

# LATIN AMERICA:

## The Rise of a New Non-Communist Left

By GEORGIE ANNE GEYER

**I** MET the young Colombian priest, Camilo Torres, in July of 1965, just six months before he became a guerrilla and was killed in the mountains. He was radiant with confidence then, the knight errant of the students and the talk of Bogotá. When I arrived at his little apartment near the Catholic University, where he taught sociology, he was bustling around, his servants watching his every move with adoring eyes. Camilo was like that—he was so handsome, so intelligent, he had so much charisma, he drew everyone to him.

It was precisely that week that rumors had started that the conservative Luis Cardinal Concha Cordoba, whose only action at the Vatican Council a year later was to vote against the schema on religious liberty, was going to defrock Camilo; he was going too far with his talk about mass movements and political change, and had not the Cardinal said: "It must be borne in mind that the church cannot involve itself in socioeconomic measures that may fail, for the truth of the church is forever."

But Camilo (everyone called him Camilo) had dismissed this. "I consider the work of a priest is to take a person to God," he said, "to work toward the love of one's brother. I consider there are circumstances that do not permit a man to offer himself to God. A priest must fight those circumstances, and for me they are political. The grave problem is political, because the fundamental decisions have to be political decisions. And these decisions are now produced by the minorities and not the majorities. Because of this, the majority must produce pressure groups; it must take political power."

This young priest in his late thirties, trained at the University of Minnesota and the Belgian University of Louvain,

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talked about starting a newspaper and showed me letters from backers who had promised to help him. Still smiling that radiant smile he had, he said goodbye and left for the airport, where several hundred cheering students saw him off.

Within weeks, Camilo had been defrocked. He tried for a while to work with his mass movement idea. Then, impatient and driven by whatever devils or saints inhabited him (his friends insist there were quite enough of both), he joined the guerrillas. On February 15, 1966, the government announced that Camilo Torres had been killed in an encounter with Colombian troops.

That marked the beginning of the Camilo legend. Colombian students marched with placards reading: CAMILO, WE WILL NOT MOURN YOU, WE WILL AVENGE YOU. Last winter the Christian Democrat youth in Venezuela held a conference, with a moment of silence observed in Camilo's memory, to discuss where he was a Catholic, where not. A fellow Colombian priest, German Guzman, one of the dozen finest sociologists in Latin America, broke the clerical silence on "the Camilo affair" this spring, saying that "generations which fight for authentic democracy will realize his sacrifice" and that "every day he grows closer to the conscience of people who want to be free." The army buried his body secretly, apparently fearing his martyrdom.

Camilo Torres may be the most extreme and dramatic example of what is happening within the Roman Catholic church in Latin America, but he is only one harbinger. The Catholic church is riven and tormented with change, with everything from "revolts of the priests" (Colombia) to Catholic reform movements in power (Chile) to brilliant young sociologists mapping out the continent for change while conservative bishops look on (Brazil). The "Catholic revolution" is already so far advanced that even Cuban Premier Fidel Castro has been telling people privately that next to his own men he considers the radical Catholics "real revolutionaries" and far more revolutionary than



—Pictorial Parade.

**Martyred social reformer Camilo Torres—"the most extreme and dramatic example of what is happening within the Roman Catholic church in Latin America."**

the Soviet Communists, who are now taking a nonviolent line.

Generally, the "Catholic revolution"—and, though it is generally peaceful, it can legitimately be called that because it aims at a total change of the structure of society—is being carried through in a three-pronged attack. There is a definite pattern and program, much of it supported from and orchestrated in Europe, rarely seen or understood from outside.

The political arm of the attack is the Christian Democrat parties, church-inspired but not overtly church-related. The social change arm is a gaggle of institutes, with stacks of money from West Germany, Belgium, and the United States, which are doing intensive sociological research and are promoting such "intermediate" organizations as trade unions, community organizations, cooperatives and peasant leagues. The intellectual arm is a group of young priests, most often trained in Europe or the United States, who, through magazines, publications, speeches, and being in key positions, are reshaping the image of the church in the Latin Catholic's eyes.

**T**HE Christian Democrats took power for the first time in 1964 in Chile with the election of President Eduardo Frei against a Marxist coalition, and Chile is today the place where all the ideas of the Catholic Left are being experimented with. It represents the ascension to power of the real middle class—doctors, lawyers, dentists, small new-immigrant merchants—and they have an

apocalyptic view of themselves as the saviors of Latin America.

Offshoots of the German and Italian parties of the same name, they share their European brothers' inspiration from the social teachings of the Vatican, but that is about all. The Latins are much much further to the left. They claim to be more revolutionary than the Marxists, more "truly" Catholic than the clergy. This gives rise to such jokes in Latin America as: "What is a Christian Democrat? A little red fish swimming in holy water."

Christian Democracy has many components and many interpreters, and all the parties take a slightly different line on things, but generally they stand for several major concepts: a change in structure through massive organization of the "marginal" elements who have always lived outside organized society; a larger amount of direction of the economy by the state; the splitting up of monopolies (so serious in Latin America, where most corporations are merely extended family groups); massive upgrading of education; and the general idea of "the state for man, and not man for the state."

In addition, Christian Democracy has some interesting slogans such as "communitarianism," which, as much as anyone can discover, means things like workers owning factories, but they talk about this rather than do much about it. It is also charged by their enemies that what they really want is a corporate state. They deny this, saying that they believe in development from the grass roots up, not from the top down.

**I**MPLICIT in all of Christian Democracy is the idea of injecting a Christian ideology of man and of progress into a society which suffers from lack of formation. They keep repeating that Latin America will go either Christian Democrat or Marxist because it must have an ideology. To them, the 1964 election, where in the space of only two years Chile went from a choice between the traditional parties (radical, liberal, conservative) to a choice between the Christian or the Marxist Left, is what will eventually happen everywhere.

They believe they are reforming Latin man and that they are in truth "new men." The prominent Chilean sociologist Eduardo Hamuy calls them "modern men, with rational attitudes, men who want facts and verify things, the most American, most New World managerial types." Father Roger Vekemans, a brilliant Jesuit in Chile, posits the Christian Democrat idea that for Latin America to develop, man himself must change—from the traditional Latin man who accepts testimony to a modern man who searches for scientific proof.

The Christian Democrats are, in all cases except one, careful to stress their

standing apart from the church hierarchy. Although there is an unquestionable coincidence of interests, this is largely true. Chile is the most ecumenical country in Latin America and the only one to have an aggressive birth control program. Moreover, the Chilean Christian Democrats, who started in the late Thirties, insist it was *they* who liberalized the hierarchy, which started to change in the early Fifties, and not the other way around.

To date, their Chilean record is impressive. In less than three years, they have put through an agrarian reform, bought into the U.S.-owned copper mines in a unique Chilean ownership-foreign ownership arrangement, taxed a redistribution of income into being, totally reformed education, and started a massive organization of the poor. Though there are problems, the Christian Democrats are so successful that one of the top Marxist Leftists told me recently, "They have faced the Left with a totally new problem. They have stolen every one of the programs we have fought for for forty years."

There are Christian Democrat parties in all the countries now, some mature, some "romantic" and green. The second-largest, Copei, is in Venezuela and might take power in the next election. They are influential and more American- and Notre Dame-oriented than the Chileans, who tend to be European- and University of Louvain-oriented. They are second in Salvador, they are in power in coalition with the ruling party in Peru, and they are in various degrees of devel-

opment in the rest of Latin America.

The most amusing situation is in Paraguay, the one country where the party does not protest too much over the government's insistent charges that it is run from the inside of the archbishop's palace (it is also not really legal, because the government classes it with the Communists as an international conspiracy). Paraguay's tough dictator-President Alfredo Stroessner has not historically shown much respect for opposition political parties, but he does respect the Catholic church. So the budding little party, which actually is independent, as the parties all are, has tacitly allowed the word to circulate that it is church-sponsored; it is its one assurance of an afterlife.

Among the parties and their organizers, there is a major saint, Jacques Maritain, the French layman-philosopher who outlined the entire postwar philosophy of the involvement of the individual Catholic in the political milieu ("As concerns the revitalized democracy we are hoping for, the only solution is of the pluralistic type"). And there is healthy pluralism even within the entire movement. Said the top Paraguayan organizer, Dr. Edgar Ibarra, with typical Christian Democrat independence, "We have cordial relations with the Chileans but we stay away from them as far as possible." He smiled, and added, "They are the imperialists of Latin America."

This independence is all the more telling and amusing because Dr. Ibarra's  
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"I find him dynamic, authoritative, and I love his warm brown eyes. What do you see in him?"

# ROME

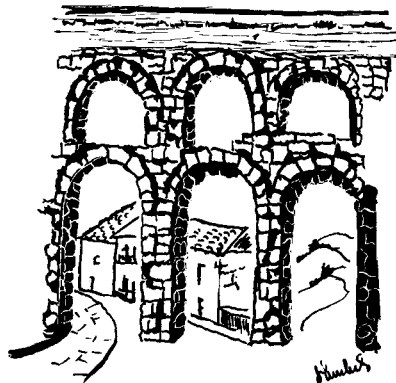
By YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO

*The following two poems, part of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's cycle "Italian Italy," are published here for the first time in English. They are taken from his book "The Mail Boat." The translator is George Reavey, editor of "The Poetry of Yevgeny Yevtushenko" and "The New Russian Poets" (October House).*

## Rhythms of Rome

Get up!  
Rome-the-giant-alarm-clock shrills by your head.  
And go out towards Rome!  
Give yourself up to the dawn thud of shoes, hammers,  
and the cries  
of milkmen, news vendors, bakers, green-grocers.  
The nuns  
with their starched white wings crackling trip in Indian file.  
The coppers  
in their clay mugs clatter appealing to passersby.  
The prostitutes,  
after their morning medical, go straight to pray in church.  
In a café  
the pot-bellied discuss the best cure for constipation.  
Gypsy girls  
jingle their coin-necklaces near an exhibit of "Super-Pop-Art."  
Ministers  
speed by in Mercedes. Their hands have callouses from playing cards.  
Hands  
calloused from work drift on, expecting nothing.  
Lemons  
and men, as it happens, cost cheaper than anything else.  
Where are  
you hurrying, all of you people? Whither are you crawling,  
the boa constrictors  
of the fire pumps, where the water strongly swirls like sinews?  
  
There are many Romes,  
but as a physical entity Rome hardly exists.  
There are many rhythms—  
no common rhythm, and that's the secret of its streets.  
But I'll become  
a bone-and-rag man crying the torn tatters of Rome.  
I shall swell  
like a sponge sucking Rome into my pores.  
Till night  
I shall eavesdrop, and then sleep not a wink through the night,  
an informant  
to all mankind about you, Rome, and about myself.  
Inside my shirt  
I shall hide all that your alleys will shout, will weep,  
whisper, whistle, clang, and murmur.  
Let my pursuit

of Rome, through Rome, break and fracture my bones—  
like a tape  
I shall eagerly wind Rome around me . . .  
"Fire! Fire!  
Signora Silvia's aflame!"  
"But no,  
you fool,  
it's her apartment . . ."  
"Search in the wardrobe—  
you'll find personal linen  
and that colander—  
chuck them out of the window!  
Throw down the divan  
and the lid of the toilet bowl!  
. . . and all's in a heap,  
might as well bang your head on a wall . . .  
Stop,  
you blockhead.  
Where's our vase?  
And where's  
the album,  
the family album? . . ."  
"Shut up,  
wife,  
squealing won't help . . ."  
". . . Why did I ever marry  
after I'd sinned?"  
"Here,  
take this rope,  
and lower the TV set . . ."  
"The damn thing  
is being lowered at last!"  
"Don't cry,  
these are just  
saucepans and cans.  
Come to,  
wife,  
look—you're all covered with  
down . . ."  
"Let go,  
don't push.  
Wait, where's the Madonna?"



The Madonna's  
burning!  
They left her upstairs!"  
"Good grief,  
what a calamity.  
Did you hear that, my son?"  
"Now they'll be locked out  
of paradise, neighbor.  
It's eternal damnation—  
for Signora Silvia . . .  
No Madonna . . .  
They forgot her . . . Ai-ai-ai!"  
  
"Who wants the Duce,  
who wants the Duce!  
A fine portrait that!  
Come, people,  
flock together,  
crowd round—  
no better man in all the world!  
The painter's brush—  
admittedly!—  
is not that of a Matisse,  
but there was a time when the Duce  
used to please you *multissimo*.  
Drift up,  
flea market,  
and do your smart trading.  
Among so many odd bird-and-fish,  
this little bird  
is quite unique!  
This day there are  
no open bidders for the Duce,  
but enough concealed ones:  
I can tell them by their eyes.  
It would serve them better  
to be bolder,  
for the Duce is already cracking.  
Who wants the Duce,  
who wants the Duce?  
No one needs the Duce?"  
  
"Come over here, Signore—  
we sell letters here.  
Real letters—  
do you see the postmarks?  
We request you not to remove the stamps—  
you can read the letters, don't hurry . . .  
Here is the eighteenth century, if you please:  
'I shall wait for you eternally.'  
Here, if you please, is the nineteenth:  
'I shall wait for you a hundred years.'  
And here's the twentieth, Signore:  
'Why do you keep twisting and  
turning?'  
I've already spent two evenings with you,  
and nothing doing.'  
Here's a World War I letter,  
and one of World War II . . .  
(Unfortunately, time has not restored  
the censor's deletions . . .)