty of individuals or groups. But - and this is new - one notes almost everywhere structural violence: violence which stems from institutions,

regimens, and systems of law. . . What should be noted as specifically new is not so much violence as awareness of violence. In former times violence was not noticed, or was endured as something inevitable, whereas today it is thought about, analyzed, and consciously desired. Many people interpret it as a law of history. Society is presented as essentially connected with conflict. (Cardinal Roy, op. cit. pp. 46-47).

7. What has happened? We may describe it, perhaps, in terms of what the ancient Greeks considered to be the very essence of tragedy: the nemesis of hubris. Man, creative man, made arrogant and greedy by the fantastic achievements of his creativity, is now in mortal peril of being dehumanized if not destroyed by the things he has created.

While very large areas of the population are unable to satisfy their primary needs, superfluous needs are ingeniously created. It can thus rightly be asked if, in spite of all his conquests, man is not turning back against himself the results of his activity. Having rationally endeavoured to control nature, is he not now becoming the slave of the objects which he makes? (Paul VI, Octogesima adveniens, n. 9).

Thus, while man extends his power in every direction, he does not always succeed in subjecting it to his own welfare. Striving to penetrate deeper into the deeper recesses of his own mind, he frequently appears more unsure of himself. Gradually and more precisely he lays bare the laws of society, only to be paralyzed by uncertainty about the direction to give it. (Vatican II, Gaudium et spes, n. 4).

8. And yet, there is no great mystery about that, surely? Ordinary people know, even without the aid of experts, where that direction lies. Sometimes they have even said it. Here is one such statement:

Many of our people, through no fault of their own, have had no education of their own. This

does not mean that they do not know what they want. A man does not have to be formally educated to know that he wants to live with his family where he wants to live; to move about freely and not require a pass; to earn a decent wage; to be free to work for the person of his choice for as long as he wants; and, finally, to be ruled by the people that he wants to be ruled by, and not those who rule him because they have more guns than he has.

An ordinary man; a man of no importance; one of count less millions; it does not really matter who he was. His name, in fact, was Toivo Herman Ja Toivo; but it could just as well have been Chang, or Joe Blow, or Juan de la Cruz. What is of some interest is that he made that statement from the dock, as a prisoner on trial for terrorism. It is not known what reply the honorable court made to him; nor, indeed, whether it took the trouble to reply.

* * * * *

* * *

*

III

These are some of the broad strokes with which those who are teachers in the Church, using the methodology of discernment, sketch out the contemporary world situation. It remains for us now, using the same methodology, to address ourselves to our third question, that is, to determine whether these general indications really point to "liberation for all men" as where the action, the action of the Spirit, is; and, further, to clarify what this task of liberation means for us, and what it is likely to demand of us.

Reference has been made to the ideal of a society of participation, national and international, set forth by John XXIII in "Pacem in terris". That encyclical was written in the early years of the Development Decade - the label given by the United Nations Organization to the period 1960-1970. It was thus based, in part, on the then prevailing theory concerning the direction in which the world was moving, or should be made to move. Pope Paul VI states this theory of development as follows (Octogesima adveni- niens, n. 41):

Since the nineteenth century, western societies and, as a result, many others have put their hopes in ceaselessly renewed and indefinite progress. They saw this progress as man's effort to free him- self in face of the demands of nature and of social constraints; progress was the condition for and the yardstick of human freedom. Progress, spread by the modern media of information and by the demand for wider knowledge and greater consumption, has be- come an omnipresent ideology.

Economic development is the most tangible and measur- able form of progress, as well as a necessary condition for most of its other forms. Hence, naturally enough, the initial thrust of development was predominantly economic : the establishment in each nation and world-wide of what

Father Philip Land calls an "organic interdependence of labour working with natural resources and capital in a social system conducive to producing a surplus (in a humane system of production)" ("Sociological observations on Cartigny", Sodepax Report 1969, p. 55).

That last phrase - in a humane system of production - is of some importance. As its implications came to be fully realized, it was seen that there were dimensions of development equally if not more important than the economic. A system of production could scarcely be called humane if not accompanied by a humane system of distribution, and neither economic production nor distribution would really have any meaning if they did not promote the development of man as such, in his wholeness as a being not only animal but spiritual, not only individual but social.

Development thus acquired social and cultural connotations; it came to mean, as Pope Paul VI put it, "to promote the good of every man and of the whole man" (Populorum progressio, n. 14).

This being the objective of development, what was conceived to be the process by which it was to be attained? Dr. Rubem Alves describes it as follows ("Theology and the liberation of man", in Sodepax Report 1969, pp. 84-85) :

The first aspect of the problem to be noticed by consciousness was that the world is divided between nations which are rich and nations which are poor: developed and underdeveloped. It was noticed, at the same time, that the whole world was amidst a process of 'rapid social changes'. The rapid social changes were believed to be the process whereby the division between rich and poor nations was to be overcome. It was thought that the same structure which contained the contradiction between rich and poor contained the dynamics which would solve it. Underdevelopment was . . . interpreted as on-the-way-towards-development, as a stage which chronologically necessarily antecedes development. Since the rapid social changes were caused by industrialization, and industrialization came from the rich nations,

these nations were considered both as leading the triumphant procession of development and as the cause and hope of the development of the underdeveloped.

All very well; with one important reservation. The process doesn't seem to work. As Dr. Alves himself points out, "this hypothesis faced a serious difficulty: the growing gap between rich nations and poor nations" (ibid., p. 75). In 1969, Lady Jackson gave the following measurements of the gap: "The annual increase in Atlantic income [that is, the income of the North Atlantic community of nations] is greater than the total income of Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The United States is twelve times wealthier than all its 'sister republics' in Latin America together. Expenditure on alcohol and tobacco alone in the North Atlantic countries is more than double the entire national income of India. These are disproportions that are greater than the old chasm between rich and poor within traditional societies" (quoted in Charles Elliott, The Development Debate, London 1971, p. 101). This year, R.L. Stout, writing in the Christian Science Monitor, provides an additional yardstick with reference to the United States: "The United States is the richest nation on earth; but, with only 6 percent of the world's population, it is now consuming one-third of its energy. It also consumes one-third of the meat" (reprinted in the Daily American, Rome, 6 July 1973).

How explain this phenomenon of the widening gap between rich and poor? The standard development theory, with its rectilinear plotting of progress - the underdeveloped nations steadily marching onward and upward under the leadership and with the aid of the developed nations - does not seem to do so. An alternative hypothesis has therefore been put forward, chiefly by Latin Americans. Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, in a conference he gave earlier this year in Rome, provides us with a capsule statement of this hypothesis ("Liberation", Documentation Sedos, 6 July 1973, p. 480):

We [of Latin America] are underdeveloped countries; or, as some of our friends in developed countries prefer to put it so that we may not

feel offended, 'developing' countries. Still and all, the economists, the social scientists, and the statesmen of Latin America give us proof that we are in reality 'underdeveloping' countries - a condition inferior to that of being underdeveloped, since it means we are not getting any better. Now then: what the experts have discovered about these countries 'on-the-road-to-underdevelopment' is that the main reason for their being such is dependence. What does that mean, dependence? In Latin America, the countries in a state of dependence are those which make no decisions of their own, whether economic, social, cultural, or political. The important decisions are made outside these countries, and they are penalized if they presume to make them for themselves.

Who make these decisions, then? It is the developed nations that make them. It is thus that dependence is defined. As Dr. Charles Elliott puts it ("An esoteric critique of Cartigny", Sodepax Report 1969, p. 23), it is

dependence upon and domination by the rich countries which have established an economic system which exploits (in the full Marxist sense of the word) the surplus generated by labour in the developing countries. Associated with this international exploitation there is in many developing countries of Latin America an oppressive political and social regime which ensures that the vast bulk of the population receives a disproportionately small percentage of national income and national social capital.

In other words, the developed nations, far from helping the underdeveloped nations to develop, keep them in their state of underdevelopment. Why? Because it is to their interest to do so; their own state of being developed depends on it. And this holds true also of the affluent establishments in underdeveloped countries, for they owe their affluence to being able to deliver to the developed world at least a part of the surplus production of the cheap labor, the underdeveloped labor, of their own laboring class. "Underdevelopment is both caused by and causes

development, and development is the cause of and depends on underdevelopment" - thus, succinctly, is how Dr. Alves sums it up (op. cit. p. 85).

What is the result? The result is the creation and the perpetuation in underdeveloped countries of a two-class society in which the vast majority of the population, for the most part peasants living at the poverty level or below it, is sharply divided from the very small minority that controls both economic and political power. A middle class is either non-existent or negligible. The form of government may be nominally democratic, but the people do not really participate in their government, for the very simple reason that it is not their government. Those who govern them do not govern with their consent, but with the consent either of their fellow oligarchs or of the military establishments they take good care to maintain; but, above all - a key point in this hypothesis - not only with the consent but with the positive support of economic interest groups of the developed world, backed, more often than not, by their respective governments.

This phenomenon of dependence gives rise to the subsidiary phenomenon of marginalization, which Dr. Elliott describes as follows (The Development Debate, pp. 52-53):

Groups may be said to be marginal when they do not enter into the decision-making processes of their communities, have a precarious economic existence... and do not relate to other groups. Marginal groups are sometimes defined racially, e.g., urban Indians in Brazil or Colombia, but are always characterized by lack of political power at local and national levels. Almost by definition, these marginal groups are the most underprivileged, the most exploited, the least educated of their society. However well the economy prospers - as in Brazil in the 1950's - none of the gains filters down to them.

This is surely a situation that cries to heaven for justice. But how is justice to be done? The answer of those who formulate the hypothesis of dependence is : liberation.

Like the term "development", the term "liberation" has acquired several levels of meaning. And if the first meaning given to development was economic, the first meaning given to liberation was political. Why are people unable to develop themselves? Because they are kept in a condition of dependence. They are enchained and oppressed by unjust structures of society. Before development can take place, these structures must be pulled down, and the only way to do this is by political action. To the question "What is political liberation?" Father Gutiérrez re plies (op. cit. p. 479):

In Latin America, it is basically our conviction that if we are to rise from our condition of misery - or, to give it a moral dimension, our situation of injustice - it is necessary to change, to overturn, the dominant economic, social, and political order as it actually exists among us . . . But mind you, liberation is not simply to remove this or that unjust structure. It is to attack the causes of these structures; to strike at their roots. Liberation - economic, social, political - is just that: to make war on the causes of contemporary social injustice and underdevelopment, so that people can become masters of their own destiny.

That is how political liberation presents itself in Latin America. In other countries of the Third World there may be analogies to the Latin-American situation; that is, similarities as well as differences. Even in the developed world there may be people in need of liberation from oppressive social structures: marginal groups, minorities, migrants, subcultures, unorganized or disorganized sectors of the working class, lost people of all classes. In all such situations, Christians committed to justice must go

through the same process of discernment and decision as their Latin-American brethren.

But now note this: in Latin America and elsewhere, liberation in its political form came up almost immediately against a formidable barrier; the barrier, namely, of apathy, of inertia, of incomprehension, precisely among those in most need of liberation. This sobering experience led to the realization that there is in liberation a second level of meaning; for men need to be freed - or rather, to free themselves - not only from external oppression but from internal constraints. It brought home the fact that of all the wounds inflicted by injustice the most grievous is surely this: injustice, if sufficiently prolonged, makes men forget what it is to be free; deprives them not only of the ability to strike off their chains, but even of the desire to do so.

Thus, liberation took on an educative, a formative dimension; an effort to awaken both consciousness and conscience; a concientización. "The essence of the attack of the movement for liberation," says Dr. Elliott (op. cit., pp. 56-57),

is the redistribution of economic and political power. But first the individual has to be liberated from his conception of himself as an object of a process, passively excluded from all decision-making. His awareness of himself as a creative and responsible being must be established, so that he may be liberated from his own servility. It is not for nothing that the most creative book to come out of Latin America since 1945 is called Educacão como prática da liberdade . . . by the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, the great exponent of conscientization, or awareness building. For when the individual becomes aware of himself and his place in society, he demands the power to challenge the injustices he sees.

Thus, the achievement of outer freedom is conditioned by the achievement of inner freedom. But consider this in inner freedom. Is it achieved simply by becoming aware of

oneself and one's place in society, aware of what one is before men? Does it not also mean, even more urgently, becoming aware of what one is before God? Is there not one last chain to be broken, a chain that lies heavily on those in need of liberation, but even more heavily on those who can undertake, and who are called upon to undertake the work of liberation: the chain, that is, of selfishness, the chain of avarice, the chain of arrogance, the chain of blind anger and bloodlust, the chain of cowardice, the chain of sin? Father Pedro Arrupe makes this a third level of meaning of liberation, and puts it first (Witnessing to Justice, p. 41):

Liberation, first of all, from the inner constraints, the inner slavery of personal sin and sinful proclivities. Liberation, next, from the ignorance, the apathy, and the fatalism, the narrow and selfish mental patterns and attitudes induced in us by our own sins and the sins of others. Liberation, finally, from the unjust economic, social, and political structures, arrangements and procedures which effectively exclude so many people from human development, and even deprive them of the means to acquire that development for themselves.

Once a community decides that it is called to work for liberation, it must next consider what specific from its liberating action is to take. This requires a clear and exact understanding, at first-hand and in depth, of the social context in which it plans to act. It would be a grave mistake to take over without modification the liberation procedures which seem to be effective in some other context. Economic, social, political conditions vary from country to country and even from one region to another of the same country. It was precisely the mechanical application of so-called laws of economic behavior, which had been developed in the West, to East and Southeast Asia that has led to serious mistakes and signal failures in the planning of development for that region.

Given a particular context, then, on which aspect of liberation should a community concentrate its efforts? Political action? Conscientization? Spiritual conversion?

Bearing in mind, of course, that these are not watertight compartments, and that conscientization, for instance, can hardly be undertaken without some form of political action. What Paulo Freire wrote to a young theology student in 1970 is very much to the point here (quoted in Blueprint, New Orleans, March 1973):

I imagine that one of the prime purposes that we Christians ought to have in this connection is to get rid of any illusory dream of trying to change man without touching the world he lives in. Such an attitude, which no doubt appeals to those who enjoy comfortable living conditions, would make us want to preserve the status quo, in which oppressed peoples are kept from being fully human. As a matter of fact, it is idle to talk of changing man without changing also the concrete circumstances he lives in; transforming them will transform him too - not automatically, of course, but quite certainly. There is definitely a dialectic involved in this process.

Political action itself can take many forms, and extremely difficult decisions will have to be made in this area, always in the light of the existing concrete situation. Is that situation what the Marxists would call a "revolutionary situation", one, that is, in which a turning-upside-down of the social order not only has become imperative but has become feasible? And what kind of revolutionary action is called for in the circumstances?

Is a choice possible between revolution as event and revolution as process, to use a distinction made by Dr. Elliott (cf. Sodepax Report 1969, p. 22)? And how is it proposed to escape the dilemma of the Gironde, as Crane Brinton puts it (cf. The Anatomy of Revolution, New York 1965, c. 5): the problem which sooner or later confronts the Center of a revolution, namely, whether to move further and further to the Left to retain control of the revolution, or to remain immobile at the center and lose control of it? In fact, is a revolution from the center really possible, as President Marcos of the Philippines claims (cf. Today's Revolution: Democracy, Manila, 1971, c.8) ?

But, of course, a prior question must be raised as to the necessity of revolution. Here are two passages from the Sodepax Report so often referred to in this paper, the first by Dr. Elliott (p. 22), the second by Father Land (pp. 56-57).

Dr. Elliott:

The crucial point about dependence and domination is that they are not amenable to change from within the system. No dominating power will ingly gives up its position of authority, of privilege; and by definition a dependent entity does not achieve independence without a struggle. Therefore, the process of liberation . . . and the process of development insofar as it is constrained by the relations of domination and dependence imply a degree of conflict. This conflict leads directly to the process of revolution.

Father Land:

One can believe that reform of mentality must precede structural change and still believe that this process normally - or at least sometimes - can proceed within the given system [underscoring ours]. Our job then becomes that of identifying which structures are capable of such human improvement and which lie quite beyond redemption. [It is argued, however, that] such reform would add up only to an amelioration that tightens more firmly the slave's bonds. Perhaps so. But can we allow the cry of ameliorationism to be cause for dismissing the possibility that improvement, even if only in economic conditions, may not [be the prelude to] still other forms of humanization? Theoretically, and surely there is some supporting historical evidence, at least in fairly open societies, the freeing of men from bondage to brute forces of nature and to economic insecurity has emboldened them to challenge political power. Established authority (let us hope even in closed societies in the long run) cannot so easily refuse ad infinitum

to respond to such pressure. And if any political competition is allowable, the pace of accommodation is bound to be quickened. Nor may we exclude all possibility that the Establishment can finally arrive, aided by this process, to some understanding and acceptance of the need to respond still more readily to forces demanding more thorough-going changes.

Reform - or revolution? To which of these views would a liberation community subscribe, given its concrete context? And if it be a Christian community, a Christian Life Community, then the question can be put this way: Where, from within this part of the world, from within this unique part of the world, is Christ's call coming (GP n. 3) ?

* * * * *

* * *

*

IV

We have come to the fourth, and last, of our questions. It is the most important question of all, and should therefore be left without comment. May I simply suggest for your reflection, personal and communal, three very brief passages.

The first is from Paul VI, on the need for action (Octogesima adveniens n. 48):

It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action.

The second is from Vatican II, on the need for action by the laity (Apostolica actuositatem n. 7) :

The laity must take on the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, and motivated by Christian love, let them act directly and definitively in the temporal sphere. As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens, using their own particular skills and acting on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice characteristic of God's kingdom. The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that, without the slightest detriment to its own proper laws, it can be brought into conformity with the higher principles of the Christian Life and adapted to the shifting circumstances of time, place, and person.

The third is again from Paul VI, on the need for discernment before action (Octogesima adveniens n. 4):.

... the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church.

But let us not overdo discernment. Let us not expect complete clarity before acting. Discernment should lead to action, not paralyze it. Let us begin modestly; but let us begin. It is often by doing that one discovers what to do. That may not be perfectly logical; it is nevertheless a fact.

One is reminded of a line from the poet Antonio Machado: "Caminante, no hay camino: se hace camino al andar". "Wayfarer, there is no way to go; one makes a way by going."

* * * * *

* * *

*

The SUPPLEMENTS to PROGRESSIO (they appear twice each year; this is the second you have received) pursue the same goal as the review PROGRESSIO. They are official publications of the World Federation of Christian Life Communities. As such, they reflect the research and inspiration that the thrust of CLC apostolic service finds in the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.

They aim to be of help to those who wish to be witnesses of God's love in the world, who search for authentic contact with the Word of God in all things, who desire to live more fully conformed to Christ in their action, in a profound and enlightened attachment to the Church.

The SUPPLEMENTS to PROGRESSIO are obtained by ordering what is called a complete subscription, which entitles one to the six regular issues of the review plus the two annual supplements. For details see next issue of PROGRESSIO.