



PAX ROMANA JOURNAL



RETHINKING DEMOCRACY

Pax Romana
IMCS and ICMICA

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About the Journal



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The Pax Romana Journal

The Pax Romana Journal is an interdisciplinary annual publication for literature reviews, research and opinion pieces on specific contemporary social issues. Key themes, include but are not limited to: Human rights; Democracy, good governance and global governance; Themes on the United Nations agenda; Faith, church reform, synodality, and lay participation; Youth participation and advocacy; Climate change and ecological justice; Intercultural/interreligious dialogue.

Each of these themes is approached from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching with the goal of promoting peace, justice and mercy, in service of the common good of the poor and the Earth.

La Revista Pax Romana

La Revista Pax Romana es una publicación anual interdisciplinaria revisada por pares del movimiento para revisiones de literatura, investigaciones y artículos de opinión sobre temas sociales contemporáneos específicos. Entre los temas claves a trabajar se encuentran (no de forma excluyente) los siguientes: Derechos humanos; Democracia, buen gobierno y gobernanza global; Temas en la agenda de Naciones Unidas; Reforma de la iglesia, sinodalidad y participación laica; Participación e incidencia juvenil; Cambio climático y justicia ecológica; Diálogo intercultural/interreligioso.

Ada uno de estos temas abordados desde la perspectiva de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, con el objetivo de promover la paz, la justicia y la misericordia, al servicio del bien común de los pobres y de la Tierra.

La Revue Pax Romana

La revue Pax Romana est une publication annuelle interdisciplinaire avec un contrôle collégial du mouvement, qui propose des publications, des recherches et des articles d'opinion sur des questions sociales contemporaines particulières. Les principaux thèmes clés comprennent, sans s'y limiter: droits de l'homme; démocratie, bonne gouvernance et gouvernance mondiale; thèmes à l'ordre du jour des Nations Unies; réforme de l'église, synodalité et participation des laïcs; participation et plaidoyer des jeunes; changement climatique et justice écologique; dialogue interculturel / interreligieux.

Chacun de ces thèmes est abordé sous l'angle de l'enseignement social catholique dans le but de promouvoir la paix, la justice et la miséricorde, au service du bien commun des pauvres et de la Terre.

The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Pax Romana IMCS or ICMICA.

Cover photo: Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, kneels in front of police and soldiers during an anti-coup protest in Myitkyina, Myanmar, Feb. 28, 2021. Sister Tawng, who became a symbol of Myanmar's nationwide protests, has been named by the BBC as among the 100 most influential and inspiring women of the year. (CNS photo/courtesy Myitkyina News Journal)

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Introduction

The idea of democracy and democratic participation transcends politics and includes other spheres of our social lives, from family structures to religious institutions. With this broader understanding, 2021 was a good year for “Rethinking Democracy”, the theme of our annual Pax Romana Journal.

From the Myanmar military coup and Capitol Riot in Washington D.C., to the collapse of the government in Afghanistan and possible Russian invasion in Ukraine, political democracy has been continuously questioned and challenged throughout the past year in many parts of the world. While these visible threats are quite alarming, those situations have raised questions about the quality of democracy and the viability (or even desirability) of the models that emerged following the end of the Cold War. Does the model of representative democracy as it is currently practiced really represent the wishes of the public or is it too easily manipulated for the needs of the market or other powerful forces? For the very reason we hail the democratic values, there is a need for honest dialogues to respond to these concerns if we need to strengthen and reinstate democratic institutions.

While we witnessed many challenges to the model of democracy, 2021 also saw new movements for participatory democracy. In the face of global warming, a growing number of people have become more directly involved in championing local and communal solutions to the systemic ecological crisis. In the face of structural racism, the Black Lives Matter movement continues to mobilize people in many countries to affirm the dignity of marginalized groups. In his 2021 address to popular movements, Pope Francis described this as a type of “Collective Samaritan.” Within the Catholic Church, movements for participatory models of being church have been expressed through the Synodal process, which has brought a new joy to the long-ignored dialogues of the marginalized within the global church. These developments inspire us with new ways of democratic engagements which would assist us to transform the weakening democratic institutions or to create new democratic possibilities around the world.

These positive efforts to strengthen models of participation and co-responsibility have also taken shape within the movements of Pax Romana. Both IMCS and ICMICA over the past year have launched a synodal process within our movement, to enable us to better understand who we are and where we are called to go in a world ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, inter and intra religious tensions and various political turmoil. For ICMICA, this process was presented at the Plenary Assembly in December.

Attention to democracy and participation is not a new priority for our movement. We were reminded of this in 2021 as Pax Romana began the year-long celebrations commemorating our centenary. From our foundation in 1921 following the First World War to the Second Vatican Council and establishment of contemporary human rights mechanisms, our movement has long advocated for participatory models of engagement. In this centennial issue of the Pax Romana Journal under the theme “Rethinking Democracy”, we wish to ignite and continue the dialogue for a world of peace and justice where the democratic values are enshrined.

Kevin Ahern & Ravi Tissera

ICMICA & IMCS (Pax Romana)

From Our Archives **40 Years Already!**

Roger Pochon – Switzerland

As Pax Romana commemorates its Centenary, we are republishing some key texts from our archives. The following was published in a booklet commemorating the movement's 40th anniversary: *Pax Romana: 1921-1961*. Here, the author, Roger Pochon, who had been a student leader in Fribourg, Switzerland at the time of its foundation in 1921, recalls key moments in the first decades of Pax Romana.

Doubtless in Pax Romana I appear as a somewhat patriarchal figure, would I otherwise have been asked to bring to mind a past linked with so many admirable, unforgettable personalities now gone?

I have indeed known Pax Romana from its cradle, for as a young collegian I had been mobilized to render small service during the 1921 Congress. I certainly had no idea then that ten years later I should preside at the Congress of its tenth anniversary in Fribourg. But in the meantime, following in the steps of my former school-master, Father Gremaud, already before the Cambridge Congress I had begun to take an active part in the Secretariat where, at the beginning of 1930 the dynamic Rudi Salat came to assist me. From then on the collaboration with these two very dear friends continued until the sad summer of 1939 when my editorial work was ended by the cessation of publication of the Pax Romana Journal, due to the war. As I write these notes, it is therefore a past tinged with sadness that rises before me, and especially those twelve years during which I was so closely connected with the life of Pax Romana. A past of which, it is good to recall, for the younger members, the principal stages.

I shall do it, but simply by letting the facts speak, because they illustrate eloquently enough the constant preoccupation of Pax Romana: that of bringing closer minds and hearts without neglecting the essential: the vast domain of the university apostolate, so that its motto may be ever better carried out: *Pax Christi in regno Christi*.

The First International Union

If the Catholics were not the first to found an international student union, it seems at least that they were the first to have had the idea.

Already in 1887, the idea had been launched by one of my compatriots, Baron Georges de Montenach, of Fribourg, then President of the Society of Swiss Students, who joined an ardent love for his little country to the greatest understanding of other countries. And it was after the General Assembly of this society in Fribourg that on 23rd August 1888, with the approval of His Holiness Leo XIII, that the bases for the first International Union of Catholic Students were laid. The bishop of the diocese, the future Cardinal Mermillod, led the discussions of the

constitutive session of the provisional committee. Georges de Montenach became President, and, like a new Peter the Hermit, went all over Europe rallying the Catholic students to his cause.

Thus 7,000 of them made a pilgrimage to Rome in 1891, to the tomb of St. Louis de Gonzague on the tricentenary of his death: 1500 attended the Assembly which expressed by acclamation the wish that, thanks to the efforts of G. de Montenach, the friendly relations between associations of young Catholics for the defense of their faith should become still closer. And some three hundred delegates discussed the statutes of the new Union. Fribourg was designated as headquarters and its promoter acclaimed President. Unfortunately, political complications linked with the Roman question, soon gave a mortal blow to this young Union. And eventually very little remained of this Congress. Divers efforts, notably in 1893 and 1900, to give life again to the Union, were fruitless.

But the idea was not discarded. It was taken up once more, not without a certain courage, just after the First World War, when the idea of grouping the Catholic intellectuals of the different countries to study international questions in the light of their doctrine, and especially those which were going to be put to the young League of Nations, was given form on another plane, after an initiative conceived in Fribourg in 1917. In November 1920 the International Catholic Study Union, forerunner of our ICMICA, was founded in Paris. The leadership was given to the Swiss group: Mr. G. de Montenach, one of its promoters, was asked to preside, and Fribourg was chosen as headquarters of its secretariat.

In the same way as in 1888, the Swiss Students' Society responded in its 1920 Assembly, to the noble ideal of one of its own members, its secretary, Father Tschuor, by deciding to further its contacts with Dr. Gerard Brom, General Secretary of the Netherlands Catholic Associations of Students.

Switzerland was, indeed, the country best situated to take such steps at the time when Catholics felt the need to reconstruct the bridges destroyed by the 1914-1918 cataclysm. Its races, its languages, the long chain of the Alps the course of its rivers attach this country to the world and to men of different nationalities. Around the Gothard mountain which separates and pass which joins, a great deal had to come to light and had become in the course of centuries, not without difficulties, a political reality: the idea of the spiritual community of the peoples and cultures of the West.

The Founding of Pax Romana

The approval of the Holy See being obtained by the initiative of the Swiss Student Society, its President, Mr. Max Gressly, met Dr. Brom at the beginning of 1921. They decided to invite the delegates of Catholic Associations of students to meet in Fribourg in July. The enthusiasm with which Spain greeted this project urged them to constitute a Hispano-Hollando-Swiss organizing committee. Mr. Gressly presided, and was assisted by three Vice-Presidents, Messrs. Martin Sanchez y Julia (Spain), Gerard Brom (Netherlands), and Kurt de Wattenwyl, President of the Renaissance societies (Switzerland), and by two Secretaries: Messrs. Jean Tschuor and Guillaume de Weck (Switzerland).

The call of this committee, accompanied by a letter of approval from the Sovereign Pontiff addressed to Mr. Gressly by Cardinal Gasparri, was met with favorable responses from the associations of twenty-three countries, and only three - Sweden, Rumania and Yugoslavia,

were finally unable to be represented at Fribourg. England, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and, from overseas, Argentina, Java and the United States, in whose delegation was the present Cardinal Munch, were actually represented on 19th July at the inauguration of the Congress in the Fribourg House of Parliament.

In his opening address the bishop of the diocese, His Lordship Mgr. Besson wisely indicated the aim: «You have before you a splendid ideal: the creation of a permanent international secretariat. Make this ideal reality and do not touch on any other questions, the discussion of which would be premature». Mr. Perrier, President of the Fribourg government, welcomed the delegates, assuring them of goodwill and aid which in fact did not cease to be shown. And Baron G. de Montenach expressed his joy at the imminent birth of this international organization for which he had worked so hard in the previous century.

By the evening of the second day the accord was already complete. After some debate which was lively, but free from bitterness, and in which three honorary members took a predominant part: Dr. Carl Sonneschein (Germany), Canon Beaupin (France) and Fr. Joseph Gremaud, delegate of Mgr. Besson, it was unanimously decided to: «found a Catholic international office for information and liaison which will adopt the words Pax Romana as an emblem and the direction of which will be ensured by the periodical reunion of the Council of delegates».

The following day was devoted to a discussion of the statutes and to the constitution of the directing organs: Council of delegates, permanent Commission, and Secretariat, Mr. Gressly was elected President of the Council of delegates and Mr. Spataro (Italy), Vice-President. The permanent commission, of which the bishop of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg was automatically President honorary was composed of Messrs. Gressly and K. de Wattenwyl, Miss Marcelle Despond (Switzerland), Messrs. Martin Sanchez y Julia (Spain) and Gerard Brom (Netherlands), and as General Secretary, Fr. J. Tschuor (Switzerland).

The delegates thus loyally showed that for them, Catholicism was not an empty word.

The First Years

What was more important than the formal adherence of twenty-three countries, and than the burning enthusiasm, was to ensure the longevity of Pax Romana - and this was not an easy thing.

From the first its Secretariat was called to assume many tasks, without having the necessary personnel and resources at its disposal. It had to take charge of the Mensa academica in Vienna, offering board and lodging to students at very low prices, and to distribute much financial aid. Until 1923, three wagon-loads of food were sent each year to Vienna, and aid in the form of clothes and gifts in kind were sent to needy students in Germany, Poland and Russia. But the Secretariat started with nothing in. taking on this entr'aide work - if was therefore obliged to run a lottery and to contract debts which for ten years curtailed its activities. The weight of these debts was all the heavier since the members' contributions arrived very irregularly and, due to extremely unfavorable exchange rates, they had no more than a symbolic character for the Secretariat.

During first year the Commission sat three times: Pax Romana days were held in Ravenna at the end of August, and in Rotterdam a short while before Easter 1922: in January 1922 appeared a first number of the *Folia periodica* as well as stenciled bulletins, the *Acta secretariatus*.

Fribourg was the site of the Second Congress, from the 7th to 9th August 1922 where the delegates - among whom one Japanese - showed the same desire for brotherly collaboration. They decided to start a work of student hostels, for Catholics - the Auxilium Studiosorum which from 1923 included the Mensa academica of Vienna, and the publication of a bulletin. Three Fribourg personalities were acclaimed honorary members and the mandates of all the leaders were renewed, except that of Mr. Gressly who declined re-election. Fr. Gremaud then took over the presidency.

Some weeks later, a first Pax Romana week was held in Vienna, followed by a second in September at Oxford. It was in Salzburg from 18th to 20th September 1922 that the third Congress took place. Finances remained the sticky point, lack of resources leading to the abandoning of work nonetheless necessary. The previous year it had been a question of the lay apostolate, of activity in favor of the missions, and of the social question, so this time the general theme of the conference was the development of Catholic thought in students' associations.

The following year Pax Romana held its reunion in Budapest. A regrettable curtailment of its activities due to the bad state of its finances was deplored. It was decided to recontinue the publication of the bulletin. Called to a parish Fr. Tschuor resigned and was replaced by Fr. Gremaud, while Dr. Nello Palmieri took over the presidency.

Given more status by the presence of Mgr. Seipel, Chancellor of Austria the 1925 congress at Bologna happily marked an important step forward. The statutes were totally revised, but the aim of Pax Romana remained unchanged: to carry out the complete development of the Catholic idea in student milieux, and this in all domains of university, intellectual and social life, basing its self on the best traditions of the Christian past, and trying to meet the exigencies of the present time, but it became in addition - title which had appeared premature in 1920 - a Confederation, the *Confederatio studentium universi terrarum orbis catholica* with its headquarters at Fribourg; this juridical formula safeguarded the autonomy of its member associations, without excluding non-national organizations. The organs of Pax Romana from then on were General Assembly of delegates, and a Directing Committee of nine members charged with carrying out its decisions, and with controlling, and specifying the work of the secretariat. Mr. Feber (Netherlands) was elected President.

The role of Pax Romana in international movements of Catholic thought was defined by Mgr. Seipel, who insisted on the obligation of the students to be «champions» of a very great and very intensive Catholic movement of pacification». His lecture, and Fr. Martindale's written exposé encouraged the Secretariat to strengthen its relations with the different international Catholic organizations and with the Commission for intellectual co-operation of the League of Nations, which, moreover, included two of our friends, Professors Oscar de Halecki (Warsaw) and Gonzague de Reynold (Fribourg) who, at the head of the Catholic union of international studies had succeeded the Baron de Montenach who had died the very year in which Pax Romana realized his youthful dream.

The sixth Congress took place in Amsterdam in September 1926. There the stress was on the help students' associations could give to missions, outlining the part Pax Romana should play in this field. And once again an attempt was made to ensure the financing of the bulletin.

Poland organized the 1927 Congress which was held in August under the presidency of Stanislas Orlikowski. It began in Warsaw and four days were given up to lectures and the liquidation of statutory business; then it continued in Krakow, offering the delegates a closer contact with Polish life, its past, and its artistic wealth, and it ended with a study journey across high Silesia. The pilgrimage to Czestochowa on Assumption Day, was the apotheosis. Among the important decisions of this Congress, besides the designation of a treasurer in the hope of finding a sovereign remedy to the continuing financial anemia of Pax Romana, it is worth mentioning the constitution of two commissions: one for female students, under a German President, charged with making closer contacts with the national organizations and the international union of feminine leagues; the other for intellectual collaboration, Fr. Rudolf (Vienna) being put in charge of the Secretariat.

And in the following year, also in August, the Cambridge, Oxford and London Congress was held, presided over by Dr. Edward Bullough. Its general theme comprised the examination, from the triple point of view, historical, philosophical and ethical, of the causes of the divorce between the spirit of the world to-day and that of Catholicism. Aid to the missions was in the forefront of the delegates preoccupations and they decided to constitute, in Fribourg, a commission to promote the study of the questions connected with it. Fr. Etienne Rossel was called on to preside. Also, an additional member for the Secretariat was requested and a new ruling on the right to vote was adopted. Once more the difficult financial situation was in the forefront.

The following year, through the drive of the commission for intellectual co-operation, meetings were held at Bordeaux, Louvain and Spain was the site of the ninth Congress in 1929. This included a study trip which took participants to San Sebastian, Vadrid, Toledo, Valencia and Barcelona. Presided over by Mr. Fernando Martin Sanchez, the Congress itself took place in Seville. A series of lectures treated the doctrinal value of Catholicism from the cultural point of view. The commission for missions was made into a secretariat, center for information and propaganda. Run by Fr. Rossel, its headquarters remained in Fribourg and Fr. François Charrière, now bishop of the diocese and our general ecclesiastical assistant, was appointed as the bishop's representative. Besides the creation of a commission for student travel and exchanges, such as the approval of the project to publish a Vade mecum for Catholic students going abroad, the assembly decided to give to the over-worked Fr. Gremaud a permanent administrative secretary. Its particularly fortunate choice was to exercise a beneficent influence on the destiny of Pax Romana.

Mr. Rudi Salat took up this post at the beginning of March. Favorably welcomed, the Vade mecum immediately showed itself to have a real utility. With the international identity card, published in collaboration with the international confederation of students, this publication enabled the foreign student to enter more easily into the Catholic circles of his new place of residence.

At the end of August 1930, Munich was the site of a Congress, presided over by Dr. Martin Luible, which witnessed a real renewal of Pax Romana. The lectures were on the

situation of Catholicism in Germany. During the missionary session. Canon Charrière, founder of the Fribourg work of St. Justin for oriental students, spoke enthusiastically on the student apostolate in missionary countries. And his plan was the starting point for a concrete action in this too neglected field. For the first time, the...chaplains held a special session and decided in future to meet during each Congress. The commission of women students was made into a secretariat with its headquarters in Fribourg, and Miss Madeleine Comte was put in charge. The often stated idea of starting, on the international plane, an Association of Friends of Pax Romana, virtually realized in Switzerland in 1927, was formulated as a resolution. Although the happy effects of the reorganization of the secretariat were already being felt, its activities were limited by the ever feeble finances. The support of friends in the different countries would bring about an amelioration of the situation and a discharging of the old debts which weighed down the secretariat. Other decisions were taken and in the following months they began to be carried out. Centers for student exchanges were organized in Paris and Berlin, exchange secretaries, with questionnaires and formulae at their disposal, started work in different countries, Pax Romana circles were formed in several university centers and the question of collective journeys found a solution, thanks to the collaboration of the work of St. Justin in Fribourg.

After a regional meeting in April 1931, bringing about fruitful exchanges of views at Grenoble between women students of four countries, the heads of Pax Romana returned to hold their meetings in the little city which had been its cradle, in order to celebrate in all simplicity its

Tenth Anniversary

Under the theme of «The University and the Catholic Student», this Anniversary Congress was held in Fribourg from 20th to 26th July 1931. A booklet published by its organization committee retraced the stages already passed. Despite the inevitable dark patches, the balance-sheet for these ten years was, in fact, clearly positive. After the years of groping about, the organization of Pax Romana had become stronger, its activities multiplied and its influence grown: the noble ideal of its founders had become living reality. Avoiding all hazardous internationalism, Pax Romana ensured the representation of Catholic students in organized international life, mainly by playing an important role in the committee of representatives of the international organizations of students. This was due to an initiative taken in 1926 by the intellectual co-operation commission of the League of Nations which was presided over from 1926 to 1929 by Mr. G. de Reynold, and from 1930 by Mr. de Halecki, both friends of Pax Romana. But that was only a secondary aspect of its activities for Catholic university people, this spreading over diverse planes - religious, intellectual, professional and social.

It is this balance sheet that Rudi Salat and I intended to draw up in the booklet. This brought together also a series of monographs on the member federations, which I had published to make the efforts of all our friends better known, and to give better knowledge of their strength to the 40,000 students then grouped in Pax Romana. A glimpse of their missionary activities, from the pen of Fr. Rossel, opportunely completed them.

Among the stands taken by the Congress, it would be impossible to pass over in silence its clear attitude towards the ideologies of nationalism and communism, the appeal addressed to the members of Pax Romana to frequent Catholic universities, the encouragement given to its young commission *Pro reditu in Ecclesia unitatem* and, result of the initiative of Mr. J. Python,

today member of the Fribourg government, the formation of a commission to promote Latin as international language. In the finance commission, generous offers showed how deeply felt was the need to remove the debt crippling the development of Pax Romana.

The Second Ten Years

Some weeks later Messrs. Gremaud, Rossel, Salat and O'Neill" went to America for the tenth Congress of University entr'aide. This journey was extremely fruitful. In Canada people spoken to were all in favor of the founding of a federation of French-speaking Catholic students. In the United States our delegates made contact with the Federation of Catholic College Clubs, the National Alumni Federation, and the Sodality Movement. These organizations and the heads of the Catholic institutions agreed to constitute a liaison committee with the aim of diverse associations affiliating to Pax Romana.

In December of the same year, the delegates of most of the Ibero-American countries, of which only Uruguay was then affiliated to Pax Romana, met in Mexico: they created a secretariat with which ours immediately entered into contact. In the beginning March 1932 the first international Press Congress of Catholic university youth took place in the School of Journalism of the Catholic Faculties of Lille. As Vice-President of Pax Romana and responsible for its bulletin, I had to read a report on the Catholic University press in the World. This congress gave birth to a permanent international press secretariat, and Leon Verschave agreed to run it. Some months later, at the Bordeaux congress, this new Lille secretariat integrated with Pax Romana.

It was in Bordeaux, with Dr. Godard as President, that the members of Pax Romana met that year for their Congress. The theme: International and Social Order reflected the preoccupations of the time. Beforehand, Pax Romana Days had been held at Luxemburg: they had revealed serious divergences of opinion concerning nationalism.

A new step ahead was made with the first outline of a professional secretariat in the medical field. The work of bringing this experiment to a head was given to a former President, Dr. Nello Palmieri (Naples) who also wished to bring together, as we are again trying to do this year - but we hope with greater success - the friends and former members of Pax Romana. In addition he was charged with representing us at the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, as due to the resignation of its President, Mgr. Beaupin, the work of our own commission was transferred to the Fribourg Secretariat. On the other hand, the part played by our missionary secretariat in the organization of the eighth International University Congress in favor of the Missions, which was held in Fribourg from 30th July to 3rd August, was recognized. And it was at Lourdes that the impressive closing ceremony under the presidency of Mgr. Gerlier took place.

The following year, two study days were organized at Solothurn and Heilighkreuz. Besides this the general secretary took part in a Catholic women students' week at Wurzburg.

However, because of the insufficiency of the methods of collaboration the international movement had lead in its wings. The past war had been forgotten and already people were beginning to fear what alert minds presaged. It seemed urgent to descend from the clouds of the Wilsonian institution to try to reorganize the world, starting from the nation... Although the orientation of Pax Romana did not need to be modified, it wanted to put more stress on Catholic

action in the service of the federations. Thus the August 1933 Congress at Luxemburg, under president Lambert Schauss, was devoted to the study of the social work of university students. Among its decisions figures the creation of a social secretariat under the leadership of Mr. Bopp (Germany).

In December, the Ibero-American secretariat for Catholic students, founded two years before in Mexico, organized in Rome a congress at which the Pax Romana secretaries took part. An Ibero-American Confederation of Catholic Students (CIDECA) was born in the eternal city; an agreement was made between it and Pax Romana; it concerned in particular the method of adherence of the national associations of these countries. During the same period the still very active press secretariat at Lille (SIPUC) started up an International Catholic University Agency. At the beginning January 1934 the «social days» in Paris brought together the Catholic students who attended the big schools there.

In Luxemburg originated the idea of replacing the 1934 congress by a Catholic students' pilgrimage to Rome for the closing of the Holy Year. Thus almost a thousand university people, chaplains and former members, arranged to meet there during the Easter holidays. On 5th April they were received by the Pope. There were several Vatican personalities among the lecturers at the study days, which were based on Catholic action in the university.

As the medical secretariat experiment was satisfactory, a juridical secretariat was set up the following year. Its leadership was undertaken by Dr. van Campen (Netherlands). And the Association of Friends of Pax Romana finally took shape, although its members were not very numerous.

In the summer of 1935 the congress members were the guests of Czechoslovakia. Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia welcomed them gladly. At Prague sessions devoted to the general theme, New Man in a New Age, were held. Questions of an internal nature were treated at Bratislava. A new professional secretariat was created, for comparative literature, under the direction of Dr. Maracovic of Zagreb. The assembly decided to substitute for the three monthly *Folia Periodica* a monthly journal containing illustrations and advertisements, the editing of which was to remain in my hands. Seven federations of Asia, America and Europe were officially admitted as members of Pax Romana which thus tended more and more to become a truly world-wide organization.

The following year Pax Romana held its meetings in Austria, at Salzburg and Vienna. The general theme: The mission of Catholic university people in contemporary culture, was examined by specialists from the angles of the press, cinema and radio. At this congress Pax Romana adopted new statutes better suited to its development. The General Assembly was replaced by an inter-federal council composed of one delegate from each federation. An executive bureau, formed by the acting President and his three predecessors with the General Secretary, replaced the old Directing Committee. The voting procedure was simplified and the collaboration of non-federal organizations facilitated by the introduction of a new category of corresponding members. Finally, the old special commissions were turned into sub-secretariats. France was chosen to organize the 1937 Congress and the participation of Pax Romana at the World Exhibition of the Catholic Press was assured.

Preceded by study days at Bouffémont devoted to university Catholic action within the framework of Pax Romana - religious, philosophical, cultural, professional and social formation,

etc. - the Congress took place in Paris at the same time as the international exhibition. Max Legendre presided. And the congress members, all seven hundred of them - a number rarely achieved - were preoccupied with the sad problem of the unemployment of intellectuals. New affiliations brought to forty-four the number of organizations grouped in Pax Romana. An address to the Congregation of Rites was voted in favor of the examination of virtues by Pier Giorgio Frassati.

The Interfederal Assembly met at Vaduz in the spring of 1938. Under the presidency of Dr. Wraber of Ljubljana, it approved the warning of the secretariat about organizations with communists at their center, and about the second World Youth Congress. Fr. J. Tschuor, the first General Secretary, since become parish priest of Schaan (Liechtenstein), was called on to be Vice President, and Pax Romana days in Yugoslavia, were prepared for August.

These last began at Rogaska Slatina, near the Magyar frontier. Canon Joseph Cardjijn, founder of the Y. C. W., took part, because in this resort the work was to be that of examining the experiences of students in their social work and also, since such was to be the theme of the Congress, the attitude to adopt to block communist penetration into student circles. Lectures and discussions on this subject were taken up again, on a more general level, at Bled. Among the discussions of this Congress, which ended at Ljubljana, two stand out: the creation of a chaplains' secretariat, and the acceptance of the invitation made to Pax Romana to hold its next Congress in New York, during the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic University of America. For the first time a non-European President, Mr. Edward Kirchner, was elected. The delegates eventually accepted, with regret, the resignation of the heads of three secretariats, social, press and mission; Messrs. Schauss, Verschave and Rossel.

Meeting in Paris in January 1939 under the direction of its second Vice President Roger Millot, the executive office designated Fr. Oswald Buchs (Switzerland) to direct the missionary secretariat and arranged for the next Interfederal Assembly to be in Switzerland.

It took place in Sarnen in April. Mr. Kirchner presided. The study days, the normal prelude, had as aim, the organization of a federation of Catholic students. Threats of war led the assembly to constitute an American section which could, if necessary, provisionally assume the tasks of the General Secretariat. At the end of the discussions, the President of the Swiss confederation, Mr. Etter, welcomed the 'participants to Bern: in the federal palace.

Some days later, Messrs. Kirchner and Salat went to Rome to see His Holiness, Pius XII, who, on 2nd March, had been chosen by the Conclave to succeed His Holiness, Pius XI. The new Sovereign Pontiff wanted to assure Pax Romana of his paternal goodwill, and to take an interest in its work. In May, Mr. Kirchner went to Lima for the second Congress of the Iber-American confederation.

On 27th August, the Pax Romana delegates arrived in New York. In the afternoon they were welcomed in Washington where, on the following day, a pontifical Mass was celebrated at the Catholic University, followed by the inaugural session of our first Overseas Congress. But on 1st September the world learnt, to its horror, of the instigation of a lightning attack by the troops of the Third Reich against unfortunate Poland. The Interfederal Assembly immediately took emergency measures. The new President, Mr. Joaquin Ruiz Giménez (Spain), Mr. Kirchner first Vice-President, and Fr. Gremaud were at the head of Pax Romana during the whole of the hostilities. As foreseen since the spring, a section of the secretariat was transferred to the United

States. Mr. Kirchner assumed direction. And Rudi Salat remained where he was to ensure the continuity while the European delegations hastened to use the services of an Italian company to return as fast as possible to the Old World. On 12th September they embarked on the Roma which, eleven days later, reached, Genoa.

Would Pax Romana be able to withstand the tempest?

During the Cataclysm

While Washington maintained contact with the Fribourg Secretariat and the non-European federations - Rudi Salat remained in the United States until 1941 and Mr. Kirchner was, in addition, aided by Fr. William Ferree S. M. and by some Canadian friends - in Fribourg Fr. Gremaud turned the activity of the secretariat to the work of helping students in the warring countries.

The cessation of federations' contributions impeded independent action, so Pax Romana worked within the framework both of the Swiss Catholic Mission, and of the European fund for help to students, the common organism of help created in 1942, on the basis of strict political and religious neutrality, by the international universal Entr'aide, the World Student Christian Federation and Pax Romana.

The Swiss Catholic Mission thus charged the Fribourg Secretariat with the book service. Fifteen thousand religious books were published in English, and the same number in Italian. By the end of June 1946, 600,000 books in 15,000 parcels and 250 cases had been sent to prisoners. For this book service, the Vatican paid Swiss Frs. 43,459 and the American National Catholic Welfare Conference Swiss Frs. 234,521.

The European Fund for aid to students, which became in August 1943 the World Fund for aid to students, was run by a committee which had Fr. Gremaud as Vice-President from the start. André Florinetti, the future President of Pax Romana, also became a member in 1942. This service came to the help of students who were prisoners of war, internees, or refugees. The financial participation of Pax Romana in this entr'aide organization was able to grow, from 1944 onwards, thanks to the gifts of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Its contribution thus reached in 1946 Swiss Frs. 56,000. The committee of this national fund carried out its work until the end of 1949. After the end of hostilities new tasks included aid for tubercular students treated at Leysin, maintenance of rest centers at Combloux (France), Rocca di Papa (Italy), and Ashton Hayes (Great Britain), opening of university hostels in China and India, and the sending of books, pharmaceutical products and laboratory equipment into these countries.

When the Fribourg and Washington secretariats tried to come the help of student war victims, Pax Romana took a leap forward in Latin America. Rudi Salat became, from April 1941, its itinerant ambassador. On his return to Europe, the nightmare dispersed, the Holy See awarded him, in gratitude for his merit, the order of St. Gregory the Great, with the grade of commander.

In 1941 an inter-American Assembly of Pax Romana, held at Bogota, decided to open an Ibero-American secretariat there in liaison with the Ibero-American Confederation of Catholic Students (CIDECA). This secretariat ceased its activity in 1943, but in March 1944 a new one was constituted in Santiago de Chile after a week of common studies of the CIDECA and of Pax Romana in which Edward Kirchner and Rudi Salat participated. This secretariat, directed by Dr:

Domingo Santa Maria, sent out circulars each month. It edited a bulletin of which one number in March 1945 was devoted to the memory of the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Besson, Honorary President of Pax Romana. The federations of different countries, several of which formally adhered to Pax Romana, published periodicals, and took part in the entr'aide work for student war victims. At Lima in March 1946 the second Inter-American Assembly and, at the same time; the third congress of the CIDEDEC took place. The theme of the discussions was, The responsibility of the Catholic university movement in face of the problems of the hour Joaquin Ruiz Giménez, President, Edward Kirchner and Roger Millot, its two Vice-Presidents, Rudi Salat, Administrative Secretary, and Domingo Santa Maria, Director of its inter-American secretariat, represented Pax Romana.

Our movement had victoriously resisted the frightful storm of iron and fire which had burst upon the world.

While Pax Romana was implanting itself solidly in Latin America, the Fribourg secretariat did not remain inactive. As soon as the first indication of the end of fighting appeared, it began to re-establish collaboration founded on the Christian ideal. Already in the spring of 1944, contact was established for the first time at the Catholic and international University of Fribourg with its foreign students who were able to keep up relations with their former federations. A new meeting was held in 1945, during the Easter holidays, at Montbarry, near Fribourg. Delegates, mainly from Spain, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia took part in it with their Swiss friends. Despite the difficulties of the first exchanges of views, the disappointments, the bitterness, agreement was reached on the necessity, in this time of upheaval, to return bravely to work.

Other exchanges of views were made the same year in London by representatives of twelve countries come to attend the celebration of the centenary of the conversion of Cardinal Newman. Although this regional assembly did not have the power to take decisions concerning the reorganization of Pax Romana, the questions of opening it to university graduates was discussed, as well as the extension on the spiritual plane of the entr'aide work, and the foundation in one of our Catholic universities of an institute of international research.

At the end of June 1946, after the commemoration in Salamances of the fourth anniversary of the death of Francisco Vittoria, the President Ruiz Giménez took the initiative in tightening bonds, loosened by the war, between European and American students - more than thirty countries were represented. This first Congress since the end of hostilities treated the great problems of the hour on moral as well as social and cultural planes, and, deduced from this, the future tasks of Pax Romana. His work: the apostolate in university circles, the affirmation of the rights of the individual in the face of abusive interventions of the States and the perils menacing Christianity.

In Salamanca, the foundation of an international association of lecturers in Catholic universities, Universitas, was agreed upon, and Professor Dering of Lublin chosen to preside. Thus, the first attempt was made to group Catholic intellectuals in an international cadre by grouping them by profession. Indeed, it appeared inopportune to continue to make Pax Romana rest solely on the student organizations at a time when, in a shattered world, at grips with multiple and agonizing problems of new dimensions, the presence of Catholic thought ought more than ever to be in evidence.

So, it was not surprising that two months later, during its Jubilee Congress, the twentieth held in Fribourg, foundations were laid for an international group of intellectuals, working parallel to that of the students in a spirit of close collaboration.

This Congress began with the first Interfederal Assembly convoked since 1939, and, for old members like me, there were very few familiar faces. Mr. Joaquin Ruiz Giménez, happy in having seen Pax Romana during his seven years of office overcome the divisions which separated humanity, relinquished his mandate. The assembly designated to succeed him Mr. André Florinetti (Switzerland) who, during the conflict, had collaborated with the General Secretary in the very useful work of the World Fund for the help of students, a fund which the Congress decided to continue to work with.

Then, while the intellectuals were discussing in Fribourg their future organization without, however, deserting the university and its course of lecture on the conception of the State, the students and chaplains devoted their study days at Estavayer-le-Lac to The future of Pax Romana.

Bringing together students and old members in the same spirit of enthusiasm the Congress itself opened solemnly on 1st September. Its general theme was The Christian duty of the university student. And its participants wanted to mark the jubilee of Pax Romana by the gift of a bronze commemorative plaque to the University of Fribourg. Placed in the entrance hall, it recalls most appropriately to the incoming students the foundation in Fribourg in 1921 of an organization which has not ceased to work in a generous, constructive spirit and to show during humanity's tragic hours that the Christian ideal is stronger than hate. The congress unanimously improved the enlarging of the framework of Pax Romana pending the approval of the Holy See. This entailed drawing up new statutes, placed in the charge of a provisional commission under the presidency of Mr. Hubert Aepli, Chancellor of Fribourg University. Two departures, particularly sad, were announced as irrevocable: those of Fr. Gremaud, who was the incarnation of Pax Romana for us, and of Rudi Salat, to whom our movement owes, in particular, its remarkable emergence in the New World. To both, proclaimed honorary members, the Congress members expressed their boundless gratitude. Fortunately neither one nor the other ceased to advise the new teams of leaders, particularly the unforgettable Fr. Gremaud who had agreed to be the ecclesiastical assistant to the IMCS. At the final session of the Congress, seventeen federations were officially welcomed to Pax Romana which witnessed the resumption of activities of the social, medical missionary and press secretariats. Mr. Domingo Santa Maria continued to run the Ibero-American secretariat on the other side of the ocean.

To succeed Fr. Gremaud, His Lordship Mgr. Charrière, an old member, called on Fr. Joseph Schneuwly, to-day secretary of UNDA, who was fortunate enough to have the precious assistance of the former aide to the General Secretary, and a great friend of us all, Bernard Ducret. Meeting in Fribourg at the beginning of January 1947, the provisional commission of the ICMICA chose Mr. Ramon Sugranyes de Franch, professor at the University of Fribourg, at its Secretary. At last, in the spring, the delegates of organizations of Catholic intellectuals from twenty countries obtain with the special blessing of His Holiness Pius XII, the approval of the new structure of Pax Romana.

With the jubilee congress of Fribourg, the old Pax Romana came to an end, this child, always a little weak, which had been transformed into an adult, matured by the vicissitudes of a

fratricidal war. But although Pax Romana had changed its face, it remained true to itself, realizing better still the ideal of a truly living university community spread over all Catholicism. Animated by an authentic spirit of apostolate its horizon is not limited to the world of ideas. Of this new Pax Romana it is for its President to retrace, in his turn, its development. Therefore I hand him my pen.

I do not want to hide the joy felt in Fribourg in welcoming in July for a simple reunion the delegates of Pax Romana which is united to it by so many close bonds. Pax Romana to-day a lively forty-year-old whose true aim was well-defined by' Etienne Gilson: to organize in the world a fraternity of minds who put their intelligence to the service of God.

Rethinking Democracy and the Church

2

Conscience/Consciousness, Responsibility, Democracy: From the Sillon to Vatican II

Stefan Gigacz

No-one has ever claimed democracy to be a perfect system. Sometimes, it has even led to disastrous results as with Hitler's Nazi Party, which won more votes than any other political party in the German elections of 1932, providing it with a platform for future domination¹. Despite such examples, Churchill's famously concluded in 1947 that "democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried."²

How then to promote better, more genuine and resilient forms of democracy? Drawing on the experience of Catholic pioneers of the early 19th century, Marc Sangnier and a group of students from Stanislas College in Paris sought to provide an answer to this question through the movement of democratic education that they launched in a college basement known as the Crypt in late 1893.

This article outlines the story of that movement, which soon adopted the name, *Le Sillon* (The Furrow), taken from the magazine that they also founded to promote their ideas and methods. And it traces the influence of the Sillon's ideas in the Specialized Catholic Action movements, Catholic Social Teaching and in the documents of Vatican II.

I. 19th century Catholic Pioneers of Democracy

It is not an accident that the Biblical concept of the "People of God" was rediscovered by the Catholic Church during the 19th century in the midst of the people's revolutions that characterized the birth of the modern industrial world and the emergence of modern democracy. Indeed, Catholics played a key role during that tumultuous period.

In Ireland, for example, Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) was inspired by the French Revolution after studying in France as a youth. Later known as "the Liberator," O'Connell devoted his life to the emancipation of the Irish people. Elected to the British Parliament in 1826, as a Catholic he was unable to take up his seat until the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1829.

But his successful methods of political organization were adopted by the British reformers, the Chartists, in the 1830s. Stopping in Paris on his way to Rome at the end of his life in March 1847, he was welcomed by French radicals as "the most successful champion of liberty and democracy in Europe."

Similarly, the writer Adam Mickiewicz played a similar role championing the freedom of the Polish people, leading to his exile in France, where he joined with others to promote his views.

Lamennais

One of those most influenced by Mickiewicz was the radical French priest, Félicité de Lamennais, who by the late 1820s had become disillusioned with the Restoration monarchy. Together with Henri Lacordaire, Charles de Montalembert and others, in 1830 he launched a newspaper entitled, *L'Avenir* (The Future), which adopted the slogan “*Dieu et liberté*” (God and freedom).

“The Church is languishing and tending to extinction in Europe,” Lamennais wrote in 1833, warning there were only two possible solutions. One was to rebuild “the ancient alliance with absolute powers, to come to their aid against the people and against liberty to obtain from them a level of tolerance, to weld altar and throne, relying on force,” a solution he evidently rejected.

“The second was to cut the ties that enslaved the Church to the state, to free it from the dependency that limits its action, to link up with the social movement that is preparing new destinies for the world, for freedom to unite it with order to redress its disparities, for science to reconcile it, through unhindered discussion, with eternal dogma, to the people so as to pour onto its immense miseries the inexhaustible flows of divine charity,” Lamennais proposed.³

This new Gospel-inspired alliance to replace the outmoded Constantinian alliance was to be founded on liberty. “We first seek freedom of conscience or full, universal freedom of religion, without distinction and without privilege, and consequently, concerning ourselves, as Catholics, we seek the total separation of church and state,” as the editors of *L'Avenir* wrote on 7 December 1830⁴.

This proved too much for conservative French Catholics and for Pope Gregory XVI, who in 1832 issued his encyclical *Mirari Vos*, which directly condemned many ideas championed by the Lamennais team, notably freedom of conscience and freedom of the press⁵.

Frederic Ozanam and the Revolution of 1848

Despite Lamennais’ break with the Catholic Church, his ideas lived on with some of his followers, including the Dominican Henri Lacordaire and the young founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam (1813-1853).

When revolution broke out in France and across Europe in February 1848, Ozanam – then a 35-year-old university lecturer at the Sorbonne – joined with other progressive Catholics in welcoming the new republic as “the only form of government henceforth possible in a country where all forms of royalty are outmoded.”

A supporter of the “democratic and Catholic line” advocated by the socialist Philippe Buchez, Ozanam also collaborated with the pro-Republican newspaper, *L'Ere Nouvelle* (New Era), which sought to inspire the new social order with Christian principles.

“Better to rely on the people who are the true ally of the Church, as poor as she is, devoted, blessed as she is with all the blessings of the Savior,” Ozanam argued⁶. “It’s time for Catholics to cross over to the barbarians camp, in other words, to the side of the people, of democracy,” he wrote. “The (revolutionary) slogan, liberty, equality, fraternity is nothing less than the Gospel itself. I believe in the renewal of the entire ancient social order...in relying on the people who are the real allies of the Church.”

Sadly, most Catholics ignored Ozanam’s pleas and the 1848 revolution failed. Conservative forces supported by many influential Catholics, succeeded in electing Napoleon III as president. Two years later, through a coup d’état he was installed as emperor of the authoritarian government of France’s Second Empire. Meanwhile, other revolutionary initiatives across Europe were also quickly suppressed.

By now, O’Connell had also died and Ireland was in the throes of the Great Famine. Ozanam, still young but in failing health, found himself marginalized within the Church. By 1853 he was dead, aged 40. Two years later Mickiewicz followed him to the grave, bringing to a close the first generation of modern Catholic democratic pioneers.

Seeking new methods of social action

The fallout from 1848 and later from the events of the ‘Paris Commune’ in 1871 led to a polarization of French society that has some striking parallels in many western democracies today. For their part, progressive Catholics refused to accept the growing polarization between the dominant bourgeois liberalism and the emerging hardline socialism. Rather than seeking a midway path (a third way) between these ideologies, those who followed in Ozanam’s steps preferred to seek a ‘new’ way based on new thinking and new methods of social action.

Among those who took up this challenge, perhaps the most important was the priest, Alphonse Gratry (1805-1871), who had previously recruited young Ozanam as a lecturer at Stanislas College in Paris, of which he had been the principal. Gratry had already published a manual of social action in the midst of the events of 1848.

A philosopher, who can be justly considered as the French counterpart of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Gratry challenged the narrow deductive scholastic philosophy that dominated Catholic intellectual discourse of the time, proposing an “inductive” method based on “understanding the signs of the times.”⁷ It was by reading these signs that people would be able to identify the path for renewing the world in line with God’s vision of truth and justice, Gratry argued.

“He signals the hideous wounds (of society),” Gratry’s disciple, Léon Ollé-Laprune (1839-1898) later wrote, “he enters into the precise, living detail; he names things by their names...; he shows what they do, and, before these poignant realities in us, around us, he provokes reflections, examinations of conscience, resolutions; and this goes a long way, a very long way, it kindles and prepares many changes.”⁸

Civic virtue as the basis of democracy

Also, a philosopher, Ollé-Laprune was another of those influenced by the ‘men of 1848.’ Indeed, he explicitly modelled his life on that of Ozanam. In his books, *Le morale d’Aristote*

(Aristotle's Ethics) and *Le Prix de la Vie* (The Price/Prize of Life), he developed Gratry's philosophy, seeking also to articulate an ethical basis for modern democratic society. Where Aristotle had understood the virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) as the fundamental virtue for political leaders, Ollé-Laprune realised that the emergence of a genuinely democratic society depended on each person developing what he called "civic virtue".

He understood also that a state ideology or religion was no longer adequate to assure social cohesion in a pluralist modern society. As with democracy, social unity began with the recognition of the role and contribution of each individual, he wrote. And he saw the Catholic Church as having a key role in promoting this ethical and social vision.

II. Marc Sangnier's Movement, Le Sillon

Addressing a group of university students at Stanislas College in 1893, Ollé-Laprune called for a "movement of opinion" that would promote the role of each person in the building of a new society.

Within months of his talk, a group of Stanislas students led by Marc Sangnier (1873-1950) launched a journal, *Le Sillon* (The Furrow), to promote these ideas through a student study circle that became known as The Crypt, taking its name from the basement room in which they met.

By 1897, they launched a nationwide campaign to promote social study circles among students and young workers. So successful was this campaign that a movement began to form around these study circles which developed what they described as "a method of democratic education".

According to an article in an early Sillon bulletin, these study circles did "not discuss abstract or vague subjects". Their method was to "bring characteristic facts... susceptible of illustrating the main lines of an issue." These Sillon study circles quickly progressed to organizing systematic enquiries on diverse topics including abuse of army recruits, workplace safety, etc.

A definition of democracy and a method of democratic education

In this, the Sillon explicitly adapted the empirical and inductive sociological enquiry methods developed by a pioneering sociologist, Frederic Le Play (1806-1882), who had also studied with Alphonse Gratry, and turned them into tools for raising consciousness and developing action.

"Our way of studying social facts also contains something very special: every social school must practice the method of observation and experimentation," wrote Louis Cousin, a lay Marianist brother and Sillon counselor. "In such conditions, study ... becomes consciousness," he continued⁹.

As Marc Sangnier commented, anticipating the "see, judge, act" method later developed and made famous by Joseph Cardijn: "Every citizen must: 1° Know the state of the country; when the situation is bad, he must 2° seek solutions; and lastly, having found the solutions, he must 3° act."¹⁰

Thus drawing on Ozanam's example of committed lay action, Gratry's inductive approach, Le Play's method of enquiry, Ollé-Laprune's analysis of prudence as the democratic virtue, the Sillon succeeded in building the first "movement" directed to mobilizing young lay Catholics into social action.

This spirit of the Sillon is perhaps best summarized in their definition of democracy as an ongoing process oriented towards encouraging each person to play their own role in civil society:

"Democracy is the system of social organization that tends to maximize the civic consciousness and responsibility of each person.¹¹"

Demise

Not only did the Sillon develop and implement a radical method of democratic education, from 1906 it also openly challenged anti-democratic French groups, including the *Action Française* movement founded by Charles Maurras. However, since many French Catholics including a number of bishops, cardinals and even Pope Pius X himself supported Maurras' movement, the Sillon attracted strong opposition within the Church. In addition, many bishops came to view Sangnier's lay-led movement as a threat to their own episcopal authority.

Indeed, Monsignor Umberto Benigni from the Secretariat of State in the Holy See did not hesitate to describe Marc Sangnier as resembling "those kinds of molluscs that must be crushed into dust because, when cut into pieces, each part grows into a new and even more dangerous creature."¹²

The outcome was that on 25 August 1910, Pope Pius X wrote to the French bishops condemning the democratic methods of the Sillon, calling for the resignation of its existing leaders and demanding that the new leadership place themselves under the direct control of their bishops.

"All members of the Sillon, such as it is, work only for a sect", according to the papal letter, "...the Sillon, the eye fixed on a chimera, conveys socialism,...(it) is a miserable tributary of a great movement of apostasy organized to establish everywhere a universal church that will have neither dogma nor hierarchy...and which, under pretext of liberty and human dignity, will bring about in the world...the legal reign of delusion."¹³

In an act of astonishing humility, the Sillon leaders resigned immediately leading to the closure of the first genuine Catholic lay movement of democratic social action. Nevertheless, with the approval of Pius X, they continued their work in another form through a new, secular movement known as *La Jeune République* (The Young Republic).

Four years later, however, the outbreak of the Great War struck another blow with many leading former Sillon leaders killed in the trenches of that savage conflict. Thus, when Pius X's successor, Benedict XV asked Sangnier to revive the Sillon, the window of opportunity had passed, bringing its work to a definitive close.

III. The Sillon legacy

Although the closure of the Sillon sent shockwaves through the Church, the loyalty to the Church and the humility of Marc Sangnier and the Sillon leaders attracted much sympathy.

After Sangnier's death in 1950, the Paris Nuncio, Angelo Roncalli, later to become Pope John XXIII, wrote that his humility and nobility in accepting the admonition of Pius X was "a measure of his true greatness." Indeed, Roncalli described hearing Marc Sangnier speak around 1903 as the "most vivid memory of my whole young priesthood."¹⁴

French social action leaders scrambled to rescue what they could of the Sillon. Many shifted their energies to the *Association catholique de la jeunesse française* (Catholic Association of French Youth) (ACJF) where they continued to promote the Sillon's inductive method of democratic education.

Similarly, across France's northern border, a young Belgian priest, Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967), began in 1912 to organize young workers in the Brussels parish of Laeken. Cardijn and his key collaborators, Victoire Cappe (1886-1927) and Fernand Tonnet (1894-1945), had both been trained in the methods of the Sillon which had a Belgian branch based at Liege, Cappe's hometown.

It was clear to everyone that Cardijn identified completely with the Sillon, as he proclaimed publicly, inviting Marc Sangnier as an "international apostle" to give a public lecture in Brussels in 1921.

In a memorable speech introducing Sangnier, Cardijn would describe him as "the eloquent promoter of the greatest surge of faith and apostolate that France has experienced since the Revolution."¹⁵

Recalling his meetings with the Sillon at Lille and Roubaix in 1907, Cardijn recalled the way in which the students and young workers of the Sillon study circles loved each other "closer than brothers, assisting each other to develop their consciousness and to exercise their responsibilities."

"The winds of the air and the birds of the sky carry off this seed and deposit it sometimes far away, in a field where God's dew fertilizes and multiplies it," Cardijn proclaimed in a prophetic phrase.

"That is how, with the same spirit, albeit perhaps in another form, that great collective effort grows and develops in order to raise the consciousness and the moral as well as the political responsibility of the working class," Cardijn continued, "and to eradicate from our society the obstacles of the economic, political, moral, intellectual and religious orders which prevent the flowering and perfecting of this consciousness and this responsibility of the most humble of popular citizens."

The Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne and the Specialized Catholic Action Movements

Given his public proclamation of his indebtedness to the Sillon, it is no surprise that Cardijn's own movement, the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (JOC) (Young Christian Workers), faced similar opposition. By 1924, Cardinal Désiré Mercier of Malines-Brussels found himself under intense pressure to close the emerging movement, forcing Cardijn to seek to present his case to Pope Pius XI.

Here Cardijn benefited from the widespread regret at the closure of the Sillon and the desire that had developed among progressive Holy See officials to see a new movement like the Sillon emerge in the Church. Indeed, in one of his first pontifical acts, Pius XI had sent a

message of encouragement to an International Democratic Peace Congress organized by Marc Sangnier in 1922.

The sympathy for Sangnier and the fact that Cardijn was publicly identified with the Sillon were therefore key factors in enabling Cardijn to gain a personal audience with Pius XI in March 1925 in which the pope adopted and blessed the new JOC.

It was a signal that many had been waiting for since 1910. By 1927, the JOC had spread to France, founded by Fr Georges Guérin, a former member of the Sillon, as were many other early JOC chaplains. In effect, the JOC sprouted from the roots of the long dormant former Sillon network.

This was also the case with other “specialized” Catholic Action movements that emerged following the model of the JOC, particularly the *Jeunesse Agricole Chrétienne* (JAC) (Young Christian Farmers), which in a number of instances appears to have emerged in parishes which had formerly hosted rural Sillon teams.

Pax Romana and Other Movements

The Sillon’s influence can also be seen in a range of other international catholic organizations. In 1927, the former Sillon chaplain, Mgr. Eugène Beaupin, proposed a “Conference of Presidents” of Catholic organizations, which later led to the establishment of the International Catholic Organizations Conference. Beaupin also cooperated closely with several of the French and Swiss pioneers of the International Movement of Catholic Students, Pax Romana.

The Conference of International Catholic Organizations which was launched in 1927 as the “Conference of Presidents” at the initiative of a former Sillon chaplain, Fr Eugène Beaupin.

Indeed, the Sillon’s impact even crossed the Atlantic to the USA, where Dorothy Day and Pierre ‘Peter’ Maurin, who was also a former sillonist, founded the Catholic Worker movement.

France’s MRP Government

At the political level, the Sillon also continued to exercise great influence, initially through the *Jeune République*, and later directly in the French National Assembly through the *Parti Démocrate Populaire* (PDP) founded by the Sillonist, Francisque Gay.

No doubt its greatest political legacy, however, came with the post-World War II 1945 French government of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) (Popular Republican Movement). As René Rémond and Guy Rossi-Landi have written:

It is generally accepted that the Christian-Democrat current from which the Popular Republican Movement (M.R.P.) arose had political roots which go back to Lacordaire, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* and Marc Sangnier’s Sillon movement...¹⁶

As Rémond and Rossi-Landi point out, the MRP had three main components: political activists from the People's Democratic Party, Christian trade unionists and leaders of the Specialized Catholic Action movements, which were federated in the *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française* (ACJF). And the Sillon had influence in each of these components.

IV. Conscience, responsibility and democracy in Catholic Social Teaching

Whereas prior to World War II, the popes had shown themselves to be reluctant to explicitly endorse democracy, this changed under Pius XII, who as Eugenio Pacelli had been a young monsignor at the Vatican when the Sillon was closed down in 1910.

Now, as pontiff, he devoted his 1944 Christmas Message, *Benignitas et humanitas*, to “democracy and lasting peace.¹⁷” Moreover, he did so in terms that closely recall the Sillon definition of democracy.

“The people live by the fullness of life in the men that compose it,” Pius XII wrote, “each of whom – at his proper place and in his own way – is a person conscious of his own responsibility and of his own views.¹⁸”

Moreover, for Pius XII, it was this personal consciousness of responsibility that distinguished a “people” from “the masses,” who, on the contrary, “wait for the impulse from outside,” and thus become “an easy plaything in the hands of anyone who exploits their instincts and impressions; ready to follow in turn, today this flag, tomorrow another.”

In contrast, “an abundant rich life is diffused in the state and all its organs from the exuberant life of a true people, instilling them with a vigor that always renews itself, the consciousness of their own responsibility and a true instinct for the common good.¹⁹”

Thus, 34 years after its demise under Pius X, the Sillon conception of democracy and democratic education now found itself fully endorsed by Pius XII.

Unsurprisingly, John XXIII’s social encyclicals follow Pius XII’s lead here. “Man’s personal dignity requires besides that he enjoy freedom and be able to make up his own mind when he acts,” Pope John wrote in *Pacem in Terris*. “Each man should act on his own initiative, conviction, and sense of responsibility, not under the constant pressure of external coercion or enticement.²⁰”

V. Vatican II

In a clear policy decision by the Council Fathers, not one of the sixteen documents of Vatican II make mention of the word “democracy” or any of its derivatives.

On the other hand, there are several significant echoes of the Sillon definition of democracy in various conciliar documents. Thus, §55 of the Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* states:

From day to day, in every group or nation, there is an increase in the number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the authors and the artisans of the culture of their community. Throughout the whole world there is a mounting increase in the sense of autonomy as well as of responsibility. This is of paramount importance for the spiritual and moral maturity of the human race. This becomes clearer if we consider the unification of the world and the duty that is imposed upon us, that we build a better world based upon truth and justice. Thus, we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by this responsibility to his brothers and to history.

Even more striking is the reference in §1 of the Decree on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*:

A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man, and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty.

Similarly, §1 of the Decree on the Apostolate on the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, contains the following reference

An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances.

What we find here in these and other conciliar texts is the culmination and vindication of 150 years of struggle within the Church for recognition of an autonomous tradition of lay democratic action. In effect, the Sillon's definition of democracy has become embedded in the key Vatican II conceptions of religious freedom, lay apostolate and the role of the Church in the world.

The impact of this can be seen clearly in Karol Wojtyla's 1972 manual for implementing Vatican II, *Sources of Renewal*, in which the future Pope John Paul II sets out the Church's major tasks as "The Formation of Consciousness" and "The Formation of Attitudes" including "participation" and "human identity and Christian responsibility."

It is hard to imagine a clearer endorsement of the methods and principles of the lay apostolate movements belonging to this democratic tradition coming from the bishop of Cracow, in whose cathedral Adam Mickiewicz lies buried.

Seeing, judging and acting to maximize conscience and responsibility

Perhaps here it is appropriate to give the final word to Marc Sangnier's disciple, Cardijn, who spoke of conscience and responsibility in each of his three 1965 speeches to the Fourth Session of Vatican II²¹.

Explaining the way in which he had worked with young people around the world for the previous 60 years of his priesthood, he said:

I have helped them to see, to judge and to act by themselves, undertaking social and cultural action, freely obeying the authorities, in order to become adult witnesses of Christ and the Gospel, conscious of being responsible for their brothers and sisters in the whole world.²²

Drawing on the heritage of the Sillon, Cardijn thus offers a new, democratic hermeneutic with which to re-read the documents of Vatican II as a call to build a world founded on developing prudential, civic and Christian virtue through maximizing conscience and responsibility.

Cardijn would continue to cite the Sillon definition of democracy in many important speeches for the rest of his life. In his keynote address to the First International Congress on Lay Apostolate in 1951, for example, he would insist that what was needed was "the active presence of pioneers who are fully conscious of their double vocation, as Christians, and as human beings,

and who are bent on assuming their responsibilities to the full, knowing neither peace nor rest until they have transformed the environment of their lives to the demands of the Gospel.²³”

¹ Fact or fiction: Adolf Hitler won an election in 1932 (Deutsch Welle): <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-or-fiction-adolf-hitler-won-an-election-in-1932/a-18680673>

² Winston S. Churchill, 11 November 1947: International Churchill Society: <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/quotes/the-worst-form-of-government/>

³ Félicité de Lamennais, “Du catholicisme dans ses rapports avec la société politique,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. 6 (Paris: Pagnerre, Paris: 1844), 58.

⁴ *L’Avenir*, 07/12/1830 quoted in Philippe Portier, *L’Eglise française face au modèle français de laïcité*, in *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 129 (January-March 2005): <http://journals.openedition.org/assr/1115> (Accessed 09/01/2018)

⁵ Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, Encyclical Letter, 1832.

⁶ “A l’abbé Alphonse Ozanam.”

⁷ Alphonse Gratry, *Les sources (Première partie), Conseils pour la conduite de l’esprit* (Paris: Charles Douniol et Cie, 1864), 76.

⁸ Léon Ollé-Laprune, *Eloge du Père Gratry* (Paris: Téqui-Le Coffre, 1896), 18.

⁹ Louis Cousin, *Vie et doctrine du Sillon* (Paris: Emmanuel Vitte, 1905), 125.

¹⁰ Marc Sangnier, *Le Bulletin de la Crypte*, 1899, quoted in Jeanne Caron, *Le Sillon*, Plon, Paris, 1957: 306.

¹¹ Jeanne Caron, *Le Sillon*, 57.

¹² Jeanne Caron, *Le Sillon*, 418-419.

¹³ Pius X, *Our Apostolic Mandate*, 25 August 1910: <https://sillon.net/our-apostolic-mandate/>

¹⁴ Mgr Angelo Roncalli – Mme Sangnier, 6 June 1950: <http://sillon.net/mgr-angelo-roncalli-mme-sangnier/>

¹⁵ Joseph Cardijn, *Welcome to Marc Sangnier*, 5 February 1921: <https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/15>

¹⁶ René Rémond and Guy Rossi-Landi, *MRP (Mouvement Républicain Populaire)* (Encyclopaedie Universalisà: <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/mrp-mouvement-republicain-populaire/>

¹⁷ Pius XII, *Benignitas et humanitas*.

¹⁸ Ibid., §23.

¹⁹ Ibid., §25.

²⁰ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

²¹ Joseph Cardijn, *Religious liberty*, 20 September 1965: <https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/95>
<https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/96>

Joseph Cardijn, *The suffering workers of the world*, 5 October 1965: <https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/97>

²² Joseph Cardijn, *Religious liberty*, 20 September 1965: <https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/95>

²³ Joseph Cardijn, *The world today and the lay apostolate*, October 1951: <https://www.josephcardijn.com/en/item/55>

El Pueblo De Dios Volviéndose Pueblo **En Busca De La Participación Del Pueblo En El Pueblo De Dios**

Fr. Pablo Dabezies

The following text is from Fr. Pablo Dabezies, a Uruguayan theologian and longtime chaplain of the Pax Romana movements. Shortly before his death in 2021, he prepared this text on “The People of God Becoming a People in Search of the Participation of the People in the People of God” for the Urugunian review, Obsur. Gretfully Printed here with permission of Obsur.

In the text, Fr. Dabezies considers the move to more collective and secular forms of discernment following the Second Vatican Council. He invites us to review some documents of the social teaching of the Church in recent times.

Following the Council, local church leaders, including Pablo Dabezies, have had to invent, create, and implement processes of synodality from their daily experiences. These show us the path and the possibilities that are becoming a reality in terms of both democracy and the challenge of evangelizing together: of synodality!

El presente texto es una contribución de nuestro asesor Pe. Pablo Dabezies A. quien fue un apasionado del tema de la democracia en la Iglesia y de esa forma específica de vivirla como Sinodalidad. La publicación es para nosotros también un homenaje póstumo a Paul por su gran aporte a nuestros movimientos (MIEC-MIIC)

El texto que Pablo preparó para la publicación uruguaya Cartas Obsur sobre el tema de la democracia en su edición de enero de 2021, finalmente no fue publicada por ser demasiado larga para el formato. Agradecemos a Obsur la autorización para la publicación.

Llamo la atención para la mirada histórica que nos da sobre el tema desde el Concilio Vat II y nos va llevando a identificar ese caminar de la Iglesia (con avances y retrocesos) hacia formas más colectivas y laicales de discernimiento, a diferencia de lo que venía dándose en los siglos anteriores. Nos invita a revisar algunos documentos de la enseñanza social de la Iglesia en estos últimos tiempos.

A algunos, entre ellos Pablo Dabezies, les ha tocado inventar, crear, poner en marcha procesos de sinodalidad desde su qué hacer cotidiano en sus comunidades de actuación que nos muestran el camino y las posibilidades que se van haciendo realidad en términos de democracia y más allá de la democracia, de un pensar para actuar y evangelizar juntos: de sinodalidad!

El título es pretencioso, pero que no se ilusione mucho el lector. Lo que sigue son algunos apuntes, una especie de ejercicio de memoria, ayudado por algunas visitas a mister Google, recordando vivencias sobre lo que llamo la búsqueda de la “participación popular” en la Iglesia.

Puede tal vez causar extrañeza esta expresión, pero me resulta gráfica para tener en cuenta dos registros simultáneamente: el socio-político en sentido amplio, que se pregunta por la participación popular, es decir del pueblo, en este caso en la vida de la Iglesia; y el teológico-pastoral, que considera a la misma Iglesia como Pueblo de Dios, con todo lo que ello implica (que todas y todos los bautizados forman parte de él, aunque en la práctica y aún se dé por descontado que hay unos que tienen todos los derechos para hacerlo mientras que otros, y sobre todo otras, no tanto).

Hago este esfuerzo porque me comprometí a escribir algo sobre esta temática para la presente edición de *Carta Obsur* sobre la democracia y luego de darle muchas vueltas me parece la manera más a mi alcance para cumplir. Pero también porque luego de una larga y trajinada vivencia en este camino en verdad apasionante, creo que estamos en un momento privilegiado en que sobre todo por obra de Francisco, pero también de muchas paciencias anónimas, se están abriendo sendas muy anheladas y de cuyo recorrido depende una reforma a fondo del estilo de vida eclesial. Ese que me gusta pensar deseó y entrevió Juan XXIII y que desde entonces soñamos con él.

Ambos registros, para quienes de manera más larga o menos, con mayor o menor intensidad vivimos el Vaticano II y el tiempo siguiente hasta hoy, se juntan articulándose en él. Por un lado, la constitución sobre la Iglesia, que conocemos como *Lumen gentium* (LG), recuperó y volvió a poner en el primer nivel de atención de todos los cristianos, un título, una imagen y categoría bíblico-teológica no nueva pero sí muy caída en desuso: Pueblo de Dios. Así contestaba a una pregunta fundamental que en la asamblea conciliar había formulado el entonces cardenal Montini, al año siguiente Papa Pablo VI: “Iglesia, ¿qué dices de ti misma?” También marcó una característica fundamental, por igual muy tradicional pero olvidada, al rescatar el “sentido sobrenatural de la fe de todo el pueblo” (*sensus fidei*, en la expresión técnica. Cfr. LG 12). Pueblo de Dios universal, pero al mismo tiempo afincado sólidamente en los diversos territorios humanos, las Iglesias locales, otro precioso rescate de LG por el que con un sentido preñado de significados decimos Iglesia de Montevideo como decimos Iglesia de Roma.

Al mismo tiempo, y seguramente recogiendo estímulos de la evolución de las sociedades, en especial pero no solo de las más desarrolladas, el Concilio, como gran caja de resonancia tuvo que responder a los impulsos de participación popular, expresados en organizaciones variadas, aspiraciones y reclamos, nueva conciencia de derechos, en una palabra, una creciente sensibilidad ciudadana. Que se estaba ya reflejándose en la misma Iglesia con el auge del laicado y sus propias organizaciones ya desde los años 30, por ejemplo en el surgimiento y rápido desarrollo de la Acción Católica y la teología que la iba acompañando. Si tomamos otra vez la *Lumen gentium*, el hecho de dar esa centralidad a la categoría de Pueblo de Dios y de la común e igual pertenencia a él por el bautismo, antes de cualquier otra diferenciación, abría nuevos cauces para la participación responsable de todos en la vida y misión de ese pueblo, aunque en esos años 60 del siglo pasado costara imaginar todo lo que hasta hoy ha ido suscitando. Baste pensar en todo lo relacionado con la promoción de la mujer y sus repercusiones en la Iglesia, de candente actualidad.

Y qué decir de la misma constitución sobre la *Sagrada Liturgia* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), articulada en torno a la gran preocupación por la “activa participación” de todos los cristianos y cristianas en ella, luego de la larga estación de casi absoluto protagonismo del clero. Y por no decir sino lo más evidente, esa otra constitución, sobre la Iglesia en el mundo, la *Gaudium et spes*, que recogiendo el llamado del Espíritu en el seno de la historia impulsó a la comunidad cristiana entera, haciendo uso del “sentido de la fe”, a emprender el evangélico discernimiento de los “signos de

los tiempos”. Contando para ello y de manera convergente con la libertad de conciencia y expresión, reconocida solemnemente en la declaración *Dignitatis humanae* (Dignidad humana) después de siglos de frontal rechazo.

Podría seguir explorando momentos y enseñanzas del Vaticano II en el sentido de esa renovada conciencia de ser pueblo en que todas y todos los bautizados son sustancialmente iguales y responsables, pero no es el objetivo central de esta nota. Sí me importa rescatar, siempre desde el registro de la participación popular, un momento y un hecho: el 15 de setiembre de 1965, el Papa Pablo VI, respondiendo a un deseo reiteradamente expresado por muchos Padres conciliares y de acuerdo con esa nueva conciencia eclesial, instituyó el Sínodo de Obispos. Con ello reanudaba una muy antigua y extendida praxis de la Iglesia del primer milenio, mucho más conservada después en las comunidades del Oriente que en las de Occidente. Ello significaba la decisión de dar un paso fundamental para ir revirtiendo el proceso de centralización romana y uniformización de la Iglesia latina a partir del segundo milenio, que tomó poco a poco formas casi caricaturales, sobre todo luego de la Reforma protestante. Con esa decisión del Papa Montini y la aprobación entusiasta de la gran mayoría conciliar, se abrió una compuerta para que poco a poco se pudiera ir encontrando nuevas formas de participación del Pueblo de Dios en la vida y misión de las Iglesias en cada lugar. Así, el último medio siglo largo eclesial puede ser leído como el intento de ir definiendo entre tanteos y hallazgos, impulsos y resistencias, alegrías y temores, un estilo de ser Iglesia que por muchos siglos casi había desaparecido que llamamos sinodal, es decir, de caminar juntos, como pueblo, integrando los dones, talentos y responsabilidades de cada uno, de cada comunidad, en la búsqueda del seguimiento del Señor en la historia de los seres humanos.

Un camino trabajoso

De pronto no resulta muy clara esta última afirmación, y es natural. Porque, ¿qué podrá tener que ver la creación de una estructura de participación episcopal, es decir más que clerical (lo digo en el registro sociológico), junto al obispo de Roma, con la liberación de un protagonismo y ejercicio de la responsabilidad laical, o sea “popular” (mismo registro)? Hagamos un breve recorrido, sin muchas pretensiones, solo recordando algunos elementos para ver cómo tiene que ver. Más, en los hechos y al menos desde una cierta mirada, ambos niveles se van articulando y, como sucede con frecuencia, se alimentan mutuamente hasta llegar al momento actual, que es a donde quiero llegar para intentar mostrar el tiempo de encrucijada que estamos viviendo y de cuya evolución depende una honda reforma de la Iglesia, esa que deseamos.

Partimos entonces del Vaticano II y la institución del Sínodo de los Obispos, setiembre de 1965, que como hechos ya tienen la virtud de comenzar a derretir el congelamiento en que estaba la estructura eclesial. Pensemos que los obispos de todo el mundo y todo el cuerpo de la Iglesia no tenía ninguna referencia concreta (solo los libros) de lo que significaba “vivir en concilio”. Embarcarse durante cuatro años en esa experiencia inédita de ejercer y ejercitar un discernimiento comunitario también desconocido, fue creando un clima y haciendo nacer imágenes provocó un clima de gran efervescencia en todos los órdenes del Pueblo de Dios. Una experiencia que cuesta imaginar por su densidad humana, cristiana. Una de las imágenes más reveladoras de ello fue la congregación del 12 de octubre de 1962, cuando la gran mayoría de los varios miles de obispos se “rebelaron” y decidieron no realizar las elecciones de las comisiones conciliares sin antes concertarse y presentar nuevas listas de candidatos que surgieran de ellos mismos y no de la Curia Romana. Todo los especialistas de la historia del Concilio cuanto los testimonios de innumerables

obispos concuerdan en que realmente allí comenzó la cosa, cuando ellos se apropiaron del evento, confiaron en sí mismos y se atrevieron a ser protagonistas y no meros ejecutores de las consignas del aparato romano. Obra ciertamente del Espíritu, contando con la gran docilidad del inolvidable Juan XXIII. Conocí personalmente en Roma obispos que reaccionaron después de ese día como si dijeran “¡Ah, ¿esto puede ser la Iglesia? No resisto citar el testimonio de Parteli que es también muy elocuente sobre esa experiencia: “En los debates sucesivos [a esa mañana], a medida que se discutían y a veces se rechazaban los esquemas presentados, yo sentía una enorme paz interior oyendo tantas voces en la misma onda de mi manera de pensar y sentir. Me parecía escuchar explícita y articuladamente lo mismo que yo siempre había sentido sin saberlo precisar, o tal vez sin quererlo precisar por respeto a lo recibido”. Muy gráfico Viola, ya veterano obispo de Salto, al finalizar la primera sesión: “¡Dejo la chacra y me dedico a la liturgia!” (soy testigo).

Pero retomemos el hilo. Luego de terminado el Concilio, diciembre de 1965, muchas fueron las Iglesias locales que se propusieron encarnar ese espíritu conciliar con iniciativas diversas que tuvieron sin embargo como uno de sus denominadores comunes la búsqueda de una amplia movilización de sus miembros. Conocemos, por haberla vivido en unos casos y por haber recibido el testimonio de ello en otros, lo que significó esa experiencia en Montevideo y también en el resto de la Iglesia uruguaya. Los entonces llamados grupos de reflexión y luego pequeñas comunidades, fueron instrumentos muy fecundos en ese sentido, por su gran número y estilo. Y aunque no se llamaron sínodo, las masivas asambleas de 1968 y 1968 (los Encuentros Pastorales) sí que lo fueron de hecho, en cuanto llevaron a cabo, como expresión de ese continuo intercambio en la fe, un vasto discernimiento sobre la misión y el estilo de vida eclesial necesario para ella por parte de nuestra comunidad diocesana. Y los documentos finales en que se plasmaron las prioridades reflexionadas y definidas por todos fueron aprobados y hechos suyos sin retoque alguno por el obispo. Lo que mostraba, como había sucedido, en el caso de Pablo VI y el Vaticano II, que se comenzaba a retomar, a diversos niveles de la Iglesia, el camino en que el Pueblo de Dios se responsabilizaba por su respuesta a la voluntad del Padre y vivía en la confianza mutua de la inspiración del Espíritu para identificarla y vivirla. Todos aprendiendo de todos.

Sabemos que esa experiencia tan inspiradora, tan engendradora de mística, de motivación por hacerse cargo de la Iglesia propia, poco a poco fue perdiendo fuerza y centralidad entre nosotros. Dejó de ser una prioridad y lo definitorio en planes pastorales. A nivel universal pero también local, por muchas razones que no están aún bien analizadas al menos entre nosotros, se produjo un repliegue paulatino provocado al menos en parte por temores, inseguridades, dificultades para confiar en ese sentido de la fe del Pueblo de Dios todo. Más valía, en la agitación de tanto impulso nuevo y eventuales exageraciones, retomar la preeminencia del estamento clerical e ir reduciendo la confianza en el discernimiento más general, como si los aires y a veces vientos de la sociedad que el laicado carga por sus formas de vida no aportaran voz del Espíritu. En lo personal viví varias veces la sensación de que entre sacerdotes y obispos muchos pensaban “Hemos ido demasiado lejos y rápido”. ¿Fe pequeña?

Hubo algunos hechos y palabras que muestran esta evolución (¿involución?), en el nivel más alto, pero que tuvieron mucha repercusión en la vida del Pueblo de Dios entero, en un sentido y en otro. Iniciando la vida del Sínodo de Obispos, Pablo VI convocó el primero para 1967. Y aunque todo transcurrió muy reducido al mundo episcopal, sin que hubiera habido movilización general, al menos en mis recuerdos, y tal vez por el tema mismo muy intraeclesial (“Preservación y fortalecimiento de la fe católica”; ese año fue declarado “Año de la Fe” y el episcopado uruguayo produjo un documento

bien interesante), el hecho en sí de poner en marcha ese nuevo instrumento colegial de gobierno fue muy importante. Al año siguiente, y precedida por una amplia consulta, se conoció la encíclica *Humanae vitae*, que dejó sin embargo la impresión de un acto bastante solitario del Papa. Las mismas reacciones tomando distancia de varios episcopados que habían sido protagonistas centrales del Vaticano II, así como la actitud como sufriente de Pablo VI que creyó su deber seguir el parecer de la minoría abonaron esa sensación. También el primer Sínodo extraordinario de 1969 sobre la “Cooperación entre la Santa Sede y las Conferencias Episcopales” pasó bastante desapercibido, a pesar de que trataba un tema de enorme trascendencia para seguir recorriendo el camino de la autoridad ejercida de manera colegial y respetuosa de las diferentes culturas y contextos.

1971 fue un año clave en ese sentido, con dos hitos en el camino que venimos recorriendo con esta mirada bastante subjetiva y selectiva. El primero, en mayo, fue la Carta Apostólica *Octogesima adveniens* (*Al llegar los 80 años*) del mismo Papa Montini, dirigida al cardenal canadiense Maurice Roy, que era el presidente de dos nuevos órganos del Vaticano creados en 1967 por influencia del Concilio y que significaban muchísimo para la participación activa de todos y todas en el Pueblo de Dios: el Consejo de Laicos y la Comisión Justicia y Paz. La ocasión era el 80 aniversario de la encíclica *Rerum novarum* de León XIII que es considerada como puntapié inicial de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia. En ella, además de muchas cosas muy interesantes (¿qué tal una lectura? Es fácil encontrarla googleando), hay algunos pasajes que expresan una novedad en la Iglesia católica, en la línea de los impulsos del Vaticano II. Hoy nos parecerá normal, tal vez, pero en el momento fue señalada como otra ruptura de inercias seculares. Por ejemplo, en el n. 4: “Frente a situaciones tan diversas, Nos es difícil pronunciar una palabra única como también proponer una solución con valor universal. No es este nuestro propósito ni tampoco nuestra misión. **Incumbe a las comunidades cristianas** analizar con objetividad la **situación propia de su país, esclarecerla mediante la luz de la palabra** inalterable del Evangelio, deducir **principios de reflexión, normas de juicio y directrices de acción** según las enseñanzas sociales de la Iglesia tal como han sido elaboradas a lo largo de la historia... A estas comunidades cristianas **toca discernir**, con la **ayuda del Espíritu Santo, en comunión con los obispos** responsables, en **diálogo con los demás hermanos** cristianos y **todos los hombres y mujeres de buena voluntad**, las **opciones** y los **compromisos** que conviene asumir para realizar las **transformaciones** sociales, políticas y económicas que se consideren de urgente necesidad en cada caso” (negritas mías). Este “incumbe a las comunidades cristianas” con que el Papa comparte su responsabilidad de discernimiento y decisión, sancionó una línea de futuro en cuanto valoración práctica del “sentido de la fe” de los cristianos, en concreto del laicado, así como de las Iglesias locales con su diversidad. Y aún más allá. Ancha puerta destrabada, que aun conociendo idas y vueltas, no será ya cerrada hasta el día de hoy, por lo menos en el terreno de la enseñanza social. Francisco retomará con vigor esta senda conciliar en varias ocasiones, también, ¡sorpresa! con respecto a temáticas reservadas a intervenciones vaticanas hasta hace bien poco, como por ejemplo la moral matrimonial. Cotejemos el texto anterior de Pablo VI con este otro de la *Amoris laetitia*: “Naturalmente, en la Iglesia es necesaria una **unidad de doctrina y de praxis**, pero ello **no impide que subsistan diferentes maneras** de interpretar algunos **aspectos de la doctrina** o algunas **consecuencias que se derivan** de ella. Esto sucederá hasta que el **Espíritu** nos lleve a la **verdad completa** (cf. Jn 16,13), es decir, cuando nos introduzca perfectamente en el misterio de Cristo y podamos ver todo con su mirada. Además, **en cada país o región** se pueden buscar **soluciones más inculturadas**, atentas a las **tradiciones y a los desafíos locales**, porque ‘las culturas son muy diferentes entre sí y todo principio general [...] necesita ser inculturado si quiere ser observado y aplicado’ (n. 3).

On the Concept of Ecclesial Democracy

Pietro Ramellini

Increasingly insistent voices are being raised, inside and outside the churches, asking for greater democracy in the ecclesial decision-making processes. It is certainly a sign of the times, since the ecclesial structures have always, at least in part, mirrored the contemporary political and social assets. Therefore, just as, in the European Middle Ages, churches and empires reflected each other in supporting strongly hierarchical conceptions, so we can expect that the planetary diffusion of political democracies will be reflected onto the ecclesial structures¹. Furthermore, already Aristotle observed that a good democracy (*politeia*) thrives where there is a vast middle class²; therefore, the current development within each church of a reflective middle class, theologically prepared and committed to its community, pushes even more towards a wave of democratisation³. However, these processes must be subjected to careful discernment, in order to distinguish the inculturation - or rather the transculturation - of Christianity from the lazy imitation of secular structures, or from an even more dangerous worldliness⁴. Therefore, distancing ourselves for a moment from the current *Zeitgeist*, it is important to ask ourselves: what is the correct way to pose the problem that we initially called the “problem of ecclesial democracy”?

Now, democracy is a form of government that refers to a political community. In the technical language of semantics, political communities are the reference class of the word 'democracy'. However, the meaning of a word includes not only its reference class, but also its sense, that is, the set of concepts that imply and are implied by the word in question⁵. For example, the word 'democracy' is connoted by values, emotions, aspirations and memories that vary, within certain dynamic limits, between people and over time. In fact, the meaning of words is historically changeable and culturally conditioned; this makes words something alive and mobile, rather than rigid and dead. Now, ecclesial communities and churches are neither properly nor primarily political (and a fortiori juridical) communities; rather, they are fraternities of people who love, hope and believe in the God of Jesus of Nazareth⁶. So, when we talk about ecclesial democracy, what do we think about? Are we thinking of a properly political order, a social *Idealtypus*, a certain humane climate, an ethos of coexistence between free and equal people, or a mixture of all this and maybe more?

Similar reflections apply to the word 'politics'. On the one hand, it denotes a certain technique of human action, on the other it designates a broader semantic nebula, where we even find that politics would merely amount to support one's own selfish interests. In my view, politics is - in the proper sense of the word - the human collective process through which decisions on issues relevant to all members of a generalist human system, and binding on all of them, are processed and/or taken and/or implemented (or through which people aspire to process them, and/or to take them, and/or to implement them)⁷. Therefore, one cannot properly speak of politics in the case of an ecclesial community, since it is not a generalist human system. A fortiori, it will not be possible to speak of a democratic political form for ecclesial communities; but it should be noted that, by accepting my definition of politics, it will not be possible to speak of a monarchical or aristocratic form of ecclesial government either⁸.

This does not mean that it is not possible to ask what are the best ways (in an absolute or comparative sense) to elaborate, take and implement binding decisions in the ecclesial context; nor does it mean that we cannot consider such ways - such techniques, basically - as political in a metaphorical, analogical or homomorphic sense. Now, to address this question there are several ways. For example, one can draw inspiration from what the Gospels tell us about Jesus's own way of making decisions⁹, or refer to Luke's ideal image of the early church¹⁰, or examine how decisions were taken in different Christian churches over time, or even how decisions are made in other religious communities. Instead of resorting to these, as it were a posteriori, methods, one can instead proceed a priori, asking oneself how decisions should be made in a community founded on Christian charity and agape, as well as on the free and adult assent of its members.

However, I would like to propose another way, if only as a regulatory idea. It consists in placing ourselves, periodically or according to opportunity, as a community of believers, before the God of Jesus of Nazareth, asking ourselves and asking Him in a spirit of prayer and meditation: how can we elaborate, make and implement binding decisions on ecclesially relevant issues, *hic et nunc et sic*, that is, in the situation in which our community lives? How can we do this without forgetting, but also without letting ourselves be imprisoned by, the millennial history of Christianity? How can we do this also by analogically tapping into the treasures of knowledge and wisdom accumulated in the political, cultural and religious experiences of the humankind, again without letting ourselves be ensnared by them? How can we do this in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, and staying faithful to the men and women among whom and with whom we live?

For my part, following my heart I would respond, even at the cost of breaking through dull categories¹¹, that more democracy (in a metaphorical reading) is needed in ecclesial communities; however, listening to my mind I would instead say that there is no single way to decide. So, joining heart and mind, I would propose that democratisation *placet iuxta modum* (that is, can be approved with reservations). It is first of all important, following the general theory of decision, to distinguish the process of elaboration from that of decision, that is, between decision-making and decision-taking¹². Then, some decisions can be better pondered upon, and taken by, small groups (liturgical commissions, pastoral councils), others by large assemblies (councils, synods), still others by relying on the universal *sensus fidelium*¹³; likewise, it is better to take certain decisions by simple majority, others unanimously, others even by rolling the dice¹⁴. I am therefore hypothesising a methodological pluralism to manage the diversity and heterogeneity of the issues on which it is necessary to decide; easier said than done, obviously, because we are a stiff-necked people¹⁵, certainly not easy to move, to gather, and above all to descale from old rusts and crossed vetoes. Obviously, one can ask what would happen to the pope in this plurality of decision-taking bodies and modalities, that is, in this sort of metaphorical mixed, polyarchic, or neo-medievalist constitution; this matter, however, does not concern ecclesial democracy in general, but only democracy in the Roman Catholic Church; thus, we can leave it aside.

As we can see, the question of decision-taking processes, and of democratic ones in particular, involves not just the *what* on which someone takes the decision (theological, liturgical, administrative, etc., issues), but also *who* takes the decisions (one, some or all the members of the community, according to a well-known tripartite division of political philosophy), and *how* they are taken (by majority or unanimously, through open or secret voting, with the decisive vote of the president in the event of a tie or not, etc.).

More deeply, however, the question of democracy primarily concerns *kratos*, the power, besides a power that has also connotations of domination and violence; after all, political power

ultimately resides in the monopoly of force, even as physical coercion¹⁶. And this is the point where I personally feel uncomfortable. In fact, if it is true that Jesus gave specific powers to the apostles and to Peter¹⁷, it is even more true that at the center of his preaching was service, and not power¹⁸. Should we not then investigate about *diakonia*-service in the *ekklesia*-ecclesial community, more than about *kratos*-power? In such case, the question would become that of *ekklesia*-*diakonia* rather than *demo*-*kratia*. We could then, before God, ask ourselves and ask Him: serve *what*? Serving, *what for*? *Who* serves *whom*? *How* to serve, *hic et nunc et sic*, that is, in the situation in which we live today? Here we touch a tension that has crossed all ecclesial histories since their origins, namely, that between the kerygmatic-charismatic and the hierarchical-judicial dimensions of the churches; an endless strain indeed, which leads us to ask whether some measure of de-cratization, or the strengthening of *diakonia*, would be more providential than the democratization of the churches.

But if we really want to go all the way, we must keep in mind that democracy is a *form* of *government*. So, let us reflect on these two words. What character does the form of the church have? Is it a *forma formata*, that is, a formed form fixed once and for all, and defined in *formulas* valid forever? Or is it a *forma formans*, i.e., a dynamic form capable of metamorphosis, agile like a girl *formosa*¹⁹? If we deem that the principle of *ecclesia semper reformanda* holds, it seems clear that the second possibility is better than the first. As for government, we have at least two metaphors, to be found also in the Bible. The first is the pastoral one, summed up in the traditional Italian expression *governare gli animali*, that is, to feed, to look after the domesticated animals; now, this task may mean either obeying the nature of the sheep, leading them to where they can be refreshed and prosper²⁰, or keeping the flock hidden inside the fold out of fear or jealousy. The second metaphor is the nautical and piscatorial one: navigation requires a pilot (in Greek *kybernetes*, from which 'governor' derives) brave enough to set out to sea in search of abundant fishing, to the point of almost breaking the nets²¹; otherwise, sailing gets reduced to small coastal cruising or, worse still, to anchor inside a harbour that is perhaps safe, but without fish. I think we can agree that the purpose of ecclesial government is not blockade, control, closure and defense, but rather abundance of grazing and fishing, the flourishing of life, "a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing"²², the *pleroma* vivified by the breath of the Holy Spirit; in short, it is the purpose of Christ the Lord, that is, "the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God"²³.

Another tension that must be examined again and again is that of the relationship between the local and the global: should, or indeed could, the way of conducting a local church be the same as for the universal church? In other words, can the same methods be applied on both the small and large scale?

As for political democracy, the most popular answer is: yes and no. On the one hand, from the town hall to supranational bodies such as the European Community, the principles and procedures are the same: isegory, voting, majorities, etc.; that this formal democracy go hand in hand with substantive democracy is obviously a different matter, but we can gloss over this aspect. On the other hand, there are differences. For example, we often hear people say: at the national level I vote for the party, while at a local level for the person; this means that voters have the feeling that to some extent there are differences between the particular and the general. But also on a theoretical level, various political philosophers have proposed different forms of government for different political communities: for example, the Chinese legalists proposed totalitarian autocracy for large states, monarchy for the middle ones, and even anarchy for the most little ones²⁴;

likewise, collective decision theory distinguishes between committees, in which one interacts face to face, and larger groups with minimal interdependence: finally, in various political systems the national *iter legis* (legislative process) is different from the regional and local one.

And what about the churches? Limiting ourselves this time to the universal Catholic Church, is it useful for decisions to be taken in the same way as in the parish near the house? Here, evidently, one disregards the form of government (for example, democracy versus autocracy), to concentrate rather on a problem of scale (local, regional, and global, which more or less respectively correspond to parishes and dioceses, episcopal conferences and continental bodies, and world Catholicism)²⁵. Currently, the discipline of parishes and dioceses is equivalent to that of the world church, both because the hierarchical order involves a top-down percolation of methods, and because the local, *urbis* church is, ecclesologically speaking, the church of Christ and a new people as much as the global, *orbis* church²⁶; with regard to praxis, on the other hand, one might think that at the local level direct human relations count more than in the Roman Curia, though we know how important certain entries into the Vatican are.

Could the way I have suggested above to handle such problems of scale help? I think so. At least two ways of proceeding can be imagined. In a first, top-down style, the pastor summons an open and informal meeting in which the participants, as I said, place themselves before God, wondering and asking Him: how can we decide in our ecclesial community? A similar event could then be followed by more structured meetings, in which to examine the relevant issues and decide in the manner identified above. In a second, bottom-style, it will be individual Christians or spontaneous groups of Christians who will carry on the reflection on the method, then exposing the results achieved in the community, and proposing their implementation. The two modalities can obviously go hand in hand; besides, they can also be adopted with regard to *ekklesio-diakonia*, asking how the community can be better served.

It may seem that this dual path weakens the ministerial role of the pastor, but this is not necessarily the case. In fact, in the top-down procedure the action starts from the pastor, so the hierarchical order is fully respected; likewise, in the bottom-up procedure the action culminates in the pastor, who can summarize the various contributions. In other words, the elaboration of new decision-making and decision-taking methods takes place *through* the pastors and *through* the hierarchy. Obviously, the more radical possibility of evolutions and developments *outside* the hierarchy remains open, as in the case of the Korean churches that arose independently of Rome; or *awaiting* the hierarchy, as witnessed by the many "transparent and hard as diamonds" prophets²⁷, who were opposed for a long time and then recognized in all their greatness; or *against* the hierarchy, as happened with so many heretical and schismatic movements which subsequently exhausted, detached or eventually returned to communion with Rome. But if we followed Cyprian's golden rule, *nihil sine episcopo, nihil sine consilio vestro, nihil sine consensu plebis meae*²⁸, many conflicts - and not only local ones - could be dissolved.

To conclude, I have tried here to reflect on some implications of the desire for democracy in ecclesial communities, without any pretense of being exhaustive. However, I remain convinced that the most pressing problems for all churches (be they local or not, Catholic or not) are those *ad extra*, and not *ad intra*, and more generally those of the Kingdom of God rather than those of the churches. However, if it is good to deal with the great questions related to judgment and to love for God, it is not necessary to neglect the tithes of garden herbs²⁹.

1 And not only that, if one thinks, for example, of the processes of democratisation of twentieth-century art; cf. Celant, G. 2008. *Artmix*. Milano, Feltrinelli.

2 *Politeia*, 1295.

3 These clarifications suggest that we are dealing with an ecclesial "class" and not the social bourgeoisie, which is instead inclined to conservatism and traditionalism, also in the religious field.

4 Cf Rm 12,2.

5 Cf Bunge, M. 1974. *Semantics I: Sense and Reference*. Dordrecht, Reidel.

6 For this reason and for the sake of simplicity I will not make a clear distinction between Churches and Ecclesial Communities in a technical or juridical-canonical sense; I will not even take into account the problem of whether all and only the baptized are included in such communities, or if we can speak of an anonymous Christianity. The term fraternity, obviously also to be understood as sorority, corresponds to the Greek *adelphotes*, which is used in the first letter of Peter (1Pt 2,17; 5,9) to denote the community of the Christian *philadelphia*, of love between brothers and sisters; the exegetes have noted that, despite Peter being the rock that founds the church (Mt 16,18), the author of the letter does not use *ekklesia* but precisely the rare word *adelphotes*.

7 This definition is partly inspired by the one in Hague, R., & M. Arrop. 2004. *Political Science*. New York, NY, Palgrave MacMillan.

8 From a historical point of view, however, the question of the relationship between political and ecclesial forms of government, which was mentioned at the beginning, remains open. For example, according to Foucault the very concept of political governmentality descends genealogically from that of pastoral power developed in Christianity, which on its turn goes back to that of the shepherd king of Middle Eastern protohistory (cf Foucault, M. 2004. *Sécurité, territoire, population*. Course au Collège de France 1977-1978. Paris, Seuil).

9 Cf for example Lk 9,51; it is a matter, to speak in a Franciscan way, of living and deciding according to the *form* of the holy Gospel.

10 Cf for example At 15,28.

11 Cf *Evangelii gaudium*, *passim*.

12 Steele, K., & H. Orri Stefánsson. 2020. *Decision Theory*. In: Zalta, E. N. (ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/decision-theory>.

13 Cf *Lumen Gentium* 12. In this sense one could speak, in analogy with political philosophy, of a principle of subsidiarity in the ecclesial decision-taking processes.

14 Cf At 1,26.

15 Cf Es 32,9.

16 Cf Bobbio, N. 2010. *Elementi di politica*. Torino, Einaudi.

17 However, more often as *exousia* and *dynamis* than as *kratos* or *arkhia*.

18 Perhaps the patristic concept of *agapetike dynamis*, of loving power, can help us in bringing together power and diaconal love. Cf e.g. Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 2.1.

19 The reference is to the expression *nigra sum sed formosa* (I am tanned but charming), which the beautiful Shulammite of the Song of Songs uses to celebrate herself in the eyes of her lover Shlomo (Ct 1,5).

20 Cf Sal 23.

21 Cf Lk 5,6.

22 Cf Lk 6,38.

23 Cf *Lumen Gentium* 18.

24 Fraser, C. 2011. *Major Rival Schools: Mohism and Legalism*, 58-67. In: Garfield, J. L., & W. Edelglass (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*. New York, Oxford U. P.

25 Other problems lie behind the local/global couple; for instance, there is a question whether priority should be assigned to the concrete community gathered around the Eucharist (the so-called Kasper thesis),

or to the universal church as the ecclesial principle of unity (the Ratzinger thesis); for further information see for example McDonnell, K. 2002. The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: the Universal Church and the Local Churches. *Theol. Stud.*, 63: 227-250.

26 Cf *Lumen Gentium* 26.

27 The reference is to the priest Lorenzo Milani, who was thus described by his spiritual guide Raffaele Bensi; cf Francis, 2017. Commemorative address of the Holy Father. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2017/june/documents/papa-francesco_20170620_don-lorenzo-milani.html.

28 Nothing without the bishop, nothing without the priest's council's advice, nothing without the consensus of my people; cf CSEL III 2, 512, 16-20. The current revival of the former Justinian, and later on canonical, principle *quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* (what interests everyone, must be tackled and approved by everyone) goes in the same direction, even if its last part is often forgotten... Cf Congar, Y. 1958 “Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet”. *Rev. Hist. Droit Franç. Etrang.*, 36: 210-259.

29 Cf Lk 11,42.

Rethinking Society and the Church

5

Unlearning Whiteness: Social Media, Truth-Telling, and Racial Justice Introduction

Jens Mueller

During the pandemic, we experienced an increase in social media usage among U.S. citizens. According to the Pew research center, 84% of people aged 18-29 say they use at least one social media site. Among those, 69% identified as white, 80% Hispanic, and 77% black.¹ This means that the overwhelming majority of young adults interact with others online and that a diverse ethnic population uses social media as a platform. Young adults spend parts of their lives in the digital sphere. As a result, it has the potential to shape them in significant ways. The last few years have shown how social media can be a blessing for many, especially in pandemic times, but it can also create a space where misinformation and hate speech can almost uncontrollably thrive.

In this article, I focus on the systemic problem of whiteness. We can define whiteness as “a system of hegemonic power that operates to benefit people perceived to be white and to disadvantage people perceived to be of color.”² We can trace its origins back at least to when European Christians created the economy of race-based slavery in the United States. Throughout the past centuries, whiteness has transformed itself into forms of white privilege, white supremacy, and racism. I argue that we can combat whiteness and racism in the United States through social media. The concept of “truth-telling,” in particular, aids in competing for normative social narratives and enables us to become responsible citizens. I acknowledge some of the more common criticisms against social media usage, including a lack of authentic engagement. During the second part, I discuss the concept of truth-telling, how it is embedded in the Christian tradition, how it connects to the dignity of the human person, and how social media can enable us to speak truth to power and unlearn social structures created by whiteness without ignoring the criticisms mentioned above.

A Tale of Three Tales: Social Media, Democracy, and Whiteness

In recent years, our daily experiences have shifted more toward online engagements in every aspect of our lives. In this section, I raise two questions that serve as a guide for the following pages. What exactly do we understand under social media? And does social media create spaces that promote democratic citizenship? The answer is somewhat complex as the examples of the spread of fake news and the reemergence of the Black Lives Matter movement during the pandemic signify.

Social Media and Our Daily Lives

Although people often use the term “social media” interchangeably, we often use apps and digital devices differently. One of many definitions of social media is that it “refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information

and ideas in virtual communities and networks.”³ The most commonly used apps—and the ones we often associate with social media—are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. There are four reasons why often reduce social media to those apps. First, Facebook and Twitter are among the longest-existing social media channels that are still most used. They are some of the most popular platforms among teenagers and young adults and are highly susceptible to a broader audience. In addition, those platforms give us the ability to share content and interact with each other in an almost instantaneous way. We can present ourselves to others and comment on others’ presentations. Therefore, we have some interaction with other people.

Third, these platforms have often received public attention. From fundraising challenges like the Ice Bucket challenge to social media-based activism like the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements, people use social media platforms to reach out to others and promote change. And lastly, unfortunately, we often hear reports of the dark side of social media use; cyberbullying, comments on posts filled with anger, hatred, and resentment, some of them so severe that they break into our daily news cycles.

Beyond much doubt, digital devices have shaped our way of life in unimaginable ways.

They provide instant access to innumerable contacts and contents, allowing us to have a seemingly infinite amount of information quite literally at our fingertips. We use them as educational and social tools, viewing them as a source of knowledge and interaction. Especially during the COVID-19, such habits increased. For many of us, social media and digital tools like Facebook, WhatsApp, FaceTime, and Snapchat were some of the few ways to interact with friends and family. The way that screens have mediated many of our daily interactions has become the new normal. In many ways, digital media have been a lifeline in these trying times.

Yet, scholars criticize that social media have the capacity to produce adverse effects on society and culture. To begin, we must assess that the digital sphere is neither inherently good nor bad. Its moral value is often dependent on the users’ interaction with digital devices. In many instances, we can witness light-heartedness within social media. To mention only one example, Tik-Tok, one of the most popular media tools for youth and young adults during the pandemic,⁴⁴ lightens people’s moods with short video clips that span from funny to thought-provoking to ridiculous. Its ability to quickly forget someone’s surroundings when many young adults feel a sense of insecurity, self-doubt, and social anxiety is something that many people appreciate.

On the other hand, we experience ongoing cyberbullying, spewing of misinformation, and the ongoing conflict in forums, comment sections, or blog posts. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of adult Americans find that social media have a negative effect on society and the state of the country.⁵ In addition, sharing fake news has been and remains an ongoing concern for many Americans.⁶

While these observations suggest that the fate of evaluating social media as either good or bad lies in the user's hands, such conclusion may oversimplify the complexity of how digital devices are tied into the web of our daily experiences. It would be convenient to regard digital devices merely as tools or resources that enhance or complicate our lives or that the use and abuse of those are mainly personal choices. It would also be erroneous to assume that no one forces us to engage with the digital world. The pandemic has, quite frankly, forced us to be part of the digital world if we did not want to run the risk of being entirely secluded from any kind of engagement with society. As we can see, the digital and physical spheres are not disconnected from each other. They are neither two different worlds, nor is one the extension of the other.

Instead, we must understand digital devices as “complex sociotechnical systems”⁷ that influence our ways of seeing and being in the world.

Such interconnectedness and emphasis on the importance of being in the digital sphere come with risks. Pope Francis, for example, warns us that social media has turned life into a spectacle. Often, we spend more time worrying about “likes,” followers, and our digital appearance, than about our real-life relationships. Social media then fosters a dangerous kind of individualism, one that lacks the sense of community building in favor of one that merely seeks the benefit of the individual.⁸ This lack of engagement also furthers the spread of misinformation and xenophobia.

The anonymity that the Internet grants users has become a dangerous tool. We can hide behind a profile, pretend to be someone we are not, and carefully choose those we deem suitable for our interactions while ignoring others who do not fit into our way of life. Social media’s use of algorithms only enforces such behavior.⁹ “True wisdom demands an encounter with reality,” Pope Francis states, but “we fail to keep our attention focused, to penetrate to the heart of matters, and to recognize what is essential to give meaning to our lives. Freedom thus becomes an illusion that we are peddled, easily confused with the ability to navigate the internet.”¹⁰ Our individual choices in the digital sphere bear consequences in our daily lives. The stronger the alienation from our community, the less will we trust others. Our lack of meaningful engagement can become obstacles to a healthy community and, ultimately, the common good.

The current pandemic has even further accelerated our social media use. Without a doubt, COVID-19 has changed the way we live our lives. One truth that we had to learn fast was that if we wanted to be together again, we had to stay apart in the meantime. For many, this meant to change the ways we interact with each other drastically. People discovered, and sometimes even rediscovered, platforms that they had not used in a long time. The “new normal” where screens mediate most of our daily interactions changed how we act and social media daily. Social media offer platforms in which we can create, share and exchange information. Given this breadth of use, social media can become a formidable resource for doing good in the world but can also harm our communities.

Social Media - A Platform for Participatory Democracy?

Whiteness has been a systemic problem in the United States, which operates regardless of someone’s intention. As citizens, we have been raised into an unjust system that privileges one group while putting others at a disadvantage. And even though we did not create this system and oppose it, we are still a part of it. Over the last hundred years, we have witnessed periods where groups have challenged this system, the Civil Rights movement being the most prominent example. Within the last decade, and with the aid of social media, we have witnessed a new form of visibility of whiteness in the United States, especially regarding fake news. But the struggle against racial injustices has also become more visible.

Fake news has always been a part of the social landscape.¹¹ But since the start of the pandemic, the phrase has made its entrance into mainstream media and has revealed polarizing tendencies. Due to our inability to continue our lives in ways we were used to, our time online increased; and with that, our habits of gathering information changed. While some of us tend to ignore misinformation, others are more prone to them.¹² And, as a result, some fake news may sow confusion and alter people’s perceptions of reality. The QAnon movement serves as the

most dramatic example of the threat of misusing social media for anti-democratic purposes and promoting whiteness in the digital sphere.¹³

As if spreading misinformation was not worrisome enough, the consequences of such online behavior are even more disconcerting. On the one hand, the rise of fake news decreased social trust, which is the shared faith that you place in people of your community.¹⁴ The lack of social trust and the trust in fake news, driven by movements like QAnon, can create outcomes so severe that it not only turns to a social threat but, quite literally, to a threat to democracy. Years of fostering white supremacist rhetoric found their current peak on January 6, 2021.

There is, however, also the other side of the coin in which social media can promote participatory democracy. The death of George Floyd has reignited an already low burning flame against racial injustice in terms of the Black Lives Matter movement. Social media has been an important resource for this particular movement as it serves as a gathering place for activists and a space in which they combat the fake news we have just described.

The common denominator for both examples is the problem of whiteness. While one group receives its strength from it, the other tries to push back against it, revealing the pain whiteness brings to society. As Bryan Massingale states, whiteness or white privilege “shifts the focus from how people of color are harmed by racism to how white Americans derive advantages because of it. ... Racial injustice comes about to preserve and protect white privilege.”¹⁵ A key concern with whiteness, then, is that it is not simply an attitude or a character trait that you may be able to overcome over time. Instead, whiteness fosters racism which “is first and foremost a social practice, which that it is an action and a rationale for action, or both at once.”¹⁶

It is then easy to understand how social media can exacerbate these practices given its poorly regulated mechanisms of confronting hate speech. But at the same time, we cannot easily dismiss social media as platforms that foster and promote whiteness. Instead, I propose in the following pages that social media can, in fact, not only be a resource for combatting whiteness but also a source for unlearning whiteness as a social practice.

Truth-Telling as a Tool to Unlearn Whiteness

As we can see, as a space, social media may often be filled with good intentions, but one must tread carefully in those spaces as they may alter our perceptions of who we are and what is right and wrong. Yet, I suggest that social media has the potential to aid in the work of dismantling whiteness in significant ways. Through truth-telling, we can create meaningful relationships and speak truth to power.

This section consists of three parts. First, I will offer a definition of truth-telling. Then, I will explain how truth-telling is deeply rooted within the Christian tradition and why it is important to our faith to speak truth to power. Last, I will showcase how we can promote truth-telling in the digital sphere and how it aids in unlearning white privilege within society.

What Is Truth-Telling?

To create a meaningful account of how social media can dismantle white supremacy, we must understand what “truth-telling” means. Theologian Mary Emily Briehl Duba defines it as “the practice of living in a way that reflects and responds to reality, even when it is hard, and faithfully resists the powers that deceive.”¹⁷ It is, first and foremost, a form of resistance to powers that try to hide aspects of such truth from people. As described earlier, these forces that

try to deceive people are manifold. And in the age of mass communication, falling prey to deceit is a legitimate threat for many. But what does it mean to “tell the truth”? Have we accomplished our mission by speaking out against forces that seek to divide and disorient us? If this is the core of what truth-telling is all about, why are we struggling to speak truth regularly? And why do people purposefully do the opposite?

One part of the answer lies in the fact that truth-telling encompasses more than not lying. It is more than just a speech-act. When we make accurate statements about events, we make a *conscious* decision to do so. And we can make the same case for inaccurate statements. Therefore, truth claims are not arbitrary or coincidental statements that happened to be said. Instead, by making the deliberate choice to speak the truth, we acknowledge that truth-telling is connected to who we are as human beings. The capacity to tell the truth is, thus, embodied in our very humanity.

However, it would be tiresome if truth-telling only means to redirect false claims and the constant battle against these injustices—no matter how important this work is. When we talk about redirecting something, we are moving away from and toward something. Truth-tellers do precisely this. By speaking truth to power, they speak out *against* those that deceive us and *for* a vision of what the world ought to be. Reality and utopia are significant aspects of truth-telling.

Another aspect of truth-telling becomes particularly important when we try to dismantle privilege positions, deconstructing master narratives. These narratives function as “stock stories”¹⁸ that members of a community tell each other and pass along over generations. In our case, the master narratives we try to dismantle are stories that are steeped in colonialist traditions. And by this, I mean our tendency to put labels on people that do not align with these standardized stories or, even worse, try to change the storyline.¹⁹

Once these narratives become normative for society, they manifest themselves in our daily practices. We develop behaviors that are, as theologian Shawn Copeland claims, rooted in bias. Referring to Bernard Lonergan’s definition, bias is “the more or less conscious choice to suppress the directives of intelligence, to repress conscience, to act in bad faith, that is, to lie to ourselves ‘in an effort to escape freedom, responsibility, and human being.’”²⁰ Such attitudes accelerate and further establish whiteness as the standard through which we judge social behaviors and actions. Truth-tellers try to break these boundaries to bear witness to the injustices that are occurring in our midst. But they are also signs of hope because they have managed to break out of the master narrative themselves. Acknowledgment of their unknowing is then its own form of truth-telling.

The Christian Roots of Truth-Telling

As we know by now, everyone can be—and should feel encouraged to be—a truth-teller. For Christians, however, it is important to remember that speaking truth to power is not something that became necessary with the onset of the digital revolution.²¹ Instead, truth-telling is deeply engrained in our Christian tradition and, therefore, part of our vocation as Christians.

When we trace the biblical roots of truth-telling, we quickly realize that our choices are seemingly unlimited. Prophets like Amos and Isaiah constantly spoke truth to power, Moses challenged the Pharaoh to YHWH’s people from enslavement, and the Mosaic law explicitly states that lying equals wrongdoing. Speaking truth has always been a vocational and liberating experience.²² In the Gospel of John, there is one example, however, that depicts the importance

of truth. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus whether he is a king, Jesus responds, “You say I am king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:37) Pilate’s response to Jesus’s statement leaves the reader perplexed, but it also reveals a lot about why truth-telling matters. Pilate’s simple response is, “What is truth?”

This brief interaction unveils important aspects of the nature of truth-telling in the Christian tradition. First and foremost, Jesus *is* truth. In the Gospel of John, the truth became incarnate. As Christians, we, thus, not only witness the power of truth, but it is also our responsibility to live a life that is committed to the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ.²³ Second, Christ solved the problem of identifying truth by embodying truth itself.²⁴ Christians can recognize truth because it creates a community and shapes our responsibility to speak and practice the truth to provide opportunities for justice to emerge. Lastly, by Christ speaking truth, He takes responsibility for it and holds Himself accountable to truth. On the other hand, Pilate walks away from the question of truth and, therefore, also turns his back from holding himself accountable for his own actions. He opens the door for injustices to occur.

As we can see, truth-telling set its roots in the foundation of Christianity, revealed and embodied through Christ. Christians understand God as truth, and, therefore, it is our responsibility to speak truth whenever an opportunity arises. By speaking the truth, we recognize that something distorts unity, something so severe that it hurts unity within the mystical body.

But, as theologian Rowan William, states the power of truth-telling is that we are aware of such distortion. And this means that we have the capability to reflect on what might have gone wrong and to rectify the wrongdoing. Commitment to truth makes us reflect on “how our present accounts of it may be questionable and partial.”²⁵

One way truth-telling affects Christian tradition, particularly if we consider the principle of the dignity of the human person, as it gets to the core of how speaking truth, or the lack thereof, shapes communities significantly. Part of the principle of human dignity is that simply speaking, we must treat our neighbors with compassion and respect. As beings created in the image and likeness of God, we bear a responsibility to participate in communal life in a positive manner. Truth-telling is, thus, a vital aspect of such communal life because “when the coexistence of human beings within a community is founded on truth, it is ordered and fruitful, and it corresponds to their dignity as persons.”²⁶ Without a commitment to speak the truth, society has no common ground. Living a life without honesty makes us suspicious and makes us doubt each other’s intentions. When we cannot trust each other, we disrupt communal life and isolate each other from such. We could say then that speaking the truth is an obligation for Christians to contribute to the common good. But it is also part of what we owe each other to feel whole as a human person. If deceit denies our personhood, truth completes it.

Speaking truth is, therefore, not simply a means to discover what is right and wrong. Instead, it is the search for the foundation of what makes us human. We understand truth ultimately as a positive good, as an element that enriches our lives and contributes to society's betterment. But we must also be aware of the fact truth-telling is a difficult enterprise. In fact, truth-telling includes telling somebody that they are wrong; depending on how close you are to that person, this might be a hurtful encounter. Yet, speaking the truth does not have the intention to be counterproductive for social relationships. If we want to take each other’s dignity seriously, telling the truth to people makes us recognize and honor their inherent dignity.

Ultimately, as Pope Francis explains, we are our own measures to assess our actions. If we do not hold truth as one of the highest goods in our lives, then truth will be “replaced by an individualistic conception of rights ... [wherein] we no longer have the capacity to build authentic human relationships marked by truth and mutual respect.”²⁷ Truth-telling, particularly in a technologically driven age, becomes an ever more important task for Christianity. I would now like to turn to how we can promote such truth in the digital sphere as a method fostering human dignity while unlearning white privilege tendencies.

Truth-Telling and Social Media

As described earlier, truth-telling is a moral obligation that is rooted in the Christian tradition. The question that remains is how we can take advantage of social media for our goal of speaking truth to power while being cognizant of the criticisms of social media? A look at a recent example of truth-telling online—the previously mentioned #BlackLivesMatter movement—helps us to understand the potential social media has to unlearn habits that promote whiteness in society.

The #BlackLivesMatter movement was a result of the death of seventeen-year-old African American Trayvon Martin. In July 2013, George Zimmermann, a neighborhood watch volunteer, was acquitted of charges related to Martin’s death. As a result, protests emerged in many US cities. The hashtag itself arose out of Alicia Garza’s initial Facebook post in which she states, “Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter. Black Lives Matter.”²⁸ Garza’s friend, Patrisse Cullors, later turned this phrase into the now widely known and popular hashtag.²⁹

The hashtag turned campaign, turned movement became one of the most broadly discussed topics on racial and systemic injustice since the Civil Rights movement. The hashtag made available the persistent underlying racial problem in the United States for a generation that may not have realized the injustices in their midst. And this is precisely what #BlackLivesMatter, in conjunction with social media, achieved. Together, they served as “a site of counter-narratives and counter-memory, assembling supplementary information that challenges the dominant narrative propagated in traditional media.”³⁰ For a generation that spends a significant amount of time online, social media can be an important resource to uncover a systemic unknowing of racial injustices and have the capacity to unlearn these habits.

Social media can be a useful source for unlearning master narratives that foster whiteness because narratives function differently in the digital sphere. Social media offer non-linear modes of communication. By this, I mean that communication may occur anywhere, at any given moment, at any time. The number of people who contribute to conversations—especially on platforms like Twitter that generally do not operate in closed groups—is seemingly endless.

People establish narratives that differ from mainstream media and may support their statements with further evidence such as video or images.

Moreover, hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter create spaces in which conversations can take place. There, you can contribute to an ongoing conversation on a topic associated with that hashtag. It may serve as grounds for disagreement or support, both essential aspects of truth-telling. Of course, the threat of misusing those hashtags for purposes other than their original intent remains a valid concern. But it also offers a space for authentic communication, which is foundational for speaking truth to power.

Having authentic encounters and promoting truth-telling remains an important and often difficult enterprise since so much relies on individual choices. Ultimately, what version of ourselves we would like to portray in the digital sphere depends on us. But, as we have seen, the Christian tradition has given us many ways to successfully live out our vocation as truth-tellers. The challenge of our faith is that authentic living is an ongoing process, and with technological progress, this process becomes more and more complicated. Especially in the digital sphere, it seems easy to fall into the trap of deceit. Therefore, theologian Marcus Mescher urges us to reflect on and further develop the virtues of prudence, temperance, fidelity, self-care, and resistance to prevent personal malformation.

Similarly, theologian Stephen Okey encourages us to recover our moral life by rediscovering the importance of virtues in our daily lives. But he also insists on understanding technology not merely as an addition to our daily lives. Instead, it can form habits that shape us who we are as human beings.³¹ And since truth-telling is part of our Christian identity, the advantages that social media can bring to our lives can help us become responsible citizens, understand systems of oppression, and unlearn behaviors that encourage, foster or accept modes of whiteness and white supremacy in society.

Is it a realistic goal to unlearn whiteness in contemporary society? The problem with whiteness will always be that a group of people based on the color of their skin will be identified as such. I suggest that unlearning whiteness is not so much about eradicating the term *per se*—this might be indeed a lofty, if not impossible, task. Instead, by critically evaluating whiteness and the injustices it produces, we can begin to belong to our social group in a new manner.

Social media can be an effective tool to help us rethink and restore our human dignity, especially when seeing and speaking the truth. Observing both powers online, good and evil, help us understand the issues we are facing. When we allow others to break down our master narratives and understand the injustice that occurs, we will enable ourselves to restore our own dignity and others. *Seeing* that we were wrong is part of a conversion process, which truth-telling sets in motion and must ultimately occur if we want to rectify whiteness as a social disease.

Conclusion

I argued that through the concept of truth-telling, we could benefit from the positive aspects of social media use. It allows us to take responsibility for our actions and acknowledge our complicity to social structures empowered by whiteness. Truth-telling in social media, thus, becomes crucial in dismantling racial injustices. It offers compelling social narratives and, ultimately, creates a culture that can understand the history of white privilege and unlearn structures that encourage and foster whiteness and racism in the United States. We need to speak out against the injustices that occur in our midst. Speaking truth is a daunting task, especially when we must confront those to us. But what lies at the core of truth-telling is not to combat racist or ignorant statements; it is the idea to invite others to follow us to rectify our mistake.

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²⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Fortress Press, 2010), 98.

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Hypocrisy,” in *Truth- Telling and Other Ecclesial Practices of Resistance*, ed. Christine Helmer (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), 13–16.

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²⁴ ²⁴ The Aristotelian definition of truth as “to say of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not, is true” becomes more complex when we add more variables that make determining truth more complex. In our case, Michel Foucault, for example, asserts that truth is always in contention with power. Therefore, he claims “it’s not of a battle ‘on behalf’ of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 74.

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Legislation Performance of The Indonesian House of Representatives

In Two Years of Council Meetings (2019-2020 & 2020-2021)

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Abstract: One of the functions of the House of Representatives (DPR) is the legislative function. This function empowers them to make laws. Implementation of this function is intended to maintain the balance of public interests, to create order and justice that can be felt by all people without exception. However, based on previous studies, as the institution with the power to make laws, the House of Representatives is often considered to have a poor performance in carrying out this function. Therefore, this study aims to determine the performance of the House of Representatives, their priorities for the ratification of laws, and their stands through the laws that have been passed. The result of the research shows that the performance of the House of Representatives in 2 Council Meeting periods (2019-2020 and 2020-2021) is so poor and slow. They are not able to rationalize between their targets and performance achievements. Even many bills that have passed are not the bills that should be their priorities. Another finding is, there are bills with the same background issues that are divided. So there is potential for overlapping regulations in the future. The passed laws was reflected that the House of Representatives is more pro to the interests of the elite rather than the interests of the people.

Background

In Indonesia, the House of Representatives (DPR) is a representation of the people's sovereignty that is elected through a democratic process called the General Election¹, which is held every 05 years. As a people's representation, the house of representatives has three main functions: 1) legislative function, 2) Budget function, 3) Supervisory function². Regarding implementing the legislative function, the house of representatives is a state institution that has the power to form laws.³ Meanwhile, regarding implementation of the budget function, the House of Representatives has the right to discuss and approve or decline the draft of the bill for the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) proposed by the President.⁴ And related to the supervisory function, it's implemented through supervision over the implementation of laws and the state budget.⁵

The Youth's Association for Parliamentary Watch(IP3) focused the research on the implementation of the legislative function, where the product of the implementation is the passing of a law. Definition of Law according to Article 1 number 3 of Law No. 15 of 2019 on Amendments to Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Establishment of Legislation (hereinafter referred to as Law No. 15/2019) is *a Legislation established by The House of Representatives with the concurrence of the President*. While the definition of the Legislation based on Article 1 no. 2 of Law No. 15/2019 is a written regulation that contains legal norms that are generally binding and

formed or established by state institutions or authorized officials through procedures set out in the Legislation.

Regarding the formation of law, Winda Wijayanti said that the formation of a comprehensive law must pay attention to 3 dimensions, that is the past which is related to the history of the nation's struggle, the present which is the current objective conditions with its strategic environment, and by looking at the future that is aspired to.⁶ It was further disclosed that the process of making laws, which is a form of legal development, is a series of events that begins with planning, proposing, discussing, and ratifying where all these processes are carried out by actors, who in a modern democratic system are called the executive (the President and line of ministries), and the legislature (the House of Representatives). In a democratic law formation system, the process of law formation has a bottom-up type, which requires that the legal material to be achieved is a reflection of the values and will of the people⁷. It shows that the Law as a legal product has to be able to focus on the interests of society, giving a sense of justice and legal certainty that can apply in the present and far into the future.

This is in line with what Eman Sulaiman said that the law was formed to maintain the balance of the interests of the society, to create order and justice that can be felt by everyone in the concerned society.⁸ It is more when referring to the hierarchy of laws and regulations that apply in Indonesia, at least as contained in 2 Articles of the 1945 Constitution that regulates matters related to law and the interests of the society. Article 1 paragraph (3) states clearly that *"the State of Indonesia is the State of Law."* The implication is that society must comply with the applicable laws. In addition, Article 28D paragraph (1) states that "Everyone has the right to recognition, guarantee, protection, and fair legal certainty and equal treatment in front of the law." This article clearly said about the role of the state to provide guarantees, protection, and fair legal certainty, as well as fair treatment for the people without exception.

Considering that the House of Representatives is the institution that has the power to produce laws, their legislative function plays a very important role in determining the fulfillment of the interests and legal certainty of the entire society by taking into account the sense of justice. However, looking back at the several studies that have been done, the appraisal of their legislation performance is considered very poor. For example, the assessment of Muhamad Nur Sholikin, a senior researcher at the Indonesian Center for Law and Policy Studies (PSHK) in a seminar entitled *"Initiating a Post-Election Regulatory Reform Policy and Amendment to the Law on the Establishment of Legislation"* in Jakarta on 2019, stated that *"The legislative performance of the House of Representatives period 2014-2019 has decreased significantly compared to the two previous periods. In addition to quantity, the quality (material content) of legislation products often leads to 'lawsuits' to the Constitutional Court (MK) because they are considered contrary to the constitution. In fact, there are legislative products from the House of Representatives that did not match the title of the Draft of the Law and its content."*⁹

It is even sharper at the results of the evaluation of the House of Representatives' performance during the 1st Council Meeting Period of the year 2018-2019, carried out by the Indonesian Parliamentary Concerned Community Forum (FORMAPPI). It stated that the House of Representatives could not complete the discussion of the bill in the National Legislation Program because the members of the House of Representatives did not care about the priority principle for the completion of bills, which was set by themselves.¹⁰ The findings and conclusions of these studies show that the House of Representatives is not serious in carrying out its legislative functions.

Therefore, to ensure whether the interests and legal certainty of the society with a sense of justice can be fulfilled through the legislative function of the House of Representatives, there are 3 (three) important questions that arise in this research: 1). How is the legislation performance of the House of Representatives? 2). Priority bills that passed as legislative products of the House of Representatives, and 3). Reflection of the stand of the House of Representatives through the implementation of its legislative functions.

Based on this rationale, IP3 initiated research with the theme "Legislation Performance of the House of Representatives in 2 Years of the Council Meetings Period(2019-2020 and 2020-2021)". The purpose of this research is to obtain a description of the legislation performance of the House of Representatives, the priority of the House of Representatives in passing the laws, and the stand of the House of Representatives through the ratified bills. This research also aims as an advocacy tool to fulfill the interests of the public, for information regarding the performance of the House of Representatives, through the dissemination of research findings through the Facebook Fanpage of the Youth's Association for Parliamentary Watch (IP3) and Instagram @ip3_center. Furthermore, this research will continue to be carried out in the 2021-2022 Council Meeting period as a form of concern for the interests of the society and an effort to encourage the improvement of the performance of the House of Representatives.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative research with a descriptive methodology which conducted from April 2021 to July 29, 2021, with the following stages:

Research Stages	Output	Information
1. Data and Information Collection.	<p>1. Data of the 5-year National Legislation Program target for the 2019-2024 period</p> <p>2. List of the 5-Year National Legislation Programs Bills of the House of Representatives for the 2019-2024 Period</p> <p>3. Data of the National Legislation Programs and Non National Legislation Programs target for the year 2019-2020</p> <p>4. List of National Legislation Program Bills for the year 2019-2020</p>	<p>source of data obtained through:</p> <p>1. www.dpr.go.id</p> <p>2. articles and research journals related to research themes</p>
2. Observation	<p>1. Data on National Legislation Program and Non National Legislation Program targets for the year 2020-2021</p> <p>2. List of National Legislation Program Bills for the year 2020-2021</p>	<p>Observations are made by monitoring:</p> <p>1. www.dpr.go.id</p> <p>2. News articles containing the implementation of the legislative functions of the House of Representatives</p>
3. Data and Information Processing	<p>1. The legislative achievements of the House of Representatives on the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 and period 2020-2021</p> <p>2. The legislative achievements of the House of Representatives in 2 Years of Council Meetings (period 2019-2020 and period 2020-2021)</p> <p>3. Legislative achievement of National Legislation Programs in 2 years of Council Meetings</p> <p>4. Legislative achievement of Non National Legislation Programs in 2 years of Council Meetings</p> <p>5. Comparison for legislation achievement of National</p>	<p>1. The percentage of legislative achievements is calculated by dividing the number of bills that have been successfully passed with the target number of bills during the 1 year council meeting and then multiplied by 100% in each council period.</p> <p>2. The percentage of legislative achievements of the House of Representatives in 2 years of Council Meetings is calculated by dividing the total number of bills that have been successfully ratified with the total number of targets in 2 Years of Council Meetings and multiplied by 100%.</p> <p>3. The percentage of legislative achievements of the National Legislation Program in 2 Years of Council Meeting is calculated by dividing the total number of National Legislation Program Bills that have been successfully ratified with the total number of targets for the National Legislation Program</p>

	Llegislation Programs and Non-National Llegislation Programs including the Open Cumulative Bill)	Bills in 2 years of Council Meetings and multiplied by 100%. 4. The percentage of legislative achievements of the Non National Legislation Program in 2 years of Council Meetings is calculated by dividing the total number of Non National Legislation Program Bills that have been successfully ratified with the total number of targets for the Non National Legislation Program Bills in 2 years of Council Meetings and multiplied by 100%.
4. Data and Information Analysis	1. Conclusion on the legislative performance of the House of Representatives. 2. Recommendation	1. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings as well as provide answers to the 3 questions in this research. 2. Recommendations are given as an effort to encourage improvements in the legislative performance of the House of Representatives based on research conclusions.
5. Dissemination of Research Results		The results of the research were released on July 30, 2021 through 2 online media portals and then uploaded to the Facebook Fanpage account of the Youth's Association for Parliamentary Watch (IP3) and the Instagram account @ip3_center.

National Legislation Program and Open Cumulative

The realization of the legislative function of the House of Representatives is to produce Laws done by establishing the National Legislation Program, discuss the Draft of Law, ratify the Bill into Law (UU) until the promulgation of Law. Law No. 15 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 12 of 2011 concerning the Establishment of Legislation, regulates how the House of Representatives works to produce a law through 2 (two) channels, which is the National Legislation Program and the Open Cumulative.

The National Legislation Program is an instrument of programs planning for the formation of the laws that are prepared in a planned, integrated, and systematic manner. It's carried through the stages of the planning process for the preparation of law which is arranged in the priority scale of the law-making program in the context of realizing a national legal system.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Open Cumulative is part of the National Legislation Program, which contains bills in the open cumulative list consisting of a). ratification of certain international treaties, b). due to the decision of the Constitutional Court, c). State Revenue and Expenditure budget, d). formation, expansion, and merger Province and/or Regency/City area, d). stipulation/revocation of Government Regulation in place of Law.¹² Through the Open Cumulative path, bills can be for address some conditions, and the House of Representatives or the President can submit bills outside the National Legislation Program including a). to deal with

extraordinary circumstances, conflict situations, or natural disasters, and b). certain circumstances that ensure the existence of national urgency for a Draft of Law that can be jointly approved by the apparatus of the House of Representatives, which specifically handles the field of legislation, and the minister or head of the institution that carries out government affairs in the field of Formation of Legislation.¹³

Result of Research

From the process of collecting data and information, processing and analyzing data, this research obtained several findings that can describe to the public about; 1. legislation performance of the House of Representatives, 2. the priority bills that have been passed by the House of Representatives, and 3. reflection of the stand of the House of Representatives through their legislative function. In this research, to avoid confusion, the bills and open cumulative laws will be classified into Non-National Legislation Program bills and laws, because in the Council Meeting period 2020-2021, Non-National Legislation Program bills were found which were not included in the National Legislation Program, but ratified in this year of the Council Meeting. The findings in this research are as follows:

1. On December 17th, 2019, at the close of the first period of Council Meeting year 2019-2020, the House of Representatives and the Government determined 248 bills to be included in the National Legislation Program List for the 2019-2024 period.¹⁴ From the 248 bills, the House of Representatives then determines priority bills that will be discussed and ratified in every year of the Council Meeting.
2. Targets and legislation achievements also bills that passed into the Laws for Council Meeting period 2019-2020 and 2020-2021
 - a. Targets and legislation achievements of Council Meeting period 2019-2020
 - The legislation target of the House of Representatives on council meeting period 2019-2020 are 48 bills with composition; 37 national legislation program bills plus 11 Open-Cumulative bills.¹⁵ From this target, they were able to pass 08 bills only consisting of 01 national legislation program bill and 07 open-cumulative bills. In a percentage, the legislative achievements of the House of Representatives on the council meeting period 2019-2020 is 16.67%.
 - The House of Representatives only can ratify 01 bills from the legislation target of National Legislation Program on council meeting period 2019-2020, that is the Bill on Amendments to Law Number 4 of 2009 concerning Mineral and Coal Mining where the bill is a carry-over bill. In percentage, the legislation achievement of the National Legislation Program on council meeting period 2019-2020 is only 2.7%.
 - The bills that passed into Laws:

National Legislation Program Bills 2019-2020			
NO.	TITLE OF BILLS	PROPOSER	DESCRIPTION
1.	Bill on Amendments to Law Number 4 of 2009 concerning Mineral and Coal Mining	House of Representatives / Commission VII	It is a Carry Over bill that passed into Law on May 12, 2020
Cumulative Bills			
1.	Bill on Ratification of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on February 6, 2020
2.	The bill on the stipulation of a government regulation in place of law (PERPPU) Number 01 of 2020 concerning State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the Corona Virus (Covid-19) Pandemic and or in Facing Threats That Endanger the National Economy and/or Financial System becomes a law	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on May 12, 2020
3.	The bill on Stipulation of Government Regulations in place of Law Number 2 of 2020 concerning the Third Amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 concerning Stipulation of Government Regulations in place of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning Election of Governors, Regents, Mayors to Become Laws	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on July 14, 2020
4.	Bill on Ratification of Mutual Legal Aid Agreements in Criminal Matters Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Swiss Confederation	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on July 14, 2020
5.	Bill on Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in the Field of Defense	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on July 14, 2020
6.	Bill on the Third Amendment to Law Number 24 of 2003 concerning the Constitutional Court	The House of Representatives/ Members	The Open Cumulative bill proposed by members that passed into Law on September 1, 2020
7.	Bill on Accountability for the Implementation of the State Budget for Fiscal Year 2019	Government	The Open Cumulative bill proposed by members that passed into Law on September 15, 2020

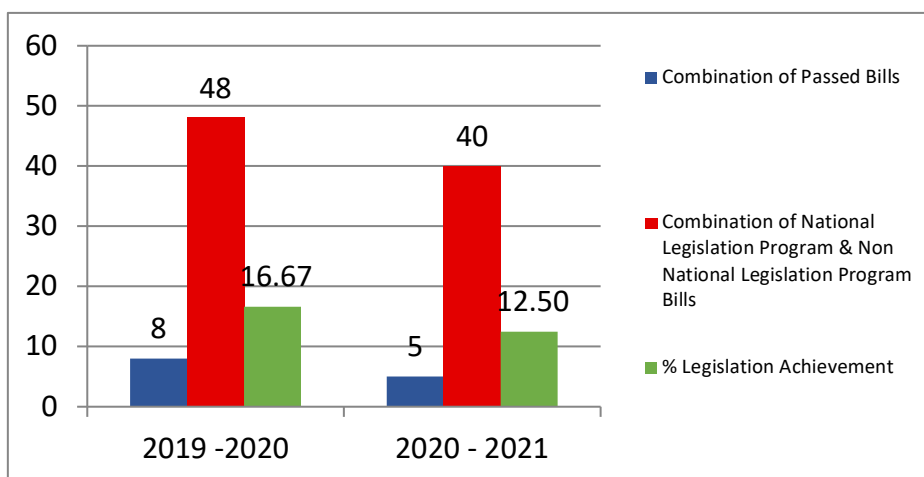
b. Targets and legislation achievements of Council Meeting period 2020-2021

- The legislation target of the House of Representatives on Council Meeting period 2020-2021 are 40 bills with composition; 33 National Legislation Program bills¹⁶ and 5 Open Cumulative bills, also 2 bills as a continuation from the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 which are not included in the National Legislation Program of 2020-2021. From this target, the House of Representatives was only able to pass 05 bills consisting of 1 National Legislation Program bill, 2 Open-Cumulative Bills, and 2 Bills as a continuation from the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 which not included in the National Legislation Program of 2020-2021. In a percentage, the legislation achievements of the House of Representatives on the Council Meeting period 2020-2021 is 12.50%.
- In the Council Meeting period 2020-2021, the House of Representatives did not progress in ratifying the National Legislation Program bills. The House of Representatives was only able to ratify 1 bill from the National Legislation Program target, namely the Bill on Amendments to Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for the Papua Province. In a percentage, the legislation achievement of the National Legislation Program on Council Meeting period 2020-2021 is only 3.03%.
- The bills that passed into Laws:

National Legislation Program Bill			
NO	TITLE OF BILLS	PROPOSER	DESCRIPTION
1.	Bill on Amendments to Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua Province	Government (Special Committee)	Passed into Law on July 15, 2021
Non National Legislation Program Bills			
NO	TITLE OF BILLS	PROPOSER	DESCRIPTION
1.	Bill on Amendments to Law Number 13 of 1985 concerning Stamp Duty	The House of Representatives/ Government	Passed into Law on October 26, 2020
2.	Bill Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation	Government	Passed into Law on October 14, 2020
Open Cumulative Bills			
NO	TITLE OF BILLS	PROPOSER	DESCRIPTION
1.	Bill on the Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Cooperation in the Field of Defence (Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden Concerning Cooperation in the Field of Defence). This bill was approved as Law Number 12 of 2020.	Government	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on November 2, 2020
2.	Bill on the Third Amendment to Law Number 24 of 2003 concerning the Constitutional Court	The House of Representatives	The Open Cumulative bill that passed into Law on September 28, 2020

c. *Legislative Achievements of the House of Representatives in Each Year of Council Meetings in Graphic:*

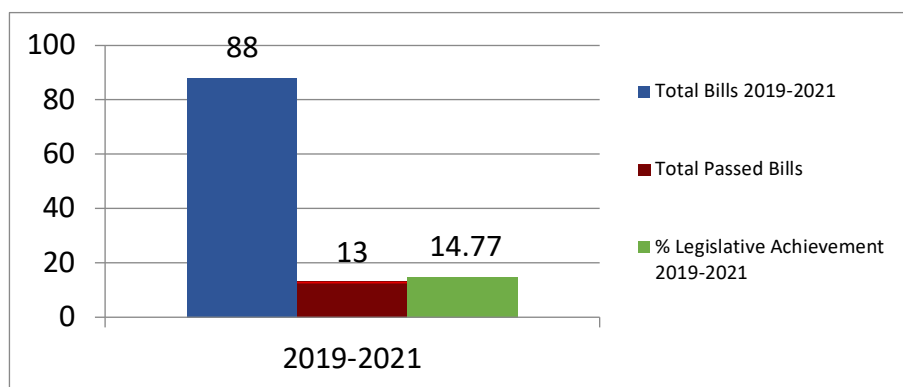
Graphic 1. Legislative Achievement of The House of Representatives in Each Year of Council Meetings



3. Targets and Legislation Achievements in 2 Years of Council Meetings (2019-2020 and 2020-2021)

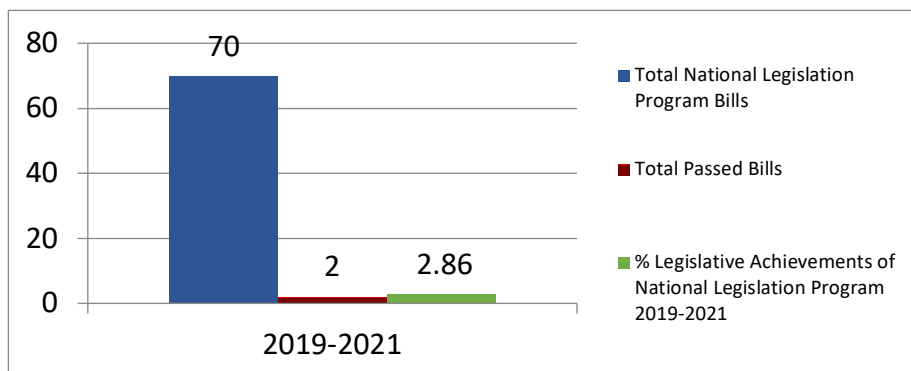
- a. If the legislative targets of Council Meeting period 2019-2020 combined with the Council Meeting period 2020-2021, the number is 88 bills, while the number of bills that passed is 13 bills, so the legislative achievement of the House of Representatives for years of Council Meeting, 2019-2021, is 14.77%.

Graphic 2. Legislative Achievements of House of Representatives in 2 Years of Council Meetings (2019-2021)



- b. As for the legislative targets of the National Legislation Program of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the total is 70 bills with the number of bills that have been ratified as many as 02 bills. So the legislative achievement of the House of Representatives for 02 years of Council Meetings 2019-2021 is only 2.86%.

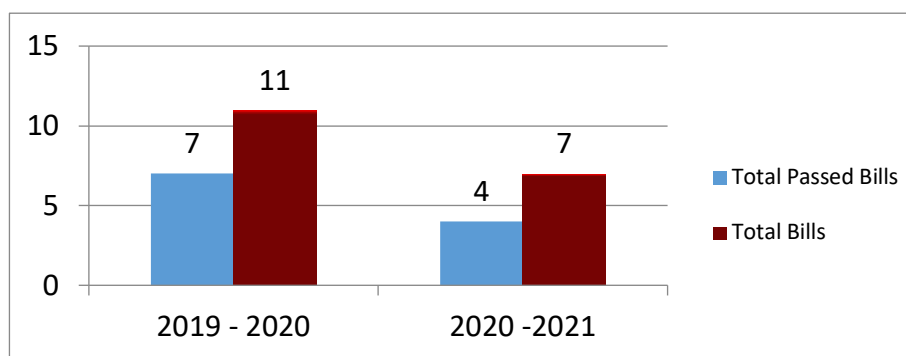
Graphic 3. Legislative Achievements of National Legislation Program in 2 Years of Council Meetings (2019-2021)



4. Legislative achievements of National Legislation Program and Non-National Legislation Program (including the Open Cumulative Bill) in 2 years of Council Meetings (2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021).

The legislative achievement of the House of Representatives for National Legislation Program is lower than the legislative achievement for the Non-National Legislation Program in both years of Council Meeting, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. It shows that the House of Representatives does not prioritize the completion of the bills in the list of National Legislation Program, but more on the Non-National Legislation Program bills either on the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 and the period 2020-2021.

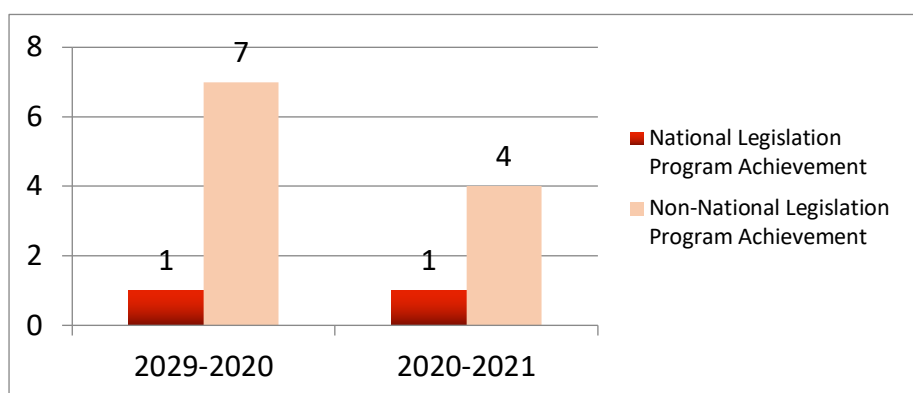
Graphic 4. Legislative Achievements of The Non-National Legislation Program in 2 years of Council Meetings (2019-2020 and 2020-2021)



5. Comparison of National Legislation Program and Non-National Legislation Program achievements of The House of Representatives between Council Meeting period 2019 until 2020 with Council Meeting period 2020 until 2021.

- a. The legislative achievement of the House of Representatives for the National Legislation Program is lower than the legislative achievement of the Non-National Legislation Program both in the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 and the period 2020-2021.
- b. This shows that the House of Representatives does not prioritize the completion of the bills in the National Legislation Program list rather than the Non-National Legislation Program bills either on the Council Meeting period 2019-2020 and the period 2020-2021.

Graphic 5. Comparison of National Legislation Program and Non-National Legislation Program achievements of The House of Representatives between Council Meeting period 2019 until 2020 with Council Meeting period 2020 until 2021.



Conclusion

1. Description of legislation performance of The House of Representatives in 2 years of Council Meetings (2019-2020 and 2020-2021)
 - By comparing the targets and achievements of legislation, we can say that the legislative performance of the House of Representatives in 2 years of Council Meetings (2019-2021) is very BAD.
 - The House of Representatives was slow in determining the National Legislation Program, example in the 2019-2020 Council Meeting, the National Legislation Program was announced only in the Speech of the Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives at the closing of the second period of the council meeting, which later due to adjusting to the pandemic period, the House of Representatives made changes to the National Legislation Program target which announced at the closing of the fourth period of the council meeting. While in the 2020-2021 Council Meeting period, the National Legislation Program was announced in the speech of the Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives at the closing of the fourth period of the 2020-2021 Council Meeting.
 - The House of Representatives is unable to rationalize the targets and projected achievements of legislative work. It shows at the time of the National Legislation

Program determination for the Council Meeting 2020-2021, which was set up at the closing of the fourth period. It means that the House of Representatives only has 01 council meeting period to complete 33 National Legislation Program bills and 5 Open-Cumulative Bills been stipulated.

- There are bills with the same grand issues, which are divided into 02 bills in the National Legislation Program for 2019-2020 council meetings. That is the Bill on National Population and Family, and the Bill on Maternal and Child Welfare. This is also being found in the National Legislation Program for the 2019-2024 period.
2. The priority of the House of Representatives in ratifying the bill into law

The House of Representatives is more focused on finalizing the Non-National Legislation Program bills, both cumulative bills, and bills that are not included in the National Legislation Program. It shows that the National Legislation Program bills are not the priority in the discussion of the bill in the House of Representatives.

3. Reflection of the stand of the House of Representatives through the bill that passed into law

The National Legislation Program bills that passed by the House of Representatives in 2 years of Council Meeting are dominated by bills that represented the interests of the elite. It shows in the ratification of the Bills on the Council Meeting period 2019-2020, namely the Bill on Amendments to Law Number 4 of 2009 concerning Mineral and Coal Mining, and the Bill on Amendments to Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for the Papua Province. Others in Council Meeting period 2020-2021, the Bill on Amendments to Law Number 13 of 1985 concerning Stamp Duty, and Bill Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation.

Recommendation

1. Regarding legislative performance of the House of Representatives
 - a. The House of Representatives to set the National Legislation Program at the beginning of the Council Meeting Period so that it has sufficient and measurable time from conducting discussions, ratification until the promulgation of the bill.
 - b. The House of Representatives to review several bills in the National Legislation Program with the same major issues or themes, and combined them into one, so that the discussion on these bills become more effective and does not open up for a chance to overlapping between one and another law in the future.
 - c. The House of Representatives to evaluate their legislation function based on performance achievements during the past two years of Council Meetings, as a reference for improving the legislation performance in the following year of Council Meeting.

2. Regarding the priority of the House of Representatives in ratifying the bill into law

The House of Representatives prioritizes the discussion and ratification of the bills that have been stipulated in the National Legislation Program bills so that the achievements of the House of Representatives in the legislative function become more measurable

3. Regarding the stand of the House of Representatives through the bill that passed into law.
4. The House of Representatives to prioritize the discussion and ratification of bills, especially the bills contained in the National Legislation Program, that represent the interests of the society, and to stops the polarization of the discussion of bills that only represent the interests of the elite.

¹Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections, Article 1

²Law No. 17 of 2014 on MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD Article 69

³ Law No. 17 of 2014 on MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD Article 70 Paragraph (1)

⁴Law No. 17 of 2014 on MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD Article 70 Paragraph (2)

⁵ Law No. 17 of 2014 on MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD Article 70 Paragraph (3)

⁶ Winda Wijayanti, "The Existence of Laws as Legal Products in Fulfilling Justice for the People (Analysis of Constitutional Court Decisions Number 50/PUU-X/2012)", Journal of the Constitution, Volume 10, Number 1, (March 2013), p.180.

⁷ Winda Wijayanti, "The Existence of Laws as Legal Products in Fulfilling Justice for the People (Analysis of Constitutional Court Decisions Number 50/PUU-X/2012)", Journal of the Constitution, Volume 10, Number 1, (March 2013), p.180- 181.

⁸ Eman Sulaiman, "Law and Public Interests (Positioning Law as Balancing Public Interests)", Journal of Dictum Law, Volume 11, Number 1, (January 2013), p. 100.

⁹ <https://pshk.or.id/rr/penyebab-menurunnya-produk-legislasi-dpr/>

¹⁰Indonesian Parliamentary Concerned Community Forum (FORMAPI), "Mini Results Maxi Working Day" (The House of Representatives Performance Evaluation During 1st Council Meeting Period, Year 2018-2019), The House of Representatives Performance Evaluation, November 2018, p.4

¹¹ Law No. 15 of 2019 on Amendments to Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Establishment of Legislation, Article 20.

¹² Law No. 15 of 2019 on Amendments to Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Establishment of Legislation, Article 23 paragraph (1).

¹³ Law No. 15 of 2019 on Amendments to Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Establishment of Legislation, Article 23 paragraph (2).

¹⁴ Manuscript of speech of the Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives at the Plenary Meeting for the closing of the first period of the Council Meetings for the year 2019-2020

¹⁵ Manuscript of speech of the Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives at the Plenary Meeting for the closing of the fifth period of the Council Meetings for the year 2019-2020

¹⁶ <https://www.dpr.go.id/berita/detail/id/32239/t/Paripurna+DPR+Sepakati+33+RUU+Prolegnas+Prioritas+2021>

La construction d'autonomies indigènes comme espace de renouveau démocratique :

un regard sur l'expérience de Charagua Iyambae en Bolivie

Walter Prysthon

La montée des autoritarismes et le rétrécissement des droits dans des nombreuses pays dans le monde (Brésil, Colombie, Inde, Birmanie, Guinée...) tendent à cacher l'émergence d'expériences novatrices de gouvernance démocratique et l'élan d'inclusion sociale et politique de nombreux groupes marginalisés. Ces expériences se multiplient en Amérique latine à partir de mobilisations sociales d'ampleur. On pourrait citer les mobilisations sociales de 2019 au Chili qui ont débouché sur le processus d'élaboration d'une nouvelle Constitution qui tournera la page de l'héritage de la dictature d'Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) ou encore le Paro nacional récent en Colombie, porté surtout par la jeunesse. Par ailleurs, nombreuses expressions de revendication d'autonomie indigène débouchent sur des expériences plus ou moins institutionnalisées et reconnues de construction de nouvelles formes de gouvernement local, en particulier en Bolivie.

Avec l'approbation en 2009 d'une nouvelle Constitution et la reconnaissance du caractère plurinational de l'Etat, la Bolivie a ouvert la porte à des nouvelles formes d'exercice démocratique en intégrant l'identité et le rapport territorial des populations indigènes. Le Gouvernement Autonome Indigène Originaire et Paysan (GAOIC) de Charagua Iyambae en est une expérience pionnière. Du référendum d'approbation de l'Autonomie en décembre 2009 à la prise de responsabilités des premières autorités autonomes en janvier 2017, en passant par le référendum d'approbation des Statuts de l'Autonomie en septembre 2015, le chemin de constitution du premier GAIIOC a été long. Très balisé par les démarches juridico-administratives, il se construit aussi au quotidien dans l'apprentissage de l'exercice du pouvoir par la population guarani et dans la négociation plus ou moins explicite, ponctuée aussi d'oppositions et tensions, avec les structures traditionnelles de pouvoir, tant au niveau local que national.

Un nouveau cadre politique voit le jour, avec l'intention de faire participer la population locale de façon plus horizontale aux décisions la concernant. Cet article abordera les défis de cette expérience locale portée par le Peuple Guarani, avec le soutien et l'accompagnement de nombreuses organisations de la société civile. Il cherchera à montrer comment l'expérience de Gouvernement Autonome indigène se constitue en tant qu'espace de transformation de l'Etat, ses défis et potentialités. Parmi les principaux défis, on discutera de la tension entre les innovations socio-politiques revendiquées et les limites économiques de la nouvelle entité administrative, ainsi que la tension avec les politiques économiques extractivistes implantées dans la région. On abordera aussi la tension entre une revendication identitaire (« indigène », Guarani) et les possibilités de construction d'une expérience ouverte à l'interculturalité.

L'article se base surtout sur des expériences d'observation participative menées entre septembre 2017 et mars 2019.

L'égalité des droits entre les citoyens, porté par l'idéal démocratique, reste un projet non achevé. L'exclusion sociale et les discriminations restent la norme, en particulier dans les pays du Sud global. Le désenchantement des citoyens et la méfiance vis-à-vis des institutions et des partis politiques semblent annoncer une longue période de crise de la démocratie. Régulièrement scandée dans des manifestations contre la corruption dans des nombreux pays, l'expression « Qu'ils s'en aillent tous » matérialise de façon très particulière ce désenchantement. Mais la vie en société et la politique ne s'accommodent pas du vide et les espaces sont souvent occupés par des expressions d'autoritarisme.

La montée des autoritarismes et le rétrécissement des droits dans de nombreuses pays (Brésil, Nicaragua, Salvador, Inde, Birmanie, Guinée, Hongrie...) tendent néanmoins à cacher l'émergence d'expériences novatrices de gouvernance démocratique et l'élan d'inclusion sociale et politique de nombreux groupes marginalisés : parmi elles, les nombreuses expressions de revendication d'autodétermination et d'autonomie indigène qui débouchent sur des expériences plus ou moins institutionnalisées et reconnues de construction de nouvelles formes de gouvernement local.

Cet article aborde les défis de la construction du gouvernement autonome indigène de Charagua Iyambae en Bolivie. Il cherche à montrer comment cette expérience portée par le peuple guarani, avec le soutien et l'accompagnement de nombreuses organisations de la société civile locale,¹ se constitue en tant qu'espace de transformation de l'État. On aborde certains de ses défis et potentialités, parmi lesquels on identifie la tension entre les innovations socio-politiques revendiquées et les limites économiques de la nouvelle entité administrative, confrontées par ailleurs à l'avancée de l'extractivisme dans la région. On discute aussi de la tension entre une revendication identitaire (« indigène », Guarani) et les possibilités de construction d'une expérience ouverte à l'interculturalité.

Le processus qui a amené à la constitution de l'Autonomie à Charagua Iyambae, entre 2009 et 2017, est accompagné de près par des ONG nationales et internationales. Il a aussi suscité l'intérêt de chercheurs boliviens et étrangers. Nous proposons ici une relecture critique qui se nourrit d'une expérience de terrain vécue en septembre 2017 et février 2019, en dialogue direct avec des acteurs locaux (autorités guaranis, mouvements sociaux indigènes, ONG). Elle s'enrichit de contributions d'auteurs qui se sont consacrés à l'étude de cette expérience, toujours en construction.

L'irruption des peuples indigènes comme sujets politiques en Amérique latine

Les origines récentes du protagonisme politique des peuples indigènes en Amérique latine remontent aux célébrations (et surtout à la contestation des célébrations !) des 500 ans de la colonisation du continent. L'année de 1992 et celles qui l'ont précédée seront marquées par un grand débat autour des discriminations historiques subies par les peuples originaires, en particulier autour de la spoliation de leurs terres. Il s'agit d'un contexte d'émergence d'un mouvement indigène renouvelé au niveau continental, dont la stratégie interpelle directement les Etats pour faire valoir et élargir les droits politiques, économiques, culturels et territoriaux collectifs des peuples autochtones. La naissance de l'Assemblée du Peuple Guarani (APG) en Bolivie en 1987, la participation des peuples indigènes brésiliens dans la discussion et l'élaboration de propositions pour le processus d'écriture de la Constitution de 1988 et le

soulèvement indigène en Equateur en 1990, porté par la CONAIE (Confédération des Nationalités Indigènes de l'Equateur) font partie de ce processus. Le soulèvement zapatiste au Chiapas (Mexique) le 1er janvier 1994, à l'occasion de l'entrée en vigueur du Traité de Libre-Echange de l'Amérique du Nord, explicitement pour prendre à contrepoint une mondialisation commandée par le néolibéralisme, va par ailleurs souligner la revendication d'autonomie comme expression de l'autodétermination des peuples.

Depuis, et dans l'actualité en particulier, les luttes des peuples indigènes marquent les scènes politiques nationales : les Mapuche au Chili et leur participation dans le processus d'écriture d'une nouvelle constitution ; les peuples indigènes en Colombie questionnant la politique sociale du gouvernement et le manque d'application de l'Accord de Paix ; les différents peuples au Brésil réclamant leurs droits (et notamment la démarcation de leurs territoires) menacés par le gouvernement Bolsonaro, et la sauvegarde de l'environnement.

Par son engagement aux côtés des peuples indigènes, l'Église catholique² a beaucoup contribué à amplifier la portée de leurs revendications, que ce soit au Brésil, en Equateur, au Pérou, en Bolivie ou au Mexique. Plus récemment, le Pape François – dans sa démarche de rencontres régulières avec des mouvements populaires et dans le processus de préparation et réalisation du Synode pour l'Amazonie (2019) – a fait des gestes significatifs pour la reconnaissance des peuples indigènes comme interlocuteurs et porteurs de savoirs nécessaires pour envisager autrement la vie commune et la place de l'humanité dans la Nature :

« Il est urgent de prendre en compte la contribution essentielle [des peuples autochtones] à la société tout entière, de ne pas faire de leurs cultures l'idéal d'un état naturel ni non plus une espèce de musée d'un genre de vie d'antan. Leur cosmovision, leur sagesse ont beaucoup à nous enseigner. »

« Il est juste de reconnaître qu'il existe des initiatives porteuses d'espérance qui naissent dans vos propres rangs et dans vos organisations et permettent que les peuples autochtones eux-mêmes ainsi que les communautés soient les gardiens des forêts, et que les ressources produites par la sauvegarde de ces forêts reviennent comme bénéfice à leurs familles, pour l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie, pour la santé et l'éducation de leurs communautés. Ce "bien-faire" se trouve en syntonie avec les pratiques du "bien-vivre" que nous découvrons dans la sagesse de nos peuples. »³

Des apports originaux pour le Vivre-ensemble autrement : la proposition du Bien-Vivre

Cette visibilité accrue des peuples indigènes s'accompagne aussi de l'émergence de la notion du Bien-Vivre. L'idée d'une autre façon de se relationner à la nature et entre humains, loin de l'exploitation, de l'utilitarisme et de la compétition est présente dans la cosmovision de nombreux peuples, dont l'histoire, la culture, les langues ont été longtemps réprimées et dévalorisées.

Le Bien-Vivre fait son apparition sur la scène politique et sociale latino-américaine avec l'approbation de la Constitution équatorienne en 2007. Inspiré du Sumak Kawsay des peuples Kichwa, le Bien-Vivre y est décrit sous forme de droits et s'accompagne de la reconnaissance des droits de la nature, propres et indépendants de son utilité pour l'être humain (cf. article 71). Cette même démarche d'inclusion d'expressions de la cosmovision indigène dans les textes politiques se vérifie aussi en Bolivie. Le Bien-Vivre, inspiré entre autres du Suma Qamaña (du

Peuple Aymara) et de l'aspiration des guaranis à une vie harmonieuse (Teko Kavi), est largement revendiqué dans la constitution de l'État, désormais plurinational (2009).

« Quand les constitutions de l'Equateur et de la Bolivie définissent le « bien vivre » (Sumak Kawsay ou Suma Qamaña) comme principe orientateur de l'organisation économique, politique et social, elles font appel à un dispositif conceptuel et normatif hybride qui réunit dans le texte juridique matriciel de la modernité occidentale – la Constitution politique – des ressources linguistiques et conceptuels non coloniaux et non occidentaux » (Santos, 2010). Cela suggère – encore selon Santos – la construction d'un « projet de pays » sur des chemins alternatifs à ceux qui orientent les économies capitalistes, dépendantes, extractivistes et agroexportatrices.

A partir d'une analyse philosophique qui cherche à reconstruire la généalogie du « dispositif Bien-Vivre », Cortez (2021) montre que les notions de sumak kawsay et de Bien-Vivre sont liées à des processus de résistance et lutte, où se jouent la défense et la possibilité de la vie au-delà d'un ordre global au caractère colonial ou néocolonial. C'est en cela que la notion de Bien-Vivre acquiert un caractère mobilisateur, qui oriente les projets des autonomies indigènes et qui inspire des luttes de nombreux acteurs sociaux et politiques non-indigènes.

Les revendications d'autonomie portées par des peuples indigènes

Le droit à l'auto-détermination est consacré dans la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones⁴ adoptée en 2007. La reconnaissance de ce droit est le fruit d'un long parcours, dont une des bases a été la Convention 169 de l'OIT (1989). Elle ouvre la voie pour le droit à l'auto-détermination en stipulant que « les gouvernements doivent respecter l'importance spéciale que revêt pour la culture et les valeurs spirituelles des peuples intéressés la relation qu'ils entretiennent avec les terres ou territoires [...] et en particulier des aspects collectifs de cette relation » (article 13). La Convention affirme aussi « le droit [des peuples autochtones] de décider de leurs propres priorités en ce qui concerne le processus du développement, dans la mesure où celui-ci a une incidence sur leur vie, leurs croyances, leurs institutions et leur bien-être spirituel et les terres qu'ils occupent ou utilisent d'une autre manière, et d'exercer autant que possible un contrôle sur leur développement économique, social et culturel propre » (article 7).

Cette dimension de l'autodétermination et de l'autonomie politique des populations indigènes va trouver différentes expressions plus ou moins abouties selon les contextes nationaux et locaux. En Colombie, d'après les dispositions de la Constitution de 1991 (articles 246, 286, 287), les peuples indigènes jouissent d'un certain niveau d'autonomie au sein de réserves (resguardos), en élisant leurs autorités selon leurs normes et procédures traditionnelles, notamment pour gérer des affaires sociales (éducation, santé). Au Mexique, pour ne citer qu'une des expressions, le soulèvement zapatiste va placer la demande d'autodétermination en haut lieu de leurs revendications, en l'incluant dans les Accords de San Andrés (signés en 1996, mais régulièrement ignorés par le gouvernement). Depuis, l'autonomie est vécue par leurs bases – sur des territoires en dispute à partir de terres récupérées – dans la définition et l'exercice de formes décolonisées du pouvoir et dans le refus des programmes et politiques impulsés depuis l'Etat. Au Guatemala, sans aller jusqu'à l'attribution d'autonomie politique aux populations indigènes, les Accords de Paix de 1996 ont permis une certaine reconnaissance des formes de gouvernement et de justice communautaires ancestrales. Le système communautaire cohabite avec les structures occidentales, parfois comme un pouvoir supplétif, dans la figure de « mairies auxiliaires ».

Inspirés par l'expérience bolivienne, des acteurs politiques indigènes rassemblés au sein du Conseil du Peuple Maya (CPO) ont proposé en 2014 un « Projet politique pour un nouvel Etat pour Guatemala », en revendiquant une démocratie plurinationale et des gouvernements autonomes pour les peuples indigènes. Plus récemment, depuis 2018, émergent dans l'Amazonie péruvienne des expériences de constitution d'autonomies de facto entre les peuples Wampis et Awajum. Elles ne jouissent pas d'un support institutionnel qui les « autorise », mais cherchent à asseoir leur légitimité et à conquérir leur reconnaissance.

L'expérience bolivienne de construction d'autonomies indigènes

Avec l'approbation en 2009 d'une nouvelle Constitution et la reconnaissance du caractère plurinational de l'Etat,⁵ la Bolivie a ouvert la porte à des nouvelles formes d'exercice démocratique en intégrant l'identité et le rapport territorial des populations indigènes. Cela passe notamment par la possibilité de constitution d'autonomies. La Constitution établit deux voies pour cela : soit par conversion municipale (la voie choisie à Charagua et dans d'autres localités du Chaco), à travers laquelle l'entité administrative municipale s'efface pour qu'un Gouvernement Autonome Indigène Originaire et Paysan (GAIOC) voit le jour en conservant le même territoire d'origine ; soit par la reconnaissance d'un Territoire indigène originaire paysan (TIOC) qui, pour en dire ainsi, s'affranchit des limites géo-administratives pré-établies pour créer une nouvelle entité. Dans les deux cas, pour que l'autonomie indigène soit approuvée la majorité de la population de l'entité territoriale doit être indigène, selon un critère d'ancestralité sur le territoire. Là où les indigènes sont minoritaires, il y a la possibilité d'y organiser des « Districts indigènes »,⁶ avec l'approbation de Chartes organiques au niveau des municipalités, garantissant aux minorités une représentation aux conseils municipaux et l'adoption de plans de gestion propres, élaborés d'après leur cosmovision.

Des processus de constitution d'autonomies indigènes, tous par la voie d'une conversion municipale, ont abouti à Charagua et Gutiérrez (devenus respectivement Charagua Iyambae et Kereimba Iyaambae) et sont en cours à Lagunilla, Macharetí et Huacaya.

Le fait que, douze ans après l'approbation de la Constitution de l'Etat Plurinational, il n'y ait que cinq autonomies indigènes constituées en Bolivie⁷ traduit la réticence des autorités (gouvernements national et départementaux) à assumer la part de renoncement et de transfert de pouvoir que l'accès aux autonomies représente. Cela n'est pas étranger à la lenteur et la lourdeur des procédures imposées.

Les dynamiques politiques à Charagua Iyambae

Le GAIOC de Charagua Iyambae est une expérience pionnière. Du référendum d'approbation de l'Autonomie en décembre 2009 à la prise de responsabilités des premières autorités en janvier 2017, en passant par le référendum d'approbation des Statuts de l'Autonomie en septembre 2015, le chemin de constitution du premier GAIOC a été long. Très balisé par les démarches juridico-administratives, il se construit aussi au quotidien dans l'apprentissage de l'exercice du pouvoir par la population guarani et dans la négociation plus ou moins explicite, ponctuée aussi d'oppositions et de tensions avec les structures traditionnelles de pouvoir, tant au niveau local que national.

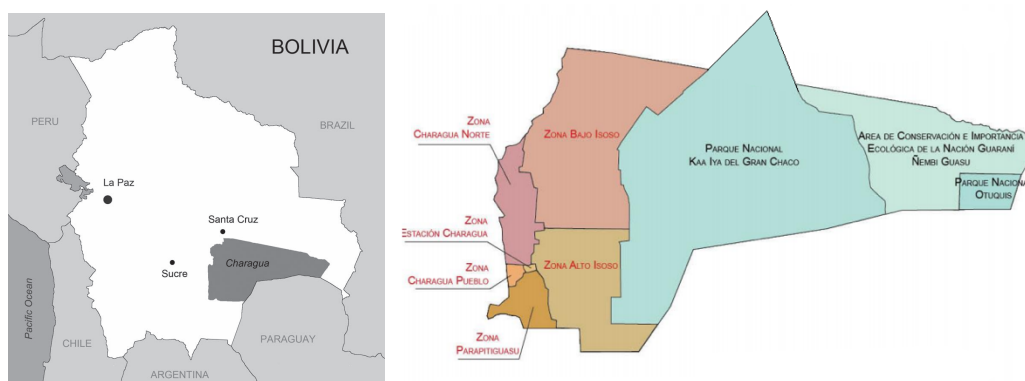
Un nouveau cadre politique voit le jour, avec l'intention de faire participer la population locale de façon plus horizontale aux décisions la concernant. Le système de partis politiques qui

avait pendant longtemps maintenu les indigènes éloignés de la gestion des affaires publiques a été abrogé en faveur d'un système de représentation basé sur des assemblées territoriales. Avec l'Autonomie, un certain renversement se produit, avec un niveau important de décentralisation des ressources et des investissements publics, ouvrant des perspectives d'accès aux droits et à des politiques publiques pour les communautés rurales.

Cela est le résultat d'une longue mobilisation d'acteurs sociaux territoriaux, dont la principale expression est l'Assemblée du Peuple Guarani (APG), l'organisation de représentation des indigènes guaranis⁸ de Bolivie. L'APG regroupe plus de 400 communautés organisées en 24 capitaineries⁹ dans les 3 départements de la région Chaco (Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz de la Sierra et Tarija).

Dès son origine, en 1987, l'APG est engagée dans la revendication de la restitution des terres aux communautés indigènes et a contribué à la régularisation de 1.800.000 hectares de terre en leur faveur. En 1995-1996, au moment du lancement de la politique d'assainissement des terres par l'Etat, l'APG avait revendiqué 10 millions d'hectares dans le Chaco, soit 7% de son territoire. Sa stratégie combine la revendication d'accès à la terre et de contrôle politique du territoire, via la constitution des autonomies. La construction d'autonomies indigènes dans le Chaco bolivien est une expression de la volonté politique du peuple guarani de récupérer son identité sur un territoire considéré comme ancestral.

Charagua Iyambae



Charagua Iyambae, avec une surface de 74.424 km², est la plus grande entité territoriale de la Bolivie. On y trouve deux zones urbaines (Charagua pueblo, Charagua Estación) et quatre territoires indigènes (Parapitiguasu, Charagua Norte, Bajo Isoso, Alto Isoso). Plus de 60% de son territoire est classé comme des zones protégées, dans deux parcs nationaux et une zone de conservation (créée par le gouvernement autonome).

Selon le recensement de 2012, Charagua comptait 32.186 habitants, dont 53% guaranis, 21% mennonites, 21% qui ne se reconnaissent pas comme indigènes et 5% d'autres peuples indigènes. Les projections pour 2020 portaient à 40.476 le nombre d'habitants, dont 89,1% en zone rurale et 70,4% sous le seuil de pauvreté. La principale activité économique est l'élevage, pratiqué de façon extensive. On parle de 200.240 têtes de bétail bovin (2013).

L'Autonomie indigène comme espace de transformation de l'Etat

L'Autonomie apporte une reconnaissance sociale et politique inédite à la population indigène et une nouvelle image des indigènes sur eux-mêmes. Ils se sont saisis de la gestion publique et, compte tenu du caractère multiethnique de l'entité territoriale à Charagua Iyambae,

ils représentent l'Etat non pas pour eux-mêmes, mais pour tous. En soi, le Gouvernement Autonome Indigène Originaire et Paysan de Charagua Iyambae matérialise une expression de transformation de l'Etat : autrefois négligés, invisibilisés, les indigènes incarnent aujourd'hui l'Etat dans la zone.

Le principal acquis de l'expérience de construction de l'autonomie indigène jusqu'ici reste cette prise en compte de l'identité indigène. Le terme citoyenneté n'apparaît pas spontanément dans les discours des nouvelles autorités publiques locales et avec les Guaranis organisés au sein de l'APG. C'est la dimension communautaire qui prime et l'idée d'une appropriation des choses publiques par le plus grand nombre est très présente.

L'Autonomie indigène de Charagua Iyambae représente, de fait, une forme de décentralisation et de rééquilibrage dans la distribution des investissements publics en faveur des indigènes, oubliés par l'administration publique municipale d'antan.

Le renversement de la pyramide du pouvoir revient dans tous les discours de présentation de l'Autonomie : au lieu d'un pouvoir exécutif exercé individuellement d'où émanent les initiatives et les décisions, on va mettre en place un fonctionnement où la prise de décision se construit collectivement en assemblées qui prennent légitimité sur les territoires. Les assemblées communautaires dans les zones rurales, à grande majorité indigènes sont des espaces ouverts où assistent ceux et celles qui le veulent et où le contrôle social sur les élus s'exerce de façon directe et plus forte.

Cette inversion de la pyramide du pouvoir se retrouve dans le choix de légiférer depuis la base. On cherche à faire discuter les contenus des projets de loi par les groupes sociaux concernés. Dès qu'une proposition est élaborée, elle est socialisée dans le cadre d'assemblées zonales : la participation des bases l'enrichit avec des nouveaux apports, avant leur approbation par l'organe législatif ou par l'instance interzonale, réunissant législateurs et membres élus de l'assemblée.

Le choix de la confrontation normative sur certains sujets

En Bolivie, notamment depuis le large processus participatif qui a mené à l'approbation de la Constitution politique de l'Etat, avec la contribution notable du Programme Nina,¹⁰ les organisations indigènes, originaires et paysannes se sont engagées dans la définition de droits et de politiques publiques, s'appropriant et orientant les instruments juridiques en leur faveur. On constate un attachement à la transcription légale des processus politiques.

En assumant jusqu'au bout les prérogatives autonomiques, le GAIOC Charagua Iyambae a fait le choix de légiférer sur différents sujets : une loi sur la consultation communautaire a déjà été votée, des lois sur les parcs naturels ou sur la santé sont en préparation... Des limbes juridiques ne manqueront pas d'apparaître avec les cadres normatifs national et départemental. L'idée, dès qu'un conflit de compétences apparaît, est de le rendre visible et de le porter à la discussion de la Cour de constitutionnalité pour mettre l'Etat plurinational devant sa responsabilité de garantir l'exercice des autonomies et de la plurinationalité.

Un domaine où la confrontation normative s'insinue déjà concerne la gestion territoriale. La constitution d'une autonomie ne rompt pas avec les principes constitutionnels de propriété des ressources naturelles par l'Etat. Toutefois, en proposant que l'entrée des entreprises au territoire soit régie par une normative autonome (loi sur les consultations), les autorités

indigènes font le pari de rompre avec des schémas centralistes et d'ouvrir des brèches dans une dispute pour des compétences élargies, qui – dans ce cas spécifique – puisse battre en brèche l'extractivisme (notamment dans l'exploitation des réserves en gaz et pétrole du territoire), considéré comme contradictoire par rapport aux principes de l'Autonomie et à la protection de l'environnement.

Cette dispute normative caractériserait ce que Santos (2010) considère comme du pluralisme juridique, en soulignant l'existence d'un cadre normatif d'inter-légalité qui appelle à des traductions interculturelles, comme chemin vers la décolonisation.

Toutefois, tout l'arsenal juridique que le GAIOC met en place souffre d'un très faible pouvoir de sanction. Interrogées sur cette question, les autorités locales renvoient vers l'importance de la mobilisation sociale, comme garante des décisions collectives. Elles envisagent aussi la possibilité d'interpeller la Cour Inter-américaine des Droits Humains pour faire respecter les garanties constitutionnelles conférées aux autonomies et les droits des peuples indigènes. L'idée de créer des comités de sécurité est en discussion, notamment pour faire respecter les normes d'occupation de l'espace (dans les zones de réserve).

Le mimétisme et la reproduction des codes occidentaux

Selon nombreux analystes du processus de construction des autonomies, la réponse au besoin de définir la charpente juridique et institutionnelle de la nouvelle entité a entraîné une certaine bureaucratisation, qui tend à reproduire le « modèle municipal », dont on a dû mal à s'affranchir. Cela débilite l'intentionnalité originelle des autonomies indigènes comme manière de rompre avec l'Etat colonial.

De façon paradoxale, les réunions des institutions de l'autonomie suivent des rituels et procédures établis dans la norme « occidentale ». La volonté d'une administration selon les us et costumes ou, pour utiliser l'expression guarani, selon leur « ñande reko » (façon d'être) est ainsi assez relative. L'appropriation des codes de pouvoir « occidental » n'est toutefois pas dénuée d'intérêt : il représente une opportunité de formation politique et habilite l'émergence de leaders indigènes capables de dialoguer avec l'institutionnalité de l'État héritée de la colonie.

Il faut y voir aussi une recherche de légitimité au-delà des sources traditionnelles « indigènes », d'appartenance commune à une histoire, à une identité linguistique et culturelle. Pour dialoguer avec l'État et agir dans ce domaine, « pour être un “bon mburuvicha” », ¹¹ il faut un niveau de formation minimal, avoir des connaissances techniques et politiques, comprendre le langage du “projectisme” et se déplacer commodément entre assemblées communales, bureaucratie étatique, bureaux d'ONG et même des entreprises pétrolières » (Morell i Tora, 2013).

Corollaire de ce mimétisme, mais en même temps aussi de la volonté de démocratiser les espaces d'exercice de pouvoir direct, on assiste à une certaine bureaucratisation du GAIOC. Une nouvelle instance (non prévue dans les Statuts) a même dû être créée : l'interzonal, réunissant des représentants de l'Assemblée, du pouvoir législatif et des pouvoirs exécutifs locaux (afin d'harmoniser les procédures pour l'approbation des nouvelles lois et établir des accords quand cela s'avère plus difficile à l'interne de l'Assemblée). Cela veut répondre aussi au besoin d'éviter la superposition de responsabilités entre les différentes instances et de redonner un rôle décisionnel à l'Assemblée (Ñembotiguasu), ¹² doublée dans cet aspect par l'organe législatif, qui aurait tendance à s'octroyer plus de pouvoirs que ceux définis par le Statut, reproduisant le

système politique traditionnel. Cela rentre en contradiction avec la volonté de renverser la pyramide du pouvoir et avec la vision d'un pouvoir qui s'exerce surtout en assemblées. Ces tensions soulignent le caractère expérimental du processus plus large de construction d'autonomies indigènes au vu de redéfinitions plus profondes et à venir de l'État.

Superposition de fonctions entre les Capitaineries guaranis et le GAIOC, un défi pour la vitalité du mouvement social indigène

Nombreux accompagnateurs du processus de construction de l'Autonomie soulignent la décision prise au départ de ne pas confondre l'organisation sociale indigène guarani avec les structures d'administration publique de l'État (dans le cadre de l'autonomie), afin de maintenir la capacité de contrôle et d'initiative du mouvement social indigène. Cela, néanmoins, induit une certaine super-position de prérogatives. Les exécutifs zonaux du GAIOC sont élus dans des assemblées zonales convoquées par les autorités des « capitaineries ». Ils sont investis des prérogatives officielles, dont un budget constitué de fonds publics, mais interviennent sur les mêmes domaines que les capitaines dans la gestion communautaire. Comment dans ce cadre – du point de vue de l'organisation guarani – maintenir la primauté des capitaineries ? Ce débat n'est pas encore véritablement entamé.

Morell i Torra interroge par ailleurs la supposée ancestralité de certains aspects de l'organisation communautaire guarani (en particulier son « institutionnalité » à partir de la figure des capitaineries). Il les situe plutôt comme le résultat d'un processus d'organisation et unification récent, indissociable de l'action des ONG et des espaces ouverts par les politiques multiculturelles des années 90, relativement éloigné du discours d'ancestralité qui prévaut dans les abordages théoriques sur les autonomies indigènes. Ainsi, le gouvernement autonome se situerait comme une « solution hybride » entre mimétisme juridique occidental et adoption d'éléments culturels propres ou revendiqués comme tels.

Cela n'invalide toutefois pas les changements opérés en matière de réappropriation de la démocratie par les populations indigènes : une vraie décentralisation est en cours rééquilibrant les pouvoirs (et le budget public) en faveur des zones rurales indigènes ; l'abolition des partis politiques comme agents privilégiés du système de gouvernement situe les communautés comme le nouveau protagoniste de la vie politique ; l'imposition de la parité femmes-hommes pour les différentes instances de l'Autonomie encourage l'émergence d'un nouveaux leadership et interroge les pratiques en matière de genre.

Le défi de la construction d'une démocratie interculturelle

Si le système des partis politiques a été formellement proscrit, l'action des individus liés aux partis reconnus au niveau national reste présente, notamment en milieu urbain. Leur action cherche à provoquer des divisions entre les indigènes, surtout avec la discussion des Plans Opératifs Annuels et des budgets des instances du GAIOC. On constate l'émergence de nouvelles conflictualités, y compris entre Guaranis, dans une lutte de pouvoir qui sert au maintien de la culture politique héritée du système colonial.

Les leaders guaranis sont très conscients de la composition multi-ethnique du territoire et du besoin de ne pas enfermer l'Autonomie à un entre-soi. Ils revendiquent et cherchent à promouvoir une démocratie ouverte à interculturelité, qui intègre les karaï,¹³ la population indigène des Hauts plateaux installée récemment et l'expressive minorité mennonite,¹⁴ rétive à la

participation sociale et politique au-delà des cercles de sa propre communauté. La génération d'espaces de vivre-ensemble et de coexistence interculturelle au sein d'une institutionnalité indigène qui se propose de redéfinir le pouvoir se fait, selon Morell i Tora, dans la recherche d'une nouvelle hégémonie qui bouleverse les rapports de domination et exclusion sociale.

Le processus de renouveau des premières autorités élues du GAOIC est en cours de finalisation en novembre 2021, après avoir été reporté suite à la crise politique qu'a traversée la Bolivie en 2019 et aux restrictions liées à la pandémie de covid-19. L'élection des nouvelles autorités et la réussite de cette transition représentera un pas de plus pour la consolidation de l'expérience.

Le défi de la transition économique et écologique, vers le Yaiko Kavi Päve (Bien-vivre)

Pour les guaranis, le Ñande Reko (leur façon d'être) apporte de la liberté et du bonheur, dans une dimension de célébration, de fête en communauté, de réciprocité, où s'affirme le sens de l'accueil. Le Ñande Reko guarani renvoie à la quête de la terre sans maux (Ivi Maraëi), territoire mythique où la vie s'exprime dans toute sa plénitude.

Le processus de construction de l'Autonomie fait appel à l'identité guarani et aux valeurs identifiées dans la culture guarani. Même si leur expression dans le Statut de l'Autonomie semble, néanmoins, plus affirmée que dans les discours des principaux leaders guaranis. Interrogées sur le sujet, des autorités guaranis tout en faisant référence à la façon de vivre des ancêtres, admettent que des principes comme le Teko Kavi (vie harmonieuse) ou le Motiro (travail communautaire et solidaire) s'érodent au quotidien.

Le Bien-Vivre est érigé en finalité de la nouvelle entité territoriale (article 2 du Statut). Il guide la vision de développement et sous-tend les dispositions concernant l'organisation économique et productive de Charagua Iyambae, qui fait toute la place à la souveraineté alimentaire et à l'approche agroécologique. Le Statut fixe nombreuses dispositions en matière de conservation des ressources naturelles et de protection environnementale. Les orientations sont ambitieuses, mais encadrées par un contexte pas forcément porteur, où les logiques extractivistes tendent à se maintenir.

En effet, la possibilité de voir émerger et se consolider un processus de décolonisation de l'État et sa pluralité dépend aussi de la transformation des politiques économiques et du rapport à la Nature.

L'histoire de l'exploitation du territoire de Charagua Iyambae est intrinsèquement lié au régime des haciendas. La mémoire de l'esclavage est encore présente. La vision dominante de l'agriculture est basée sur l'élevage extensif, dans une logique de production pour des besoins et des profits externes au territoire. Ces éleveurs, grands propriétaires fonciers, constituent l'élite économique locale. La majorité d'entre eux n'habitent pas sur place et investissent ailleurs les revenus générés par leur activité. Le développement de la région et son nouveau modèle de gouvernance leur importent peu ou pas à cause de leur manque d'attachement culturel ou affectif au territoire.

Par ailleurs, on assiste aussi à une expansion de la frontière agricole impulsée par le gouvernement central. Des nouvelles dynamiques de colonisation se mettent en place sur des terres des réserves naturelles avec l'installation de populations des Hauts plateaux andins, étrangères à la culture guarani, et arrivées sans concertation avec les nouvelles autorités. On

dénombrerait en 2019, au moins 36 installations illégales. Avec l'arrivée des colons avance aussi le modèle d'agriculture productiviste, pas remis en cause par les gouvernements du MAS (Mouvement au socialisme), malgré la rhétorique sur le Bien Vivre et sur le respect de la Pachamama. Les organisations paysannes et des organisations de producteurs assument le discours de modernisation de l'agriculture et revendiquent, par exemple, l'accès à des semences OGM, considérées comme plus productives.

Conclusion

Beaucoup de chemin a été parcouru depuis l'approbation par 56 % des habitants de Charagua de la première autonomie indigène en Bolivie en 2009. L'esprit insufflé par la Constitution de l'Etat Plurinational porte peut-être moins aujourd'hui. Mais l'expérience du gouvernement autonome de Charagua Iyambae s'installe et ouvre la voie.

Les défis sont énormes notamment pour rendre audibles les demandes des autorités autonomes face au pouvoir central : la renégociation du pacte fiscal – pour en faire de la place aux autonomies – en est une des principales expressions. Par ailleurs, le gouvernement autonome a ses propres défis internes qui vont du maintien de la cohésion et de la cohérence dans ses structures à la lutte contre la corruption (avec des résultats intéressants dans ce domaine, fruit des mécanismes de contrôle social des élus au sein du système assembléaire) ; sans oublier celui de l'invention de nouveaux modes de relation à la population en général et au mouvement social qui le porte...

La réussite d'une démocratie multiculturelle portée par des indigènes sur un territoire aussi vaste est, en quelque sorte, une réponse locale à l'appel du Pape François dans son encyclique *Fratelli Tutti* de « réaliser la fraternité à partir des peuples et des nations qui vivent l'amitié sociale ». « Par des renoncements et de la patience, un gouvernant peut aider à créer ce magnifique polyèdre où tout le monde trouve une place. » (*Fratelli Tutti*, n°190)

Ce tour d'horizon des dynamiques politiques, économiques, sociales et culturelles à l'œuvre à Charagua ne pouvait pas se clôturer sans une mention aux personnes qui incarnent ces changements. Elles ouvrent le chemin sans avoir de modèle préalable. En tant que responsables politiques indigènes, elles doivent répondre non seulement à leurs bases, mais aussi aux besoins en matière d'administration publique, avec des codes contraignants éloignés de leur expérience. Elles se forment en dialoguant avec des références contradictoires et en tension. Par ailleurs, la portée transformatrice de l'expérience dépasse la sphère politique et suscite l'opposition des intérêts économiques dominants. Malgré ce poids, les élus de Charagua Iyambae assument leur mandat avec une abnégation admirable.

A Charagua Iyambae on voit converger les batailles pour la transition écologique et sociale et pour la construction d'une nouvelle hégémonie culturelle. Loin des grandes capitales, dans les combats quotidiens de Dina, Nelly, Delcy, Luis, Silvia, Adhemar, Ronald et tant d'autres, se joue aussi la possibilité d'émergence d'une nouvelle expression de l'État et d'un renouveau démocratique.

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¹ Parmi lesquelles, on souligne CIPCA (Centre de recherche et de promotion de la paysannerie), organisation liée aux jésuites.

² Au long de l'histoire, et notamment pendant la période de colonisation, le positionnement de l'Église catholique vis-à-vis des populations indigènes a aussi été à l'origine de « douleur et souffrance ». Cela a fait l'objet d'actes symboliques de demande de pardon par les Papes Jean Paul II en 1992 et par François en 2015. A la suite de Bartolomé de Las Casas, nombreuses églises locales se sont engagées dans la défense des peuples indigènes.

³ Discours lors de la rencontre avec les populations de l'Amazonie (Puerto Maldonado, Pérou), janvier 2018.

⁴ « Les peuples autochtones ont le droit à l'autodétermination. En vertu de ce droit, ils déterminent librement leur statut politique et assurent librement leur développement économique, social et culturel » (article 3).

« Les peuples autochtones, dans l'exercice de leur droit à l'autodétermination, ont le droit d'être autonomes et de s'administrer eux-mêmes pour tout ce qui touche à leurs affaires intérieures et locales, ainsi que de disposer des moyens de financer leurs activités autonomes » (article 4).

⁵ Selon le recensement de 2012, 40,6% de la population se reconnaît comme indigène. Les Quechuas avec 45,6% et les Aymara avec 42,4% sont les plus nombreux parmi les 36 peuples indigènes de la Bolivie

⁶ Pour le moment, il n'existe pas encore de districts indigènes constitués en Bolivie. Dans la région du Chaco, au moins 4 processus impliquant des guaranis sont en cours (à Guacareta, Villa Vaca Guzmán, Camiri et Monte Agudo).

⁷ Charagua Iyambae, Uru Chipaya, Raqaypampa, Salinas et Kereimba Iyaambae, dont les deux dernières en 2021. Raqaypampa est la seule autonomie par voie de reconnaissance d'un TIOC.

⁸ Le peuple guarani rassemble 2,1% de la population bolivienne qui se reconnaissent indigènes (soit environ 58.900 personnes). Il se concentre notamment dans la région du Chaco, qui s'étale sur 16 municipalités dans 3 départements (Santa Cruz, Tarija, Chuquisaca).

⁹ Les capitaineries sont l'unité de base territoriale de l'organisation communautaire guarani.

¹⁰ Le Programme Nina a été mis en place en 1989 par un consortium d'ONG boliviennes, dont CIPCA et UNITAS, pour contribuer au renforcement des organisations indigènes, originaires et paysannes de Bolivie, en proposant des espaces de formation politique et sociale. Son nom, Nina, vient du mot aymara et quechua qui veut dire « feu », choisit pour représenter l'énergie de vie dans chaque être humain.

¹¹ Leader, autorité, en guarani.

¹² Assemblée de l'Autonomie. Instance de délibération constituée par 4 délégués (2 femmes, 2 hommes) élus dans chacune des 6 zones de Charagua Iyambae (4 territoires indigènes et 2 zones urbaines), auxquels se joignent 1 représentant élu des 3 zones naturelles de conservation. Ses membres ne bénéficient pas de salaires.

¹³ Non-indigène en guarani.

¹⁴ Les communautés mennonites ont leur origine en Europe centrale à l'époque de la Reforme protestante du XVI siècle. Elles se caractérisent par l'adoption de pratiques très hermétiques en matière religieuse et culturelle. Leur arrivée en Bolivie a été favorisée par le premier gouvernement de Victor Paz Estensoro, qui – à travers le décret suprême n° 4192 d'octobre 1955 – a accordé des privilèges à leurs collectivités agricoles. A Charagua, ils se sont installés à partir de 1987, et ont étendu leur présence par des achats irréguliers de terres auprès de certains capitaines guaranis. Des données recompilerées par la Fundación Tierra, entre 2010 et 2012, parlent de 8.478 mennonites à Charagua (1.422 familles) sur 51.487 hectares.

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The presidents of IMCS and ICMICA serve as the main editors of the *Pax Romana Journal*. In 2021, they are:

- **Ravi Tissera** (Sri Lanka), president of IMCS: is a young lawyer from Sri Lanka who served as the Asia Pacific coordinator of IMCS Pax Romana before joining the international coordination of the organization.
- **Kevin Ahern, PhD** (USA) outgoing president of ICMICA (2016-2021): is a Catholic theologian specializing in the ethics of church movements and structures. He is an associate professor of religious studies at Manhattan College and the author of several books in Catholic theology.

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About Pax Romana

Pax Romana is the name for a family of Catholic lay movements engaging students, intellectuals and professionals since 1921.



The International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-Pax Romana) founded in 1921, brings together Catholic university students and national student movements with a shared mission of mobilizing for faith and action. As a youth-led youth movement, IMCS promotes student leadership and responsibility in life, the Church's mission and in the world. While the name and structure of each national movement within IMCS often differs from country to country, IMCS members are united by our spirituality of action and a shared commitment to the option for the poor, the marginalized and creation, our common home. Currently IMCS has more than 88 national member movements and federations coordinated by six regional secretariats and the international office based in Paris, France. IMCS has regional offices in four continents: IMCS Africa (Nairobi, Kenya); IMCS Asia Pacific (Manila, Philippines); JECI-MIEC Europe (Brussels, Belgium); and MIEC-JECI Latin America (Quito, Ecuador). www.imcs-miec.org



The International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA-Pax Romana) is a global community of Catholic intellectuals and professionals engaged in the world with a spirituality of action. Since 1947, ICMICA has united a wide range of individuals, small communities, national movements, and international networks with a shared commitment to support one another across borders and to integrate faith and action for a more just world. Inspired by the Gospel and the Catholic social tradition, ICMICA members are committed to the option for the poor, integral human development, interreligious dialogue, and the empowerment of women and young professionals. In Africa, Europe, and Latin America, the movement is served by regional teams. ICMICA includes several networks of specific professions, including The International Secretariat of the Catholic Lawyers (MIJC); The International Secretariat of the Catholic Engineers, Agronomists and Industrialists (SIIAEC); and The International Secretariat of Catholic High School Teachers (SIESC). www.icmica-miic.org

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International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
Mouvement International des Intellectuels Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Intelectuales Católicos