



PROPOSAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE CHURCH'S ROLE
IN THE 1964 BRAZILIAN POLITICAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the Church's role in the 1964 political crisis in Brazil. It attempts to explain why, after supporting the populist regime from 1956 to 1963, the Church moved into the opposition and helped undermine this regime. The paper proposes a theoretical approach for studying the Church's political role which draws upon Gramsci, Habermas, and Bloch.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo discute el papel de la Iglesia en la crisis política brasileña de 1964. Se intenta explicar el cambio en la posición de la Iglesia en 1963: después de haber apoyado el régimen populista en el período 1956-63 pasó a la oposición y contribuyó al derrocamiento de aquel. Este trabajo propone un enfoque teórico para el estudio del papel político de la Iglesia, construido a partir de Gramsci, Habermas, y Bloch.

PROPOSAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE CHURCH'S ROLE
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The military putsch of April 1964 apparently "resolved" the crisis of the populist regime — which had deeply shaken the Brazilian polity in the early 60s. This crisis raised several issues of great importance about the political development of the country. Particularly, it questioned the role of several institutions of the state and civil society in either securing or undermining political stability and democratic participation. One such institution was the Catholic Church, whose political role has been debated both by analysts and protagonists of the crisis. Social scientists have proposed divergent interpretations about the political role of the Church in Brazil during the crisis of the early 60s. The support of the Brazilian Bishop's Conference (CNBB) for the military coup has been especially debated because of its previous support for the populist regime

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since at least 1956. These events were interpreted in different ways by various scholars. It is therefore necessary to consider some basic features of these authors' approaches, in order to understand their different interpretations.

Elsewhere I have done a review of the literature (Krischke, 1981), where I emphasize the main theoretical and methodological problems of the current approaches to the study of the Church in Brazil. In this paper I will advance an alternative approach, based mainly on the theoretical and methodological contributions of Antonio Gramsci (1971), Jürgen Habermas (1975) and Ernst Bloch (1961).

One of the points of discrepancy of the literature about this period lies in the interpretation of the degree of autonomy of the Church in the context of the political crisis. Some studies have assigned to the Church a leading role in the cultural and institutional modernization of the country during the post-war period (e.g. T. Bruneau, 1974; C.P.F Camargo, 1967). Other studies have emphasized, on the contrary, the dependent position of the Church vis-à-vis the state, and the conflicts of interest within the power-bloc (p. ex., De Kadt, 1970; Della Cava, 1975; Moreira Alves, 1974).¹ These different interpretations agree nevertheless, on the recognition of one basic problem which they attempt to explain in divergent ways. On the occasion of the destitution of Pres. João Goulart by the military in

1964, there was a conservative realignment of the Church hierarchy in support of the military intervention. This unexpected change in the orientation of the Church hierarchy has been explained in different ways. Some studies have underlined what could be called the "relative autonomy" of the CNBB in its beginnings. From this perspective, the CNBB was seen as a modernizing "pressure-group" within the hierarchy, which supported the populist strategy, and which was on the occasion of the latter's failure deposed by a conservative move of other Church leaders.² Other studies emphasized an ex post interpretation of the role of the CNBB during the crisis, maintaining that the contradictions of the hierarchy derived from, and participated of the breaches within the dominant bloc — and that the CNBB could not go, in fact, any farther.³

There is some truth in both sides of this debate. Furthermore, these scholars converged around other facts and appraisals of the life of the Church, acknowledged by most if not by all analysts of the period. For instance, it is widely recognized that there was a process of political development of the Church's orientations since the post-war period — both in the Church's internal institutional life and in its "external" effects on the national political culture and institutions. Some authors maintained that this

development was a radical departure from the previous pattern of political participation of the Church — for instance, its dependency on the state and the dominant classes — into a much more active and autonomous position. During the 50s the modernizing sectors of the Church, led by the CNBB, clearly took the initiative (and occasionally even the leadership) of some important innovations in the Brazilian polity. These included rural unions, attempts at agrarian reform, adult literacy programs, regional economic planning, etc.

Other scholars tended, however, to emphasize that the Church was not the only institution that passed during this period through deep and crucial transformations. From this perspective it would be misleading (and indeed false, from a standpoint that I will propose) to maintain that the Church was more influential on, than influenced by the process of "modernization" that affected the whole of society. This was one reason why some studies have refused to recognize a really autonomous and independent political role for the Church (especially vis-à-vis the contradictions within the power-bloc) in the crisis of the early 60s.

I have therefore summarized the central features of the debate of the current literature, around the limits of the political autonomy of the Church. I have centered the debate around two contrasting approaches, to focus and simplify the main arguments advanced by the previous studies of our theme.

One of these approaches was termed "classist" because of its direct or indirect inspiration by an orthodox reductionist view of social classes and their effects upon the polity. The other approach was termed "culturalist" because it mostly derives from the so-called "consensus theory" of structural-functionalism. But I do not presume that the current literature can be reduced to these "classic" frameworks rigidly defined. Nevertheless, I am convinced that an adequate approach to our theme needs to solve some basic theoretical problems not properly handled by the current literature. I tried to demonstrate, therefore, that these unsolved problems relate to inadequacies in those "classic" approaches that previously hindered the capacity of the analysts to integrate the available historical evidence. My suggestion is that these problems were left unsolved by the current literature mainly as a result of the theoretical and methodological limitations of the approaches to the theme. If one accepts the outline I proposed of these problems, it is possible to summarize their consequences as follows: it is theoretically unsound and historically erroneous to consider the political actions and orientations of the Church as if they were the immediate expression of class interests. However, it is also unacceptable to consider the Church as a tendentially homogeneous, corporative and autonomous institution vis-à-vis the society - as if it were "outside and above" (in the classic phrase of the Brazilian

Bishops) social contradictions and inequalities and their conflicting effects upon the polity.

In other words, it is necessary to consider the Church as a cultural institution of the polity, and as a channel for the mutual interaction and/or confrontation among social trends inside and outside the ecclesiastic institution. During the last decades the Church has taken a leading profile in Brazil, mainly because of the absence of alternative political institutions and historical projects capable of opening up a process of democratic development of the polity. This fact generated an urgent challenge to understand the limits and possibilities of the Church's political participation. This urgency throws new light on the contributions and shortcomings we have noted above in the literature. For it is possible to understand that some scholars have emphasized the apparently complete autonomy of the Church, whereas other authors tended to underline the Church's dependency on one or another of the opposing social interests. It is now necessary to recover, therefore, a general outlook of the historical process, in order to integrate these and other features of the Church's political role into a single coherent interpretation. I shall now propose an alternative theoretical and methodological approach to these diverse historical and intellectual problems.

One of the basic points of my proposal is that the relations between the Church and the state must be considered in the context of what Antonio Gramsci called a "historic bloc":

Structures and super-structures form a historical bloc: This reasoning is based on the necessary reciprocity between structure and super-structure, a reciprocity that is nothing other than the real dialectical process.⁴

In other words, those relations must be seen as part of the interaction among the main structural and cultural factors of society, in a specific period of time. This approach recognizes that the Church performs a relatively autonomous political role, particularly in a period of political crisis in which it can interact more freely and reciprocally with the other institutions and political currents of the society. Bobbio's commentary on Gramsci's use of the "spatial imagery" helps to situate the crucial role of the cultural institutions:

Gramsci usually represents the opposition between the structural and the super-structural moments as a duality between the economic and the ethical-political moments, between necessity and freedom, objectivity and subjectivity (...). In order to represent the opposition between civil society and the state he uses another duality: consensus-force; ethics-politics; persuasion-coercion; hegemony-domination; leadership-dictatorship. In the first dichotomy the economic moment is opposed to the ethical-political moment; however, the second dichotomy can be considered as the development of the duality implied in the second moment of the first dichotomy. It is possible to say, therefore, with some simplification (...) that there are three basic elements in Gramsci's system: the

economic moment which represents the material structure; the political element which represents the material moment of the super-structure (i.e., coercion); and the ethical moment, which unites the former to the latter.⁵

The ethical and cultural components of the society therefore perform a fundamental unifying role for the reproduction of the "historic bloc".

Of course, this approach was not "invented" by Gramsci, for it can be traced back to other classic studies on religion by social scientists (e.g. Marx, 1963). The classic literature had already proposed a positive relationship between the internalization of private religious values and discipline, on the one hand, and the transformation of the legitimation and institutional orders, on the other hand (which happened during the development of liberal democratic institutions in the modern Western societies). However, before Gramsci's contribution, the concrete agents (the "intellectuals") that led this process seldom were explicitly recognized. Therefore, before Gramsci's contribution it was difficult to identify the specific role performed by religious institutions, and their relationship with other aspects of society. Gramsci studied the political role of the cultural institutions in the development and crisis of the bourgeois "historic bloc" under Italian fascism and advanced important propositions about the political significance of the Roman Catholic Church in that process. Here I will emphasize some of his key categories which are particularly relevant for the study of the Brazilian situation.

The Church as a "Secondary" Institution of
the Bourgeois Historic Bloc

First, it is necessary to recognize the role and the position of the Church "intellectuals" in the modern Western polities. Intellectuals are seen by Gramsci as the strata which politically mediate between structural and cultural phenomena and thus provide a homogeneous direction for the social classes contending for political power:

The intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class, in the given conditions (...) create a system of solidarity among all the intellectuals. This phenomenon manifests itself "spontaneously" in the historical periods in which the given social group is really progressive — i.e. really causes the society to move forward.⁶

Church intellectuals are called "traditional" by Gramsci, in the sense that within the bourgeois "historic bloc" the Church is not the institution in charge of the elaboration and diffusion of the dominant ideology. In this context Portelli maintains that the Church becomes a "secondary" institution of bourgeois society:

Beyond "conjunctural" expressions (... the Church's) internal breaches are bound to continue as long as the Church has become a secondary ideological force; it is no longer in charge of creating and publicizing the dominant ideology; and on the contrary it suffers the influence of external ideologies.⁷

Thus, Church intellectuals may interact, from a relatively independent position, with the "organic" (or representative) intellectuals and ideologies of the fundamental social classes. Church intellectuals tend to reproduce in the Church's internal

organization and ideology (its ethics, theology, pastoral work, etc.) the confrontation and/or collaboration among the "organic" intellectuals of the main social classes.

Of course, this is not a dependent or "reflexive" phenomenon, but an interaction which expresses the Church's internal dynamics and relative autonomy. Church intellectuals may contribute decisively to the rise or fall of the main contending social classes, by reacting either positively or negatively to the attempts of the latter's organic intellectuals to achieve hegemony over the legitimation and institutional orders. As Portelli commented in relation to the Church's political role in contemporary socialist countries,

In a crisis situation the Church appears as the real opposition party which has to be either defeated or compromised.⁸

In fact, Portelli maintains that there is a consistent pattern of organization and a division of labor among the "intellectuals" of the "Catholic ideological bloc" which facilitate the actions and orientations of the Church as a "secondary" institution:

When one analyses the super-structure of the Catholic ideological bloc, one realizes that there are three overlapping organizations: the ecclesiastic apparatus, Catholic Action and the Catholic unions and parties. Each of them is assigned a precise function; however, it may happen that these functions do not coincide with their respective institutions due to national political circumstances. Finally, even when the functions perfectly coincide with the institutions the separation among the institutions is not rigid, and there is a strict osmosis among them within the Catholic ideological bloc

(...) The ecclesiastic apparatus is led by the hierarchy and the religious leaders; the mass organizations are only controlled (more or less rigidly) by the clergy; but their essential activities are conducted by lay militants (...) Catholic Action is the true ecclesiastic party (...) The distinction between, on the one hand, Catholic Action, and the Catholic parties and unions, on the other hand, is the same as that between what is permanent and obligatory and what is optional and conjunctural (...) The Catholic party is an autonomous organization which mainly participates in the ideological framework of the lay state and not in the framework of the Church (...) The same phenomenon happens with Catholic unions (...) In sum (...) the Catholic organizations reflect within the Catholic world the differences which exist in society, the array of forces among the other ideologies and ideological apparatuses in every state, and the contradictions between the national and international strategies of the Church.⁹

My own suggestion is that the passive or "reflexive" role which Portelli assigns to the Church in his conclusion does not extract the rich possibilities of his analysis of the "Catholic ideological bloc" as a "secondary" force of the polity. On the one hand, he says that the leadership of Catholic Action (the "true" or authentic Catholic party) and the other lay organizations of the Church is not the same as that of the hierarchy (in spite of being usually conceived as "the lay arm of the hierarchy in the world"). On the other hand, Portelli also suggests that Catholic parties and unions tend to operate exclusively in the ideological and political framework of the "secular" state (notwithstanding their special commitment to the defense of the Church's corporate interests). He recognizes that these patterns of organization can be interchangeable in specific national situations; and their importance to my mind is that they illustrate

the dialectical nature of the Church's relationship with the polity as a "secondary" political institution. For the Church no longer is responsible for the formulation and diffusion of the dominant ideologies, but it can (and does) provide ethical and motivational orientations which deeply influence the legitimation order of the polity.

My argument is that the Church can perform its "secondary" political role through a dialectical institutional and ideological process. On the one hand, party and union Catholic leaders can disseminate the Church's influence upon the various currents and institutions of the polity. On the other hand, Catholic Action and the hierarchy receive and organize the ideological external influences within the Church's own priorities, guaranteeing the pluralistic congruence and unity of the "Catholic ideological bloc". This "secondary political role of the Church may have a special importance in times of social and political crises. In these critical periods the "centripetal/centrifugal dialectics" of the Catholic ideological bloc may tend to become radicalized, both in internal pluralistic controversies and in "external" partisan splits. Paradoxically, the same trends which provide Christian motivations for radical party politics may tend to reinforce the congruence of the Catholic ideological bloc to the extent that the Church be able to institutionally channel the controversies among its members. Of course, these are not the only possible consequences

of the Church's "secondary" political role. And as Portelli also suggests, this role has to be appraised within specific historical contexts.

"Organic" and "Conjunctural" Phenomena

Secondly, Gramsci distinguished between "organic" and "conjunctural" phenomena, a distinction which helped to differentiate in time and circumstance the role of the various social actors and institutions, and their long and short term impacts on the historic bloc. The "organic" phenomena are fundamental transformations of the main contending social classes in their dispute for hegemony. However, all events have to be analyzed and distinguished from one another when they are combined in a particular "conjunctural" context, where both "organic" and "immediate" factors are at play, deeply influence one another, and may decide the outcome of the political struggles:

Hence it may be said that all these elements are the concrete manifestation of the conjunctural fluctuations of the totality of social relations of force, on whose terrain the passage takes place from the latter to political relations of force (...).¹⁰

In fact, in particular transitional situations, such as the one described by Gramsci as "organic crisis", or even in the case of a crisis "from above", within the dominant bloc, incidental and conjunctural phenomena (derived for instance from "secondary" institutions such as the Church) may take on lasting significance and decisively influence the outcome of

the crisis. Such "secondary" forces and tendencies may either reinforce or weaken the trends of the classes in opposition (given the transitional and fluid conditions of a crisis situation) and significantly affect the final results of the crisis.

The "Moral and Intellectual Reform"

Finally, Gramsci developed the concept of "moral and intellectual reform" which he linked with the main tasks of the organic intellectuals of a dominant class in its rise to hegemony. Portelli correctly remarks that this concept

(...) responded to the situation of the subordinate classes in Italy (...) where no liberal or protestant reformation had incorporated the masses in cultural and political life. The peasants remained under the control of the Church.¹¹

It was on this basis that Gramsci criticized fascism for its inability to achieve a necessary relation and continuity among "religion, party and state".¹² Gramsci commented here on the religious character that fascism wanted to assume but could not achieve; this was precisely due to the fact that the dominant classes were unable to overcome the gap between the bourgeois political culture and the masses' popular culture. It was from this fact that Gramsci proposed the notion of religion as an "active conception of the world" that would be capable of uniting the society under a dominant ideology through a process of "moral and intellectual reform". Therefore, the problem of fascist party fanaticism was not simply

that it pretended to be a "religion" (thus understood), but that it was the very opposite of a "moral and intellectual reform" because it was not the "historic and necessary expression of the fundamental classes" of the society.

As a petit bourgeois movement and ideology, fascism was a sectarian degeneration of the bourgeois culture and legitimation order — demonstrating the incapacity of the fundamental classes for compromising, and especially of the dominant classes for governing society through their own ideological and institutional means.

Gramsci was not referring in this context to Catholic religion; his main interest was in the promotion of the "Modern Prince" (the Communist Party) which in his opinion should lead Italian society to its moral and intellectual reformation. As a "secondary" institution of the modern world, the Church could either adapt to or resist fascism. In fact, it participated in the generalized process of delegitimation under fascism — described by Gramsci as a "passive revolution"¹³ in contrast to the true reform that he considered necessary. Gramsci's reflections on the "moral and intellectual reform" were, thus, part of his appraisal of the political failures that had led his country to fascism, as well as part of his proposal for the future post-fascist "redemocratization".

In sum, the Church as a "secondary" institution of bourgeois society would not be expected to express, in a direct or

immediate way, the "organic" trends of the main contending social classes. However, these trends could be endorsed by sectors of Church "intellectuals" who could in turn propagate them in the Church structures and among the "populus". Therefore, the Church could act decisively in specific "conjunctural" situations, particularly in periods when hegemony was not achieved in the dominant bloc, or in the relations of the latter with the subordinate classes. In periods of deep political transformations (such as "moral and intellectual reforms") the Church could either support or oppose these changes within the legitimation and institutional orders, on the basis of its own internal tendencies, and could thereby affect the results of such transformations.

Now it is necessary to present an outline of the events which led to the crisis of 1964 in Brazil in order to indicate the usefulness of Gramsci's categories, as well as their connections to concepts drawn from other theoretical sources.

The Search for Hegemony in the Power-Bloc

During the post-war period there was a fast process of political transformation in Brazil. In 1945 Vargas founded the two main parties that ruled the country in the next two decades; his dictatorship was substituted by a constitutional government¹⁴ after he had introduced a new style of diffuse political integration of the subordinate classes, around his

charismatic leadership.¹⁵

The new forms of populist political integration had been elaborated under the "state ideology" of the previous Estado Novo dictatorship.¹⁶ The civil and military bureaucracy had then adopted a strategy of economic nationalism that favored the process of industrialization, and implemented social legislation to improve and regulate the labor relations of the country. The growth of the industrial and nationalist sectors in the post-war period favored economic policies geared to the internal development of the country, and promoted socio-economic differentiation among the subordinate classes.¹⁷ Simultaneously, there were increasing contradictions in the power bloc, between the industrialists and nationalists, on the one hand, and the landed and export sectors on the other hand, while the increasing demands of the subordinate classes gradually challenged the efficiency of populist integration. These mounting contradictory political pressures led to the suicide of Pres. Vargas in 1954.

The CNBB was founded in 1952 by a Catholic Action pressure group within the hierarchy, aiming at the Church's institutional and cultural development and at increasing its influence in society. The Vatican supported both Catholic Action and its initiative in founding the CNBB, while the majority of the Church hierarchy was still very traditionally oriented to a passive dependence upon the state and little inclined to religious and institutional reforms. From

its beginnings, the CNBB actively supported the aims of economic development, regional planning, agrarian reform, rural unions, etc. proposed by the nationalist sectors of the government.¹⁸ The CNBB advanced these proposals within the Church, in connection with its own aims of internal religious and institutional reforms and of increasing ecclesiastic influence.

The CNBB's creation, therefore, responded to three different types of influence: 1) the growth of reformers and progressive intellectuals within the hierarchy; 2) the moral and institutional support of the Vatican to the trends for ecclesiastic reform; 3) the growth of nationalist and developmentalist policies within the government, associated with increasing popular demands and institutional reforms in the polity. In this sense, it will be seen that contrary to what some authors have maintained, the Church was neither dependent on nor completely autonomous of the orientations of the dominant classes. In this period (in which a nationalist sector of the power bloc was working out its attempt at political hegemony) progressive sectors of Church intellectuals were striving to reform the ecclesiastic institution. They supported the main tendencies for reforms in the polity but also strived to influence the Church into a relatively autonomous position as a "secondary" institution independent from the state. They laid the seeds for the next period in which the Church helped to delegitimize the populist regime.

The next government (Kubitschek-Goulart, 1956-1960) was able to channel and reconcile the divergences within the power bloc and the redistributive economic demands of the subordinate classes. This was mainly achieved through the "developmentalist" program and ideology of the governmental "Target Plan" (Plano de Metas), by which a "parallel administration" was created by the Executive to administer its development program outside the control of Congress and other state institutions.¹⁹ However, this increased political capability and institutional flexibility of populism paved the way for the crisis of the early 60s. For instance, the cooperation between private administration and the civil-military bureaucracy in the "parallel administration" helped them to reformulate their previous nationalist and developmentalist orientations in more "realistic", transnational and technocratic terms.²⁰ The "parallel administration" initially permitted a more efficient incorporation of political demands; but it also favored a growing isolation of the Executive vis-à-vis the other state institutions and civil society. This trend would culminate in the political crisis of the early 60s.

The transformations in the life of the Church apparently followed an inverted pattern when compared with the changes in the state. The CNBB tended to a gradual reformulation of its initial role (as a "parallel" pressure-group within the hierarchy) and became increasingly established at the regional and local levels of the Church. These changes attempted

to respond in religious terms to liberal pressures and democratic demands similar to those which later eroded the efficiency of the populist regime.²¹ Therefore, it is possible to say that in the new critical conjuncture of the early 60s the actions and orientations of the Church for religious and institutional reform helped to withdraw legitimacy from the populist regime. This helps to explain the waverings of the hierarchy during the crisis, which greatly puzzled many of the analysts of this period. For the Church then became a truly "secondary" political institution; it helped to sustain the initial success of the populist regime but also supported the emerging demands that delegitimized the regime.

The Culmination and Crisis of "Developmentalism"

It will be necessary now to specify some of the central points of the two historical periods I am going to study, in order to explain further other crucial theoretical aspects of my approach. The final collapse of populism was only the epilogue of a political regime that had always functioned at a low legitimacy level (both within the dominant bloc and in the entire polity). In the initial post-war period of diffuse populist integration, the regime's weakness was inherent in its authoritarian heritage (its "state ideology",²² the generalities of economic nationalism, political incorporation through minima civil rights, the low profile of party institutionalization and representation, etc.). It is against this background

that one has to consider the changes in the legitimation and institutional orders which happened during the next period of culmination and crisis of the populist regime.

Various studies have been done on the crisis of populism,²³ analyzing the reasons for the success and limits of the developmentalist ideology and program,

This provisional efficiency has been attributed by the various studies, on the one hand to the regime's capacity to integrate the diverse and competitive dominant interests into a single conjunctural economic project; and on the other hand, to its ability to conceal the reality of economic exploitation which constituted the basis for economic development, from the subordinate classes. To these two reasons for the success of developmentalism I must add a third one: the efficient institutional transaction between the labor unions and the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), on the one hand, and the government on the other hand, in the "parallel administration" of the Executive.

In short, the "developmentalism" of the final stage of populism managed to reconcile the dominant interests and also an important part of the active sectors of the subordinate classes. Thus, it was capable of administering, at least for some years, the contradictory interests of the active social classes around a minimum national project, adequate to the circumstances. "Developmentalism" was theoretically organized, as an ideology and political project, by a sector of civil

bureaucrats and University intellectuals, at the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB),²⁴ sponsored by the Kubitschek-Goulart government. This group then led the bureaucracy of the "parallel administration", in a government program which was quite successful, at least during a short period.

The impact of this project on the culture and legitimation order, as well as its limitations, can best be appraised in what happened within the Church. The initial support for the developmentalist strategy channelled into the legitimation order a positive moral and religious sanction for secular "modernizing" orientations to nationalism, economic planning, etc. These orientations, in turn, helped to withdraw legitimacy from the traditional structures and styles of domination of the landed oligarchies, and from the more backward clientelistic sectors of the populist establishment.

It is necessary also to stress the fact that this religious reinforcement of political "modernization" was much more than a series of rhetorical manifestations of support from the CNBB's leadership to the government. For it was practically and concretely expressed in many specific ecclesiastic initiatives for social and cultural reform (such as rural unions, literacy campaigns, community organization, etc.). These initiatives channelled the manifest autonomous orientations and the basic democratic demands of various subordinate social sectors. Therefore, the initial support of the

CNBB to developmentalist populism went beyond the governmental strategy and reinforced popular democratic expectations.

One main conclusion about the influence of the ecclesiastic orientations on the polity is that they helped to delegitimize populism in at least two ways: 1) by withdrawing religious support from the traditional oligarchic and clientelistic populist politics, they helped to undermine the cohesion of the power bloc; and 2) by offering religious support to new democratic expectations, they stimulated popular demands which tended to surpass the populist means of ideological and political integration. It is interesting to note at this point that, although the data about these two sets of phenomena have always been available, the "classist" and "culturalist" interpretations of the crisis were never able to integrate them adequately into their analyses of the period — because these facts did not fit well into their respective theoretical formulations. In fact, the analysis of these phenomena implies a recognition of their roots in the motivational order of society, to which I now must turn.

The Motivational Delegitimacy of Tradition

Habermas states that a traditional component is always present at the legitimation order of every society (a fact that the Weberian and Parsonian promoters of a linear process of "modernization" cannot readily recognize). According to Habermas, this traditional component provides the central

nucleus for the articulation between norms and values in every society:

Motivational structures necessary for bourgeois society are only incompletely reflected in bourgeois ideologies. Capitalist societies were always dependent on cultural boundary conditions that they could not themselves reproduce; they fed parasitically on the remains of tradition.²⁵

This central importance of pre-bourgeois ideologies and institutions is probably more accentuated in culturally and structurally heterogeneous countries such as Brazil than in the European Western societies studied by Habermas. In any case, the decisive question is to appraise the balance between the traditional and the modern components in each society (and in every conjuncture) in order either to assure its normal reproduction, or to precipitate its crisis.

Therefore, it is necessary to see in the period of populist culmination and crisis the effects of Church support to developmentalist planning and rationalization, in the more traditional components of the legitimation and motivational orders. My argument is that the ecclesiastic support for developmentalism brought up for discussion certain themes and dimensions of the legitimation order that until then had been concealed from the public consciousness by religious and moral traditions. The examples could be multiplied, for instance in regard to the conditions of life in the countryside, in such radical themes (in that context) as rural unions, land reform, the question of the social function of property, etc.

In relation to urban, industrial and labor problems, as well as other more general issues affecting all the subordinate classes — such as educational reform, adult literacy, housing and health programs, etc. — studies that are in progress are revealing the importance of joint Church-state initiatives and strategies. The latter apparently became the main catalyzers of popular political conscientização during that period.²⁶

On the other hand, Habermas concluded that in the Western European countries, state intervention in rational planning, and in such cultural activities as educational reforms, had an unintended delegitimizing effect. For,

(...) traditions withheld from the public problematic, and all the more from practical discourses, are thematized. An example of such direct administrative processing of cultural tradition is educational planning, especially curriculum planning (...) based on the premise that traditional patterns could as well be otherwise. Administrative planning produces a universal pressure for legitimation in a sphere that was once distinguished precisely for its power of self-legitimation.²⁷

Therefore, the public debate on the official initiatives for educational reform — which had a decisive participation of the Church — during the final crisis of Brazilian populism, also had a delegitimizing effect, due to its rationalizing impact upon the legitimation order. This public debate openly recognized the issues of democratic access to education, public vs. private schools, etc. — that beforehand were concealed ("self-legitimized") by religious and cultural discriminatory traditions.

Educational reform was only one among the many issues publicly raised by the administrative interventions of "developmentism". The entire planning activity of the Kubitschek-Goulart government, with its Plano de Metas, occasioned unpredictable cultural consequences that helped to undermine populist legitimation in several fronts. As Habermas suggested a legitimation crisis could derive from "unintended side effects (politicization) of administrative interventions in the cultural tradition".²⁸ Furthermore, it is certain that the Church responded in more than one way to specific issues of the "developmentalist" strategy (often raising internal ecclesiastic controversies that reinforced the polarizations in public opinion) - which undoubtedly aggravated their delegitimizing effects.²⁹ However, the initiatives of the Church were not only taken in response to the government. In fact, the Church also had other interlocutors during this period of crisis; in particular, among those sectors of the subordinate classes whose democratic demands it helped to raise and channel. Furthermore, (during the legitimation crisis of populism) the Church acted specifically at a "modernizing" motivational level which we shall now examine.

The "Modernizing" Motivational Crisis

The growing divisions within the Church — which culminated in the famous Marchas com Deus e a Família pela Liberdade in the most acute period of the crisis (these street

demonstrations with a religious inspiration were used by the military as an excuse for the 1964 putsch) - led also to the ousting of Helder Câmara and his group from the leadership of the CNBB. These striking institutional changes had deep motivational sources. As Habermas maintains certain political interventions have a delegitimizing effect when combined with a deeper ethical and motivational crisis. The latter could, in turn, occur either by "the erosion of traditions important for the (system's) continued existence", or by "overloading through universalistic value-systems ('new' needs)".³⁰ Therefore, both a deficit of the traditional component, and an "overload" of the modern component could effect a motivational crisis conducive to delegitimation.

The participation of large sectors of the Church either in support of, or in opposition to the populist regime, demonstrated that the motivational erosion of populist legitimacy occurred in both the ways indicated above. On the one hand, the more traditional Church sectors (supported by other sectors of the hierarchy at the end of the crisis) managed to unite a majority of the ecclesiastic institution in support of the more conservative factions of the dominant classes and the state bureaucracy. On the other hand, the central and avant garde sectors of the hierarchy, and the militants they had mobilized in support of developmentalism, shared the regime's ambiguities and lack of alternatives, finally abandoning their own CNBB leadership to its isolation and ostracism.

These manifest political events emerged from profound causes in the motivational crisis, having to do with the ethical and religious alternatives of the Church, vis-à-vis the democratic demands that were starting at this time among the subordinate classes. The studies of the populist unions, both in the cities³¹ and in the rural areas,³² have shown how the workers progressively surpassed the populist strategies of political integration implemented by the "parallel administration". However, the subordinate classes were unable to find national political alternatives during the collapse of populism. It is necessary, therefore, to explain the motivational crisis of populist legitimacy and the apparent popular indifference and apathy on the occasion of the military putsch (when the union central organization called a national strike and was not obeyed).

To utilize Gramsci's concept, it is not possible to say that there was an effective "moral and intellectual reform" led by the populist regime - not even during the peak years of "developmentalism". The absence of political alternatives to the collapse of populism had also shown that the more active social classes were not able to work out a project for the national democratic development of the country. What, then, was the root of the popular motivational erosion of populism? What was the participation and presence of the subordinate classes in the populist crisis, as emerging historic social actors participating in this process of delegitimation? Neither the

"classist" nor the "culturalist" studies of this period have even raised these questions - perhaps because motivational phenomena are resistant to the tests of empiricism.

The Emerging Religious Reform

I would like now to suggest that Ernst Bloch's studies on "utopia" and "hope"³³ may lead a step further in the understanding of the popular participation in the crisis of populism - as part of what Gramsci called "religion" (an "active conception of the world", however incipient at that time). Bloch emphasized "hope" among the human expectations that anticipate the future - and which are not socially engendered, such as envy and avarice are. Hope (as well as anguish and fear) expresses "the most human feeling (...) related to the most vast and luminous horizons".³⁴ Bloch maintained at this stage that hope was the most important, positive and liberating emotion that effected the motivations for socio-cultural change.

Bloch first presented these insights as part of his study on Thomas Muntzer's peasant war (against Martin Luther's reformation in Germany). Bloch developed this theme further on a theoretical level many years later, proposing that hope works on the motivational order as a kind of "day dream" that actively supports, and projects into history, manifest expectations - in contrast to the static traditional culture which is incapable of anticipation and planning. However, he emphasized that such active anticipation of the future initially

emerged as what he called a "not-yet-conscious" human capacity.

This active capacity was interpreted as a psychic representation of "what-is-not-yet" - and which nevertheless exists as motivational orientation. Hope was seen, therefore, as an active psycho-social orientation that strived to become conscious and "critico-practical" in history. When such "not-yet-conscious" hope gradually managed to become "self-conscious" in the society, it ceased to be a simple mental representation and assumed a concrete "utopian" function that mobilized human historical activity. "Hope" and "utopia" were presented therefore as key components of human existence, in order that it becomes critically oriented to anticipate the future and transform contemporary history. From this perspective, an active anticipation of the future is by itself the motivational clue for the transformation of the present legitimation order of the society, through "critico-practical" activity.³⁵

My suggestion is that Bloch's seminal insights about social "hope" and "utopia" are much more fruitful for an approach of the problems of motivational crisis than the concepts of ideology and political culture - respectively advanced by the orthodox Marxist and culturalist currents. For the latter (as well as Mannheim's well-known dichotomy between "ideology vs. utopia")³⁶ remain at the level of socially manifest orientations - either culturally institutionalized, or at least

formalized as "currents of opinion" and organized social interests (i.e. at Habermas' legitimation order). In short, the usual interpretations of the motivational order tend to consider only a posteriori its external manifestations in the processes of legitimation-delegitimation of the polity (and often regard those manifestations as simple epiphenomena of the latter processes). My suggestion is that legitimation-delegitimation processes should be considered — especially in transitional and crisis periods such as the ones I study here — with reference to their roots in internalized, incipient and gradual changes (which Gramsci called "molecular" tendencies) of the motivational order. For such are the changes that provide the potential for the socio-political role of religion - in its "critico-practical" manifestation, as an "active conception of the world".

This recognition of the mobilizing potential of "utopia" helps to appraise the motivational functions of the religious renewal initiated by CNBB and their impact on the legitimation order, especially among the subordinate classes. The governmental "developmentalist" strategy followed a rationale closely articulated to the interests of the power-bloc, but it stimulated the dynamics and revealed the limitations of capitalist reproduction in the heterogeneous Brazilian society — up to the point of facilitating the awakening of "utopian" expectations and motivations that could neither be incorporated nor efficiently controlled

The participation of Church sectors, symbolically significant, in the developmentalist strategy helped also to emancipate an "utopian" popular motivational potential, supported by religious renewal and "aggiornamento". Therefore, in spite of starting subordinated to the dominant governmental and ecclesiastic strategies, the motivational re-orientation of the popular sectors helped to withdraw legitimacy from the populist regime.

In sum, returning to Habermas' categories, we see that the delegitimation of populism was due not only to a deficit of the traditional motivations that had helped to support the initial stages of the regime, but also to an "overload" of its modernizing motivational components. These, in fact, were not only impossible to satisfy under the developmentalist strategy, but were in part surpassed by the "utopian" and religiously supported self-stimulation and initiative of the more advanced sectors of the subordinate classes. This incipient and tentative stage of "moral and intellectual reform" among the Brazilian subordinate classes received, therefore, one of its main supports from the religious renewal initiated by the CNBB.

The Political Crisis and its Perpetuation

I will summarize now the basic points of my proposal, around the analysis of the political crisis of populism and its chronic perpetuation. I shall thus consider the role of

the CNBB both in the crisis within the power bloc and also in the crisis of the entire populist polity.

The crisis within the power bloc resulted from the greater difficulties in institutionally negotiating (and economically satisfying) the interests of the "Populist Developmentalist Alliance" of the dominant classes during the depressive conjuncture of the early 60s. Gramsci's concept of hegemony crisis helps to understand, at this level of analysis, the lack of coherence between expectations and achievement that economically and politically undermined that alliance. It also shows why the "parallel administration" of the state (with its civil-military "intellectuals") was unable to work out an alternative democratic solution to the collapse of populism. For its "parallelism" facilitated both the increasing "catastrophic" isolation of the executive from the liberal institutions of the state (evidenced at the "institutional paralysis" of the latter) and the growth within that administration of civil-military personnel reoriented to an authoritarian "solution" of the crisis.³⁷

This growing dependency of the power-bloc vis-à-vis the state executive originated in the provisional compromise between the "modernizing" and the traditional components of "developmentalism". Habermas shows how the traditional components of the legitimation order could be easily eroded through state administrative action. The CNBB further supported this erosion of the populist alliance, sponsoring (and religiously sanctioning)

the modernizing state interventions of "developmentalism".

The crisis in the rest of the polity followed a similar pattern — in spite of being more complex and less institutionalized. The capacity of "developmentalism" to incorporate popular support at the polls (and at the labour union and party components of the "parallel administration") was linked to its efficiency in "delivering the goods" - both directly through increased jobs and salaries, and indirectly, through public works and services-and significantly, through "symbolic consumption" (Habermas' modernizing "demonstration effects" of developmentalism on public expectations). The economic recession and electoral crisis of the early sixties drastically unveiled the manipulatory and exploitative characteristics of the regime. Advanced sectors of the labor and popular movements began to demand their rights for autonomous organization, actively supported by the religious and institutional renewal of the Church. However, they could not find a leadership (Gramsci's "organic intellectuals") capable of formulating a policy of social alliances and an alternative institutional democratic project.

This delegitimation remained, therefore, at the motivational level of the polity. Bloch's social "hope" and "utopia" help to explain this political stalemate, which became chronic under the military regime. For the democratic reorientation of popular motivations made impossible a re-establishment of the liberal institutions of the state via populist (or other

manipulatory) political incorporation. The Church has continued to reinforce this political stalemate through the influence of its growing internal democratization and religious reform on the subordinate classes. The widespread increase of social local organizations (labor, peasant, neighbourhood and consumer groups) has received, since then, the firm support of the Church.

Therefore, there was a democratic motivational reorientation of Brazilian society which has not been channelled, until now, into an adequate institutional reform of the polity. On the other hand, the internal religious and institutional renewal of the Church helped (however indirectly) to withdraw motivational legitimacy from the populist regime. Nevertheless, the Church could not lead (as some "culturalist" analysts seem to have expected) a political alternative project to the populist and the military regimes. For, as Portelli has shown, the Church is a "secondary" institution of bourgeois society, whose intellectuals interact with the "organic intellectuals" of the main contending social classes; they either facilitate or obstruct the latter's action upon the polity — but cannot substitute their leadership action in the search for hegemony.

Moreover, the orientations of the Church during the crisis have not been passive or dependent, as other ("classist") interpreters have maintained. In fact, as a "secondary" institution of the polity the Church actively participated in the delegitimation of populism at least in two different and

complementary ways: 1) it provided ethical and motivational support to opposing ideologies which undermined the populist alliance; and 2) it started to perform a surrogate pluralistic role, which contrasted with the lack of cohesion and alternative institutional channels in the polity. My suggestion is that this dual opposition action of the Church, as a "secondary" institution, will only cease (if at all) to be justified when new representative parties and movements emerge in the polity for the autonomous participation of the subordinate classes in a pluralistic democratic political system.³⁸

NOTES

- 1) See for instance the pioneer works of Camargo (1966, 1967) and Borges Costa (1966), passim, as examples of the first type of theoretical framework.
- 2) P. ex. Bruneau (1974), pp. 121-122. He uses Vallier's (1970,a) hypothesis of an "extraction, insulation, re-entry", to describe the dynamics of the modernization in the relations between the Church and the state.
- 3) Cf. de Kadt (1970), p. 191.
- 4) Gramsci, 1971, p. 366.
- 5) Bobbio, 1968, p. 26.
- 6) Cf. Gramsci, 1971, p. 60. See also Portelli, 1972, ps. 13-46.
- 7) Portelli, 1977, p. 181.
- 8) Ibidem, p. 231. I would like to thank Clodovis Boff's comments to a previous version of this interpretation of the "secondary" role of the Church in the Brazilian polity. I shall attempt to demonstrate in this work that such an interpretation does not imply a depreciation (and rather implies a just appraisal) of the political importance and relative autonomy of the Church.
- 9) Portelli, 1977, ps. 150-157.
- 10) Gramsci, Ibidem, p. 185.
- 11) Portelli, 1977, p. 211. See also on this, Gramsci, Ibidem, p. 132.
- 12) Gramsci, Ibidem, p. 266.
- 13) Ibidem, pp. 109 to 120: "One may apply to the concept of passive revolution (documenting it from the Italian Risorgimento) the interpretative criterion of molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes (...) What is important from the political and ideological point of view (of state capitalism) is that it is capable of creating - and indeed does create - a period of expectation and hope, especially in certain Italian social groups such as the great mass of urban and rural petit bourgeois. It thus reinforces the hegemonic system and the forces of military and civil coercion at the disposal of the traditional ruling classes". The concept is constructed therefore, both from the conditions of hegemonic crisis within the power-bloc, and from the linkages of the intermediate social sectors to the state bureaucracy.

- 14) See Cardoso e Falleto (1970), especially Chapter V.
- 15) Weffort, 1973, passim.
- 16) Cf. Lamounier (1974), pp. 79 ff.
- 17) For instance, Moisés (1976), passim.
- 18) Queiroga (1977) documents these facts.
- 19) Cf. Benevides (1976), pp. 224-233. See also the works of Limoeiro Cardoso (1976), Toledo (1978) and Carvalho Franco (1978), passim.
- 20) Cf. the studies of Cohn (1966), Lima Figueiredo (1980), Dreifuss (1980) and others.
- 21) Cf. Weffort (1978), Sérvo de Medeiros (1980) and other studies, already cited, by Moisés and Munhoz.
- 22) Cf. Lamounier (1974).
- 23) See note 16 above.
- 24) The Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB) was created by Café Filho's transitional government (1954-1955) and sponsored by Kubitschek's Ministry of Education.
- 25) It is important to stress at this point that Habermas (1975, p. 76) utilizes the concepts of tradition and modernization in the context of the historical studies of culture and society, undertaken by the "Frankfurt School" - and therefore from an entirely different standpoint from the formalist structural-functional approach. Habermas' concept of the legitimation order or sub-system has been constructed from his emphasis on the necessary relation between legitimacy and "truth of belief" (i.e. legitimacy's basic foundation in the motivational order). He asserted his position in a criticism of the well known structural-functional tendencies to assimilate Weber's concept of legitimation to those of legality and law-enforcement: "(...) If binding decisions are legitimate, that is, if they can be made independently of the concrete exercise of force and of the manifest threat of sanctions, and can be regularly implemented even against the interests of those affected, then they must be considered as the fulfillment of recognized norms. This unconstrained normative validity is based on the supposition that the norm could, if necessary, be justified and defended against

critique. And this supposition is itself not automatic. It is the consequence of an interpretation which admits of consensus and which has a justificatory function, in other words, of a world-view which legitimizes authority." (Habermas and Luhmann, Sozialtechnologie?, cited by Hasbermas, 1975 p. 101).

- 26) For instance, the unpublished works of Wanderley, Gomes de Souza and Souza Lima.
- 27) Habermas, Op. Cit., p. 71.
- 28) Ibidem, p. 50.
- 29) Prandi (1975, passim) documented the erosion of traditional orientations among urban middle class Catholics during this period.
- 30) Habermas, Op. Cit., p. 50.
- 31) P. ex., Weffort (1973), passim.
- 32) P. ex., Sérvolo de Medeiros (1980), passim.
- 33) Ernst Bloch (1959), passim. Bloch started his studies on the revolutionary significance of "utopia" in his research on the peasant rebellion of Thomaz Muntzer (later on theoretically elaborated in his next book Geist der Utopie, published soon after the first essay in 1919/1923). However, only his more recent books have fully developed his theory, to the point of receiving widespread recognition among "non-orthodox" marxists and elsewhere.
- 34) Ibidem, p. 82.
- 35) Bloch (1961), passim.
- 36) Mannheim for instance, states that "it is only when the distrust of man toward man (...) becomes explicit and is methodically recognized that one may properly speak of an ideological taint in the utterance of others (...). Even in the formulation of concepts, the angle of vision is guided by the observer's interests. Thought, namely, is directed in accordance with what a particular social group expects". (1936, ps. 61 and 273). The same happens in the case of Mannheim's "utopia" - which is only considered as efficient and active when manifests itself in an externalized practical activity. A similar emphasis in externalization is present, for instance, in Sorel's (1950) anarcho-syndicalism ("myths vs. uthopias", p. 123), when

acting in freedom means to recover possession of one-self", etc.

- 37) See, for instance, Santos (1979), Lima Figueiredo (1980) and Dreifuss (1980) for the study of this authoritarian reorientation of the military. See also O'Donnell (1977 and 1980), *passim*, for the characteristics of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.
- 38) A fuller investigation of these provisional conclusions should include the research of the relations between the Church and the state under the present military regime. A more detailed presentation and interpretation of the empirical data about the relations between the Church and the state under the populist regime was presented in my "Populism and the Catholic Church: The Crisis of Democracy in Brazil, 1964" (forthcoming, Editora Paz e Terra, Rio de Janeiro).

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