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Research Project Description

This project aims to examine the relations between the Catholic Church and the leftist populist regimes in Latin America, particularly the cases of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru. During the last decade of dictatorship, the church played a prominent role in defending human rights and fostering dialogue (between the dictatorships and the opposition groups) in order to facilitate the return to democracy. Once again, the church is being drawn in a similar long vis-a-vis the leftist populist regimes, but in this new context, the situation is more ambiguous and the roles are less clear. To begin with, all of these regimes have been democratically elected, but in several cases they have displayed authoritarian tendencies (in three cases the regimes have written new constitutions to allow for nearly permanent re-election) and have used pressure tactics to suppress freedom of all these regimes are also supported by large segments of the lower classes.

In this context the Catholic Church is emerging as one of the principal voices of criticism of these regimes. But the Church is conscious that in the eyes of the government

them comes from the lower classes, among which are to be found many base ecclesial still has.

But, in addition to these more political issues, there is a deeper and more complex problem which goes beyond the question of democracy versus dictatorship or veiled dictatorships, and that is the church vis-a-vis the modern world, especially as concerns two and other non-governmental advocacy groups have been pressuring for legalized abortion under certain conditions: in case of rape or therapeutic abortions to save the

mother's life. Some groups simply demand that the right to choose, under any circumstances, be incorporated in the new constitutions. So far, abortion is legal only in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Federal District of Mexico, and in Bolivia since 1973 in case of rape or to save the mother's life; but the issue is looming larger in the rest of Latin America.

advocates within their ranks in favor of legalizing abortion.

The question of education is another problem. The leftist nonulist regimes allow for private education, but offer minimal state support for public education. The regimes have also announced that they will support only secular (non-religious) education. But the Church is now heavily engaged in lower class education, of which the Fe y Alegría schools would be a prime example. The Fe y Alegría schools were founded by the Jesuits and receive state funding. The question is as to whether the State will continue to fund Fe y Alegría and other

This project will examine the different stances and roles which the Catholic Church

challenges with particular references to the leftist nonulist regimes in Latin America today.

Methodology

A review will be made of all recent literature on the leftist nonulist regimes of Latin America, with particular attention paid to their relationship with the Catholic Church.

Interviews will be conducted in each of the selected countries with knowledgeable

Anticipated Results

A single article for an academic journal, and one or two articles for more broad-based

Academic Contribution

This project is an attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the state of the Catholic Church in of

the early twenty-first century. While some political analysts are re-examining the reality of

democracy in Latin America, little attention is being paid to the role the Catholic Church in this new scenario.

Publication Outlets

Academic Journals:

The Journal of Church and State (Dordrecht University). The author has published in this journal before.

The Americas (Franciscan Mission Academy, Washington, D.C.). The author has also

Publications geared for a broader non-academic audience:

America (Jesuits)

Commonweal