

**The Catholic Church and Trade Unions in Brazil:
A Case Study of the Relationship Between the
Dioceses of São Paulo and Santo André and
the Metalworkers of Greater São Paulo, 1970-1986**

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Abstract

The thesis is a study of religion and social change seen from the perspective of Brazil's Roman Catholic Church and urban Labour Movement. The relationship between Catholicism and urban trade union struggles is explored within the specific institutional setting of the metalworkers' unions and Roman Catholic dioceses of Greater São Paulo during the period 1970-1986.

Although the value of the study derives partly from the quantitative significance of the institutions selected (São Paulo's archdiocese is the world's largest and the metalworkers' union of the region is the largest in Latin America), it is their qualitative make-up that is of most interest. On the one hand, this is marked by a church firmly committed to liberation theology perspectives; and on the other hand by a deeply divided labour movement which is split into radical and conservative factions.

By exploring relations between these respective groupings, the thesis highlights the contradictions and dilemmas faced by a radical church seeking to reconcile traditional catholic themes of unity with its more recent acceptance of the class-divided nature of society and the so-called "preferential option for the poor".

The study also discusses in detail the profound historical realignment of relations between radical sectors of the Church and the progressive Labour Movement during the 1970's and early 1980's. It examines the pivotal role of Catholic labour militancy in this process of rapprochement, together with the institutional as well as self-imposed limits to this process.

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Introduction

"Unity is one of the notes of the Church and yet the class struggle divides men; is the unity of the Church compatible with class struggle?"
G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*¹

I.1 Catholic Unity and Class Conflict

Liberation Theology² originally emerged in Latin America in the 1960's and early 1970's. It was especially with regard to the Roman Catholic Church's social teaching and mission that this new theology stood many traditional concepts on their head. Amongst other things, liberation theologians argued for an increasingly historicised vision of the Church, i.e., one which was rooted in the social problems of the day. More significantly still, they coupled that call with the demand that the Church should operate from the perspective of the poorest members of society and not, as had been the case for centuries in Latin America, from the perspective of the ruling classes.

It is not the aim of this study to explain how and why these changes came about since such issues have already been dealt with in considerable detail by other authors.³ For present purposes, what is of significance is that some of these concepts, particularly the emphasis on the poor, came to permeate the discourse of Latin American bishops themselves.

× Clear evidence of this shift comes in the conclusions of the second and third extraordinary conferences of the Latin American Episcopal Council (Conselho Episcopal Latino-Americano, CELAM). In 1968, the CELAM Bishops' Conference, the key gathering of bishops from all over Latin America, undertook the rhetorical break with the Church's past of power and privilege. This was at its Second Extraordinary Conference, in the Colombian city of Medellin. There, in a document on "Poverty and the Church", the bishops focused upon the example of Christ "Who 'being rich became poor' (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9) in order to redeem us." They went on to assert that:

a poor Church: - Denounces the unjust lack of this world's goods and the sins that begets it; - Preaches and lives in spiritual poverty, as an attitude of spiritual childhood and openness to the Lord; - Is herself bound to material poverty. The poverty of the Church is, in effect, a constant factor in the history of salvation (nos. 4-5).⁴

To a certain extent, the Third Latin American Bishops' Conference (held in the Mexican city of Puebla in 1979) merely took the process a stage further by officially adopting what it termed "A Preferential Option for the Poor". Here the bishops emphasised, for example,

the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor aimed at their integral liberation.⁵

It was this preferential option which, above all, came to symbolise the historic about-

face of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. However, this comparatively recent conversion to an option for the poor not only brought with it a new agenda, in the sense of a reorientation of priorities, but simultaneously highlighted a number of major dilemmas. One of the most fundamental of these, and a central theme which this thesis seeks to address in the context of the Catholic Church and metalworkers of São Paulo, is that of how Catholicism can effectively hope to square its own multi-class composition and universalising discourses with (a), the fact of a society divided amongst conflicting classes, and (b), its stated desire for a preferential option for the poor.

1.2 *The Brazilian Context - The Resurgence of Union Militancy and the Development of Links Between the Church and the Trade Unions*

Between 1978 and 1980 Brazil was gripped by a massive strike wave. At its height, in 1979, more than three million workers were directly involved and fifteen out of the nation's twenty-three states were affected.

What rendered these events of such historical significance was the fact that not since well before the establishment of a repressive military dictatorship, in 1964, had the country witnessed strike action on anything like this scale or with this degree of success. On the contrary, under military rule the nearest comparable form of industrial action (in terms of its open defiance of labour legislation) had involved only a few hundred workers in 1968, and their efforts had been quickly liquidated by sheer brute force. The strikes of 1978-80 therefore underlined the end of an era. Not only did they challenge military might, but they also took the working classes out of their years of isolation and defensiveness and showed to both themselves and the country at large that they were alive and ready to kick.

The centre of the resurgence in this trade union militancy was confined to one geographical area and one group of workers in particular: the metalworkers of the industrial belt based in and around the city of São Paulo. Their level of spatial concentration, political organisation and sheer numbers, provided a central reference point and bulwark to the labour movement as a whole. Taken collectively, metalworkers from this region were (a), the first to go out on strike, and (b), the largest single body of workers to do so. In addition to this, they possessed a disproportionately high strategic significance of an economic and, therefore, political nature. This was because they were present in the lucrative automotive and engineering industry, one of the most dynamic and powerful sectors of the Brazilian economy, and a key contributor to the country's so-called economic miracle of the late 1960's and early 1970's.⁶ Thus, in contrast to a numerically significant group like the teachers, for instance, a strike amongst metalworkers would quickly be felt in the rest of the economy as well as the country's trade exports.

It is in the light of these characteristics that a growing body of academic study has been devoted to the metalworkers of this region.⁷ The onset of political democratisation in the

1980's, and a new phase in the politics of the labour movement, has done little to diminish the strategic importance of the metalworkers. It was during this decade of liberalisation that Brazil finally gained trade union confederations free from government tutelage. Once again, the metalworkers of the São Paulo region were at the forefront of these developments.

What is striking, however, is just how little attention has been devoted to the issue of whether there are any linkages between the dramatic events of the 1970's and 1980's and the Roman Catholic Church of the region.⁸

To some observers, this may appear to be a somewhat artificial line of enquiry. Even the briefest look at the events, however, demonstrates that the Catholic Church was closely involved in the strikes of 1978-80. Just to give a few examples: at various stages during the disputes: (a) union headquarters were transferred to Catholic churches; (b) the bishop of the region was involved in negotiations on behalf of the workers; (c) parishes collected foodstuffs and money for the strikers; (d) pickets were organised through Church organisations; (e) the local bishop attended picket lines; (f) the Catholic Church officially took over union strike funds; (g) a Catholic priest was given leave to live in the house of one strike leader during the dispute; (h) the Church issued public statements of solidarity with the strikers; and (i), the President of Brazil, General Figueiredo, accused the Archbishop of São Paulo of "inciting the strike" - a crime punishable by imprisonment.

Thus, it was obvious for all, even General Figueiredo himself, that a connection between the Catholic Church and the trade unions existed. But what was not so clear at the time - or since, for that matter - was the real substance of this relationship. Most leading studies which have dealt with the metalworkers, either only make passing reference to the presence of the Catholic Church, or, when the linkages are touched upon in a little more detail, largely confine themselves to noting the concrete instances of solidarity rather than situating the relationship in its historical and institutional contexts.⁹ In part, then, this study is an attempt to redress the balance. It deliberately sets out to make the linkages between the Catholic Church and the trade unions the principal object of sociological attention.

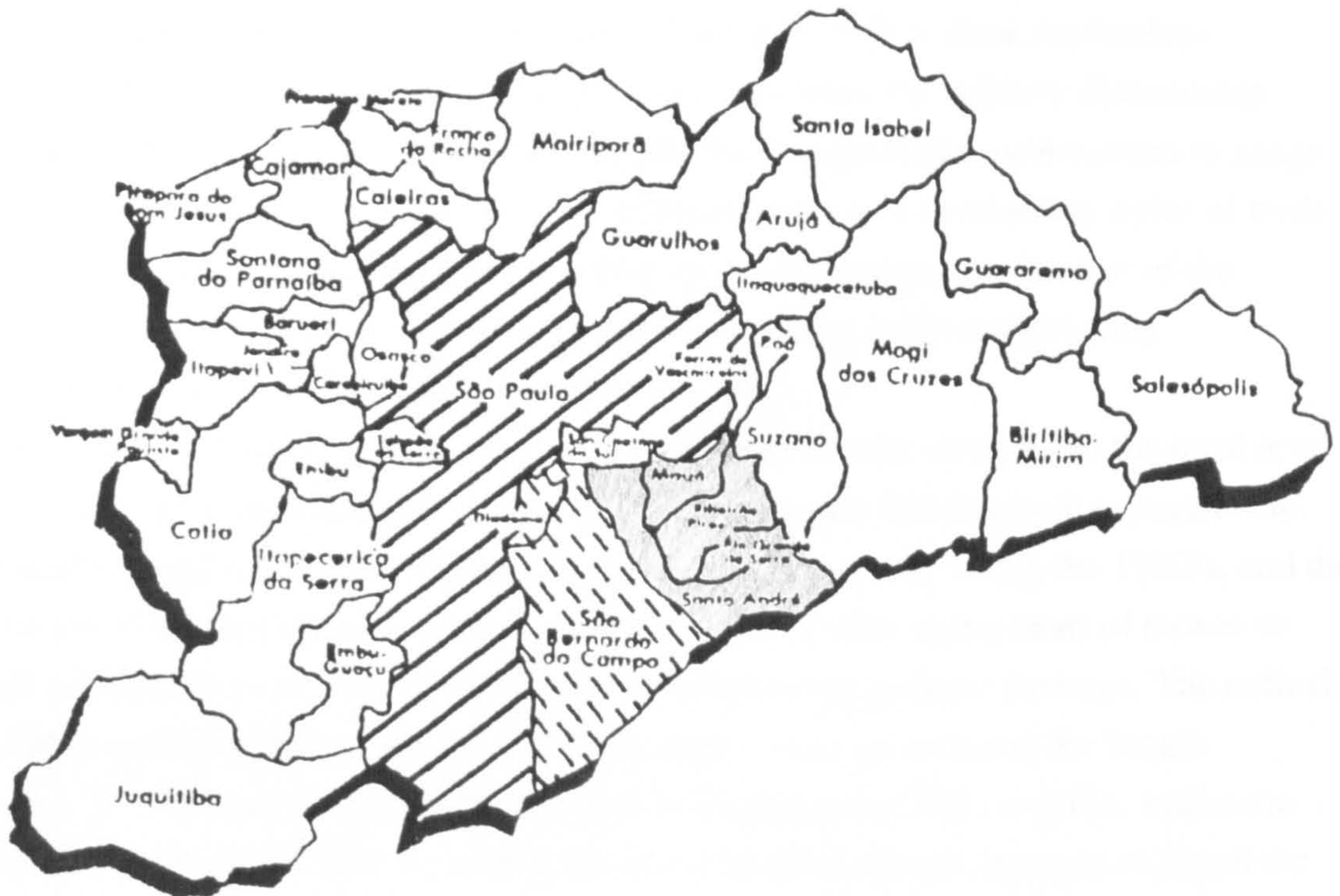
1.3 The Significance of Greater São Paulo as a Case Study of Brazilian Unionism

The decision to take Greater São Paulo (see figure 1 overleaf) as the geographic area analysis stemmed not so much from the actual preponderance of a strategic group of workers within this area (central though that was), as from factors which made comparative analysis possible. In essence, the region encompasses not one, but two radically contrasting and, more importantly, dominant models of trade unionism.

The older, numerically stronger, and more conservative is based in the capital's 400,000 strong São Paulo Metalworkers' Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Metalúrgicos de São Paulo). At critical moments in its history the leadership of this

Fig. 1.

Map of Greater São Paulo municipalities showing territorial limits of the Metalworkers' Unions of São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo and Santo André.



Territorial limit of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union (includes the municipality of São Paulo).



Territorial limit of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union (includes the municipalities of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema).



Territorial limit of the Santo André Metalworkers' Union (includes the municipalities of Santo André, Mauá, Riberão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra).

union received backing from the forces of the military dictatorship. The other, younger, numerically weaker, and more radical form of union politics, is based in the São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema Metalworkers' Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de São Bernardo do Campo e Diadema; hereafter know as the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union), and the Santo André Metalworkers' Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Santo André), which between them have some 200,000 members. By contrast, at critical moments in their history, such as the strikes of the late 1970's, these leaderships encountered sustained verbal and physical opposition from the military dictatorship.

In effect, then, a study within the Greater São Paulo region allows observers to gauge how the Catholic Church situated itself in relationship to two contrasting styles of trade unionism. If, as will be shown, there is a difference in treatment on the part of the Church, then that, in turn, will help us to identify not only its own short term conjunctural objectives, but longer term ones as well.

The validity of these comparative dimensions is not merely confined to the local level either. Through an examination of conflicts within Greater São Paulo, it is possible to gain useful insights into the national situation. That is because during the 1980's, and the relaxation of military rule, the unions mentioned above were at the heart of moves to found nationwide trade union confederations in their own political image. The radicals, in alliance with unionists from all over the country, went on to found the Single Workers' Confederation (Central Única dos Trabalhadores, CUT) in 1983, whilst the conservatives, again in alliance with unionists throughout Brazil, went on to found the General Workers' Confederation (Central Geral dos Trabalhadores, CGT), in 1986.

It is in the light of this national polarisation, which partially reflected the situation in Greater São Paulo, that the question arises as to whether the differences in treatment accorded by the Churches of this region were similarly transposed on to the national stage. In short, was there a difference in policy towards the new confederations?, and, what does this tell us about the Church?

1.4 Three Reasons Why a Study is Needed

Earlier in this introduction it was noted just how little the issue of Catholicism and metalworkers had been dealt with despite the Church's obvious presence on certain occasions. To some extent this is understandable given the justifiable concern of social scientists with the relationship of metalworkers to more traditional themes like union reorganisation; the democratisation process; the formation of political parties; class consciousness; factory militancy; and so on. That is why, for instance, regarding his own study of São Bernardo metalworkers, Humphrey openly states that his chosen:

strategy of taking the workplace and union as a point of departure entails a corresponding weakness in discussing the role of the Church...within the labour movement.¹⁰

But whilst all social science necessarily involves choices like the one above, in the case

of the Catholic Church at least, there has been a cumulative price to be paid: ignorance as to its motives and actions regarding labour. In many other cases this would not be such a big problem; but precisely because it is ignorance about one organisation in particular, the Catholic Church, it represents a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs. This is for three main reasons.

Firstly, because one is speaking of an institution of tremendous socio-political and cultural significance, and not a marginal entity. Even if, as has been established, its position is gradually being eroded by secularism and the advent of new religious sects, it nevertheless remains the dominant religion throughout Brazil as, indeed, the rest of Latin America.¹¹

On a general level, this overwhelming presence has provoked many social scientists researching the Church to ask whether it has affected the prospects for social change in Brazil. Over the past two decades, much of the emphasis has been channeled towards the issue of relations between Church and state, the democratic transition, political parties, and so on.¹² In sharp contrast to this, however, comparatively little attention has been directed towards the issue of whether an institution of such socio-cultural significance might affect the prospects of change in the field of labour relations.

The second reason for exploring the question arises from the simple fact that the Roman Catholic Church has, indeed, affected the prospects of change in this area. The Church has proved to be anything but a sleeping giant. This thesis will demonstrate that it can and has flexed its muscles to considerable effect. The fact is that labour has become a major issue within the Church, which in turn has become a significant consideration amongst trade union ranks. The late 1970's is a case in point, and thereby tends to act as the natural focus of attention, but closer examination shows varying forms and intensities of involvement throughout the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a deeper and wider examination of these events and processes together with the issues involved.

Finally, the third motive for exploring this question arises from the nature of that involvement. A clear linkage exists with progressive currents of thought - in particular, Liberation Theology perspectives - which have come to influence not only large sectors of the Brazilian Catholic Church, but also, substantial sectors of the Church throughout Latin America. To this extent, therefore, the case of São Paulo represents the practical implementation of one leading theoretical approach to a question of great relevance.

1.5 The Significance of Greater São Paulo as a Case Study of Brazilian Catholicism

Although questions about how the Church theoretically and practically mediates such contradictory elements as its own unity with the class divided nature of society can only receive limited treatment in a study such as the present, the example of São Paulo's metalworkers and Catholic Church does, nevertheless, represent an important test case. This is for two reasons. First, is São Paulo's aforementioned status as a key centre of

Brazilian urban class struggles. Second, as detailed below, is the unique qualitative and quantitative ecclesiastical dimensions to the Catholic Church in the São Paulo area.

In common with the metalworkers of the region, the Catholic Church is both large and dynamic. Infact, the Archdiocese of São Paulo far outstrips the metalworkers insofar as it can claim to be not merely the largest unit of its kind in Brazil or South America (as is the case of the Metalworkers' Union of São Paulo), but in the world.¹³ It is worth bearing in mind, for instance, that population of the tiny country of Nicaragua, which has received considerable attention from scholars of the Church and social change, can fit into the archdiocese several times over.

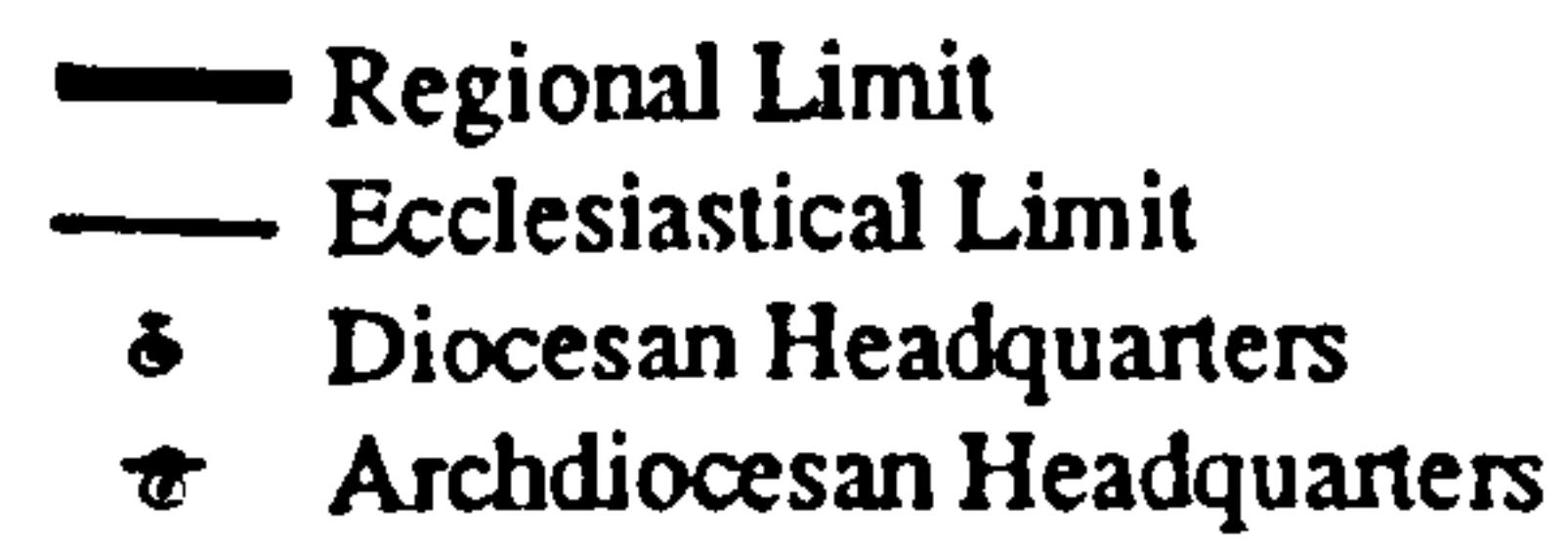
Size alone has tended to accord the archdiocese a place of strategic and symbolic importance within the Brazilian Catholic Church. In 1986, for instance, 11 out of 47 São Paulo state bishops came from the archdiocese, i.e., almost 25% of total votes. Over the past decades this has been reflected in the frequent choice of bishops from the archdiocese to occupy the top posts of Sul-1, the ecclesiastical name for São Paulo state (see figure 2 overleaf). As a proportion of the country's total of 371 bishops, Sul-1 is comparatively small, but it does represent one out of a much more limited 14 ecclesiastical divisions covering the whole of Brazil. Given that the state is able to feed initiatives of its own into the highest levels in the National Brazilian Bishops' Conference (Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros, CNBB) this means that the bishops of São Paulo possess a very strong institutional platform within the CNBB. Their institutional weight is further complemented by the presence of one cardinal, out a nationwide total of four, within the archdiocese.¹⁴

In international terms too, São Paulo gains a certain status as the largest archdiocese in the most populous Catholic nation and continent on earth.

What has really tended to mark out the archdiocese, however, is its dynamism. Part of this dynamism is attributable to secular factors. That is to say, insofar as the Church is present in a region as politically and economically sensitive as Sao Paulo, there is a unique socio-political backdrop against which to compare the institution's theory and practice. Much more, though, is owed to the figure of Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, who was appointed archbishop in 1970.

Under his leadership the Catholic Church took an active stance against the military dictatorship's human rights abuses. It was this courageous policy which helped to bring the archdiocese to world attention. Away from the glare of publicity, however, other major changes were also taking place. These included Dom Paulo's championing of a more democratic form of decision-making within the Church; the production of pastoral plans in key social mission areas, which included urban labour; the support of Liberation Theology perspectives within teaching seminaries; the support of grassroots initiatives; and the firm support of the preferential option for the poor. In other words, unlike many other instances in Latin America and Brazil, Dom Paulo's Church undertook the implementation of a preferential option for the poor from a radical perspective.

CNBB REGIONAL SUL-1
The State of São Paulo



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It is the simultaneous presence of these qualitative and quantitative factors (secular as well as religious) that makes an analysis of this particular diocese of much wider significance. In effect, it provides a privileged opportunity of seeing how, when it is favourably disposed, the Church seeks to come to grips with the thorny issue of its own identity in a society divided amongst classes.

With regard to the choice of the Diocese of Santo André for study, this arose principally because within its borders lie the Metalworkers' Unions of São Bernardo and Santo André, i.e., the radical end of the labour spectrum. As will be made clear later on, one reason why the Archdiocese of São Paulo became involved with the strikes of the late 1970's was because it shared common borders with the Diocese of Santo André (see figure 3 overleaf). The fact remains, however, that it was the Diocese of Santo André which remained at the forefront of relations between these more radical metalworkers' unions and the wider Catholic Church. Given my aim of conducting a comparative study of the metalworker unions, there therefore existed a corresponding need to examine this diocese as well.

1.6 The Church and Social Change - A Theoretical Framework

The principal focus of the present work is upon the urban Brazilian labour movement and the Roman Catholic Church in a given place and at a given moment in time. Underlying many of the questions posed, however, is an implicit vision of the Church and society. In order to put the more specific concerns of the present study into perspective, it is to these broader issues that I must now briefly turn.

Approaches to the study of Roman Catholicism in Latin American society have variously emphasised two key factors at work. One concerns institutional dynamics, and the other, class dynamics. It would be wrong to suggest that two distinctive schools exist, but certainly there are marked differences of approach to the question.

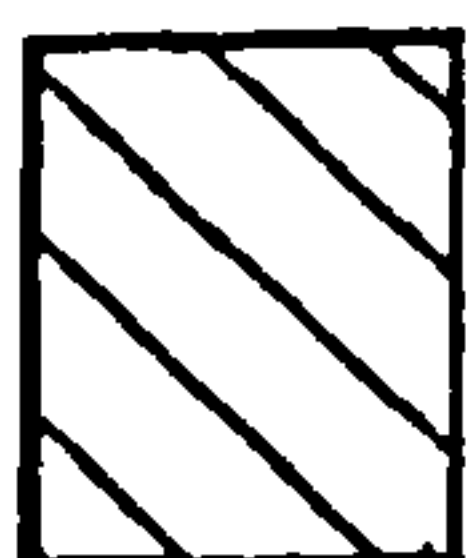
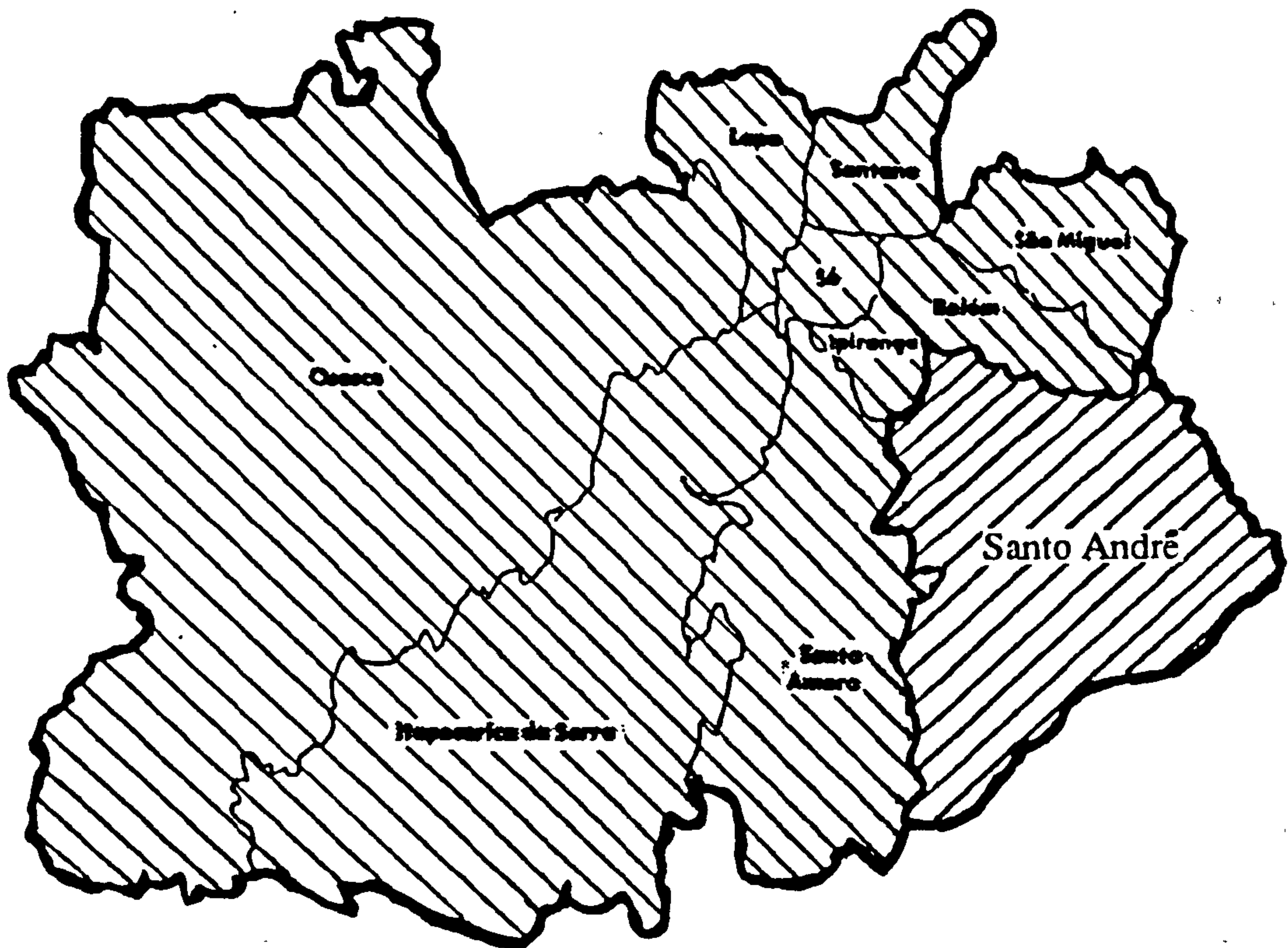
The institutional dimension to the Church has been stressed by a wide variety of authors. Ivan Vallier, in his *Catholicism, Social Control and Modernisation in Latin America*,¹⁵ was one of the first to suggest that the Church should essentially be conceived as an influence maximising organisation. Albeit with certain criticisms and different emphases, many others have held to elements of this organisational analysis approach. A central theme common amongst authors of the Brazilian situation, like Bruneau, Della Cava, and Moreira Alves,¹⁶ is that the Church is somewhat akin to an elaborate self-defence mechanism. In essence, it attempts to preserve a given series of interests in an ever-changing social framework which, in the twentieth century at least, has done much to undermine these interests. Thus, for example, its disestablishment from the state posed problems, i.e., loss of political power, for which the Church sought solutions in the shape of informal alliances with leading political figures during the 1930's. Similarly, the rise of secularism and Protestantism, the declining numbers attending mass and entering the priesthood are the kinds of challenges to which the

Fig. 3.

The Archdiocese of São Paulo
(with episcopal subdivisions)

AND

The Diocese of Santo André

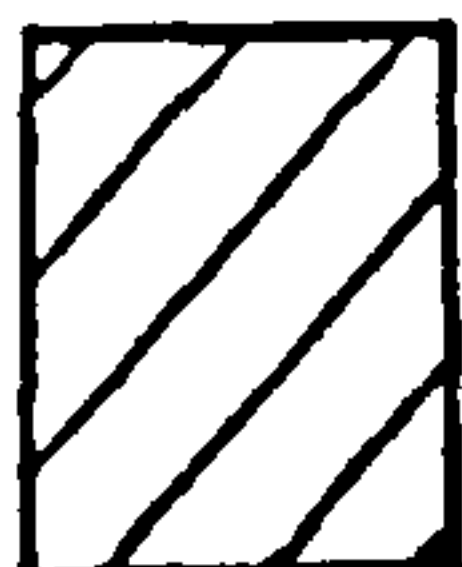


THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SÃO PAULO

Municipalities: Baueri, Carapicuíba, Cotia, Embu, Embu-Guaçu, Ibiúna, Itapeva da Serra, Itapevi, Jandira, Juquitiba, Mairinque, Osasco, São Paulo, São Roque, Taboão da Serra, Vargem Grande Paulista.

Population: 9,781,022 (1980 census)

Area: 5,060 km²



THE DIOCESE OF SANTO ANDRÉ

Municipalities: Diadema, Mauá, Riberão Pires, Rio Grande da Serra, Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, São Caetano do Sul.

Population: 1,652,781 (1980 census)

Area: 742 km²

Sources: Adapted from CNBB, Igreja no Brasil: Diretório Litúrgico 1987., CNBB, Brasília, 1986, p. 58; Centro Estatística Religiosa e Investigações Sociais (CERIS), Anuário Católico do Brasil: 1985., CERIS, Rio de Janeiro, 1985, pp. 971 and 1039., Folha de São Paulo.

Catholic Church is said to have been forced to adapt.

One of the difficulties associated with the organisational approach, however, concerns the fact that ecclesiastical interests are much more than just a series of objective and unambiguous givens. They are hierarchically ordered and, more often than not, a partially or even wholly contradictory totality. It is for this reason that one observer of the Brazilian situation, Scott Mainwaring, rightly notes how:

Most organisational analysts have understated the conflicts between different conceptions of institutional objectives - different models of the Church. Defending the Church's interests includes such potentially contradictory goals as encouraging high mass attendance, fighting Communism, fighting for social justice, and having a close relationship with the elite.¹⁷

In no way does this kind of criticism imply that institutional dynamics are of marginal significance. Instead, what it seeks to do is to draw attention to their potentially conflictual as well as consensual make-up.

My own thesis underlines the presence of these dualities and contradictions. It shows that whilst there are indeed remarkably wide areas of consensus which circumscribe the activities of all groups within the Church in relation to labour issues, there are, simultaneously, starkly differing conceptions as to what the interests and the role of the Church on this issue are and should be. Unfortunately, the institutional peculiarities of the Church, especially its desire to present a consensual line and a united front, tend to conceal these conflicts from the outside world; one is not dealing with the adversarialism of, for example, the British legal system, which is built around the polarisation of positions. One of the aims of the present study, therefore, is to tease out the Church's conflicting positions.

Another criticism of organisational approaches to the study of the Church concerns their undue emphasis on the role of leadership to the exclusion of other groups and dynamics. That leadership occupies a special role within the Church is not in question. Catholic bishops possess executive powers which are conferred upon them from above (ultimately from the Pope himself), rather than democratically from below (i.e., from clerical or lay followers). This notoriously centralised and vertically structured system of power relations has, quite understandably, given rise to the view that hierarchy is the key determinant of ecclesiastical outlooks and activity. Much weight, therefore, has been attached to the work of progressive bishops, like Dom Hélder Câmara in the north east of Brazil and Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns in the south east, for having shifted the stance of the Church away from its conservative past and in a more liberal direction as one means of preserving its influence.

The author Luiz Gonzaga de Souza Lima provides one of the most effective critiques of this overemphasis upon leadership. In his book, *Evolução Política dos Católicos e da Igreja no Brasil*,¹⁸ he draws attention to alternative foci of change, in particular, to the role and significance of radical lay Catholic militants. He begins, quite correctly, in my view, from the premise that these Catholic militants belong first and foremost to social

classes and their attendant dynamics of conflict, and only then constitute agents of change within the Church itself. In essence, he argues that the radicalisation of certain lay Catholic groups (like Brazilian Catholic Action (Ação Católica Brasileira, ACB) and Popular Action (Ação Popular, AP)) during the 1950's and 1960's must be seen not as a purely intra-ecclesiastical phenomenon but as part of a wider process, i.e., in the context of the political crisis (the break up of populist alliances) through which Brazil was going. Similarly, it was with the repression of political expression following the military coup of 1964, that some sectors of the institutional Church increasingly assumed the struggles of these Catholic militants and thereby constituted one of the few available channels of popular expression and resistance. The Church increasingly became a locus of class struggle as it came under attack for its defence of these groups. According to Souza Lima, the reorientation of ecclesiastical perspectives which came to favour the working classes was much more than the result of mere episcopal volition and the desire for institutional self-preservation. It was, amongst other things, the result of sustained pressure from these groups which were themselves inserted in a class divided society.

One leading Catholic intellectual and friar, Frei Betto, takes a not dissimilar view. He rightly argues that:

it was not exactly the Church which opted for the poor, but, due to the repression against the popular movement and the trade union movement, the poor made an option for the Church, in other words, within it they sought a space where they could maintain themselves organised, articulated, conscious and active. ...Thus, to the extent that the poor invaded the Church, priests and bishops began to convert themselves to Christianity.¹⁹

It is in the very nature of complex relationships of this kind that one cannot attribute change to a single factor (be it hierarchy, militancy, class conflict, Catholic doctrine, etc) especially when the weight of these factors is itself historically variable. If one takes the specific case of the Archdiocese of São Paulo during the period examined by this thesis, it becomes apparent that prior to 1970 the hierarchy constituted a significant block upon radical Catholic struggles. Thereafter, with the appointment of a new archbishop, the hierarchy began to act as a major support to radical Catholic struggles. It is also becomes clear, however, that the adoption of an increasingly class conflictive line by the Church came about not simply as a result of this shift in personnel (critical though that was), but also through the sustained pressure of Catholic militants themselves. As far as the case of Santo Andre is concerned, matters are somewhat different. There too, as will be demonstrated in a later chapter, hierarchy played a highly significant role in the rearticulation of the Church, but it did so (a), in the context of a sustained dialogue with militants, and (b), in the context of a massive labour-capital conflict.

It should be clear from the above that any a-priori attempt to oppose institutional to class dynamics is by definition a false juxta-position.

One of the most important theoretical contributions to the study of politico-religious questions, especially in the Latin American context, comes from the author Otto Maduro.

His book, *Religion and Social Conflicts*, puts forward a theoretical framework which correctly, in my view, conceives of religion as both a "product" of social conflicts, and also, as a mediator of conflict, i.e., with its own specificities and capacities for acting upon society. What follows is a brief summary of his arguments.

Maduro adopts a materialist perspective insofar as he says that any mode of production is the *conditio sine qua non* of all else, including religion. He goes on to argue that:

in a class society every religious activity is an activity by no means outside or above class conflicts. In a class society every religious activity is carried out within class conflicts, and as such is an activity permeated, limited, and oriented by these conflicts.²⁰

...class resistance to domination will impose its own orientations and limitations upon the reading, interpretation, and official definitions of the foundational message of any religion operating within subordinate classes.²¹

He further adds that:

the conflict between the opposing interests of *autonomy* on the part of the dominated and *hegemony* on the dominating will translate into a latent or open conflict in the religious field between the religious agents espousing these respective tendencies.²²

! x Both these sets of propositions appear to be strongly borne out by my own findings. As will be shown in the course of the thesis, without any exceptions whatsoever, those figures (be they bishops or militants) who were pushing for a Church strongly committed to the working classes admitted to the presence of these ideological byasses in their own reading of foundational texts, and production of new documents. This was notwithstanding their simultaneous and self-confessed desire to avoid ideological interpretations. As for the question of conflict within the religious field, despite the claims of high-ranking figures to the contrary, it was evident that here too, there were indeed both latent and open conflicts. These divisions became all the more apparent as one descended clerical ranks and passed into lay ranks.

Turning to the second major argument advanced by Maduro, i.e., religion as a relatively autonomous field of social conflicts, he suggests that:

the tendential effect of social structures, struggles, and transformations upon religious teachings and practices is a *mediate* effect - mediated by the religious field as such - and a *variable* effect - dependent upon the internal situation of the religious field.²³

In each concrete religious conjuncture, there will be a determinate set of possibilities, and impossibilities, apertures and blockages, facing the religious demands of the laity. They will limit and orientate the specific form and content of production [of religious discourses and practises] tending *transactionally* (that is, partially and unequally) to satisfy these demands.²⁴

In other words, the religious field, whilst critically circumscribed by external factors, does not directly and mechanically reproduce them, but rather, it represents a complex and indirect institutional mediation of these social forces and conflicts. The fact that it is able to act as a blocking or filtering mechanism - neither totally determined by, nor independent of, wider social forces - explains why one must always have regard to its internal specificities at any given moment in time. This is particularly so in the case of an

organisation like the Catholic Church which, over the course of centuries, and not just decades, has built up a vast bureaucratic machine, an extended division of labour, centralised power structures - in short, a series of interests which are largely concerned with the maintenance of the status quo. Indeed, it is precisely this kind of factor which helps to explain, for example, the innate conservatism of the Church, and why its whole history throughout Latin America has largely been one of adaptive rather than innovative change.

A third major proposition advanced by Maduro, and a question which is of central importance to my own thesis, is notion that:

Religions do not necessarily constitute an obstacle to the autonomy of subordinate classes, or to their alliances against domination.²⁵

He goes much further than this, however, and argues that religion may carry out a "revolutionary" role insofar as it reinforces the autonomy and alliances of dominated classes. It is suggested that this may be done at the level of (a) "class consciousness" (by which he means anything ranging from the mere collective self-perception of a dominated existence, to the advancement of strategies for overcoming this situation), (b) at the level of "class organisation" (by which he understands anything ranging from periodic meetings of the dominated to sustained meetings with the explicit aim of fighting domination in mind), and finally (c), at the level of "class mobilization" (which he takes to be evident in isolated acts of protest, or, in its most potent form, as systematic and continuous act of protest).²⁶

One of the most potent examples of this revolutionary potential was the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. In October 1980, the victorious Sandinistas even produced a document on the question of Christian participation in the revolution. There they publicly stated that:

our experience demonstrates that when Christians, supported by their faith, are capable of responding to the necessities of the people and of history, their very religious convictions lead them to revolutionary militancy.²⁷

It is clear that this situation contrasts sharply with that of Brazil during the period 1970-1986 insofar as the politics of the latter nation were characterised by a painfully slow transition from military dictatorship to presidential democracy, rather than any dramatic revolutionary socialist break with the past. In spite of this difference, however, there is plenty of evidence to substantiate Maduro's main hypotheses. Viewed within the specific context of labour struggles in Brazil, which is the main concern of the present thesis, it becomes clear that the Church acted as a buttress to working class autonomy on all the levels mentioned and, what is more, over a sustained period of time.

It is at this point that one must be careful to make certain conceptual distinctions and qualifications regarding the term Church since it is somewhat all-inclusive, and, in this sense, imprecise. The comments of the Brazilian friar, and one of the world's leading

theologians of liberation, Frei Leonardo Boff, shed some light on this question. In a 1979 article, published on the eve of the Third CELAM conference, when a polarization of views and forces was underway between different sectors of the Church, he said that:

The opposition that one presently notes - it should be well understood - does not establish itself between an official Church and a popular Church, but between Christendom (Church incarnated in the hegemonic classes) and the popular Church. The latter Church is articulated with the hierarchical Church but establishes an antagonism towards the project of a new Christendom, which would attempt...to subordinate the pastoral action of the Church to its own articulation with the hegemonic classes.²⁸

We must not view the Church at the base as a parallel Church to that great institution; the antagonism...is not established between institution and community but between Christendom (Church associated to the hegemonic powers of a class society) and popular Church (articulated with the bases).²⁹

This distinction between the Church as an institution and as a community, combined with a corresponding emphasis upon the potential for the two to articulate favourably rather than antagonistically, is, I believe, essential to an understanding of the Catholic Church. This is for two broad reasons. First, because observers must be careful not to frame conflicts (of which there are many) in terms of false juxtapositions. The fact is, on a large range of theoretical issues, persons throughout the ethico-political spectrum (a spectrum in which, for instance, I would place both the current Pope, the bishops of São Paulo, the CNBB, radical Catholic militants, and leading liberation theologians) stand together rather than in mutually divided and antagonistic camps. Naturally, the presence of agreement over many fundamental orienting principles does not preclude conflict over the precise forms by which these principles are mediated. Indeed, this theme of conflicting mediations - the adaptation of Catholic theology to conflicting historical specificities - is a recurrent theme throughout the present thesis and is discussed in some detail in the fifth chapter.

The second motive for making a distinction between Church as community and as institution, is that without it, one is either confined to a monolithic concept of what is in fact a class fractured entity; or, when the possibility of a favourable articulation is not taken into account, one asserts the existence of divisions, but exclusively in terms of a crude bipolarity of forces which are horizontally constructed and circumscribed.

Even the most cursory examination of the Latin American situation shows that the Church per se is neither monolithic, nor bipolar. Considerable plurality exists. In the case of Nicaragua, for example, there has been a marked division of the Church along horizontal lines, with open antagonisms emerging between the grass roots (who participated in the 1979 revolution) and the most senior hierarchy (which substantially resisted it). In this instance, there is nothing monolithic about the Church. In El Salvador, on the other hand, one is confronted with the figure of Archbishop Oscar Romero who, in 1980, was assassinated precisely because of his outspoken defence of a popular Church and his criticism of the right-wing military dictatorship. Here is an example where a powerful verticle linkage between grassroots radicals and the hierarchy existed.

What is required, then, is a case by case analysis. With regard to Brazil, and the Archdiocese of São Paulo, it will be shown that the relation of forces within the Church shifted substantially over time. Under Cardinal Agnelo Rossi (1964-1970), for instance, there was little or no articulation between hierarchy and popular Church. On the contrary, there was deep mutual hostility. But with the arrival of Dom Paulo, in 1970, that began to change, and one of Brazil's most solid examples of an interchange along vertical lines was developed. Significantly, it was this vertically integrated model of the Church, and not just any model, which came to act as a buttress to working class autonomy. That is precisely why, as noted earlier, care is needed with a term as all-embracing as "the Church".

The final qualification to the concept of the Church which needs to be made, concerns its international character. It is perhaps easier, in the light of conflicts between national churches and the Vatican during the 1980's, to appreciate the specificity of the latter. Like class, it too represents a powerful - admittedly more direct - constraint upon the actions of any given national church. Quite literally, it sets the rules - be they organisational or theological. Furthermore, through its capacity to appoint bishops, it may substantially alter the balance of forces within a given diocese (indeed, as we shall see, this is precisely what happened in the case of São Paulo in the early 1970's and late 1980's). But like class, however, it too is mediated. Vatican policy is always circumscribed by national peculiarities. It may seek to establish an abstract, i.e., universal, framework for the conduct of ecclesiastical policy; but it has little choice as to the extra-ecclesiastical conditions under which that policy is carried out. As has already been underlined in this section, and as will become clearer in the course of the thesis, these extra-institutional conditions are of essential importance if one is to understand the dynamics of change within the Brazilian Catholic Church.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Turning to the structure and content of the study, the reader will observe that it is divided into five broadly chronological chapters.

The first examines the processes behind the Archdiocese of São Paulo's reversal of attitudes in relation to issues of class conflict and labour militancy during the late 1960's and early 1970's. This shift, from what were essentially class conciliatory concepts towards more conflictive notions of social reality, is discussed with special reference to Catholic involvement in the metalworker politics of the region.

The second chapter, which covers the period 1975-78, looks at the up-grading, or stabilisation, of radical Catholic labour militancy within the context of a new ecclesiastical organisational framework that gave increasing priority to lay sectors. Once again, attention is also given to the relationship between these changes and metalworker union dynamics. As will become clear, not only did this period witness the establishment of a highly complex and effective division of labour between lay Catholic activists and

the Church hierarchy; but it also saw the maturation of alliances of influence between the Catholic Church and radical metalworker union militants.

The third chapter compares and contrasts the experiences in the Diocese of Santo André to those in São Paulo, with the main emphasis being upon the period 1975 to 1980. Ironically, for a Church which came to be closely associated with metalworker struggles, the links between the Diocese Santo André and progressive unionism are shown to be far more tenuous than the events of the late 1970's would lead one to expect. It is only after and not before the first strike of 1978 that strong links really come to be forged. Prior to this moment, the Church is comparatively marginalised; it does not enjoy the privileged links of its São Paulo counterpart with radical metalworkers. The chapter also deals with the question of who benefitted from the closer integration of metalworker struggles with the Church. Amongst other things, it is argued that the events of 1978-80 represented a golden opportunity for the Church to rehabilitate itself amongst this critical sector of the working class.

In the light of all these developments, the fourth chapter (which spans the early to mid-1980's), goes on to examine the fundamental realignment of national trade union politics from the perspective of the Church's involvement in and response to the founding of the CUT and the CGT. Amongst other issues, the chapter discusses the suggestion that the labour movement's secular integrity has been violated and undermined through the involvement of the Church.

The fifth and final chapter brings together the themes of class and Catholicism raised by the examples of the Greater São Paulo churches; but this time it also situates them in a theoretical and international institutional perspective. The chapter discusses some of the theoretical difficulties involved in reconciling Catholic unity with notions of class conflict and a preferential option for the poor. At the same time the section raises more immediate practical institutional conflicts and dilemmas - most notably, the question of how the Church hierarchies of São Paulo and Santo André can reconcile their progressive stance with the Vatican's determination to create a Church of the poor which, in the words of Pope John Paul II:

does not wish to serve that which causes tensions and makes struggles explode between men.³⁰

Notes

¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*., SCM Press, London, 1985, p. 273.

² Care is needed with this term since there is no single definitive "Theology of Liberation". It is not a purely Catholic phenomenon. Some of the leading Latin American of liberation theologians, like José Miguez Bonino and Rubem Alves, are drawn from Protestant ranks. It is more accurate, therefore, to speak in terms of "theologies of liberation", a fact underlined by the more recent emergence of Jewish, Asian, and Black theologies of liberation. The fact remains, however, that the Theology of Liberation emerged in Latin America and in response to the problems of that region and its dominant religion, Catholicism. The classic Liberation Theology text remains *A Theology of Liberation* by the Peruvian Catholic theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez. For a Brazilian perspective see the works of Paulo Freire, Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, and Frei Betto.

³ The best brief introduction to this question which I know is Edward L. Cleary's *Crisis and Change: The church in Latin America Today*., Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1985.

⁴ Quoted from Gutiérrez, *Op.cit.*, p. 306.

⁵ Conferencia General del Episcopado Latino-Americano, Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops: Puebla; Evangelisation at Present and in the Future of Latin America., CIIR, Slough, 1980 p. 178, paragraph 1134.

⁶ With the exception of 1970, the period of the "economic miracle" saw double digit rates of GDP growth: 1968 - 11.2%; 1969 - 10.0%; 1970 - 8.8%; 1971 - 13.3%; 1972 - 11.2%; and 1973 - 14.0%. (Source: Maria Helena Moreira Alves, *State and Opposition in Military Brazil*., University of Texas Press, Austin, 1985, p.107.) During the period 1965 to 1973, average annual manufacturing output increased by a remarkable 12.0%, and in 1970 it accounted for 30% of total GDP as against 22% back in 1950. (Source: S. Collier, H. Blakemore, T. E. Skidmore, (eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Latin America and the Caribbean*., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 68-69.) Between 1965 and 1970, manufactured products rose from 8% of Brazilian exports to 35%. Brazil also became the tenth largest manufacturer of cars in the world. (Source: *Ibid.*, p. 325.) Taking the state of São Paulo, i.e., Brazil's industrial heartland, in 1949 "the four sectors represented by the metalworking unions - mechanical, transport materials, electrical materials, and metallurgy - employed 16.3 percent of the total manufacturing labour force, compared with 43.4 percent in 1974." (John Humphrey, *Capitalist Control and Workers Struggle in the Brazilian Auto Industry*., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982, p. 32.)

⁷ See, for example, *Ibid*; Ricardo Antunes, *A Rebelião do Trabalho: O Confronto Operário no ABC Paulista: As Greves de 1978/80*., Editora Ensaio/Unicamp, São Paulo, 1988; Maria Herminia Tavares de Almeida, "O Sindicato no Brasil: Novos Problemas, Velhas Estruturas", *Debate e Crítica*., São Paulo, No. 6, July, 1975; see also her "Desarrollo Capitalista y Accion Sindical", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*., Ano XL, Vol. XL, No. 2, April-June, 1978; John Humphrey, "As Raízes e os Desafios do "Novo" Sindicalismo da Indústria Automobilística" in *Revista Estudos CEBRAP*., Vozes, Petropolis, No. 26, 1980; Eli Pimenta, *Aspectos da Greve Metalúrgica de Santo André em 1979*., Masters Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1985; Jose Alvaro Moises, "Current Issues in the Labor Movement in Brazil", *Latin American Perspectives*., Fall, No. 23, 1979.

⁸ The major exception is Heloisa de Souza Martins' *Igreja e Movimento Operário no ABC: 1954-1975*., Doctoral Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1986. However, as the title indicates, its coverage is essentially confined to the period 1954-75. For the situation in São Paulo see references to Catholic militancy in Hamilton Faria's *A Experiência nos Anos de Resistência: A Oposição Sindical Metalúrgica de São Paulo e a Dinâmica do Movimento Operário (1964-78)*., Masters Thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica, São Paulo, 1986. See also Vera Silva Telles, "Anos 70: Experiências e Práticas Cotidianas", in P. Krischke and S. Mainwaring (eds.), *A Igreja nas Bases em Tempo de Transição: 1974-1985*., LPM/CEDEC, São Paulo, 1986. For a useful collection of Church documents in relation to the 1980 metalworkers dispute see Centro Pastoral Vergueiro (CPV), "As Greves do ABC e a Igreja", *Cadernos de Documentação*., No. 3, CPV, São Paulo, December, 1980. Another collection of documents on the theme

of labour and the Brazilian Catholic Church has been produced by the Centro de Estudios e Publicaciones (CEP), *Brasil: Mundo Obrero y Solidaridad de la Iglesia.*, Lima, 1985.

⁹ See, for example, Moreira Alves, *Op.cit.*, pp. 200-207; Oswaldo Bargas and Luis F. Rainho, *As Lutas Operárias e Sindicais dos Metalúrgicos em São Bernardo (1977/79).*, Vol. I, Associação Beneficente e Cultural dos Metalúrgicos de São Bernardo do Campo e Diadema, São Paulo, 1983; and Pimenta, *Op.cit.*

¹⁰ John Humphrey, *Capitalist Control and Workers Struggle in the Brazilian Auto Industry.*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982, p. 160.

¹¹ In 1987 some 87.8% of Latin Americans, i.e., 371.8 million out of a total population of 423 million, were Catholics. (Source: Dermi Azevedo, "Maioria dos cristãos esta em países do terceiro mundo", *Folha de São Paulo.*, August 11, 1988) In Brazil, Protestantism has clearly shown marked rates of growth, rising from 2.6% of the total population in 1940, to 6.6% in 1980 (Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, *Pentecostais no Brasil.*, Vozes, Petropolis, 1985, p. 20.) Even so, Catholicism still remains the dominant religion. The 1980 census conducted by the Fundacao Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (FIBGE), indicated that more than 106 million people (i.e., 88%) out of a total population of 120 million were Roman Catholics in origin. Protestants were the next most numerous group, with almost eight million followers (more or less evenly divided between "Traditional" and "Pentecostal"). They were followed by spiritist cults with just over one and a half million followers. (Source: Victor Civita (ed.), *Almanaque Abril: 1983.*, Editora Abril, 1983, p. 79.)

¹² In relation to the state see, for example, Roberto Romano, *Brasil: Igreja Contra Estado.*, Editora Kairos, São Paulo, 1979; Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, *As Relações Igreja-Estado no Brasil.*, Vols. 1-6 (1964-1979), Edicoes Loyola, São Paulo; and Fernando Bastos de Avila, *Igreja e Estado no Brasil*, Edicoes Loyola, São Paulo, 1987. In relation to the transition see Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil: 1916-1985.*, Stanford University Press, California, 1986; Krischke & Mainwaring (eds.), *Op.cit.* Regarding the Church and politics in Brazil see Antonio Ricardo Knippel Galleta, *Pastoral Popular e Política Partidaria no Brasil.*, Masters Thesis, Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba, São Paulo, 1985.

¹³ Thomas C. Bruneau gives the figure of eight million people, of whom at least seven million are baptised (*The Church in Brazil: The Politics of Religion.*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1982, p. 89). Other more up to date sources have suggested that the population within the archdiocese stands at 14.4 million (Dermi Azevedo, "Igreja Catolica de São Paulo Vai Votar em Serra e Luiza Erundina", *Folha de São Paulo.*, October 31, 1988). This figure of 14.4 million only applied in 1988, for in 1989 the Vatican chose to remove some of the most populous areas within the archdiocese's ambit and turned them into new independent dioceses instead. For details of why, see Chapter Five below.

¹⁴ Data for this paragraph gathered from: Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros, *Igreja no Brasil: Diretório Litúrgico 1987*, CNBB, Brasilia, 1986.

¹⁵ Ivan Vallier, *Catholicism, Social Control and Modernisation in Latin America.*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1970.

¹⁶ Thomas C. Bruneau, *O Catolicismo Brasileiro em Epoca de Transição.*, Edicoes Loyola, São Paulo, 1974; Ralph Della Cava, "Igreja e Estado no Brasil do Seculo XX: Sete Monografias Recentes Sobre o Catolicismo Brasileiro, 1916/1964", *Estudos CEBRAP.*, No. 12, São Paulo, April-June 1975; Marcio Moreira Alves, *A Igreja e a Política no Brasil.*, Editora Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1979.

¹⁷ Mainwaring, *Op.cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Luiz Gonzaga de Souza Lima, *Evolução Política dos Católicos e da Igreja no Brasil.*, Editora Vozes, Petropolis, 1979.

¹⁹ Frei Betto, *Fidel e Religião: Conversas com Frei Betto.*, Editora Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1987, pp.281-282.

²⁰ Otto Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts.*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1982, p.67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁶ See especially section entitled "Religious Autonomy and Revolutionary Strategy", *Ibid.*

²⁷ Quoted from Frei Betto, *Op.cit.*, p. 331. For more details on this question of a revolutionary Christian experience in Nicaragua see the series of detailed interviews with 15 leading public figures and revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua carried out by Teofilo Cabestrero, *Revolucionarios por Causa do Evangelio.*, Editora Vozes, Petropolis. 1985.

²⁸ Frei Leonardo Boff, "Características da Igreja Encarnada nas Classes Subalternas", *SEDOC.*, Vol. 11, No. 118, January-February 1979, p. 837.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 838.

³⁰ Quoted from Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, "Eclesiologizacoes para Oprimidos", *Communio.*, No. 38, March-April, Ano VII, Vol. VII, p.113.

Chapter One: Church, Labour and Class - The Crisis of the Late 1960's and the Constitution of a New Ecclesiastical Identity

1.1 Introduction

The basic aim of this chapter is to examine the processes behind the Archdiocese of São Paulo's re-evaluation of class and labour issues during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Inasmuch as that re-evaluation would involve a shift away from open support of the military dictatorship and theories of class collaboration, to criticism of that dictatorship and the support of left-wing working class militancy, it is the story of a remarkable about-face.

In the first sections I will briefly describe the intra-ecclesiastical status quo of the late 1960's, why it became untenable, and why the initial solution proposed by the hierarchy - a technical solution rather than the requisite shift in orientation and strategy - would itself prove a failure. The remaining sections are devoted to an examination of those processes which led to the formulation of a new, more class conflictive, consensus in the early 1970's.

As well as focusing upon the hierarchy, the present chapter will examine the emergence of a new consensus in the context of five lay Catholic labour organisations which were, on various occasions, closely linked to metalworkers' struggles in the São Paulo area. The emphasis upon these militant groups arises for two reasons. The first, which was discussed in more detail in the introductory chapter, is my view that ecclesiastical change in this area cannot be explained without reference to lay militancy and its insertion in broader class dynamics. The second, stems from my specific concern with links between the Church and metalworkers of São Paulo. In the event it was the most left-wing of these Catholic militant groups which became the cutting edge of increasingly close ties between the Church and the most progressive sectors of the unions. Furthermore, it was these groups which would, with varying degrees of success, play a key role in the emergence of left oriented *secular* oppositions to the nominees or sympathisers of the dictatorship within the unions.

1.2 Conflicting Ecclesiastical Approaches to the Question of Class

At the heart of the conflict that convulsed the Church of São Paulo in the late 1960's lay a series of competing doctrinal interpretations and ecclesiastical stances on class. Above all, it was the military coup of 1964 that was to render their comparatively peaceful co-existence impossible. In effect, the dictatorship, and the tensions that its repressive social policies generated, deprived the Church of the luxury of indefinición which democracy had originally afforded it. It brought latent tensions to the fore. As with militants from left-wing secular organisations, Catholic militants who were involved with

the labour movement and opposed to the military regime became subject to military repression. This situation left the Church with a stark choice. Either it could turn its back on these individuals and events (which was the policy at a certain stage), or (as would later become the case), it could progressively be dragged into the conflict. The latter course, however, would entail not merely theoretical clarification and re-interpretation of its own doctrinal bases, but also, a practical response to the political challenges posed by attacks from without and the pressures which these generated within its ranks. The myth of neutrality would have to be cast aside.

The reassessment of the Church's role in relation to the state and civil society was not an easy process. It was also full of historical irony. Firstly, because the immediate catalyst for change came not from within the Church but from without, in the form of the secular dictatorship it had helped to bring to power. Secondly, because that self-same dictatorship provided the Church with a tremendous opportunity for grasping fundamental issues that it had either been unwilling or incapable of dealing with during the years of post-war democracy. That is why, for instance, one of the regime's most consistent high-ranking ecclesiastical opponents suggested that "Nothing helped the Church more than the revolution of 1964."¹

There is, however, another longer term dimension to these shifts in orientation which must not be neglected. That is the broader conflict of ideas already present within the heart of the wider Roman Catholic Church prior to 1964.

The redefinition of theological discourse from the centre, under the Papacy of John XXIII (1958-63), was a matter of far greater historical significance to the extent that it represented a departure from centuries of tradition. By re-drawing the theological map, it accorded increased legitimacy to the Catholic left, and weakened the Catholic right. This was irrespective of local conditions.

In Latin America, these shifts in the theological terrain were recognised by the Bishops' Conference at Medellin (1968) which, as I indicated earlier, marked a decisive break with the Church's past of power and privilege. What it did not mark, however, was the entire liquidation of conservative perspectives. On the contrary, as the case of the Archdiocese of São Paulo shows, the Church at that time was divided in relation to papal doctrine. What follows, is a brief synopsis of these conflicting approaches.

The more conservative perspectives, which, it must be stressed, enjoyed most favour with the Cardinal of São Paulo, Dom Agnelo Rossi, were to varying degrees, based upon two major papal encyclicals. The first, by Pope Leo XIII (1879-1903) entitled *Rerum Novarum* (1891), and the second, by Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) entitled *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). These were earlier Vatican answers to what was widely known as the "social question". They offered a Catholic analysis of class society which at the very least was flawed as a sociological analysis, and at its worst, represented a complete mystification of social problems and relations. Inequalities between people, for instance, were

characterised as both natural and desirable:

The differences which exist naturally between men are great and many. There is no equality in talent, or skill, or health, or strength, and these unavoidable differences lead of themselves to inequalities of fortune. This is clearly of advantage to both individuals and to society.²

Adopting this pseudo-scientific line of reasoning, the encyclical went on:

it is a mistake to imagine that class is spontaneously hostile to class, as if nature had matched together the wealthy owners of the means of production and the unpropertied workers to persist in laying wildly about each other. ...Just as the different parts of the body unite to form a whole so well proportioned as to be symmetrical, so also nature has decreed that in the state these twin classes should correspond to each other in concord and create an equilibrium. Each stands in need of the other: there can be no capital without labour, nor labour without capital.³

Utilising this kind of analysis of the difficulties engendered by a class-divided society, the Catholic Church attacked two great evils: unbridled capitalism, and socialist inspired class conflict. The way out of the impasse, it was argued, was by means of a process of give and take between the various forces leading to the harmonisation rather than polarisation of classes.

Such views contrasted with those of the Catholic left which, to varying degrees, took its source of inspiration from the encyclicals *Mater et Magistra*(1961), *Pacem in Terris*(1963), and most especially from the Second Vatican Council. All had their origins in the Papacy of John XXIII. The two encyclicals marked a determined shift away from an organicist conception of society with its consequent stress upon hierarchy, order, anti-Communism, class paternalism and harmony. They focused instead upon the just roads to development, particularly those that would lead to the reduction of global inequalities. As for the Second Vatican Council, some of its key documents, like *Gaudium et Spes*, shifted from natural law theorising to empirically based and more radical forms of action which sought to adapt themselves to the realities of a class-divided society rather than forcing society to adapt itself to a series of divinely ordained abstract principles. As Clearey says:

Instead of proceeding in the time honoured fashion, discussing theological or biblical principles and then applying them to the present-day situation, *Gaudium et Spes* reverses the process: it begins with a careful analysis of the de facto situation, then turns to sacred scripture and theology for reflection on that situation, and finally, as a third step, makes pastoral applications. *Theological reflection thus becomes the second, and not the first, step.*⁴

For the purposes of abstract comparison it is possible to identify neatly the theological watershed that separated radical from conservative perspectives, but in practice these did not always find such clear-cut organisational expression. Groups on the left frequently made reference to *Rerum et Novarum*, and others, on the centre-right, made use of more radical documents such as the findings of Medellin. In part this was due to the Church's traditionally eclectic use of its own documents, each being accorded a certain degree of legitimacy, but, more significantly, it was also a reflection of the frequently ambiguous

ideological roots of those movements, particularly of the centre-left, and the fact that at this point they were in the throes of re-defining their identities.

Not all groups of the left suffered from this problem of theoretical in-definition. Some individuals were so clear as to their mission that they felt compelled to leave the ranks of the Church and seek new organisational expressions (hence the emergence of Popular Action (Ação Popular, AP) which was pledged to revolutionary struggle). A number of left groups which stayed within the Church, especially the student groups, also had a clear and well articulated idea as to their own mission. They opted for a path which explicitly distanced itself from the rule of the hierarchy.⁵

In the sections that follow, however, my concern is exclusively with those lay and clerical organisations whose main defining characteristics were (a), a specific devotion to labour issues, and (b), whose activities were directly channeled into metalworkers' struggles in São Paulo. Five groups stand out as being of special significance: the *Círculos Operários*; UNICOR; Ação Católica Operária; the Frente Nacional do Trabalho; and Pastoral Operária. As will become clear, they each possessed not merely distinctive political characteristics and approaches to the question of labour and class within the Archdiocese of São Paulo, but also organisational ones. Their degree of autonomy from the Church hierarchy varied considerably, as did their political weight within both the Church and union movement.

1.2.1 *The Círculos Operários - Class Collaboration*

The Catholic labour organisation of most numerical weight in São Paulo until the mid 1960's was the Workers' Circles (*Círculos Operários*, COs). In 1964 there were 60 COs in the state of São Paulo (15 in the capital and 45 in the interior) with a total of some 200,000 members.⁶ With the coup of that year the COs began to enjoy even greater success, this time at a leadership level, as a number of their members were drafted into unions as "interventors", i.e., government imposed rather than democratically elected union leaders.

Although in organisational terms the COs were comparatively autonomous, there is little doubt that the Catholic Church was their principal intellectual patron. Many priests were involved as advisers to the COs at all levels. The origins of the COs as a national force lay in the 1930's when their brand of anti-Communism and labour assistance (based upon the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*) appeared to blend in well with the anti-Communism of the Vargas regime and its desire to implant a non-conflictual system of labour relations.⁷ Sponsorship therefore came from two quarters, Rio de Janeiro's Cardinal Sebastião Leme, who was pushing for the rapprochement of Church and state, and President Getulio Vargas himself, who like the COs, was keen to purge the labour movement of its Communist and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies. This is how it came about that in 1941 the COs received official recognition as a "technical and consultative organ" to the Ministry of Labour Industry and

Commerce.⁸

Whilst many of their objectives could be regarded as trade unionist in orientation - especially those concerning the reduction of the working day and the improvement of working conditions for both men and women, the COs were not trade unions in the accepted sense of the term; their emphasis was upon education and welfare rather than mass mobilisation - particularly one that might involve any form of strike action. As the COs' own manual pointed out, the group's objective was:

a) to lend efficient spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and professional *assistance* to its members and to workers in general by means of schools, colleges, courses, emergency and general clinics, hospitals, co-operatives, loans organisations, recreational and sports departments, etc... b) to give the workers an adequate *education*... d) to compete for the *harmonisation* of the relations between employees and employers... f) to *co-operate* with the Ministry of Labour in what pertains to the legitimate interests of the workers...⁹

In many respects the COs showed a great resemblance to the corporatist-type unions set up by Vargas during this era. So much so, in fact, that there were debates as to what the proper functions of the two should be.

Despite the limitations which the COs set themselves, we find that amongst the metalworkers of São Paulo their influence was quite pronounced. Having targeted the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union for action in 1961 they supported a former CO member and candidate of the right, Joaquim dos Santos Andrade (better known as "Joaquinzão"), in his campaign against the incumbent left-wing leadership. This was for what he described as having "excessively party-politicised the union";¹⁰ another way of saying that it had become too subject to the influence of the Communist Party. On this occasion their campaign failed, but as Affonso Delellis, the former president of the union from 1963 to 1964 (before he was barred from office by the dictatorship) noted in a later interview, the person who would eventually give the introductory speech at Joaquinzão's inauguration in 1965 was none other than the leader of the COs, Frei Celso.¹¹

By this time Joaquinzão himself was no longer a CO member, but this public support leaves no doubt as to where their mutual sympathies lay. Indeed, his subsequent policies within the union can be regarded as a fine secular expression of the COs' philosophy with its stress upon the social service aspects of unions, together with its opposition to class combativity generally and left-wing groups in particular.

This and other successes in the 1960's, like the government imposed appointment of many members as union leaders after the 1964 coup,¹² belied the fact that the COs were already entering a period of deep crisis. Thus, by 1968 they were in a process of selling-off a number of their headquarters, and by the 1970's had all but lost their mass base and the influence they once exercised within São Paulo's labour movement. The causes of this precipitous decline have not yet been sufficiently explained and require more research.¹³ However, three factors do stand out.

The first concerns changes in Vatican social teaching then taking place under the

papacy of John XXIII (and sustained in his successor's, Pope Paul VI's, *Octogesima Adveniens*(1971)). These left the COs theologically and, to a lesser extent, politically outmoded as far as the wider institution was concerned (although this would only become fully apparent later when Brazilian conservative clerical Catholicism itself entered into crisis). Whilst the COs as a whole were slow to adapt, some members did begin to question their theological bases in the light of recent changes in Catholic social teaching.

A second factor was the relationship between the COs' leadership and the wider membership. A former member explained to me how the top jobs, in virtue of the education they required, went to the middle classes and, intentionally or not, these marginalised the struggle of the workers in the factories. As he put it:

There was always a distance between the true worker and the leaderships of the Circles. ...the problem is not so much that these leaderships were anti-Communist, but in the fact that they did not assume the struggle of the workers, they did not have a project for the workers because they were not workers suffering their needs.¹⁴

The final factor concerns the political outlook of the leadership. Although there was considerable regional variation throughout Brazil, in the specific case of São Paulo state the marginalisation of the workers' struggle was no accident. More than anywhere else, the leaders of the COs here were closely tied to the interests of the local industrial elites and therefore actively played the anti-Communist card. According to the above source, "everything was anti-Communism."¹⁵ The problem, of course, was that one could only play this card for so long, especially when the dictatorship itself came to be perceived as the primary threat to workers' rights.¹⁶ Given the unusually centralised and authoritarian nature of the COs, and the fact that from the outset it was the leadership which above all had supported the military's project and ideology, it was not surprising that the organisation as a whole proved incapable of modernising in order to save its own skin.

1.2.2 UNICOR - A Modernising Conciliatory Approach

Not all groups who espoused a class conciliatory line were as dogmatic as the *Círculos Operários*. In the case of the Church in São Paulo there were modernising groups whose efforts broke free of the rigid anti-Communist constraints and which genuinely sought a more balanced approach to relations between labour and capital. In the late 1960's the most significant of these modernisers, both in intellectual¹⁷ and ecclesio-political terms, was the Franciscan friar, Frei Luis Maria Alves Sartori.

In many respects he was ahead of his time, capable of challenging the more anachronistic aspects of Church life. A one-time close colleague Frei Alamiro, described this aspect of his work thus:

Sartori was one of the first, as I see it, to make this insertion into the world of work, that is to say this shift of socio-economic location and practice. The difficulty that Sartori faced was that a lot of the Church did not make this move. The Franciscans did not make the move and continue to view him

with distance. He physically moved out..., abandoning the parochial structure, living in workers' neighbourhoods.. I think that for the Church it was a big thing for a friar not to live in a monastery, to live in a working class district, no longer to use a habit but to dress in a monkeysuit, participating with the workers in the factory...¹⁸

X The overall strategy of Sartori and his group, União e Coração - UNICOR (from the Latin unicum cor, "one heart only") was relatively simple. It envisaged the overcoming of the capital-labour division of the enterprise and forming a single unit. Once again, like the Workers' Circles, UNICOR was not subject to the dictates of the Church. It did not have a direct or organic link with the institution, rather, it too was heavily dependent upon the intellectual contribution of individual priests.

✓ Whilst it was more a question of coincidence that the work of UNICOR took place in metalworking firms, what was not accidental was the means of entering these firms - with the consent of the employers. Sartori, together with a number of priests and workers, would go to a factory at meal times and unite with the workers in groups where they would study the social doctrine of the Church. Unlike the Workers' Circles, however, the UNICOR conception of social doctrine was more broadly defined, including not only the writings of Leo XIII and Pius XI, but also the findings of Medellin which had recently come out. From this factory based study Sartori and his colleagues would also get to know the families of the workers and form family groups in the neighbourhoods. In the factory itself, Sartori encouraged the formation of a factory commission through which the problems of the workers could be discussed.

✓ Testimony as to the inefficacy of the Sartori factory commissions, other than as a very limited consciousness raising exercise, comes in two forms. First, and one already alluded to above, is the fact that the group only got into a given factory with employer consent. More than this, "The experience he developed in a factory gave him credentials before the boss and one boss would give a reference to another."¹⁹ The same could not be said for the efforts of radical Catholics to start up factory commissions in metalworking firms (of which more later). On the contrary, they were openly persecuted by their employers. The second comes in the form of the attention it provoked amongst the Communists - not in terms of what progressive organisations the UNICOR commissions were, but the exact opposite - of how, with a little militant attention, they or their members could perhaps be given a few more teeth.

These contradictions even led some of Sartori's closest allies to desert the organisation. Commenting on the broad objectives of the movement, Frei Alamiro said the following:

I think that as utopia, fine and well, but as reality and method to go forward that is where I entered a little bit into a different line of thinking from Sartori's. ...the route he used to enter into a factory was already a concession of the boss. We entered into a factory already with the concession of capital in order to work upon the workers. So there was a root problem with which I did not feel comfortable because it falsified the relation, because I see the factory as truly divided between labour and capital, and there is a conflict between the two, and they are antagonistic interests.²⁰

The principal reason for the failure of the Sartori approach, which despite its powerful

supporters in the São Paulo Catholic hierarchy never passed beyond the activity of a few militants and, more significantly, was later eclipsed by its left-wing critics, was the rapidly polarising political and labour situation in Brazil at that time. Perhaps, under a dictatorship, where only the tiniest of reforms were countenanced, Frei Sartori represented the most daring of legal means for Catholic militancy, but it was precisely the viability of these dictatorially circumscribed legal means that the generals were in effect forcing Catholic militants to question. In increasing numbers the latter either chose to abandon militancy altogether (for fear of their lives) or, alternately, as their room for manoeuvre became progressively more restricted they chose to expand it dramatically by opting for measures, like strike action, which the law deemed unacceptable.

1.2.3 *Ação Católica Operária - A Class Conflictive Approach*

No treatment of radical Catholic labour militancy can avoid some reference to the work of Catholic Workers Action (*Ação Católica Operária*, ACO). Unlike the Workers' Circles, this organisation never achieved mass proportions, nor was it intended to do so, being geared instead to a specific - in many ways exclusive - brand of militancy. In the city of São Paulo, for example, it is estimated that there were only 50 ACO militants at the time of the 1964 coup, and that before the introduction of the *Acto Institucional Cinco* (AI-5) in 1968 (which directly hit the organisation) this figure had tripled. The diocese of Santo André presented much the same picture with 150 militants.²¹

Like the Workers' Circles and UNICOR, ACO was a workers' movement inspired by the Christian message. But whilst it was an autonomous lay movement, it was more closely linked to the Catholic Church. In its own words, the organisation sought to be:

a movement that represents the working class within the Church, with the right to demand from the Church that it be faithful to the working class.²²

Furthermore, the organisation recognised that:

ACO cannot exist without an ecclesiastical adviser capable of understanding the workers' struggle and of giving Christian encouragement to the militants.²³

ACO's individuality and strength lay in three main areas: (a) its independence from local hierarchical control, (b) the power of its methodology and (c), the quality and commitment of the militants it produced. Officially founded in 1962, its significance quickly became apparent within the ranks of the labour movement, specifically, the metalworkers of the Greater São Paulo region. Militants were instrumental in setting up Osasco's National Labour Front (of which more later), in instituting a genuinely radical factory commission at the Cobrasma metalworking factory (in the city of Osasco), and, in 1968, with following these actions through by means of an illegal strike which had widespread repercussions. Within the city of São Paulo itself, other members, building upon previous struggles, were instrumental in the formation of an opposition to another

conservative metalworkers' union, that led by Joaquinzão. The slate that was eventually mounted to combat the incumbent was led by Waldemar Rossi, ACO's leading militant.

Part of ACO's success in capturing new members was explicable in terms of its ability to respond directly to the need amongst militants, either within or close to Catholic Youth Workers (Juventude Operária Católica, JOC), for an organisation devoted to the needs of adults. With the increased maturity and experience of some of the older cadres, like Waldemar Rossi himself, their:

greater interest came to be less youth and more the context of the world of work. ...To the extent that the entrance into the world of work in a more conscious manner required a more incisive action within the factory, more present within the union, this required us to think less as youth and more as adults.²⁴

In other words, whilst JOC had been key in orienting Catholics towards the world of work, this had been done very much in the name of youth and the problems that it faced. A number of militants had quite literally outgrown these specific concerns and needed a broader means of inserting their struggles in the factories and trade unions.

A second factor which accounts for ACO's success was the clarity of purpose of its membership which decisively rejected certain options whilst setting the movement limited but important and feasible goals. At the meeting of November 1-4 1962 in São Paulo, which constituted ACO, it was agreed that "political action must be assumed under the personal responsibility of the militant" and that the movement would not act as a "closed bloc" i.e., that "the organisation of militants around common actions would not be admitted except in the most exceptional of circumstances".²⁵ This approach in effect precluded any attempt by the movement to constitute itself either as a parallel political or trade union force, an important step and one that would be a model for other left-wing Catholic militant organisations that developed in the 1970's. Instead, the movement's impact was to be achieved by militants acting within the working class, and as part of the working class.

Although the ultimate form that action took was a matter of personal choice, the movement had its own distinctive Christian ethic as well as method of training. The Sao Paulo meeting, for instance, included a structural critique of society, basing this upon the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*. It rejected individualistic solutions, that is to say, improvement through changing the human person, which was typical of much Christian action, and used by the Workers' Circles, and, instead, adopted more structural approaches as set out in Pope John XXIII's encyclical. The key *modus operandi* adopted was that of the periodic "Revision of Working Life" by militants.

Essentially this built upon ACO's JOC heritage of "See, Judge and Act". It provided the movement with such a dynamic method of action that again this would be adopted by other left-wing Catholic organisations in the 1970's. It is worth quoting at length from ACO's own account what the method entailed.

...In this pedagogy of SEE, JUDGE and ACT, five basic attitudes distinguish themselves:

- *The creative participation of the militants, who narrate the facts that occur daily and choose, amongst themselves, one to be the object of the Revision of Workers Life.*

- *The analysis of the fact in a more global vision, so that its significance in the economic, social, political and ideological aspect, as far as the causes and consequences, are fully understood, thus enabling the creation of conscious and adequate proposals of transformative actions.*

- *The discovery that sin is both social and personal, that it maintains the injustices and contradictions in society and the resistance to the just aspirations of the workers.*

- *The comprehension of the workers' reality in the light of Biblical teachings, searching for the signs of Christ not merely in the JUDGING, but also in the SEEING and the ACTING.*

- *The decision to fight for the objective of radically transforming people and structures for the construction of a new society, just, free, egalitarian and fraternal.*²⁶

The methodology was no longer introspective. It focused not only upon the individual aspects of sin (which was the traditional domain of the right, and practically speaking circumscribed the latter's activities), but also upon its structural manifestations and, ultimately, solutions. Not only was this structuralist dimension to the Catholic critique of society notably absent from groups like the Workers' Circles, but it was also absent from the centre-right, as was the case of Sartori's group. In the context of dictatorship, where small reforms within the system were out of the question, this ultimately proved the downfall of the Workers' Circles and UNICOR. Perhaps Sartori's power-sharing arrangement with the employers (which was recommended by *Mater and Magistra* and constituted an advance on individualism) would have met with greater success in a less polarised national situation. But as it was, in the context of the dictatorship, this gradualist-type solution could not even begin to address broader political fundamentals which both the radical Catholic movements and the trade union movement as a whole would eventually have to do.

ACO, on the other hand, was one group/proceeded from the analysis of the individual, or small unit, to a more global critique, with the aim of constructing an altogether new society that could indeed satisfy the aspirations of its members, and most especially, the working class as a whole.

To the extent that ACO permitted its membership to follow a number of broad class objectives rather than to subordinate their activity to organisational or ecclesiastical self-interest, one can describe ACO as methodologically pluralist. This fact is well illustrated by the wide range of working class organisations - Catholic or otherwise - in which individual members could be found acting (and which were noted at the beginning of this section). Again, the reluctance to counterpose class objectives to movement objectives represented one of ACO's inherent strengths (one that would be taken on board by other left-wing Catholic labour organisations of the 1970's), giving it a remarkable penetration within the ranks of combative labour. In the context of the late 1960's, however, this proved a double-edged asset since it put ACO on a collision course not merely with employers or the state, but also the Church - the one body that could provide it with some form of protection.

1.2.4 *The Frente Nacional do Trabalho - Transition to a Class Conflictive Approach*

Founded in 1960, the National Labour Front (*Frente Nacional do Trabalho*, FNT) was an independent Christian lay organisation of considerable political ambiguity. Whilst in effect it represented a practical grass roots critique of capitalism (it had, after all, emerged very much as a direct result of the strikes of cement workers at the Perus factory in the late fifties), it did not carry this out from a Christian socialist perspective as would later become that case. Instead, it relied on Catholic social teaching and all the ambiguities which that entailed. Indeed, the FNT's own pamphlet admits that:

At that time [the early 1960's] it did not tackle with clarity the question of the class struggle within capitalism... The perspective was much more one of the conciliating labour and capital, in the line of converting the boss so that he, perceiving the true situation of the worker, would unite forces with us.²⁷

This conciliatory perspective should come as no surprise since many of the group's militants had come through courses in the social doctrine of the Church given by Frei Luis Sartori. He saw the FNT as an:

area in which the worker could find application for the social doctrine of the Church...an area inside the Church where the concrete application of worker legislation could be made.²⁸

It is clear, however, that others within the FNT saw it as much more than this. Marcelino Pereira Martins, one of its founding members and a former president between the years 1966 and 1972, describes how it:

sought to promote a line of new unionism, allied to a means of combating unjust structures, political paternalism, union "peleguismo",²⁹ false leaderships, and the union tax. The Front positioned itself and sought to unite forces with those groups within the unions, albe they very small, who combated this system that was tied to government. The Front came to affirm a position of "trade unionism of the base", a unionism from within the factory, with a factory delegate.³⁰

In the context of the early 1960's, however, this combatting of "false leaderships" represented a de facto confrontation with the Communists who were very much the ruling block within the trade union movement.

Now the precise extent to which that confrontation was the result of an underlying ideological hostility on the part of Catholics towards the Communists and a desire therefore to move into Communist areas of influence, or simply the inevitable conflict between on the one hand a decentralised and factory-based form of power and on the other a centralised and party oriented one is difficult to say. Current members, for example, emphasise that their grievance was not so much with Communism as an ideology per se, but rather with what they viewed as the anti-democratic activities of the Brazilian Communist parties' trade union followers.³¹ However, historically speaking, it is difficult to ignore the FNT's close association with figures like Sartori or its roots in a doctrine that although undergoing a process of modernisation, had long sought to neutralise Communist influence, and, to all intents and purposes, appeared to be doing so

once more. One internal document, for example, was quite clear that the FNT was founded in order to carry out the social doctrine of the Church "in accordance with the principles of *Rerum Novarum*".³²

Whatever the underlying motives of FNT members prior to the coup, the fact is that by 1965, with the purging of Communist leaderships from the unions, their principles and methods of action shifted toward an altogether different group of people. Unlike the Workers' Circles, the advent of the dictatorship did not represent the loss of the FNT's *raison d'être*. On the contrary, it simply gave added urgency to the need to break with the fascist inspired labour system. As the following section will show, the FNT was one organisation which was able to make the transition from indirectly attacking Communists to attacking the nominees of the dictatorship (or those who avoided any form of conflict with the new military regime). Whatever the ambiguities that might have remained, the events of 1968 grafically demonstrate, how the adoption of concrete class strategies by Catholic militants provided them with a road out of their sectarian divide and into radical secular forms of union resistance. In other words, they began to break out of the superior and objectivist Church mentality which had confidently hoped that society would be changed according to its principles and strategy, but which in reality had only succeeded in isolating it from society, and Catholic militants from union militancy generally.

1.2.4.1 *The Osasco Strike of 1968 - A Class Conflictive Approach in Action*

Fransisco Weffort, who carried out a study of the Osasco metalworkers' strike at the Cobrasma factory in 1968, describes this strike and the formation of a factory commission beforehand in terms of their implications for the trade union movement as a whole. He suggests that events marked a

process of internal rupture of populist trade unionism...evidencing certain characteristics of worker independence which contrast in a very clear manner with the dominant tendencies in the trade union movement in the country since the 1950's.³³

But for Catholic militancy too, the events of 1968 also marked an important stage in a process of rupture. This rupture, however, was not with populist trade unionism (which certain Catholic sectors had long since criticised for their own reasons), but with Catholicism's own more narrow trade union objectives and cold war past.

Leading non-Catholic (i.e., secular) participants in the strike of 1968, like José Ibrahim, leader of the union at the time of the dispute, are quick to admit the significance that groups of the FNT had:

In Osasco the question of the factory commission was already raised before 1964. In 1963, we had an experience of commission organisation in Cobrasma. There, there existed a group of Catholic militants who made part of the opposition to the union from the right. It was a group of people quite heavily laden with anti-Communist sentiment. It was these people who first began to raise the question of the commission. It is the famous "Commission of the 10" which began with 10 militants from the National Labour Front.³⁴

And yet it was precisely these militants who would come to an agreement with Ibrahim (whom they knew enjoyed the loyalty of the communists) over how best to take over the union as a joint slate. More than this, once their short term objectives were realised, the two groups did not enter into conflict with one another. On the contrary, as Zé Groff, a key member of the FNT and the leader of the factory commission says, "The question of these ideological differences *never* got in the way of the union's work."³⁵

It is Ibrahim's own comments which provide an important insight into how the two groups came closer together. Firstly, there was the question of a common critique of Brazilian trade unionism (albeit with differing ideological starting points), and a jointly shared interest in prioritising certain previously neglected areas for action:

...inside Cobrasma, there existed a group of militants who did not fit into the perspective of the commission of 10. In truth, it was a committee which we called the factory committee, of which myself and a series of comrades formed a part. We too had a critical vision of the trade union structure and believed that another kind of trade unionism was necessary. We assumed the question of the organisation within the firm, by the base, something which at the time the union movement did not assume.³⁶

Secondly, there was value attached to specific forms of local worker resistance:

The principal aspect for the emergence of the commission of Cobrasma, as such, was the very struggle of the workers inside Cobrasma. For example, we had an "operation tortoise" [a go-slow], the problem of the restaurant, and we won many struggles. The idea of the commission, which already existed, began to gain force, but in a quite authentic manner and the dialogue with the leadership emerged from all this process of ferment.³⁷

And finally, there was the capacity of the two groups, in virtue of the above, to hammer out a series of workable proposals:

From there we came to an agreement with the people of the National Labour Front over a number of points: the legalisation of the commission, elections inside the factory and immunity of those elected - both the office-holders and their reserves. So we arrived at the legalisation of the commission, first, inside the struggle, and then, because we found a fairly favourable situation inside the factory.³⁸

José Groff, the FNT's leading militant at the time of the dispute, and leader of the factory commission in 1968, suggests that once the commission had begun to show results another even more ambitious series of common objectives came to the fore. These were: (a) the defeat of the corrupt union leaders and conquest of the union; (b) the strengthening of the Cobrasma factory commission; (c) the creation of new factory commissions in Osasco and elsewhere to serve as a the launchpad for a strong union movement throughout Brazil; and (d), the strengthening of the anti wage-squeeze movement.³⁹ This meeting of minds in what later became a dispute between on the one hand, the union and commission, and the employers and government on the other, does not in any way imply that all differences between Ibrahim's and Groff's groups were resolved, let alone that their identities converged. Important differences, like the FNT's rejection of the "imposto sindical" (trade union tax⁴⁰), still remained. But what it does demonstrate is just how far Catholic militancy had come, in particular, how its

immersion in the dynamics of the working class, now under a military dictatorship, was purging it of its sectarian past. It also highlights a number of themes with respect to trade union practice that would become a hallmark of left-wing Catholic militancy in São Paulo, namely its strong commitment to work within the factory (be it in terms of the valorisation of the base, small scale struggles as a means of raising consciousness, or factory commissions themselves). Some of these [some of these] points will be tackled in greater detail when I deal with the São Paulo Metalworkers Opposition which also has its roots in this period and amongst Catholic militants.

1.2.5 Pastoral Operária - The Crisis of the Church and Militants Over the Issue of Class

Whilst the events at Osasco represent an important victory of radical Catholicism over its sectarian isolation, and an important step forward in the lay sectors' own redefinition of the Church's social role, the strike also highlighted a number of critical insufficiencies. Foremost of these was the relationship between militants and the Church hierarchy. In the specific case of ACO militants who sought to inform the cardinal of the situation in Osasco before the strike, Groff describes how "he [Dom Agnelo Rossi] received us with the utmost coolness...not a drop of support from Agnelo Rossi, nothing!"⁴¹

This reception was symptomatic of a much deeper conflict that had been developing since the coup of 1964. In their May day message of that year, the bishops of São Paulo state, via their regional secretariat, released a statement noting with "satisfaction" the implantation of the new military order for:

trying to snuff-out the danger of Communism which was already assuming frightening proportions, infiltrating itself with unacceptable propositions in the most just and urgent reformist campaigns⁴².

In that part of the statement which went on to deal specifically with the trade union situation, the bishops urged:

That legitimate and free trade unionism, already a dream of *Rerum Novarum* for the promotion of the workers, be given encouragement by the government and understood by all those who pride themselves in adopting the social doctrine of the Church.⁴³

They further argued that:

It is not trade unionism that provokes the class struggle, but yes the impudence of false leaders and the incomprehensible resistance of inhuman leaders. The same zeal that represses the abuses of trade union power must promote the authentic spirit of class.⁴⁴

With this statement the Church was effectively condoning the repression of those ranks which it judged to be engaged in "the abuse of trade union power" by their promotion of class struggle.

For groups like ACO, and more especially JOC, which had already been moving in a more radical direction at the time of the coup, the hierarchy's approach put their very

existence into question. The militants' concept of "the authentic spirit of class" appeared diametrically opposed to that of the bishops. Prior to the coup-d'état that had not been such a big problem as their international links had afforded them some degree of autonomy from local ecclesiastical control and they could continue to pursue their affairs without too much interference. What was needed now, however, was some form of local insertion and above all protection. Both were singularly absent. Already, at a national level, JOC had rapidly lost its membership base and the capacity to articulate itself in an effective manner, such was the impact of government arrests, bans and interventions in its secretariats. In São Paulo, where the cardinal welcomed the coup as "a battle miraculously won" against the "communist plot",⁴⁵ matters hardly augured well for radical militancy. ACO militants were under the distinct impression that the cardinal:

believed that certain of the militants of ACO and of JOC who were imprisoned should be imprisoned for being Communists. He never expressed this openly, but he had this conviction that that was the right way.⁴⁶

The cardinal's actions, or rather their conspicuous absence, would appear to confirm this view:

We had a case of a sympathiser of ACO in the city of Osasco, which is in the Archdiocese of São Paulo, who was brutally tortured, and we sought out Agnelo Rossi two or three times and he avoided the subject, did not wish to know, said that he did not believe it⁴⁷.

Matters were quickly reaching a crisis point on two levels: externally, i.e., in terms of the repression meted out by the government to left-wing union militants; and internally, in relation to São Paulo's Church hierarchy. As one leading militant of the time confirms:

In Sao Paulo we were working within the union movement, in the communities, despite Dom Agnelo Rossi. ...We felt that there was a major difficulty in using the name of JOC or ACO in fighting this question within the Church.⁴⁸

Although by no means exempt from government repression, matters in the Diocese of Santo André were a little more favourable since the bishop there, Dom Jorge Marcos, was more critical of the government generally, and not afraid to associate himself with ACO. In May 1965, for instance, he was a signatory to a letter which cast doubt upon the supposedly good intentions of the Castello Branco government and which made no apologies for the lack of signatories, arguing that those who might have been expected to sign were "fearful that they would become victims of the persecution by elements linked to the government."⁴⁹ Also in that month he undersigned the local ACO's manifesto against unemployment. The situation of militants in São Paulo, on the other hand, was especially difficult, and the pressure to find a new *modus vivendi* was all the more acute.

1.2.5.1 Pastoral Operária - A New But Unworkable Modus Vivendi

A qualified breakthrough finally came in 1968. It was known at that time that the cardinal was keen to set up an organisation that could unite all lay entities which had

anything to do with the world of work. From there came the idea of the Workers' Pastoral (Pastoral Operária, PO) as a foundation between JOC, ACO, the Workers' Circles, UNICOR, and people from the parishes. The proposal was fraught with difficulties. The possible advantage for individuals inside JOC and ACO was that PO might act as a new vehicle, permitting them to transfer their proposals to the level of the community and avoiding the conflict which the groups' names attracted. If the shift came about, however, it would be more than simply tactical since it would involve the loss of movement characteristics and a correspondingly greater insertion in local ecclesiastical life and structures.

Whilst many militants welcomed such a shift in strategy they did so only insofar as their broader class aims could simultaneously be maintained. A number of reservations therefore arose. Firstly, there was the question of Dom Agnelo's own motivations. One radical priest put it thus:

I think that he had an extremely clear political vision. Agnelo Rossi was very frightened by the advance of the Catholic worker movements, and he believed, as the military believed, that any expression of unhappiness or rebellion was already Communism...So under the wing of the Church, of the bishops, he tried to put the workers' movements who from there would lose their autonomy - the Workers' Circles, after all, had a certain degree of autonomy, ACO had autonomy, JOC had autonomy, and he put them inside a Workers' Pastoral which was a thing directed by the bishop.⁵⁰

Compounding the left's fears of a loss of autonomy was the inevitable question as to what possible function an organisation embracing views as diverse as those espoused by ACO and the Workers' Circles could have, particularly at a moment of such intense polarisation. In fact, this problem was less serious than might have been expected because the Workers' Circles by this time had already lost credibility in the eyes of the labour movement and were in a process of selling off some of their local headquarters. The more serious conflict concerned Dom Agnelo's choice of Frei Luis Sartori as coordinator for the new pastoral. To some ACO militants, Sartori's views upon the harmony between labour and capital were simply unacceptable and they therefore stayed well clear of the organisation. Waldemar Rossi, on the other hand, was one of those militants who felt that it was better to take the bull by the horns, to participate in Dom Agnelo's pastoral, but to push it in a class conflictive direction. In the event, however, conditions proved too conflictual for PO to hold together in its envisaged form. The archdiocesan coordination was effectively suspended:

that point of union disappeared, and each one returned to his own place to continue.⁵¹

Although the break-up of Dom Agnelo's pastoral obviously represented a serious personal defeat, and a temporary defeat for the ideas of Frei Sartori, it hardly represented a victory for Catholic radicals given the absence of a clear alternative. On the contrary, the radical apostolic movements were themselves faced with the prospect of continuing fragmentation, of members either leaving militancy altogether, going underground, or of

conducting "independent" experiences with the support of progressive local priests and communities. The limitations of such a development were being recognised all over Brasil as militancy was forced into isolation.

1.3 The Appointment of Dom Paulo and a New Approach to Class

The real breakthrough, which offered the prospect of resolving the impass, was finally achieved with the Vatican's appointment in 1970 of Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns as São Paulo's new archbishop. At the time, however, his promotion was not greeted with universal acclaim. Indeed, many militants viewed the matter with emotions ranging from scepticism to fear. One former priest described his own reaction as follows:

At the beginning when we [a group of some thirty progressive priests working in the city's southern zone] heard about the nomination of Dom Paulo we got the shivers...I even suggested that we make a formal protest against the manner in which he had been appointed, without consultation, etc., and against him - we thought of him as a person who was more closed than open.⁵²

The reasons for such fears are clear. Although, Dom Paulo was not new to the difficulties facing the working class - "I had already worked ten and a half years with workers in Petropolis and in the favelas and I knew well the workers' problems and I was still very interested in helping the poor"⁵³ - his public profile was that of a loyal auxiliary to Dom Agnelo Rossi. In many respects Dom Paulo was simply an unknown quantity. From 1967 he had engaged in popular evangelisation, particularly in outlying areas of the city, but his attitude to sensitive ecclesio-political questions remained to be defined.

1.3.1 The Emergence of a "Class Conscious" Pastoral Operária and the Definition of its Trade Union Critique

Immediately upon his promotion, Dom Paulo sought out those sectors associated with the previously abortive effort to form PO and entered into a dialogue - initially over the death of a Catholic militant, Luis Hirata - which subsequently broadened out to include all matters of interest to both sides. Over the following years PO would be reborn, but this time, in two senses. Firstly as an organisation, and secondly, as a method or framework of operation, in other words, as the sum total of the local Church's policies and actions in relation to workers' issues. Confusion sometimes arises because Church documents frequently use the term "Pastoral Operária" to refer to both the broader framework (which was properly established in 1975) and to the organisation (which recommenced the process of officialisation in 1970). Where possible, I have sought to eliminate this confusion by referring to the organisation in capitals as PO, or the Workers' Pastoral; whilst the framework is referred to variously as the Mission to the World of Work, or the Workers' Mission.

Under Dom Paulo's cardinalship the Church was to take a view not dissimilar to that of the more left-wing Catholic militants, particularly in terms of the immediacy and nature of the problems faced. He characterises the early 1970's as "a time of the persecution of

the working class" where "there was almost no possibility of organising here in São Paulo".⁵⁴ But whilst the Church was predisposed to counterbalance this situation, it did not nurture any pretensions to organising the working classes (a task that would have proved both totally unrealistic and, indeed, unacceptable to both Catholic and non-Catholic militants alike). Instead, it sought to effect intra-ecclesiastic changes in a number of areas that would have a positive impact on the capacity to organise without in any way dictating the precise form this should take. That was left to labour movement activists themselves.

One of the most significant of these changes was the Church's gradual recognition, by a process of dialogue and mutual exploration, of a certain strain of Catholic militancy. This was a significant step because for the first time since the 1964 coup, the Church was beginning to come alive not only to certain hitherto marginalised individuals, but also to hitherto marginalised themes and processes like the question of the class conflictual nature of society. Up until that moment, the more left-wing Catholic militants had been faced with the dilemma of whether or not to join a Workers' Pastoral of the kind envisaged by Dom Agnelo and Frei Sartori. Those who joined had done so on the following basis:

We defended the idea that indeed we should be present precisely in order to meet the challenge, in order to say 'look, the conflict is here, the class struggle is a reality, and the struggle to overcome class divisions is a Gospel imperative. So we have to enter and guarantee this.'⁵⁵

In 1972 came one of the most significant results of this encounter: the completion of the first stage in the consolidation of a class conscious position by the hierarchy of São Paulo. Dom Paulo gave firm backing to militants, like Waldemar Rossi, who were pushing for Church recognition of the class struggle as a phenomenon caused by the very nature and structure of capitalism and thus necessitating more radical forms of intervention on behalf of the working class. This new position of the hierarchy represented a bitter setback for those militants grouped around Frei Sartori after months of internal struggle. In the words of Dom Paulo:

Frei Luis Maria Sartori worked more in the sense of socialising the products of the factories, and of socialising the role of Christian workers and employers whilst, I believe, our struggle was broader, also supporting the formation of unions that would have popular support and would struggle for the rights of the workers and not merely for the relief of the workers' world.⁵⁶

Despite the significance of this shift its direct impact upon the labour movement in the short-term was not remarkable. This was not surprising. In organisational terms all that had happened was that the Church had finally chosen to come to terms with and legitimise an already existing state of affairs. It had chosen to give recognition to a certain brand of militancy over which it had *never* exercised a veto. During those years when cooperation had not been forthcoming from the hierarchy, the militants had simply sought out those individual priests - like the worker priests⁵⁷ and advisers to JOC

x and ACO - who were sympathetic and willing to risk continued support, in the form of providing safe houses, secretly running messages between comrades in clandestinity, participating indirectly in strikes, providing community education of a more critical nature, training new militants, and so on. In the case, for example, of the metalworkers' resistance in São Paulo (with whom, as we shall see, Catholic militants enjoyed close ties), one finds that on repeated occasions metalworker militants were harboured by priests or held their meetings in churches. Infact, such was the measure of Catholic militant autonomy that at one stage they were even able to organise a secret meeting of metalworker militants opposed to the presidency of Joaquinzão within the precincts of the cardinal's own palace, behind Dom Agnelo's back.⁵⁸

To the extent, therefore, that a Catholic labour support network existed prior to this change in the attitudes of the hierarchy, its direct impact was bound to be a limited one. A further factor is that under the extremely repressive conditions of the time there was hardly likely to be a sudden flourishing of Catholic militancy; rather, what could be expected was the aggregation of hitherto disparate efforts as militants saw more scope for their kinds of struggles and regrouped.

Evidence of such an aggregation comes in the form of the sustained period of growth which PO enjoyed between the years 1970 and 1974. This was only cut short by direct military repression and the arrest and torture of leading members. However, in 1975 that sustained growth resumed, clearly indicating that P O was widely perceived as both a necessary and viable vehicle for social and ecclesiastical change.

λ Although Dom Paulo was legitimising certain more combative forms of militancy, he did so largely out of the public gaze and very discretely - at a relative distance - avoiding the mistake of identifying himself too closely with one or other faction or ideology. Whilst, therefore, he might open up new possibilities to the persons grouped around Waldemar Rossi, a group which identified itself with notions of class struggle, and give them to understand that he supported their more combative form of militancy, he was not about to identify himself directly with this group nor was he about to oppose alternative approaches. This is evident in comments he made at a 1973 meeting concerning "the Church in the world of work", at which activists from all regions of the city and members of UNICOR, ACO and JOC were present. In it he was keen to stress the need for a multi-class approach by the Church.

The Mission to the World of Work cannot refrain, also, from concerning itself with pastoral care of the middle class and the upper class. They too are very important. Never to lose sight of the fact that beyond the working class exists the middle and upper class.⁵⁹

It is by no means accidental that such comments are compatible with just about any framework one might wish to adopt in relation to the issue of class. In this way the Church could continue to give scope to a whole range of conflicting groups and methods of action which, in any other organisation, especially a political party, would quickly

have torn it to pieces. That is why in all conscience the cardinal could, for example, support Waldemar Rossi and describe him as "a great workers leader" whilst in virtually the same breath maintaining that "right up until today I give considerable support to Frei Maria Luis Sartori."⁶⁰

This apparent contradiction, between a Church official's tacit support for an organisation, group, or ideology, and his simultaneous unwillingness to identify directly with the positions assumed by the determined group or ideology is a recurrent theme in ecclesiastical life (and one that will be tackled in greater detail in later chapters). It has much to do with the contradictions inherent in an organisation like the Catholic Church which, on the one hand, seeks to incarnate the word of God, but, on the other hand, denies itself the mechanisms for doing so, preferring instead to leave this to lay individuals whom it hopes to "influence". That said, Dom Paulo's decision to empower radical militancy had important repercussions. It gave the reformed and more radical PO a much stronger intra-ecclesiastical platform on which to both define and publicise its critique of Brazil's labour relations system. In 1973, for instance, PO was used as the Church's official publicity organ in four weeks of campaigning and education to advance a "Mass for the just wage", to be held in many of São Paulo's Churches on the occasion of the annual round of wage negotiation. Whatever the constraints facing the hierarchy (in terms of passing specific judgement upon events) the fact is that the language used by Catholic militants themselves was anything but ambiguous. They described the process of wage negotiation allowed for by law as:

the forcible closing of wage campaigns after the phase of negotiation between bosses and workers has run its course. It is a forced curtailment done by means of government intervention which resolves beforehand what the wage increase will be.⁶¹

Earlier in the year, at a seminar which Dom Paulo had again decided to address personally, Catholic militants tackled the theme of "participation in neighbourhoods, factories, and unions". The real significance of the meeting lies in the clarity of the conclusions at which its participants arrived and the fact that they did so at such an early stage when a profound public questioning of the Brazilian trade union structure had not yet begun.⁶² They presented an analysis of union structures which at best could be described as a damning indictment. To the question "do the trade unions carry out their principal objective?" all the study groups reached the following basic conclusions:

1. The unions are tied to and dependent upon the Ministry of Labour;
2. The union tax leads to the accommodation of leaderships, which begin to act more as functionaries of the Ministry than as representatives of the workers - it is the phenomenon known as "peleguismo";⁶³
3. The unions are under a state of intervention since 1937;
4. The Brazilian structure of unionism perverted the meaning of unionism rendering it mere welfare support, which is paternalist and alienating; one only need cite the fact that for the majority of union members the principal motive for affiliating is the medical, dental and other forms of assistance;
5. Current unions are organs of small enclaves, detached from the working classes;

6. There is widespread scepticism amongst workers with regard to the unions;
7. The workers are not organised in their work places in order to struggle within the unions and change the present situation;...⁶⁴

The groups also went on to examine in some detail a whole range of factors contributing to this state of affairs: recent changes in the composition of the working class that contributed to its apathy (i.e., the influx of many peasants who were actually now enjoying a marginally better standard of living than previously); the role of the media; the lack of education; the precarious economic existence of most workers; "the domination of bourgeois ideology, principally through individualism, that leads to egoism, isolation and disunity"; repression of authentic worker leaders; intimidation by government, bosses, "and even the very clergy itself".⁶⁵

On the more practical matter of how it might be possible to break out of this situation, the groups came to a number of conclusions which encapsulate the essence of PO's approach prior to the arrest of leading members in 1974.

First and foremost, there was the need for the "formation of organized groups inside the firms". These groups would carry out the painstaking task of "conscientization [consciousness raising] and organisation, beginning with the smaller problems and internal struggles of the firm." Their "basic method" was to be that of "see, judge and act". The second major task groups set themselves was that of:

carrying out propaganda amongst the workers on the nature of true unionism. Clarifying, by means of courses or debates, the current situation of our unions, and proposing trade union organisation beginning with the firms as the first step required to change this situation⁶⁶.

This concern with rank and file struggles, which as we have seen was a constant preoccupation of radical Catholic action throughout the 1960's, should not be confused with "basismo", which is the belief that the base (or grass roots) can resolve their own problems without reference to or help from outside forces like intellectuals or political parties. The emphasis upon base struggles was not conducted to the neglect of broader political issues. On the contrary, there was a clear perception that the ideology of depoliticisation that had come to dominate the union by its emphasis upon the "individual advantages that the union can offer, like the doctor, dentist, etc", needed to be combated and substituted for another that would "lead to the participation of comrades in the trade union struggle."⁶⁷ Certainly, the acceptance of the grass roots as the primary locus for truly democratic action constituted a central element in militant perspectives, but it was also one that was well suited to the demands of the time. Given the constraints imposed on other more open forms of activity, a grass roots orientation appeared as one of the few viable courses of action available.

In political terms, however, it did give rise to the assertion that factory based trade union organisation was, at least for the time-being, "*the first step*"⁶⁸ in changing the situation. (My emphasis) In other words, these militants were opting for a road of quasi-parallel union development akin to that adopted by opposition forces in the São Paulo

Metalworkers' Union (and in sharp contrast, incidentally, to the road that would be adopted by the metalworkers of São Bernardo do Campo whose principal vehicle of change was the officially recognised union itself).

1.3.2 Catholic Militancy's Double Identity and the Constitution of an Opposition to the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union

The apparent coincidence of radical Catholic analyses with those put forward by the strongest opposition group, the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition (Oposição Sindical Metalúrgica de São Paulo, OSM-SP, hereafter to be referred to as the OSM, the Metalworkers Opposition, or simply the Opposition), was much more than just the fortuitous meeting of two separate approaches under similarly difficult circumstances. In certain respects the origins of the two analyses were one and the same. The two movements were not only contemporaneous, but the majority of PO's members were metalworker activists, and the bulk of Opposition members were of radical Catholic origin. In its initial stages, for example, the Opposition was, for the most part, constituted by Catholic militants grouped around the figure of Waldemar Rossi who was their candidate in the 1967 elections to the union. As he says:

The inspiration was ours, based on the experience of the factory commission of Cobrasma which emerged in 1963 and of a commission of struggle that also emerged in 1963 in Bernardini. These two experiences showed a path which came to be confirmed after 1964. So all the work we carried out was in an attempt to multiply and develop those experiences and to give this character of a group of workers in the sense of an opposition to the union structure. We were the ones who characterized this; who early on provided a large group of militants - the largest group at first. We were also people of the Church, companheiros who had emerged from groups that we had in the Church.⁶⁹

It is important to stress, however, that the formation of the Opposition was not an attempt by Catholics to set themselves up as a leftist-inspired parallel Christian trade union force. Nor, for that matter, were they trying to translate exclusively Catholic principles into practice. Rather, they were:

people who entered into the movement, who had a clear class vision of the struggle, and an expectation, in terms of the movement, of creating a class-based movement and not one of Catholic orientation⁷⁰.

In other words, their aims had a strictly universal, i.e., secular appeal.

Naturally, there were a series of values that Catholic militants felt they could closely associate themselves with:

the question of liberty, the question of equality, the question of democracy, the democratic process, the sticking to the decisions of the majority, the going forward together, the work of the base (not to be confused with "basismo") of a process that goes from below to above and not from top to bottom⁷¹.

But whilst their faith might inspire them to search for adequate means of realising these goals - ones, it should be noted that were by no means exclusive to Catholic militancy - it

did not dictate the modalities these took. On the contrary, forms of action and organisation were hammered out in the context of broader class struggles, and in the context of developments within the labour movement. These were the fundamental reference points of radical Catholic labour movement militancy and not, perhaps surprisingly, its Catholic origins.

The above comments would appear to beg the question as to what, then, the distinctive features of Catholic militancy were. If radical Catholicism took class and not Church attendance or religiosity as its methodological point of departure, then how, if in any way at all, could it be distinguished from other brands of labour militancy like those espoused by the Communist parties, Trotskyists, independent socialists, etc?

The short answer is that Catholic militants articulated not on one, but two levels. The self-imposed secular/class definition of their actions only applied at the level of labour movement practise. This element of subordination to the secular, or respect for the autonomy of the secular, was perfectly in accord with recent changes in Church theology (in particular, the rejection of the old triumphalist mentalities which had sought to make society conform to its own principles and strategy). It was also a continuation of the policy first established by ACO in 1962, which emphatically rejected the organisation of its own militants under a separate banner from the rest of the labour movement - except, that is "in the most unusual of circumstances".⁷² Thus, as far as internal labour movement dynamics were concerned, there was, indeed, little to distinguish Catholic militancy from other forms of militancy. Although there was an undoubted historical affinity between radical Catholicism and certain forms of factory struggle (for example, an emphasis upon grass roots militancy), there was nothing inherently Catholic about this - so much so, that other groups would gravitate to the ranks of the Opposition.

What, however, did separate Catholic from all other brands of militancy was the fact that the day-to-day class struggle was not its exclusive methodological point of departure. On the contrary, there were other clearly ecclesiological and transcendental dimensions as well. In theoretical terms this form of militancy had always represented the crystallisation of a complex series of mediations between the objective labour situation of the day and a whole range of subjective responses. More significantly, these responses had drawn not merely upon secular theorisations of the challenges posed, but also upon religious approaches, ones as diverse as the Bible, Catholic social doctrine, Liberation Theology, and the "see, judge and act" method. In practical terms there were two highly significant areas of action that lay exclusively within the ambit of Catholic militancy. The first, was the capacity of activists to influence internal ecclesiastical changes which were more directly related to the labour movement, such as the drawing up of official documents on the subject. The second, was the capacity of militants to bring the weight of the Church - at all its levels - to bear favourably upon those sectors of the labour movement pushing for radical structural change. As I will show in the

following chapter, at various stages this capacity would prove of critical importance to labour movement fortunes.

This dual dimension to Catholic militancy, more specifically, its capacity to subordinate its own more specific organisational objectives to those of the labour movement as a whole, was not always so apparent. In 1968, for example, during the metalworkers' strike at Osasco, there was no question of giving ground on questions of movement identity. On the contrary, there was a long and intense period of negotiation between two clearly distinct groups - basically a Catholic and a non-Catholic camp - who throughout retained a very clear sense of their political identities. As Zé Groff (leader of the FNT militants) says:

when we went about making up the opposition slate to the union it was quite clear which was the FNT slate and the Ibrahim slate⁷³.

Even so, in spite of these clearly defined origins and the negotiated character of the final slate, the practical propositions eventually formulated by both the Communists and the FNT (i.e., elections inside the factory, legalisation of the factory commission, immunity for those elected, etc.) proved almost identical.

x In certain senses, therefore, the Metalworkers' Opposition of São Paulo represented an advance upon this situation. It took matters one step further by quite deliberately excluding from consideration the political origins of the various groupings involved. The Opposition constituted itself as a front of individual workers rather than as a front of tendencies. Initially, it was dominated by Catholic militants with the presence of a few militants from the Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro, PCB) only to be followed in later years by Trotskyists and Leninists. But as one non-Catholic militant explains:

we never asked, 'now what does the Church think?' It did not matter to us in least what the Church thought, or what the central committee of whatever organisation thought. Obviously, each one discussed in their collectives, but at the moment of sitting down it was the individual.⁷⁴

Thus, for example, the choice of Waldemar Rossi to head the 1967 Opposition slate did not reflected any attempt by Catholics to impose "their" candidate on the rest of the organisation, but simply, the widespread view that he was a first-class factory militant and labour leader. Similarly, in terms of the proposals put forward by the slate, these would remain of a strictly secular nature. Catholic elements of the Opposition in São Paulo never considered the possibility of a radical parallel Christian trade union force. For them, such a course would have represented a violation of respective spheres of influence, a conflation of militant Catholicism's inherently dualistic nature, and, more significantly, a profound disservice to the labour movement.

Naturally, the presence of a dualism, which is perhaps militant Catholicism's most distinctive feature, does not mean that Church and labour arenas were always kept strictly separate. On the contrary, the *raison d'être* of Catholic militants was precisely to

bring the two into reciprocal relation with one another. They wanted to make the Church responsive to the needs of the labour movement, and, conversely, to give a practical testimony of that Gospel commitment within the labour movement. The real question, therefore, was about *how* the two would be brought together, and the *limitations* that should be put upon the process. The key issue was not whether, but the precise extent to which, for example, a figure like Dom Paulo would be expected to manifest his support for combative unions; the extent to which the Church of São Paulo would be expected to give verbal declarations of support for structural changes; or, most significantly at that time, the extent to which the Church should be called upon to provide logistical support for a labour movement that was in deep crisis.

In the following chapter these limitations will be discussed in the context of the period 1975-1978, when, more than ever before, the Church was both in a position and actually called upon to define itself in relation to these issues. In the next section, however, my concern is with those pressures that drove the secular and Catholic dimensions of metalworker militancy ever closer.

1.3.3 The Real and Apparent Fusion of Pastoral Operária with the Metalworkers' Opposition

The overlap of membership between the Metalworkers' Opposition and the Workers' Pastoral also saw much cooperation between the two. However, this expanded to such a degree that one commentator has suggested that "The Opposition came to lose its identity. What is Pastoral? What is Opposition? From 1974 to 1977 the groups of the Opposition were groups of the Church."⁷⁵ Such a statement is, I would argue, more confusing than illuminating because whilst it does point to a strengthening of ties which took place between the two groups, it simultaneously relegates to the background what were a number of highly significant differences between them - differences that were never, as the quotation seems to imply, called into question. In this section, therefore, these essential defining features will first be examined before moving on to see if and how they might have become blurred.

The most fundamental of all the distinctions that must be made between PO and the Opposition concerns the underlying dynamic that structured them throughout their existence. If one examines the Opposition it becomes quite clear that despite (in its initial stages, at least) a particularly marked Catholic presence, the organisation nevertheless operated according to an essentially secular dynamic. Membership was drawn from various organisations - including non-Catholic ones - and, more significantly, goals were of a purely electoral or political nature. The same cannot, however, be said for the Workers' Pastoral. It deliberately sought to embrace both secular and religious dynamics. Its very *raison d'être* was to address not one but two constituencies: the labour movement and the Church. Indeed, if the origins of radical Catholic labour militancy are examined,

it becomes evident that it was a product, i.e., a hybrid, of these two constituencies. Throughout its existence, radical Catholic militancy drew inspiration from both its specifically working class and Catholic heritages.

We have already seen how religious dynamics profoundly affected the very emergence of PO under the cardinalships of Dom Agnelo and Dom Paulo. We can now turn our attentions to the manner in which secular dynamics, in the form of the peculiarities of the class situation in São Paulo, circumscribed and shaped PO's development.

The most obvious and significant manifestation of PO's rootedness in these dynamics is the dominance enjoyed within its ranks by one group - the metalworkers. The true significance of this apparently limited spectrum of growth lies in the fact that it was basically but a faithful reflection of, or coming to terms with, a series of fundamental difficulties and characteristics of the labour movement itself, rather than any failure on the part of PO. It can be asserted with some degree of validity that PO merely attracted to its ranks members of what was already the single most numerical urban labour group within São Paulo; in other words, that the issue of metalworker representation inside Catholic ranks possessed a quantitative element. It is also clear, however, that there were other qualitative dimensions to the problem. Why, for instance, had other large urban categories, like civil construction and commercial workers, been all but left out? From interviews with militants there seems little doubt as to the answer. In the words of one:

it was a category that had a history of struggles therefore it was easier for our proposal to reach the metalworkers rather than other unorganised categories⁷⁶.

Indeed, when it came to trade union militancy by other non-Catholic groups, these too came to terms with the realities of the class situation in São Paulo and gravitated towards the organisational potential of the metalworkers. Successful militancy could not simply be grafted from one group of workers to another, it needed favourable conditions under which it could develop, and the degree of organisation was one of these.

A further condition was strategic. As the largest single urban union in the country, and with union resources to match, the metalworkers offered a perspective for more widespread change which other unions - either by virtue of their lack of organisation or resources - could not. Recognition of this fact was implicit in the hotly contested nature of leadership elections. The competing political factions within the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union knew that a change in the leadership of this group of workers would not only affect the internal balance of the officially recognised labour movement, possibly pushing it in a sharp leftward direction, but also put into question the stability of the military's politico-economic project. These facts of life were not lost upon the militants of PO - all the more so given that the repression facing labour activists demanded that they concentrate their resources in precisely those areas where they could have greatest impact rather than that they dilute these efforts over a wide range of labour sectors (as it was, on certain occasions, maintaining contact within just the one sector

proved exceptionally difficult).

What the above comments indicate is that secular dynamics acutely circumscribed the development of PO's trade union base. The need to adapt to the limitations that were either forced upon or were so much a part of the wider labour movement impelled radical Catholic militancy to look towards the metalworkers of São Paulo. It is important to add, however, that the secularity of PO was far more complex than a mere ability to adapt. It should be recalled that PO simultaneously represented an intelligent, organised and strategic response - a secular response - to the failings of Brazilian trade unionism. Had PO simply concerned itself with the need to inspire individual Catholics with a range of moral responsibilities, then it is quite conceivable that membership could have been drawn from practically any category. What precluded that, however, was the organisation's commitment to a structural critique of trade unionism and its belief in the role of the militant as the chief agent for bringing that change about. Once embarked upon this road, it had to seek to defend and make these goals viable in the most practical manner possible. Crucial day-to-day decisions of this kind were essentially mediated by secular rather than religious considerations.

As an example of this, the alliance of PO militants with the Opposition may be cited. It came about for two main reasons: (a) an affinity and compatibility of their respective trade union goals; and (b), a context of military repression that necessitated the regrouping of forces. It certainly did not come about because the clandestine left within the ranks of the Opposition had enjoyed a sudden conversion to Catholicism or because Catholic activists had discovered the virtues of historical materialism. Quite simply, these philosophical differences were irrelevant in the context of the early 1970's.

Given the ability of PO to insert itself so forcefully within a secular dynamic and set aside religious differences, it is perhaps not surprising that conceptual ambiguities of the type outlined at the beginning of this section (i.e., "What is Pastoral? What is Opposition?") should arise. The fact remains, however, that underlying differences still remained and these should not be ignored. But when it comes to the actual practice of activists exclusively within the sphere of the labour movement, then there was frequently little to distinguish Catholic from other left-wing secular forms of militancy. Viewed organisationally, these differences would become even finer as, on a number of occasions, the Opposition was forced to abandon its formal identity and don the mantle of the Workers' Pastoral. What follows, is a brief discussion of the reasons behind the Opposition's apparent weakness and PO's strength, together with the true extent to which their identities merged.

In contrast to the Opposition, PO was not factory based. This may appear somewhat contradictory for an organisation that set so much store by the capacity of workers to organise in factory commissions; and yet, as the following quote indicates, this was entirely in keeping with its philosophy of class expression rather than organisational self-

interest. As Waldemar Rossi makes it plain:

The Workers' Pastoral did not preoccupy itself with the creation of groups within the firms, but yes, commencing from the groups in the neighbourhoods and communities the militant concerned himself with a process of organisation within the factories - not in terms of PO, but in terms of the working class.⁷⁷

In other words, a strict conceptual separation, or hierarchy of activities existed. In essence this simply entailed PO subordinating its own organisational identity to those of its class whilst members were engaged in specifically labour movement activities, such as trade union or factory militancy. Outside this field, however, especially in the neighbourhoods, PO could indeed assume its formal identity quite openly without in any way compromising its commitment to class unity.

In no way did PO's reliance upon community struggles amount to some form of self-marginalisation from "the real" struggle. This was so for two reasons. Firstly, because neighbourhood activity was always conceived with an eye towards the broader strategic issues involved, i.e., to how it could be linked with factory struggles; and secondly, because the brutality of the repression suddenly made local community organisation a virtual pre-requisite to labour movement militancy.

Turning to the first of these points, we can see evidence of this desire to act as a bridge between the community and the workplace in a 1978 document by PO. It made a number of key recommendations for action within the neighbourhoods. These included:

encouraging the formation of factory commissions and participation within the unions; clarifying the labour laws; urging militants of the community to agitate in the factories and the unions; acquiring new militants and support groups for the labour movement; education meetings to develop new cadres who can work in the organisation of the class; setting up professional schools where one could gain a better understanding of the problems of class; discussing problems of the slums, children, women, the cost of living; acting upon the issue of transport which presents difficulties for all the workers.⁷⁸

This emphasis upon community involvement was more than a mere desire to draw distinctions between organisational and class aims and suggest where the former might be properly exercised in their own right. As we saw in an earlier section, the emergence of PO was partly the result of conjunctural factors, i.e., the difficulties encountered by traditional apostolic movements like ACO and JOC. But it went beyond this. PO was also a response to changes taking place in Catholic social doctrine. It represented an attempt to supercede traditional pastoral methods by developing an *organic* pastoral approach, that is, one rooted in the local conditions rather than in an international ecclesiastical strategy. As one priest explains:

It was neither a problem of parallelism, nor of double loyalties, it was that they [movements like ACO and JOC] had a mechanism and a methodology that reached only those whom the movement had conditions to reach. In other words, a greatly reduced number. The idea was that the Workers' Pastoral should be a mass organisation, mass not in the sense of reaching everybody, because it never had this characteristic, but in the sense that it should penetrate through the whole of the Church of São Paulo - reaching the parishes, communities, etc.⁷⁹

Community involvement, therefore, was an integral rather than accidental component of PO's activities.

For the rest of the labour movement, however, involvement in the community would be a largely accidental affair since the emphasis had hitherto been upon organised labour. Confirmation of this bias comes in interviews with Antonio Flores (a former member of the PCB, who was vice-presidential candidate of the Opposition in 1972 and later vice-president of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union), and with Aurelio Peres (a former seminarist and later a leading member of the Communist Party of Brazil (Partido Comunista do Brasil, PCdoB)). Both acknowledged that the party with real penetration inside the organised labour movement was the PCB; but, as Flores explains, "with the coming of the dictatorship the grassroots work of the PCB collapsed completely."⁸⁰ Yet outside the unions and factories there was no consistent record of militancy. As Peres says, "the people who monopolised the work of the neighbourhoods were sectors of the Church."⁸¹

This situation of repression led to a fundamental re-evaluation of the Church as a possible vehicle for progressive rather than reactionary change. Affonso Deléllis was one member of the PCB who forcefully argued that despite the Church's support of the coup (and, indeed, its partial responsibility for his own demise as leader of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union) fruitful cooperation between Catholic militants and Communists could take place. It was a view that increasingly came to be accepted for reasons which are outlined by Flores:

at the time, what the Communist militants thought was much the same as what sectors of the Church thought. We all needed to fight against the military dictatorship; and the idea, therefore, was to gain control of the [São Paulo] Union of Metalworkers which was still in the hands of the government appointee. ...so why not unite the little that remained of the Communist Party [with the Church's grassroots community work] so as to fight against the common adversary⁸².

✓ The actual strength of the Church's neighbourhood militancy at this time (the early 1970's) should not be over-emphasised. It must be recalled that all forms of militancy - whether factory or community based - were proceeding from a position of weakness. The precise contours of the Church's Mission to the World of Work, for example, still remained to be defined, as, indeed, did the political outlook of PO itself. The atomisation of political resistance was the order of the day.

But even if adequate structures were still in their infancy, neighbourhood involvement clearly held out a number of possibilities. As one PO document notes, the neighbourhood is "the place in which the worker lives and suffers the consequences of the world of work", "where there is greater contact with all the [labour] categories", "where people of diverse experiences congregate", and "it is easy to meet one another".⁸³ Under conditions of severe repression, which had and continued to provoke the disintegration of all forms of official resistance, such unofficial points of contact and unification not unnaturally

acquired an altogether greater significance. Furthermore, the viability of these courses of action was primarily ensured by the one force that was both capable and willing to underwrite these activities in its own name: the progressive Church.

Essentially, then, this was how the paths of the Opposition and the Workers' Pastoral would converge. As one priest explained:

At the time when the question of the Workers' Pastoral emerged in the period of 1970/71/72, there was a certain presence of militants who were prevented from acting within the autonomous union movement, and even the official union movement, because the latter was under the tutelage of the military regime. So there was no possibility of speaking inside the trade unions. Thus, a number of churches provided what we used to call an "alternative space" for workers' organisation; and from there emerged the Workers' Pastoral. The very Metalworkers' Opposition itself emerges in many places - located, equipped, and supported by parishes and by priests who had a certain sensitivity towards the workers.⁸⁴

It is important to clarify, however, that unlike the Opposition, PO's links with the local Church were not simply confined to the dynamics of repression, i.e., to the need to find some form of logistical support at a time of difficulty. On the contrary, PO's very existence was both predicated upon, and represented a crystallisation of, the concept of a more organic and decentralised Church. Militants held to the profound religious conviction that the neighbourhood was the place where people "could live as a community of dwellers and Church".⁸⁵

It was in conformity with this conviction, and unlike groups of the traditional left who were slow to perceive the potentialities of making links between small scale/localised struggles and the trade union struggle, that PO went about developing ties with what were mainly Church inspired groups emerging at this time. Many of these groups were short-lived, springing up intermittently and with varying degrees of success around single issues, like the need for transport, adequate health care, creches, water supplies, sewage treatment, and so on. But throughout, militants from PO sought to draw sustenance from these contacts and attempted to broaden discussions by relating them to wider trade union and labour issues.

The second field which PO was able to develop as a matter of conviction, and not simply necessity, was in its relations with progressive priests. In many respects the latter were to provide the infrastructural backbone to the organisation, a fact which is partly evident in the comments of Padre Altemeyer above, but which is also underlined if seen in the context of those regions of the city of São Paulo where PO succeeded and those where it failed.

In the case of the two most outstanding success stories, the southern and eastern zones, both exhibited a marked working class presence - the former particularly notable in terms of its high concentration of industry (with an estimated 130-150,000 metalworkers), and the latter (despite lower concentrations of industry) for dormitory neighbourhoods with high working class densities. However, although these areas provided PO with a natural constituency, interviews I conducted with Catholic militants confirmed that the decisive

factor which rendered them operationally viable was the presence of networks of priests who were politically conscious, sensitive, sympathetic, and above all, willing to involve themselves in working class problems. In part they were simply reflecting the concerns of their area.

Radical priests proved invaluable when it came to the propagation of one of PO's earliest strategies, the May Day Mass. Such Masses, in addition to being religious celebrations, served as a forum for discussion; as a means of identifying potential recruits; as a means of generating solidarity and confidence in one another; and as a means of generating resistance to the view (prevalent inside the official unions) that May Day was just another holiday. Committed clergy were also able to provide Catholic militants with a base for their activities (i.e., a church or parish house) that was largely immune from government intervention, and, of course, they were also able to provide safe-havens for many trade union militants.

On the other hand, in those areas where a sympathy of this kind did not exist, such as in Santana, in the north of the city, militants were left to their own devices and remained for the most part isolated and therefore ineffective. The priest charged with the work of encouraging the formation of a Pastoral Operária in this region, Padre Raimundo Lipsk, admitted that one of the key problems he faced was that large parts of Santana could be characterised as middle class. But he went on to point to certain ecclesiastical limitations which tended to reinforce these difficulties. He said:

The bishop wants to carry out a more general type of work, and the Mission to the World of Work thus does not have priority...a mentality of investing in this area does not exist, it is said that this is a job for the priests themselves, it is said that this is an area for Padre Raimundo, its with him. But they [the priests] do not engage, they do not commit themselves. Firstly because it is a difficult Mission. It concerns itself with wounds, and secondly, there is not much practise.⁸⁶

The result of this was that efforts to form groups of PO continued on a sporadic and isolated basis.

In 1972, despite the risks inherent in mounting a slate to contest the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections, the Opposition was able to do so in its own name. By 1974, however, that limited leeway completely disappeared. A series of mass arrests that year - some 70 in all - virtually decimated the organisation. The rationale which had seen a cross-fertilisation between Opposition and the Workers' Pastoral suddenly received a boost. As one leading non-Catholic militant explains, by 1975:

the only manner in which one could articulate or combine was through a work of Pastoral Operária in the southern zone specifically, where two things combined: the necessity for the movement to have some kind of shelter in the Church; and a social attitude of various Christian activists and priests that lay within a Liberation Theology line.⁸⁷

Flores put matters more bluntly, "one has to be clear: between 1974 and 1978 the only thing that really survived was the Church."⁸⁸

The requisite, then, that the Opposition now articulate itself through PO, coming as it

did on top of the considerable overlap of individual members and trade union perspectives, not surprisingly introduces serious complications for any analysis of the two movements. In the light of this substantial realignment, Faria goes so far as to suggest that it is only really from 1976 that "The Opposition moves to reorganise its sectors on the basis of industrial characteristics and not on the basis of organisational criteria of the archdiocese."⁸⁹

Again, however, this overstates the case somewhat and confuses the issues. Firstly, because the notion of organising on the basis of criteria of the archdiocese (criteria which, incidentally, are never adequately defined or substantiated) implies the presence of an altogether more global, i.e, city-wide approach than actually existed. Secondly, because the notion is somewhat exclusive. It is clear, for example, that organisation took place on the basis of a whole number of criteria. Sometimes a nucleus would spring up where a particular militant was working. On other occasions it would depend upon where that person was living, or where a safe house, school, or even bar, happened to be. Indeed, Faria himself asserts that there were some sectors of the organised left that formed part of the Opposition but simultaneously - and quite deliberately - organised themselves outside a framework involving the Church.⁹⁰

There is little doubt that those efforts of the Church connected with its Mission to the World of Work (from the initiatives of individual priests to those conducted by PO) acted as a bonding force - bringing together militants from across the various regions and helping to introduce new cadres to the ranks of the Opposition. It is true, furthermore, that the formal identity of the Opposition was put into question to the extent that it could not use its own name and was unable to mount a slate for the elections in 1975. Such was the degree of fragmentation within its ranks. A dependency upon structures of the Church developed with tremendous force. One must be careful, however, not to use language that ascribes to this dependency (or appears to ascribe to it) a status which it did not possess. It is confusing, in the very least, to argue that from 1974 groups of the Opposition "were" groups of the Church. Militants with whom I spoke, for instance, were under no illusions as to their own, the Opposition's, or the Church's true identity or role in the matter. As one said:

obviously we met in a church, it was the only place where we had any immunity from arrest by the police and this made it appear in the eyes of some that the influence of the Church was very great, and this was not the case. Now the influence of the Church was always the same via its militants... It was not an opportunism on our part to work in this, it was a combination of mutual interests. We had interests, and those who were Christians had a double reason, beyond the specific struggle that everybody was carrying out.⁹¹

It is precisely in order to avoid confusions of this kind that we must remember that even on those occasions when the Opposition subordinated its formal identity to that of PO, the former continued to pursue purely secular goals.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed those conditions, ranging from changes in theology to the more immediate series of pressures generated by the advent of the military dictatorship, which led to the reversal in attitudes of São Paulo's Catholic Church on questions of labour and class. The appointment of a new archbishop in 1970 was the single most critical intra-ecclesiastical shift. Since institutional recognition could only come from above, it was this appointment which above all helped to pave the way for an up-grading of left-wing Catholic militant status within the institutional Church.

In another sense, however, the Church was recognising the limits to its sovereignty. Dom Paulo simply began to come to terms (in a positive manner) with an already existing state of affairs over which the Church had never exercised any direct control. The record of progressive Catholic militancy, especially during the 1960's, shows that it did not emerge as a result of changes amongst the local Catholic hierarchy. On the contrary, with the support of individual progressive priests it developed and persisted in spite of Dom Agnelo's extreme conservatism. The real constraining factor upon Catholic militants was the labour situation and not the Church hierarchy. Due to the repression meted out by the military dictatorship, the room for manoeuvre of these militants was frequently just as restricted as that of their left-wing secular counterparts. That is precisely why, even with the appointment of Dom Paulo, their impact upon the labour movement did not strengthen overnight.

I also showed that these secular limitations to Catholic militancy did not imply that its impact was marginal. In the specific case of the metalworkers of São Paulo we saw that there was a considerable degree of interpenetration between radical Catholic organisations and individuals on the one hand, and the main opposition force to the union leadership on the other. I emphasised, however, that that interpenetration was carefully constructed; subject to certain self-imposed rules and dynamics. In spite of Catholic militants dominating the Metalworkers' Opposition in its early phases, they were quite clear that class, rather than more narrowly defined organisational objectives, was to be the main orienting principle of conduct and organisation within the labour movement. This did not preclude specific contributions. On the contrary, even leading Communist figures were forced to recognise that Catholic militants' involvement in neighbourhood struggles - their access to networks of priests (who were not so easily subject to the repression), and the corresponding capacity to congregate large groups of workers without risking immediate arrest - afforded significant possibilities of reorganising labour struggles.

In the following chapter, which discusses the period 1975 to 1978, I will show how those possibilities would become a potent reality as the hierarchy threw more and more institutional weight behind progressive labour struggles in general, and the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition in particular.

Notes

¹ Quoted from Heloisa de Souza Martins, *Igreja e Movimento Operário no ABC: 1954-1975.*, Doctoral Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1986, p. 135.

² Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum.*, Translated by Joseph Kirwan, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1983, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Most translations of the original Latin text are problematical for their use of the terms "rich" and "poor" to denote the words "locupletes" and "proletarii" respectively. Kirwan's is the first english version in more than 90 years to use the terms "wealthy owners of the means of production" and "the unpropertied workers" instead. Given the whole tenor of the encyclical, i.e., its attack on socialism and liberal capitalism, this more specific terminology is, I believe, an important and valid shift of emphasis.

⁴ Edward L. Clearey, *Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today.*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1985, pp. 60-61.

⁵ On this question see Centro Pastoral Vergueiro (CPV), *As Relações Igreja-Estado no Brasil.*, Vol I, Edições Loyola, São Paulo, 1986, p. 78.

⁶ Source: Silvia Maria Manfredi, *Educação em Sindicatos.*, Doctoral Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1983, p. 45.

⁷ One advisor to the Ministry of Labour at the time said that "Our trade unionism is professional, corporativist, Christian. It does not seek social reform. It neither recognises revolutionary Marxism nor reformist Marxism. It seeks, in the writings of the great Popes, Leo XIII and Pius XI, its inspiration and principles." (Quoted from Vito Giannotti, *O Que É Estrutura Sindical.*, Editora Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1987, p. 17.

⁸ Frei Hugo Fragoso (OFM), *Os Círculos Operários: "Uma" Busca de Solução Para o Problema Social.*, mimeo., N.D. (circa 1985), p. 5.

⁹ Quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Joaquinção, 20/9/88.

¹¹ Affonso Deléllis interviewed in "Movimento Operário: Novas e velhas lutas", *Escrita Ensaio*, Ano III, No. 6, São Paulo, 1980. See especially pp. 28-29.

¹² These government imposed union leaders are referred to in Brazil as "interventors. Taking the specific case of Joaquinção, he was appointed a union "interventor" in the Guarulhos Metalworkers' Union (also situated in Greater São Paulo). It was only later that he stood for election in São Paulo where, in the absence of a competing slate, he was elected President of the metalworkers union.

¹³ Very little has been written about the Workers' Circles. Howard J. Wiarda's "The Brazilian Catholic Labour Movement" (reprinted in H.J. Rosenbaum and W.G. Tyler (eds.), *Contemporary Brazil.*, Praeger, New York, 1972) is, to my knowledge, the most detailed general study available even more than twenty years after its original publication in 1969. Events, however, have moved on. After the implosion of the movement in the late 1960's, my own researches showed that attempts were made to revitalise the Circulos in the 1980's, only this time, from a centre-left perspective. The latter efforts, which received indirect support from CLAT (See references to CLAT in Chapter Four below, section 4.5), took account of post Vatican II theological developments and sought

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to democratise the movement's organisation. In 1988, these efforts culminated in the Fourteenth National Circulista Congress' adoption of a new Letter of Principles. This did away with many cherished doctrines, and certainly sought to do away with the influence of local elites. On the specific question of class struggle, for example, the document noted that "The Circulista Movement does not accept the class struggle *as the destructive conflict between men*. But, it does recognise the existence of a real conflict between exploited and exploiters. For this reason, *a proposal of class conciliation must be refused by CIRCULISM*, whilst the present conflict between the parties is maintained." (Confederação Brasileira de Trabalhadores Cristãos, "Carta de Principios Doutrinarios e Programaticos do Movimento Circulista", mimeo, July 1988, p. 3.)

This kind of shift in policy should not be underestimated. Taken as a whole, the letter represents a veritable purging of the COs' reactionary Catholic characteristics, nothing less. In practical terms, however, the movement remains a shadow of its former self. Officially, there are 36 COs left in the state of São Paulo with only four left in the capital. But even this figure understates their degree of marginalisation. The vast majority of the groups left have, by the admission of leading reformers within the COs, little connection with the working classes. Their formerly educative and political roles have all but been submerged by their social assistance functions. For the foreseeable future, at least, the Círculos will remain of peripheral significance to the labour movement in Brazil. Even if one assumes that the reformers continue to win their power struggle at the centre, it is also clear that the changes in policy brought about by the 1988 conference will take a considerable time to bring into effect at a grass roots organisational level.

¹⁴ Author's interview with Marcelino Pereira Martins, 16/8/88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Following the coup, the labour movement lost all the influence it had previously exercised over the state (which was not inconsiderable). It also became the subject of tough anti-strike legislation. The immediate effects in the São Paulo area were wage cuts and an increase in unemployment.

¹⁷ Over the period of 30 years he has written extensively. See especially *Libertação Cristã do Mundo do Trabalho.*, Vozes, Petropolis, 1985, regarded by some as his most synthetic work.

¹⁸ Author's interview with Frei Alamiro, 12/8/88.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Source: author interview with Padre Carlos Tosar, ACO adviser and worker priest in the Diocese of Santo André, 1/9/88.

²² Quoted from Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil: 1916-1985.*, Stanford University Press, California, 1986, p. 125.

²³ Ação Católica Operária (ACO), *Historia da ACO: Fidelidade e Compromisso na Classe Operária.*, ACO, Rio de Janeiro, 1987, p. 42.

²⁴ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

²⁵ ACO, *Op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁷ Frente Nacional do Trabalho (FNT), "Vinte anos de Luta: Fundação da FNT", *Primerio Caderno da FNT.*, São Paulo, 1980, p. 43.

²⁸ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁹ The terms "peleguismo" or "pelego" derive from ranching terminology which refers to the pelego, or lambskin, placed under a horse's saddle to soften the impact for both rider and horse. In the trade union context it refers to those union officials whose main job is to soften the conflict between workers and management, or workers and government. In permitting an easier ride for both parties they also preserve the basic relations of domination and subordination. The term "pelego" is therefore a pejorative one.

³⁰ Quoted from FNT, *Op.cit.*, p. 39.

³¹ Salvador Pires (elected President of the FNT in 1975) suggested that the conflict between the FNT and the Communists in the early 1960's had much more to do with the practise of the Communist parties rather than any religiously motivated ideology of anti-Communism, whilst Zé Groff suggests that the priests with whom he was involved were engaged in a serious and undogmatic study of Marxism. (Source: Author's interviews with Salvador Pires. 8/8/88, and Zé Groff. 13/12/88.)

³² Quoted from Manfredi, *Op.cit.*, pp. 51-52.

³³ Francisco C. Weffort, "Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco 1968", *Cadernos CEBRAP.*, No. 5, São Paulo, 1972, p. 87.

³⁴ José Ibrahim interviewed in *Escrita Ensaio.*, *Op.cit.*, p. 73.

³⁵ Author's interview with Zé Groff. 13/12/88.

³⁶ José Ibrahim interviewed in *Escrita Ensaio.*, *Op.cit.*, p. 73.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

³⁹ Author's interview with Zé Groff. 13/12/88.

⁴⁰ The "imposto sindical", or trade union tax, is a tax (one day's wages per anum) levied by the government upon every worker of which 60% is paid into his or her corresponding union (a matter decided by law) irrespective of whether the worker then joins that union. The result is that if unions stay within the law, they are then guaranteed an income from the government on the basis of maximum possible membership. In this sense, they can be extremely powerful entities. The São Paulo Metalworkers Union, for example, is reputed to have an income in excess of that of the Brazilian state of Alagoas and employs 644 staff. (Source: Leoncio Martins Rodrigues, Gilberto Tedeia, *O Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos de São Paulo na Campanha Salarial de '85.*, CEDEC mimeo, 1988, p. 1.) The problem, however, is that they can also be unrepresentative inasmuch as they have no need for an active membership. Thus, in 1988 São Paulo's Union of Metalworkers (which at the time had a quite reasonable membership level by Brazilian standards) possessed 130,000 members out of a total industrial base of 360,000. It received the tax from the 360,000 workers. (Source: *Ibid.*, loc.cit.) The other difficulty is that the moment they go beyond the law (which is extremely restrictive) unions may find their funds cut off at source. Thus, one idea behind the tax is that he who pays the piper should call the tune. The difficulty with the abolition of the tax is that for the vast majority of Brazilian unions the change would dramatically cut their income.

⁴¹ Author's interview with Zé Groff. 13/12/88.

⁴² Quoted from CPV, *Op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁴³ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁴⁵ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Padre Abid Andery, 3/8/88.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁴⁹ Quoted from CPV, *Op.cit.*, p. 52.

⁵⁰ Author's interview with Padre Abid Andery, 3/8/88.

⁵¹ Author's interview with Frei Alamiro, 12/8/88.

⁵² Author's interview with Virginio de Madonna, 12/12/88.

⁵³ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁵⁶ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁵⁷ On this question of "worker priests" see below. Chapter Three, note 5.

⁵⁸ Source: author's interview with Franco Farinasi and Vito Giannotti, 6/12/88.

⁵⁹ Equipe de Formação, "A Igreja no Mundo do Trabalho da Grande São Paulo: Relatório do dia 12 de agosto de 1973", *Caderno No. 5.*, São Paulo, August 12, 1973, p.4.

⁶⁰ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁶¹ Equipe de Formação, *Op.cit.*, p. 14.

⁶² This is evident if one looks to the São Bernardo Metalworkers Union, which is generally regarded as the home of progressive unionism in Brazil. At the time of the Catholic militants' meeting in 1973, Lula (the leader of the strikes in the late 1970's) was nowhere to be seen. He was still the loyal vice-president to Paulo Vidal, whose methods were always in strict conformity with the law. The process of debate within that union itself was not even in its infancy since the First Congress of Metalworkers had not yet been called (that would only take place in September). What is remarkable, therefore, is that radical Catholic militants had already developed a far-reaching critique of the trade unions at this early stage. Furthermore, their analysis would enjoy greater favour with ever larger sectors of the labour movement as time went on.

⁶³ On the question of "peleguismo" and the union tax see above, notes 29 and 40 respectively.

⁶⁴ Equipe de Formação, "A Igreja no Mundo do Trabalho da Grande São Paulo: Relatório do Dia de Estudo Sobre Participação nos Bairros, Fábricas e Sindicatos", *Caderno No. 4.*, São Paulo, April 1, 1973, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 22/11/88.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² ACO, *Op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.

⁷³ Author's interview with ZÉ Groff. 13/12/88.

⁷⁴ Author's interview with Vito Giannotti, 8/11/88.

⁷⁵ Hamilton Faria, *A Experiência nos Anos de Resistência: A Oposição Sindical Metalúrgica de São Paulo e a Dinâmica do Movimento Operário (1964-78)*., Masters Thesis, Pontifica Universidade Catolica, São Paulo, 1986, p. 235.

⁷⁶ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho. *Pastoral Operária: Porquê e como?*., Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1978. pp. 13-14.

⁷⁹ Author's interview with Padre Fernando Altemeyer Jr., 19/7/88.

⁸⁰ Author's interview with Antonio F. Flores, 7/8/89.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Aurelio Peres, 7/8/89.

⁸² Author's interview with Antonio F. Flores, 7/8/89.

⁸³ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, *Op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Padre Fernando Altemeyer Jr., 19/7/88.

⁸⁵ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, *Op.cit.*, p.13.

⁸⁶ Author's interview with Padre Raimundo Lipsk, 1/8/88.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Vito Giannotti, 8/11/88.

⁸⁸ Author's interview with Antonio F. Flores, 7/8/89.

⁸⁹ Faria, *Op.cit.*, pp. 235-236.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁹¹ Author's interview with Vito Giannotti, 11/8/88.

Chapter Two: São Paulo's Preferential Option for the Working Classes - 1975-1978

2.1 Introduction

The year 1975 marks a historic watershed for relations between the Church of São Paulo on the one hand, and the constituency composed of radical Catholic and trade union militants on the other. If one describes the proximity and nature of relations between the Church and militants as hitherto at the mercy of individual bishops - be they of a reactionary or progressive orientation - then 1975 witnessed a significant shift in the institutional centre of gravity as all lay elements (which obviously included radical militants) were given a more meaningful voice in a consultative exercise that would directly determine the nature and enactment of the Church's pastoral priorities over the years to come.

The initial sections of this chapter examine some of the processes behind the institutionalisation of these hitherto marginalised voices together with the policy outcome that this helped to bring about - in particular, the Church's official adoption, in February 1976, of the Mission to the World of Work, "giving special priority to the labouring classes".

The latter parts of this chapter are concerned with the ways in which these principles came to be put into practice in the specific context of metalworker struggles during the period 1975-1978.

2.2 Formal Aspects of the Pastoral Planning Process in São Paulo

In 1975 the Archdiocese of São Paulo began a consultation exercise which culminated in February 1976 with the adoption of a series of pastoral priorities, or, goals in relation to the community. This move was not without precedent. However, its innovative nature becomes evident if it is compared to the *General Pastoral Plan (Plano de Pastoral de Conjunto, PPC)*, a plan designed to set guidelines and priorities for the Church throughout Brazil and published a decade earlier, in 1966. In the introduction to the PPC, Dom Agnelo Rossi had claimed with some pride that "This plan was elaborated by specialists, and exhaustively discussed, amended and approved by the bishops of Brazil".¹ But it was precisely these specialist characteristics that some people criticised. They saw it as a plan created by experts for experts; a plan that rendered "The People of God" a mere object in need of enlightenment and quite incapable of forging its own religious destiny; a plan that saw the proliferation of dozens of specialist organs with their own impenetrable language. Worse still, a plan whose technocratic and authoritarian concepts and execution merely masked an underlying political conservatism. As Oscar Beozzo, a leading Catholic intellectual and himself a priest commented:

there was a clear option for situating the Church less in relation to its historical tasks in the field of evangelisation and of its social and political commitment, and more in relation to itself and the reorganisation of parochial and diocesan structures. It was a means of retreating in the face of a conflictive reality divided into classes and deeply marked by social, political and ideological conflicts.²

× One practical manifestation of this conservatism was the plan's complete omission of any reference to radical lay Catholic movements like ACO and JOC.³

The far more democratic methods adopted during the Archdiocese of São Paulo's 1975-76 planning process provided a marked contrast to the PPC's paternalistic approach. In São Paulo all sectors of the Church - both in terms of geographical distribution (north, south, east and west of the city) and hierarchical function (i.e., both clergy and lay as well as the bishops themselves) were "invited to study and manifest their opinions with respect to the plan."⁴ More significantly, those opinions were given practical validity when in November of that year these same sectors were called upon to determine by a vote the four priorities the city would adopt. All 38 sectors of the archdiocese sent representatives to this meeting (hardly a surprising result given the extensive coverage which the issue received in the pages of the Catholic weekly *O São Paulo*) with the final decision being taken by the College of Bishops "in jointly responsible action with the Assembly of the Church in São Paulo"⁵. In this later meeting, the final version was approved. It contained the same four priorities of the first plenary: (1) Base Ecclesiastical Communities, (2) Human Rights and the Marginalised, (3) the Periphery, and (4), the World of Work. The order, though, was altered slightly with the World of Work being moved into second place, whilst the pastoral of Human Rights and the Marginalised came to occupy third place, and the pastoral of the Periphery fourth.

Leaving aside for the moment the nature of the priorities actually approved, it is clear that these changes in method were a sign of the times. They bore witness to both the maturity of the Church of São Paulo, i.e., its desire to embrace in a thorough-going manner the spirit of Vatican II and Medellín,⁶ and the more favourable objective conditions - both internal and external - for the realisation of such an extensive exercise in democratic participation.

Amongst those more favourable internal conditions was the increased rootedness of participative practices within the Church itself on an impressively widespread basis. In national terms, for instance, it should be noted that January 1975 saw the holding of the first nation-wide meeting of base ecclesiastical communities (CEBs⁷) in Espírito Santo. This demonstrated that the CEBs had already achieved a certain level of success (numerically, organisationally, and intellectually) and showed every sign of building upon this. In local terms it is well known that the Archdiocese of São Paulo was one of the major growth points for the CEBs. Dom Paulo had long been favourable towards initiatives which, like the CEBs, derived their source of inspiration from the needs of the grassroots.

As far as external conditions were concerned, 1975 was the year which saw some

abatement in state repression. If one takes the particular example of Catholic militants within the World of Work - and it was, after all, militants, whether lay or clergy, who would ultimately help to bring the planning process down to a community level - then these could be said to be re-emerging following the harsh crack-down of 1974. A democratic planning process which could not count upon the the input and support of such cadres would have been severely limited, one might even say a non-starter. Indeed, as we shall see below, to a large extent, it was the militants who were partly responsible for framing the early position documents and then in bringing a heated - and by all accounts very rich - debate to the 1975 Sul-1 bishops' conference.

Turning to the adoption of the World of Work as a top priority, it is interesting to note that this originally took place at a state-wide level, followed a few months later by a version for the city of São Paulo which, in its essentials, was identical. Both versions, for example, set out the objective of their mission in the following terminology:

THE FULL PROMOTION, IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL, OF THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE CLASSES LINKED TO THE WORLD OF WORK, GIVING PRIORITY TO THE WORKING CLASSES.⁸

Similarly, both versions would use identical language to describe the contents of such a mission, which was:

- To seek, without paternalistic attitudes, the self-promotion of the worker in all aspects of his life - which is not merely identified with work.
- To envision the transformation of a society based on egoism, into a fraternal society based on justice and love.
- To give priority to wage workers who work in production without excluding a preoccupation with other members of the World of Work.⁹

What does the identity of language and concepts tell us? Given the more democratic and autonomous manner in which policy was formulated (whilst noting that the regional bishops of Sul-1 were a far more restricted voting constituency), it indicates that there was, during this period, a genuinely close correspondence of views between the two episcopal levels. Naturally, there were differences between the two, reflecting as these did a necessarily different response to local and regional realities. Thus, for example, two of Sul-1's five priorities - those of Youth and Family - were not chosen for inclusion in the archdiocese's list of four main priorities; however, three out of four of the city's priorities (CEBs, World of Work, and Human Rights) coincided with those chosen by Sul-1 which also put CEBs at the top of its list.

This coincidence was to be expected for a number of reasons, quite apart from the obvious fact that many of the problems were of universal concern. One of these was the degree of overlap between the two bodies which understandably resulted in a certain echoing of each other's position. It should be remembered, for example, that bishops from the archdiocese represented just under 20 per cent of the bishops of Sul-1, and that they occupied a number of strategic posts.¹⁰ Added to this was the fact that the brand of

x progressive Catholicism espoused by the archdiocese, and which had by 1975 helped to make Dom Paulo a figure of national and even world reknown, enjoyed a hegemonic position in Sul-1. Lastly, there was a more traditional feature which helped bring about this coincidence of outcomes. It was the longstanding desire on the part of the Catholic Church to formulate policy which was in keeping with its increasingly collegial nature; in other words, a policy that was both consistent and, where possible, universally applicable.

x Whilst the above-mentioned features go a long way towards explaining how a policy on the World of Work could have emerged in such a unanimous manner, they only give a slight indication as to why that policy actually emerged. For the answer to this question one must look to the role developed by militants of the Workers' Pastoral itself as well as to changes in ecclesiastical procedures that rendered militants a more potent force.

By 1975 a profound shift in Church practise had taken place. Instead of trying, in the words of the PPC, "To create the means and conditions by which the Church of Brazil can adjust itself as fully and quickly as possible to the image of the Church of Vatican II",¹¹ what the bishops sought to do was to adjust their actions to the Brazilian reality. This comes across quite clearly in comments made to me by Dom Mauro Morelli, who at the time of the Second Regional Plan was the Regional Secretary of Sul-1, and instrumental in setting up the early meetings that would discuss pastoral priorities in the light of the CNBB's National Plan. As he put it:

An attempt was always made in the Regional [Sul-1] to have an understanding and practice of pastoral planning. Hence, many courses and meetings were held in the dioceses and Sul-1, making the latter learn the truth that planning strengthens the fidelity of the Church to its mission, that is to say, by looking at reality, illuminating it in the light of our faith, and arriving at practical conclusions. Through this process of looking at reality the priorities began to emerge, for example, the state of São Paulo is characterised by the world of work, thus a Church that does not have the World of Work as its priority is a Church without any sense whatsoever.¹²

Having opted for such an approach, which had been taking root in the Brazilian Church for sometime,¹³ one can begin to understand why the militants came to occupy such an important role in the eventual outcome. After all, it was they in large part who were entrusted with bringing to the attention of the bishops the precise contours of that reality. But more than simply reporting upon the past and present situation of labour, activists also brought position documents to the meetings that served as a basis for often heated debates between themselves and the bishops.

Their role was anything but passive. Anísio Batista de Oliveira, a leading Catholic militant (and later presidential candidate on behalf of the Metalworkers Opposition in the 1978 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections), mentions how in the early bishops' meetings at Itaici, which led to the first regional plan, himself and other like-minded militants emphasised the importance of the Church developing a coherent approach in relation to the World of Work. As he says:

we carried out a task that was quite individual with many bishops that were present. And inside the

discussion groups we managed to sensitise all the bishops towards this question¹⁴

It is in this way that Waldemar Rossi could with all justice claim that militants "participated in the preparation and the actual conduct of the bishops assembly."¹⁵ Again, as had earlier been the case with Dom Paulo, the process was one of mutual discovery and one might even say a certain suspicion on the part of some bishops as to the real intentions of PO. As Rossi comments:

Our proposal created a certain impact, it shocked, because we have a clearly class-based, i.e., conflictual vision. For many people present in the assembly of bishops this was pretty difficult. So you see the impact was strong: there were tense moments, but in the decision of the five priorities one of them was the Mission to the World of Work.¹⁶

2.3 Impact and Content of the Church's New Policy on the World of Work

Whilst the statement by the bishops of Sul-1 represented an important historical landmark, its actual effects - particularly within the outlying areas of São Paulo state - were frequently difficult to perceive.¹⁷ In some instances this merely reflected the somewhat parochial attitude of bishops, priests and even pastoral agents themselves, who shied away from any activity that could possibly entail conflict with either employers, government, or the official union apparatus itself. There was also the question to consider of the divisions that such a move might create within the local Church itself, a prospect that was not to everyone's liking. For these reasons, then, some dioceses never even got as far as adopting the priority of labour at all. Others, on the other hand, adopted the correct episcopal formulae but did so quite cynically - not putting them into operation, but merely channeling enough resources and personnel into the field to show that "something was being done", and at times never even getting this far. However, in those cases where a genuine attempt was made, there were serious obstacles to face. Obstacles that had much to do with various forms of repression meted out to workers who might wish to organise themselves in a political manner; obstacles associated with trying to organise a group in the interior of the state, where communications were difficult and the sense of isolation so much the greater; and even the obstacles presented by potential recruits themselves who questioned the validity of any form of political activity, their ability to conduct it successfully, and the degree to which the Roman-Catholic Church should indeed be involved in such affairs.

Although by no means free from such difficulties, the Archdiocese of São Paulo nevertheless provided a radical contrast to this scenario. Nothing could match the resources available to it or, indeed, the resources that an infrastructure of a city the size of São Paulo could provide for any worker wishing to mobilise. Not a single diocese in the interior, for example, could boast a Catholic weekly of the high journalistic quality and vast circulation of *O São Paulo*. Nor could any city in the interior provide a trade union militancy that rivalled the scale and tradition of São Paulo's. More significantly,

for our purposes, it was clear by 1975, that with the appointment of new auxiliary bishops Dom Paulo had acquired a formidable and supportive team - one of whom, Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, expressed an interest in and was appointed to be bishop responsible for the Mission to the World of Work in the archdiocese. For these reasons, and the fact that radical Catholic militancy in the city was one of the country's best organised and most articulate, there was little prospect - let alone intention - of somehow brushing this pastoral under the carpet.

Already, by April 1975, Dom Angélico had organised a thorough-going review of efforts in the World of Work, bringing together the Archdiocesan Council for the Coordination of the Mission to the World of Work and representatives from the south and east of the city as well as members of JOC and ACO who offered their views on the Mission in their regions and organisations. In the words of the Secretary to the Archdiocesan Pastoral, Frei Gilberto Gorgulho, one was witnessing:

a veritable new surge in the work of the Mission in the World of Work, with groups springing up in many neighbourhoods and factories.¹⁸

The relationship between militants and Dom Angélico was most fortuitous. In the specific case of Waldemar Rossi, it dated back to his earlier days in Riberão Preto when the bishop had been a friend was a family friend. It was a natural step, therefore, for militants of PO to invite the new auxiliary bishop (whose sympathies they already knew) to work with the organisation, subject to the ratification of Dom Paulo.

Once installed in his new post, work began in earnest. As Rossi says:

all the work that we had already been doing before gained impetus with the arrival of Dom Angélico who, in turn, stimulated Dom Paulo. He put this question on the list of CNBB discussions.¹⁹

For his part, Dom Angélico is quick to stress that interest in the labour question was far from new and predated his arrival:

notwithstanding the violence of the repression, the Workers' Pastoral was increasingly organising itself here in São paulo. So seeds of JOC, seeds of ACO, all the work of organisation of PO in the Archdiocese of São Paulo led the [Sul-1 bishops'] assembly of Itaiaci to emphasise the need for us, as the Church, to opt for the World of Work.²⁰

He did, nevertheless, occupy a privileged place in the Church hierarchy, using it to articulate certain interests:

My work, my function in this, was that of a person already involved in the Mission to the World of Work here in São Paulo, who also brought to the assembly of bishops all the fears, all the expectations and hopes of the Christian militants of the Workers' Pastoral.²¹

It is ultimately impossible to gauge the precise extent to which changes in ecclesiastical policy were either the result of action by progressive bishops like Dom Paulo and Dom Angélico, or of Catholic militants. Dom Angélico's own personal view was that the testimony of lay persons who had suffered atrocities due to their radical religious

commitment "evidently echoed very strongly in the episcopal assembly", and for this reason he attributed that decision "*above all* to the presence and action of these militants."²² What can be said with absolute certainty, however, is that without a supportive element of the episcopacy, and most especially, without the insight and action of these militants, a change in 1975 in both policy and practical terms would not have been possible.

To better assess the success - or otherwise - of the Church's new priority towards labour requires a brief answer to the following two questions: (a) to what extent was the proposal a genuinely class-based, one?, and (b), did the proposals succeed in achieving their desired objectives?

Unfortunately, the answer to the first question is ambiguous, a fact which is directly attributable to the nature of the text on the one hand, and the Brazilian situation on the other. If, for example, we ask the question: does the text present a class conflictual analysis in the socialist or Marxist senses of the term?, then the answer is an emphatic "no". The vision is utopian - "To envision the transformation of a society based on egoism, into a fraternal society based on justice and love."²³ - but there is no hint of socialism in it. Certainly the document notes that "There are constant conflicts in the World of Work...", that a "structural change is required in the World of Work", and even that the "numerous violations of human rights" in the field of work are caused in part by "a structure of the World of Work based on egoism, the perversion in the conduction of one's duty, in profit and not the human person."²⁴ But it does not analyse these in what could be described as a rigorous sociological manner, i.e., setting out a broad analysis of the problems, their causes and effects, as well as social tools for overcoming such difficulties. The word "capitalism", for instance, is conspicuous by its absence.

Whilst accepting that a document of little more than three sides can hardly be expected to provide profound new insights, it is, nevertheless, clear that the plan fails - in a manner which is characteristic of the Church - to offer any analysis of the mediating mechanisms for achieving the desired goal of "the common good".²⁵ Thus, into the basket of structural change both employers and employees are neatly placed in a seemingly effortless and unproblematical manner. On the one hand, the Church expresses its desire to give "priority to the labouring classes", but in same breath it emphasises that this should not be to the exclusion of "other members" of the World of Work. Who are these other members - bankers, ranchers, large and small businessmen?, and how would this work in practice? This is never really clarified. One short paragraph merely urges the reflection and action of Christian employers themselves.²⁶ For a more adventurous (although still basically problematical) analysis of the relationship between the sacred and the profane, one must look to other documents, a question which must be taken up in later chapters.

These criticisms aside, there was a very real sense in which the document did contain

genuinely conflictive potentialities. Take, for example, two seemingly innocuous passages; one of which urged "The constant publication of information on the World of Work and the Mission to the World of Work"; and the other which proposed "The strengthening of significant dates in the World of Work."²⁷

With regard to the first passage it should be remembered that it was at exactly this time that the Brazilian government was falsifying statistics on inflation (a fact which later served as a catalyst to the São Bernardo metalworkers' strike of 1978), and that press censorship - especially as it affected a sensitive issue like the labour situation - was still quite common. The pages of *O São Paulo*, for instance, were repeatedly peppered with gaps that were created by the scissors of the local censor. Any attempt, therefore, which sought to diffuse in any manner whatsoever accurate information, let alone run propaganda for union oppositions, obviously represented a tangible challenge to the status quo.

As for the "strengthening of significant dates" in the labour calendar, there is little doubt that the prime objective here was May Day itself. The Church's intention, certainly in the case of the archdiocese at least, was to recover this day as a day of profound political significance for the labour movement, to wrest it from the hands of those groups - be they government, employers, or corrupt union leaders - who had effectively hijacked it under the dictatorship and rendered May Day just another public holiday, i.e., purged of all historical and class meaning.

Any adequate critique of the theoretical merits of the Church's new policy on labour therefore needs to be tempered with a comprehension of the wider historical setting and not merely with an understanding of the philosophical issues involved. Otherwise it risks being completely static, thereby reducing passages of considerable historical significance to little short of banal philosophical utterances. Certainly there were groups within the Church who were quite happy to see that happen, and the Mission to the World of Work reduced to a collection of platitudes; but there were others who had been at the forefront of the document's preparation and were now keen to exploit such passages to their full class potential.

These qualifications apart, it is nevertheless curious, given the presence of left-wing Catholic militants in the drafting process, that intermediate structures like the unions themselves were not given a mention - an omission that would be quite unacceptable in many a party-political document. How does one explain such an apparently obvious oversight? How does one explain the presence of a contradiction between the desire to come to grips with reality and the simultaneous inability, or unwillingness, to define intermediate structures and practices?

The answer is a complex one which begs a whole series of more fundamental theoretical questions. These issues are covered in considerable detail in later chapters. For the moment, however, it is necessary to indicate three important explanations.

Firstly, there is the obvious but still important difference that the Church, unlike a

✓ political party, neither has the goal nor the possibility of assuming direct state power. It may seek to influence, even be called into, government meetings, and as observers we may question the ways in which it mediates between the divine and the profane. Essentially, however, its role is confined to operating through intermediaries and structures. It does not produce programmes for political power and neither is it subject to electoral exigencies.

Secondly, it must be noted that the Church's somewhat vague formulations in this, as well as in many other documents, derived from the simple political fact that with increased specificity, particularly in a controversial area like labour relations, opinion was bound to fragment into competing proposals. Broad consensus was, therefore, the hallmark and basis for successful policy change within the Brazilian Roman-Catholic Church, and like any other group, be they of the left or the right, radical militants had to take account of this fact. In effect, then, what passed in the last instance was the policy of the lowest common denominator. That should not be taken to imply that the programme was of a low standard, but simply that good or bad, the resulting document had to meet this criterion. Had a consensus on the need to discuss intermediate structures existed at the time of preparation, then this would have been reflected in the final result.

✓ Finally, if the specific conditions themselves are examined, it is evident that the document was a compromise between, on the one hand, those sectors of the Church (i.e., lay persons, and in a handful of cases bishops) who had a precise and more concretely - or historically - defined vision of the issues involved, and indeed themselves adopted a partisan approach; and, on the other hand, the clear tendency of high-ranking Church authorities to pass documents that are in some way universally applicable - a paradox in the case of labour where the Church uses the discourse of a preferential option for the poor. What cemented these competing proposals into a whole, and partly (although by no means fully) resolved the contradiction, was the mutual if sometimes uneasy respect for the various levels of the Church and their corresponding levels of authority and autonomy. Thus, the bishops felt no pressing need to make specific declarations on an issue like the Brazilian trade union structure. Instead, that could be left to organs like the Workers' Pastoral whose language was designed to embrace such specificities. Nor for that matter, did militants in PO feel that they had to get such a commitment. What was most important for them was that the general principle was passed and that a framework within which these issues could be tackled was established; and indeed, it could only realistically be tackled at a local level.

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✕ What the preceding comments clearly indicate is that paradoxically, for an institution as bureaucratic and centralised as the Church, its relations in both policy and day-to-day practice are almost wholly constituted at a local level, more specifically, whatever interpretation a particular bishop or lay movement might wish to put on regional or national documents and whatever content he might wish to invest these with. Naturally, such interpretations are not made without restrictions. The Vatican can intervene, and has

done so with impunity, where it sees fit. Similarly, a higher instance of the Church can, where fundamental doctrinal issues are brought into question, restrain a lower one.²⁸ However, the exercise of such powers are the exception and not the rule. In the meantime a tremendous local diversity does indeed prevail alongside generalised notions which bind it to the regional, national and ultimately Roman Catholic Church.

As evidence of this one only needs to compare the starkly contrasting approaches to the question of labour by the archdioceses of Rio de Janeiro, under the cardinalship of Dom Eugênio Sales, to that of São Paulo, under Dom Paulo. Although this question will be discussed in more detail later on, the difference can be summarised as one that involves, in the case of Rio, a cardinal who is bitterly opposed to a Workers' Pastoral that is in any way conflictive and who has therefore created his own highly paternalistic version, and that in São Paulo which is both a jealous guardian of its own autonomy (which is respected and even encouraged by the hierarchy), and proposes an option which is conflictive.

It is now possible to return to the second question posed at the beginning of this section, i.e., the extent to which this new policy was successful. It should, by now, be fully apparent that the pastoral plan of 1976-77 could only serve as but a pale indication of relations between the Church, the official and unofficial sectors of the labour movement. It was a framework of operation, a guide, rather than a plan to be executed. "Success", therefore, could only be achieved by those sectors who throughout the plan's formulation had intended to invest its declarations with a radical practical content. The question, therefore, is whether these sectors (which included bishops, priests, nuns and militants alike) were or were not successful in putting their own plans into action. Did the Church make good its commitment to "give priority to the labouring classes" and to "seek, without paternalistic attitudes, the self-promotion of the worker in all aspects of his life"? How did it choose to translate these concepts into practice? What limitations, if any, did it set itself?

That These are some of the questions must be examined in the following section which deals with one of the richest and most controversial manifestations of Brazilian radical Catholicism: relations between the Church of São Paulo and the metalworkers of the region over the period 1975-78

2.4 The Basis and Limits to Church Intervention in Metalworker Affairs

Whatever the ambiguities of episcopal policy at a state level, there is little doubt that in the Archdiocese of São Paulo the Church succeeded in creating the impression amongst key participants on both sides of the political divide that it was anything but an impartial bystander to metalworker affairs. We have already seen the high esteem in which the Opposition held its activities. As for those sections close to the union's president, Joaquinção, they viewed the Church as meddling in a field that lay completely outside its jurisdiction. Indeed, he himself complained of occasions when "companheiros of mine

went to Mass and witnessed during it, in the homily, the father speaking of union elections and attacking me violently."²⁹ More seriously he made the allegation that:

Any person who makes an investment like the clergy did, an investment which was possibly taken from the pocket of the poor during Mass in order to defray the expenses of a slate in a particular trade union [i.e., the Metalworkers' Opposition in the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union] pays a very high price - not simply in economic terms, but in moral terms, which was the distancing of Catholics from the Church due to this practice.³⁰

Such comments are clearly designed to call into question the moral legitimacy of the Church's stance together with the representativeness of the Opposition itself, but they do simultaneously raise a number of questions which merit attention. Firstly, there is the question of the extent to which the Catholic Church in São Paulo was truly partisan. Closely related to this is the issue of what the theoretical bases and limits to this partisanship might have been. Can it be said, for example, that the Church was pursuing a series of spiritual values which temporarily - for reasons not of its choosing - attracted decidedly political/electoral connotations? Or, was it straying into a qualitatively new field of action based upon essentially electoral considerations? In this section these issues will be discussed with special reference to the period 1975-1978 (a time when the triangle of Church, union and opposition acquired more precise contours). As regards the problem of what costs - if any - the Church may have incurred in the pursuance of its particular option, this demands a longer term analysis in the light of successive union elections. This question is briefly examined in Chapter Four.

It would be a profound methodological error to seek to base any analysis of the Church's attitudes to the metalworkers of the São Paulo solely upon episcopal declarations. Two reasons for this immediately spring to mind. Firstly, there is the fact that there are so few direct declarations on the subject. Extrapolation of a consistent policy on such limited evidence would therefore be mere guess-work. Secondly there is the obvious, but nevertheless fundamentally important methodological point which holds that the Church is far more than the sum total of its bishops, and therefore deserves to be studied accordingly. This is especially the case in an instance like São Paulo where there was a considerable stress on the democratic, collegial and lay dimensions of pastoral life rather than the virtues of purely hierarchically ordained action. Naturally, had the bishops in the archdiocese centralised power in their hands and subsequently remained silent on key issues, then there might exist solid grounds for inferring a reluctance on their part to grapple with a contentious issue like the metalworkers. But they did the exact opposite of this. Through the development of a pastoral plan they in effect sought to provide conditions conducive to the institution of a suitable framework in which Catholic workers could themselves articulate both a theory of action and the practice itself.

The central issue therefore becomes not so much one of what the bishops themselves said (although this is clearly of relevance), but rather, the extent to which they legitimised the actions of groups like the Workers' Pastoral, and the degree to which

such groups, on issues relating to the metalworkers of São Paulo, acquired some autonomous voice and could be said to be speaking on behalf of the Church as a whole.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the legitimization of the Workers' Pastoral as a force for change both within and beyond the Church was high on the agenda of Dom Paulo. In 1975 he made it quite plain that "the restructuring of the movements of the Mission to the World of Work" (of which PO was one), along with certain forms of popular evangelisation in the periphery of the city, was "certainly the greatest hope and most pressing task of our Church in Sao Paulo."³¹

✓ Aside from Dom Paulo's personal affinity for this type of work, there was another compelling reason for adopting it as a strategic priority. This related to the make-up of the city itself. In the same 1975 article, the archbishop essentially argued for the Church to come to grips in a positive manner with one simple fact: "we are in the city of work, amongst a predominantly working class population."³²

The restructuring of the workers' movements was, therefore, to be at the cutting edge of the Church's response to a series of tasks which, by its own admission, were immense. Indeed, the true scale of the challenge came out in a study sponsored by the archdiocese's Justice and Peace Commission and carried out by researchers based at CEBRAP. In that study, entitled *São Paulo 1975 - Crescimento e Pobreza* (*São Paulo 1975 - Growth and Poverty*), the metropolis' working class dimensions, together with the huge suffering of the people involved, were powerfully argued - frequently using the government's own statistics to devastating effect. In accordance with practically all the most significant socio-economic indicators (for example, housing, transport, nutritional levels, infant mortality, wages, and working conditions), it was argued that for the vast majority of the city's inhabitants, conditions of life had worsened, rather than improved (as was so often the government's claim) during the years of Brazil's so-called economic miracle.³³

Not surprisingly, therefore, Dom Paulo's strategic prioritisation of the issue found echoes amongst fellow bishops. Asked, for example, why he showed an interest in the area, Dom Angélico was quite clear:

Well because the city of São Paulo is markedly characterised by work, and it is in the World of Work where the greatest and worst offences against the human person are to be found. ...So it was the situation of dramatic injustice in which the working class lives here in Greater São Paulo which led me to opt for this task.³⁴

Added to these factors of city-wide deprivation and the hierarchy's willingness to provide a coherent response was, of course, the question of the grassroots itself and the feed-back it was providing on the issue. As the Dom Paulo makes clear:

When we carried out the first research in São Paulo to get to know what priorities the people wanted to propose for the Church of São Paulo, they proposed as first priority the defence of human rights and second justice in the World of Work. That was in 1974. And it is for this reason that we have adopted this priority and the people always renew this request for us not to abandon the working classes.³⁵

Thus, having deliberately sought to encourage a greater degree of lay participation by an exercise of this kind, and given the cardinal's general philosophy which accorded the grass roots of the Catholic Church a greater say in the running of its affairs, it was only logical that the hierarchy should respond positively to the special significance with which these sectors in turn invested the problem of the World of Work. In this way, the Mission to the World of Work was put very firmly on the agenda.

The desire to legitimate the work of PO and associated organisations was therefore clearly present, but that still leaves open the crucial matter of the extent to which - on issues concerned with the metalworkers of São Paulo - PO could speak for the whole of the Church. Unfortunately, a simple answer to this question is not possible. Whilst in formal organisational terms one can say that when it came to the assumption of an official ecclesiastical position on a particular subject the bishops had the last word, it is simultaneously evident that in the case of São Paulo the practice clearly went well beyond such a rigid framework. This is apparent from the following highly significant comments of Dom Angélico:

In general, the decisions concerning the World of Work are left to the Workers' Pastoral. Indeed, in many instances, the Workers' Pastoral indicates to the bishops a certain problem, a certain situation which would be good for the bishops to take a certain position with respect to. There has never been here, in São Paulo, any taking-up of a position by the Workers' Pastoral which did not reflect the position taken up by the Church. On some occasions it is the Workers' Pastoral which speaks, on other occasions it is the cardinal, the bishops of São Paulo, I who speak - but never without listening to the workers beforehand.³⁶

In effect, then, what could be witnessed in São Paulo was an informal and in this sense highly complex division of labour.

Inevitably, the informal nature of these relations makes their study of a difficult undertaking. With diverse centres of power working towards similar objectives one cannot talk in terms of a single architect of change. Indeed, looking to the relations between the Church and metalworkers for the period 1975-78, where it can be said that the Church exerted a powerful impact on events, there is the added difficulty that that impact was essentially cumulative in character.

As an example of the diverse origins and gradual nature of these contributions, one need but turn to the role played by the Workers' Pastoral in the re-emergence of the Opposition as an effective fighting force. All participants in the Opposition - Catholic and non-Catholic alike - are agreed that insofar as PO helped to furnish forms of logistical support (e.g., meeting places, refuge, contacts, telephones, office space and equipment, etc.) it was of decisive importance. Without this assistance the Opposition's own effectiveness would have been more seriously compromised than it already had been by the repression a year earlier. It is also evident that PO's contribution went beyond purely logistical factors, for it also helped to inject the largest single body of new

militants into the ranks of the Opposition. So strong was this contribution and the vitality of PO at this time, that one militant even suggested that there was an abortive attempt to produce a slate for the 1975 union elections, with PO's younger activists originating and developing the proposal.³⁷

However, PO's ability to carry out these valuable logistical and membership tasks was not the exclusive result of its militants' sheer determination. It was also built upon newer foundations, i.e., a favourable shift in official attitudes which led to the recognition of the Mission to the World of Work as a top priority in the archdiocese in late 1975. This was in sharp contrast to the kind of officialisation process that had begun to take place in the latter part of Dom Agnelo's cardinalship which at the time had been widely perceived as an attempt to dilute and subordinate progressive Catholicism. Instead, the new radical officialisation, long sought after by the militants, contributed to their ability to both grow in numbers, reorganise (for they too had been hit by the repression of 1974) and move towards an offensive public posture.

This process of reintegration was partly anticipated by the appointment of Dom Angélico as the bishop with special responsibility for the area. Through the Archdiocesan Council for the Coordination of the Mission to the World of Work, he helped bring together the efforts of radical Catholic organisations throughout the city in early 1975. The formal creation of an Archdiocesan Commission a year later simply sustained these moves as well as projecting them further into the future. Thus, the Commission was involved with all those tasks which pertained to any form of city-wide co-ordination. These included: assisting in the development of general guidelines for the militants; assessing the strengths of the organisation in particular areas of the city; helping in the setting-up of new nucleae; producing internal position papers; bringing the various organisations in the field - e.g., JOC, ACO, FNT, PO, - into closer contact with one another; helping to diffuse articles and statistics on workers issues; and finally, developing proposals for the next pastoral plan.

The journal, *O São Paulo* also played a significant role in heightening general perceptions of PO within Catholic circles. Under the directorship of Dom Angélico, who had received a journalistic as well as clerical training, the paper threw its pages open to the Workers' Pastoral and became a sort of recruiting sergeant. The 1000th edition was primarily devoted to the "Dia do Trabalhador" - May Day. Citing Gustavo Gutiérrez and Paulo Freire (in their respective ways two leading exponents of liberation theology), Dom Angélico wrote an article which emphasised how May Day should be seen not so much a day of celebration as a day for demanding liberation.³⁸ Similar sentiments were expressed by PO in an open letter on the issue. Another article entitled "Authentic Unionism and a Democratic Base", written by a labour lawyer, argued the need for independent unions with the right to strike. Dom Paulo also weighed in with a long contribution on the workers' condition. In one section dealing with relations between the Church and the workers he noted that "the appropriate methodology for action in favour

of the workers is still in its initial phases", and went on to argue that:

We will not come to form agents of the Mission to the World of Work, nor will we achieve a continuous presence alongside the workers, if we do not address ourselves with decision towards the evangelisation of this world which today constitutes the majority in the Church and society at large.³⁹

All these factors helped to give the PO a legitimacy and an efficacy it had hitherto not possessed. Naturally, the organisation's unofficial links with priests and nuns, who had helped it through the early 1970's, continued to be one of its mainstays. Now, however, PO could articulate its views on a regional basis and with the official backing of both the hierarchy and the assembled churches of São Paulo.

A better appreciation of the real contribution of the Church hierarchy and the Workers' Mission to the Opposition can be gained by looking at the latter's fortunes three years later, during the 1978 elections to the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union. This can be asserted for two main reasons. Firstly, because left-wing Catholic militancy had had time to feed its way through the system. This therefore permits a balance of its achievements in relation to one of the Opposition's most important goals, that of contesting elections, to be made. And secondly, because the epoch of elections inside this union gives an important insight into relations between hierarchy and militants at a determined - indeed, determinant - moment in time.

2.4.1 Church Involvement in the 1978 Metalworkers' Elections

In the elections of 1978 three slates were standing. Slate One was headed by the incumbent, Joaquinção, whilst Slate Two (entitled Renewal) and Slate Three (the Opposition) stood against him.

One of the most notable features of the Opposition slate was its selection of candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency, always an important decision in Brazilian unions because of the considerable weight attached to the presidential figure in any campaign. In both cases, the persons chosen (Anísio Batista de Oliveira and Santos Dias da Silva respectively) also happened to be leading militants from the Workers' Pastoral. The question which therefore arises is whether this selection was mere coincidence or the reflection of ecclesiastical influence amongst Opposition ranks.

There is little doubt that PO was a powerful force at this time. It was precisely through the activities of militants like Anísio and Santos Dias that the PO had brought new members into the Opposition. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the "power" of PO was more associative than direct. By this I mean that whilst the organisation was a major contributory force to the revitalisation of the Opposition, it never constituted itself as a bloc within the ranks of the Opposition. Neither did it select any candidates of its own, nor did it have the power (or the desire for that matter) to impose these upon the Opposition.

The unwillingness of PO to articulate itself as a bloc, and consequently select a

candidate of its own derived from, amongst other things, its philosophy of non-parallelist intervention (a question that will be examined towards the end of this section). As for its lack leverage over the Opposition, this was the result of the latter's deliberate articulation as a front of workers rather than tendencies. Thus, like other groups involved in the Opposition, such as the PCB, PCdoB, and various Trotskyist organisations, PO inserted itself within a selection process which took individual factories rather than particular individuals or their organisations as its starting point. In practical terms this took the form of some 2000 workers from 40 factories firstly discussing the Opposition programme, and subsequently selecting some 50 possible candidates on a factory by factory basis. And when it came to the choice of the final 24 (a number imposed by Brazil's trade union laws) there was no real conflict to speak of.

Part of the reason for the absence of conflict lay in the qualities of the candidates themselves. Interviews with non-Catholic Opposition figures confirms that both Anísio and Santos Dias were candidates with excellent communications skills, a solid track record of Opposition militancy, and a good relationship with the factory grass-roots. To this extent, therefore, their Catholic origins were irrelevant. The comments of Antonio Flores (at that time a member of the PCB) are instructive in this respect.

It was not seen as a slate of the Church, it was seen as a slate of militants who belonged to the Church, and who were metalworkers, who were distinguishing themselves, and who had a track-record of grassroots involvement... You see, in a slate you have to work upon the names of people beforehand. It was not a question that these people were from the Church and therefore would not be targeted by the government - we had every certainty that they would be - but that they were comrades who enjoyed the confidence of the workers.⁴⁰

A second factor which contributed to the absence of conflict was the earlier mentioned form in which the Opposition had chosen to articulate itself, i.e., as a front of workers rather than as a front of tendencies. Thus, Anísio and Santos Dias were there to represent all workers rather than the aspirations of this or that particular tendency. Had matters been the other way around, then one might have expected a more conflictual process than was the case. Ironically, one element which appears to have helped to sustain this method of operation was the dictatorship itself, since it generated a widespread feeling amongst Opposition ranks that there was only one real enemy, the military, whose main representative among the metalworkers was none other than Joaquinzão. Groups therefore subordinated any philosophical or political differences they might have had to the immediate priority of electoral victory.

From interviews with many figures in the Opposition it also becomes clear that the dictatorship exerted profound constraints on the selection process itself. Alternative candidates, with what many militants regarded as an even greater ability and wider experience, like Waldemar Rossi and Antonio Flores, amongst others, did not even figure in the selection process because they were actively precluded from taking part by the forces of the dictatorship. Both these men, for instance, were the subject of judicial

review. On the day on which the slate was finalised they had to be present in Rio de Janeiro for judgement. They could not run for election simply because to do so required a certificate from DOPS (the government security agency) which was not forthcoming. Their support for the slate eventually chosen was, however, unequivocal since it represented the best available cadres at a particularly difficult moment in time.

Although PO chose not to put forward a specific platform with particular candidates, and although it basically articulated a broad set of aims through its individual militants - who might have a number of tactical political differences amongst themselves - it did have a significance that went beyond that of a mere collection of individuals. At the very least, it affected the perceptions of other forces who had a more tightly structured conception of organisation. In this regard, the words of one Opposition member, Franco Farinasi, who at the time was closer to Trotskyist organisations, are highly instructive. As far as he was concerned:

in this question of the slate's composition the weight of the Church figured heavily, because it is quite clear that there were far more able and prepared elements; but the problem was the following: there was the question of the need for the political support of the Church, and we took this very much into account.⁴¹

In other words, whether or not sectors of the Church mobilised themselves within the Opposition on a collective political basis, the fact remained that they were, nevertheless, a major political actor in the eyes of others. Farinasi explained that in 1975:

we had a real problem...; obviously the repression had abated a little but there still was not the security to act openly, we had to act in semi-clandestinity... we did not have places to meet, so the only places to which we had access were churches. In this respect the Church was of considerable weight, and elements linked to the Church have a great weight.⁴²

That weight could also be translated in terms of the significant numbers of voters likely to follow particular candidates. Militants like Wlademar Rossi, Santos Dias, and Anísio Batista all had personal followings irrespective of whether they chose to cultivate these or not. When, therefore, one candidate, whom many sectors of the left regarded with suspicion, appeared as an important force to be reckoned with, his ecclesiastical connections came in for scrutiny. The candidate was Aurelio Peres. He had worked in the southern zone of the city in close cooperation with sectors of the Church. Thus, in order to counter-balance or neutralise any support he might enjoy amongst these sectors, many people within the Opposition favoured the selection of Anísio Batista de Oliveria who also had connections with the Church but a view that was regarded as more open.

This episode is a fascinating one in two respects. Firstly, because it illustrates that on one level "the Church" was indeed a force to be reckoned with; that is to say, it was capable of posing or neutralising a problem. Simultaneously, however, these events conclusively demonstrate that that force was far from monolithic. The fact that Peres and Anísio had connections with Catholic militancy certainly had acted as a constraint upon the choices exercised by secular counterparts, thus partly demonstrating the latter's

weakness insofar as a political debate and manoeuvring had been framed in these terms at all. At the same time it had been shown that there were significant political divisions amongst Catholics themselves. Paradoxical though it might sound, religion had been shown to be of secondary importance to the political content of a particular candidacy.

The political support of the Church of which Farinasi speaks was taken into account in a broader sense than just those of the dynamics of the individual candidacies themselves. As he makes clear with regard to the 1981 election (where, if anything, the Church's influence had diminished):

We knew in 1981 that were we to choose another candidate [in this case one other than Waldemar Rossi] we could end up without the support of the Church, the political and other forms of support. So the great weight of the Church was a function of this. All the Opposition leaders knew this clearly. There was no dispute in terms of candidates, there was no other proposal.⁴³

In ascribing such importance to the Church one must be clear as to what the notion of political support did or did not entail. What was not sought was officially sanctioned ecclesiastical backing in the form of episcopal declarations, but something more mundane than this: all kinds of logistical support to help neutralise the vast electoral machine which any president of a union like the metalworkers' disposed of. What Opposition figures undoubtedly hoped for - for that was what it was, just a set of hopes rather than mutually worked out guarantees - was that with two PO militants at the helm, Catholic individuals, particularly the clergy in all parts of the Church, would look upon their activities favourably and therefore it would be relatively easy to gain access to meeting places, type-writers, phones, canvassers, printing equipment, contact networks, and so on. There was no guarantee that the selection of Anísio and Santos would provide these resources, after all, PO itself could only provide limited direct help and what was needed went well beyond the confines of a single organisation. But their presence was certainly likely to encourage an opening up of Church resources, which is precisely what happened.

The attitude of the hierarchy to the electoral contest at this time is indicative of the largely harmonious division of labour that had developed within the Church's ranks. Bishops did not pass judgement upon whom they felt was the ideal, or, for that matter, the worst candidate; instead, they largely confined their activities to the continued and vigorous support of PO whilst turning a blind eye to the more partisan activities of its members.

Surprisingly, perhaps, this position was not entirely inconsistent with episcopal claims to stand above partisan struggles. The relationship that had evolved between PO and the hierarchy was one of mutual respect and, ultimately, the right of autonomous action. Ultimately, because action was generally taken with reference to one another. Within certain self-imposed constraints, PO was free to choose its own destiny, in the words of Waldemar Rossi it was "an integral part of the life of the diocese...not subordinate, but part of the body."⁴⁴ For the hierarchy to have intervened at this stage would, therefore,

not only have constituted an infringement of PO's sovereignty, but also a highly charged political act, quite possibly leading to accusations of partisanship. Questions could have arisen as to why the bishops had chosen this highly sensitive moment to intervene. Furthermore, in the event that they had done so, their grounds would have been most shaky indeed, for the position that PO had assumed was one of considerable subtlety. It had not, as some might imagine, simply chosen to throw its weight behind the Opposition, at least not collectively. Instead, it had left that choice to individuals, well realising, of course, that in practice the vast majority would opt for the slate of Anísio and Santos Dias.

The adoption of this approach was more than the result of tactical positioning on the part of PO. Rather, it was the result of a deep-seated - and by all accounts unanimous - conviction that PO, rather like the bishops themselves, should hold on to a pluralistic concept of action, and avoid closing ranks around a determinate slate, political party or trade union confederation. Both groups were in complete agreement that casting aside this principle would have constituted an unacceptable form of secularisation, that is to say, that the transcendental aspects of Catholicism would thereby have been reduced to a single programme. Not merely to one, albeit important, dimension of their faith, but to an all too narrowly defined concept of that secular dimension which, moreover, the conditions of that time did not warrant.

This position may come as a surprise to many observers who see in the Catholic left a tendency towards historical reductionism and the negation of the transcendental aspects of religion. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate the serious commitment of left-wing Christians to the spiritual foundations of their faith. If one takes the specific example of a document produced by PO to mark the October 1978 meeting of its groups throughout the archdiocese (a meeting whose aim was to flesh out basic principles) it was emphasised there that:

Jesus Christ did not wish to tie himself down to one party or ideology. When the zealots want to make him the king, the military chief for whom they are waiting, Jesus refuses, for the Good News is not to be confused with a socio-political or socio-religious regime. It is universalist.⁴⁵

Of course, this kind of perspective is far from unproblematical. It raises a number of uncomfortable questions, not least: how can one specify the conditions under which support or rejection of a determinate socio-political force will be established; what are the factors that can mediate such a decision; and whether these are religious truths or ideological formulations? These are fundamental questions which will be discussed in considerable detail in later chapters. For the moment, however, the point is that there was a conscious desire on the part of militants not to be tied down to a particular programme. The origins of this perspective were overwhelmingly religious and rather than tactical.

Certainly, there were political dimensions to this principle of collective non-partisanship. The latter was also crucial in helping to sustain the viability of PO's claim

and desire to work "within existing organisations" and "not to develop parallel groups".⁴⁶ This was a theme that went back to the organisation's ACO/JOC roots and the reservations these groups had expressed towards any form of political activity that went beyond that of the individual. PO's reasoning was a continuation of this theme, not holding itself to be "an organ that represents the class, but rather a means of achieving consciousness, of valuing oneself and the class"⁴⁷. The key issue was:

not to dominate the organisation and the struggle, but to encourage the shift from an individualistic mentality to a class mentality⁴⁸

As with ACO, PO had therefore assumed - almost as an article of faith - the view that collectively sanctioned partisan action was inadmissible under other than the most exceptional circumstances. What the election of 1978 therefore indicates is that in the view of the Catholic militants who took part, those exceptional needs criteria had not as yet been met (a conclusion that may be deduced retrospectively from the arguments put forward by militants in 1984 when those conditions were fulfilled). Indeed, so obvious did the 1978 situation appear to them, and consequently the correct manner in which PO should insert itself in metalworker affairs, that the question of support never seriously arose and long records of discussions are therefore not available.

By basing ourselves upon the events of 1984 (which shall be dealt with in Chapter Four) it may be concluded that what probably constituted the single most important obstacle to some form of officially sanctioned collective action at this stage was the fact that there were three slates standing, of whom two had some serious claims to opposition status. By this I mean that not only did they have an appreciable following amongst rank and file metalworkers (a claim that could be made by the incumbents) but they also had a democratic form of conduct and a genuine desire, therefore, to broaden workers' control over the union. Had this not been the case and had the choice been between just two slates, the current president and an opposition group, then it might have been argued that the choice was a simple one between good and evil and that it therefore fell to - indeed, under these circumstances was incumbent upon - PO to pass judgement on the participants. As it was, however, what the workers had before them were several slates and hence a series of political choices to be made. For many within the ranks of PO, the support of a determinate slate under these conditions would have constituted a step backwards, a return to the Church's earlier paternalistic practices, a subversion of working class autonomy and a corresponding violation of PO's own basic rules governing political intervention.

To those outside Catholic circles, especially those in charge of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union, the subtle positioning of bishops, clergy and militants appeared as little more than opportunistic manoeuvring, i.e., as a crude attempt to give support to a particular slate whilst simultaneously pleading impartiality. Even to the most objective observer, this did look like a somewhat specialised, i.e., contradictory, concept of

impartiality. The fact remains, for example, that by one means or another the resources of the Church were thrown open to the Opposition slate, even to the extent whereby nuns acted as vote tellers on the latter's behalf. As has been shown, however, for those groups within the Church the validity and legitimacy of their actions centred around the provision of an adequate response to the following question: To what extent and in what precise form is intervention justifiable under the present circumstances? The answers given at the time demonstrate that there were a number of fundamentally important self-imposed limits governing the action of the Church throughout this episode. These explain why the bishops chose not to give official backing; why PO chose not to request it of them; and why PO opted for individual rather than collective representation of its views.

2.5 Conclusion

In some senses this chapter has sought, especially through its examination of the 1978 elections, to delineate what is essentially an insoluble paradox. On the one hand, we have seen the importance of the Church as a force to be reckoned with. Via complex networks of militants, priests, nuns, logistics and so on, radical Catholicism cut across and became an integral part of electoral dynamics. At the same time, however, we have seen that the force of the Church was not monolithic and capable of simple instrumentalisation by one group or another; on the contrary, what the outside observer may perceive as "the power of the Church" was, in fact, composed of autonomous (albeit cooperating rather than competing) centres of power that could range from the actions of a radical priest or PO activist to a bishop. Indeed, at times, that power could even be expressed in terms of the perceptions of secular militants.

The injection of new cadres into the ranks of the Metalworkers' Opposition after 1975 did not mean that it somehow became a tool of the Church. In this respect the words of Waldemar Rossi cited earlier are worth repeating. They put the issue into perspective:

I think that the contribution of PO, that is to say members of the Church, to the Opposition was decisive. I think that the members who came from the Church helped to establish the guiding principles, and not only were authors of the proposal, but also able to help maintain it, as they nourished it with the largest number of militants..." But: "the people who entered into the movement...had a clear class vision of the struggle, and an expectation, in terms of the movement, of creating a class-based movement and not one of Catholic orientation..."⁴⁹

In other words, there was a coincidence and compatibility of values rather than a direct transposition or identity of those values.

These, then, were the intentions of Catholic militants. But what of the Catholic hierarchy? Was there any attempt at an instrumentalisation of Catholic forces for a determined series of political ends? In an article published at the time of the elections Dom Angélico made the following comments:

Little by little, the Workers' Pastoral is offering to the labour movement militants possessing alternatives inspired by the principles of the Gospel, the transformation of men and unjust structures. In practice, the labour movement will have a Christian, "pelego", Communist, etc., orientation

depending upon its leadership. What interests us is that the labour movement has a Christian orientation, hence we work to offer it Christian militants with a real consciousness of class and yearning for liberation. It is in the labour movement that the great class dialogue is realised. It is there that the most diverse of currents meet one another in the search for a way out of a situation that is recognised to be one of oppression.⁵⁰

To a large extent this sums up the position of the official Church. It was not a-political, but on the contrary was keenly aware of the competing versions of the best forms for trade union organisation. Bishops felt that there should be a specifically Christian contribution to this process of dialogue. The sustained support of the Workers' Pastoral was one way of achieving this. However, PO was conceived in a radical/grassroots mould rather than a vertical interventionist one. By this I mean that it was not there to try and impose some tightly structured Christian solution to the problems of Brazilian labour. Parallelism of this kind had long been rejected. It was there because of a radical Christian commitment, to reflect the perceived needs of the working classes, and help give a Christian orientation to that labour movement.

What is of critical importance is that that Christian orientation would take decidedly secular forms. One can appreciate this simply by listing some of the criticisms levelled by bishops at the labour movement and the solution proposed. In another 1978 article, for instance, Dom Angélico was quite specific:

we know that reality presents us with a picture that is far from ideal. We possess a system of trade unionism which is both tied down to the Ministry of Labour and distorted in its functions by virtue of welfarist attributes.⁵¹

As for what that ideal should entail, the bishops of São Paulo state concluded earlier in the year that:

The Mission [to the World of Work] must contribute towards the unification and organisation of the workers with the ultimate aim that they themselves assume their own destiny and find the paths to their own liberation."⁵²

These, then, were the paths to a labour movement with a Christian orientation rather than the mere presence of Catholics at its helm. And it was for these reasons that Dom Angélico regarded the salary campaigns and union elections of 1978 as "beacons of hope". In his words, the Labour Movement was "lifting itself in an effort towards greater union and better organisation."⁵³ Again, the comments of Waldemar Rossi are instructive in this respect. The following passage, taken from an interview with him during the 1978 metalworkers' campaign, makes it quite plain as to who enjoyed the order of precedence and why:

The Workers' Pastoral, which is not a movement of bishops and priests but which in the Catholic workers has its greatest force, assumes positions in accordance with the views of the the masses. If current trade unionism does not represent a force for the expression and defence of the working class, the worker - conscious of gospel values, conscious of his rights and all the experience accumulated by humanity - will fight for a different form of trade unionism. The option of Christians for a new trade union system leads to a form of contestation which, naturally, encourages the formation of movements of contestation.⁵⁴

Let us now return to a question posed at the beginning of section four. To what extent was the Church either pursuing a series of spiritual values which, for reasons not of its own choosing, enmeshed it in political and electoral controversies, or was it, in actual fact, deliberately straying into a qualitatively new field of action that was based upon what were essentially electoral considerations, as the comments of the metalworkers' president, Joaquinzão, would appear to suggest? The answer is neither. As the declarations of the São Paulo state bishops, the city hierarchy, and leading militants reveals, the Church was pursuing more than just a series of spiritual values which led to its somehow being caught up in the events of 1978. It had quite consciously sought - and succeeded - in developing a range of what are best described as meta-political policies, i.e., an implicit vision rather than explicit/programmatic one.

By far the most important of these policies, and under which all the others may be subsumed, was outlined to me by Frei Gilberto Gorgulho, a close associate of Dom Paulo's and secretary to the Archdiocesan Council for the Coordination of the Mission to the World of Work between 1975 and 1986. He argued that the Church of São Paulo:

sets out from this fundamental principle: the people must be the subject of their struggle and of their liberation. One must respect the people and one cannot substitute them.⁵⁵

But he also admitted the presence of another crucial accompanying element to this outlook, namely:

the necessity of bringing the people to become an active subject and to assume their own struggles.⁵⁶

Both these statements are of profound significance. The former indicates an ecclesiastical ideal, i.e., that all things being equal, the people can and must be their own masters. But the latter statement, especially if inserted in the context of the Brazilian labour movement - where all things were far from equal, and where, for example, electoral passivity was a major hallmark - reminds us of the onerous task which the Church had taken upon itself. The "necessity" of bringing people together as an "active subject" therefore demanded the creation of a whole range of new instruments and criteria to meet these needs. This was precisely one of the major reasons behind the emergence of the various missions in general and that of the World of Work in particular. For its part, the Workers' Pastoral was to be the key organisation in helping both to concretise and subject to critical scrutiny the Church's proposition.

Judged from the point of view of the participants themselves the strategy of the Church appears to have been successful in a number of respects. Firstly, the Metalworkers' Opposition, through its links with the Church, was able to develop a machine of sufficient electoral strength not only to challenge the union president but also, by all reliable accounts, to actually beat him.⁵⁷ Of course, this does not mean that the political

dimensions of the Opposition's victory can be attributed to its tactical alliance with sectors of the Church; for that to be the case voters would have had to have been made aware of such a connection and the Opposition would have had to have made political capital out of the Catholic origins of its two leading candidates. This did not happen. Only to a more specialised audience, like the readers of the journal *O São Paulo*, was any overt reference made to the activities of Anísio and Santos on the regional commission of the Mission to the World of Work, or the historical links between PO and the Opposition. But even here, no confusion could arise as to the strictly secular nature and origins of their demands - the principal one being a wholesale reform of the union structure.⁵⁸ Thus, it was not any identification of Church with Opposition amongst the voters that contributed to victory, but secular factors. Amongst these were: the logistical support which the Church provided; the skillfully conducted nature of the campaign itself; the heightened sense of confidence and radicalism amongst grassroots São Paulo metalworkers in the aftermath of the historic victories scored by their colleagues in the ABC region earlier that year;⁵⁹ and a general climate of mobilisation and freer debate.

A second reason for being pleased was the turn around that had been effected in PO's fortunes. During the 1978 elections it had passed an important hurdle and manifested a remarkable degree of theoretical clarity and practical commitment. This state of affairs was in sharp contrast to little more than six years earlier when the organisation had been marginalised, deeply divided, and with members in fear of their very lives. Naturally, other factors, like the general political liberalisation that was still in progress and the sheer determination of a core group of militants, had contributed to this improvement in perspectives; but it is equally clear that the protective and supportive role of the hierarchy had played an important part.

As far as PO was concerned the 1978 elections marked a high point. Not only did the organisation provide a decisive contribution to the campaign in terms of leading figures and logistical support, but just as importantly from its point of view, it was able to provide practical testimony of its evangelical and class commitment without falling into the trap of secularism or reductionism.

In terms of the ideal relationship to be assumed between PO and the Opposition here, too, one can talk of a success. That the two groups became so closely involved was very much the product of circumstances and not an ideal situation to find themselves in. But interviews with the participants make it quite clear that all of them understood that a decoupling would eventually have to take place. Discussions were held within the ranks of the Opposition as to how, in the words of a secular militant, "to eliminate the dependence upon the Church".⁶⁰ One solution proposed was the setting up of "Workers Associations", which were seen as a natural transition towards an autonomous logistical base for the Opposition. The same source noted that rather than being opposed to this development:

the militants linked to the Church who lived this process, generally always supported inclusive this initiative - Anísio Batista de Oliveira himself always took part in this Association in Ipiranga.⁶¹

For their part, the bishops could also be well pleased with the Church's actions in the elections of 1978. Firstly, coverage of both the ABC strikes and the run-up to the São Paulo metalworker elections by the Catholic weekly *O São Paulo* indicate that some senior Church figures possessed a strategic vision of the desirability of a cross-fertilisation between organised labour and Catholic doctrine. Although they would rarely openly state it in these terms, the hierarchy could, nevertheless, be satisfied with the fact that amongst one of the strategically most significant groups of Brazilian workers, the metalworkers, there was an active - and in electoral terms powerful - group of people very much in tune with their own thinking. Secondly, the partnership between the various sectors of the Church had worked extremely well, evidencing few signs of friction and, indeed, showing all indications that the parties were in agreement with the division of labour as it stood. There was an acute awareness amongst the parties as to what they could reasonably expect from one another. The result of this had been confidence and consequently a reciprocally reinforcing dynamic. Waldemar Rossi, for instance speaks of how militants:

searched for their inspiration in the dialogue with priests, bishops, nuns, etc., in order to have a better understanding of the biblical and theological interpretation of their militancy.⁶²

And for his part, Dom Angélico put forward the view that:

we go forward together in dialogue; I learn a great deal from the militants of the Workers' Pastoral.⁶³

The real bulwark to this successful separation of powers, however, was not to be found in the formal division of labour established amongst hierarchy and militants. A pastoral planning process, no matter how carefully worked out, could only work in a dynamic manner if there was the simultaneous presence of a sufficient series of broadly shared ideological positions. To paraphrase earlier comments made by Dom Angélico, these common starting points had enabled decisions regarding the Mission to World of Work generally to be left to PO; they had enabled the bishops to seriously take on board the suggestions of the latter; and they had enabled PO itself to reflect in large measure the positions of the Church. Without these elements it would have been a purely paper instead of organic Workers' Pastoral.

In the following chapter the basis and limits to the intervention of the progressive catholic Church will be examined in the context of metalworker struggles in the ABC region⁶⁴ of São Paulo. For reasons which will become apparent, there were a number of differences in both the instruments and discourses involved. Amongst other things, for example, the Church's critique in the case of São Bernardo came to be directed at the conduct of the state, rather than a particular candidate who might happen to enjoy its

support. In other words, the stakes were much higher, the issues more polarised, and therefore that much clearer. In spite of these differences, however, it is possible to point to continuities between the two cases and a consistency in the forms and limits to intervention.

Notes

¹ Quoted from Padre Oscar Beozzo, "Igreja no Brasil: Planejamento e Pastoral em Questão", *Revista Eclesiastica Brasileira*, Vol. 42, fasc. 167, September 1982, p. 495.

² *Ibid.*, p. 502.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

⁴ Arquidiocese de São Paulo, *Primeiro Plano Bienal de Pastoral, 1976-77.*, Arquidiocese São Paulo, São Paulo, 1976, p. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ The idea of a strong planning process had been developing for some time within the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) had recommended that the "forms of the apostleship should adapt themselves to the social, demographic and economic conditions of men" and that "all initiatives should be channeled towards collective action". (Quoted from Comissão Episcopal Regional Sul-1, *Primeiro Plano Biennial de Atividades dos Organismos da Comissão Episcopal: Regional Sul-1 CNBB, 1973-1975.*, São Paulo, 1973, p. 2.) Pope Paul VI, in his message to the bishops of Latin America in 1965, had noted that "wise planning can also offer to the Church an effective means and incentive for action". (Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 2.) And for their part, the bishops at the Second CELAM Conference had noted that "pastoral action of the ecclesial community...must of necessity be global, organic and articulated. ...ecclesiastical structures must periodically be re-examined and re-adjusted". (Quoted from *Ibid.*, p.3.) They argued that it should be adapted to the realities of the Latin American situation.

⁷ With an estimated eighty thousand throughout Brazil, much has been written about the CEBs, and they have been variously defined. However, three factors stand out above all others. First, community. Members of a CEB are made up of families, adults, children, etc, who share the same faith, live in the same region, and have regular personal ties with one another. The number of followers in one group may range from twenty to fifty individuals. Second, is the ecclesiastical dimension. They celebrate the "Word of God" and are related to the wider Church - usually receiving the encouragement of lay leaders, priests, or bishops. Third, is the "base" element. This refers to the fact that they are a local response to local religious and community needs, and that they are constantly renewed and subject to control at a grass roots level. Generally speaking they are also composed of people with low incomes.

For more information on CEBs see, for example, Frei Betto, *O Que É Comunidade Eclesial de Base.* Editora Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1981, and his *CEBs: Rumo À Nova Sociedade.*, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1983. See also Frei Leonardo Boff, *E A Igreja se Fez Povo.*, Editora Vozes, 1986, especially pp. 68-105. For official Church views of the subject see, for example Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros, "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base no Brasil", *Estudos da CNBB.*, No. 23, 1978, and "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base na Igreja do Brasil", *Documentos da CNBB.*, no. 25, 1982.

⁸ Comissão Episcopal Regional Sul-1, *Segundo Plano Bienal de Pastoral do Regional Sul-1 - CNBB, 1975-1977*, CER Sul-1, Editora Ave Maria, São Paulo, 1975, p. 33; Arquidiocese de São Paulo, *Op.cit.*, p.29.

⁹ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹⁰ In 1975, for example, the Secretary of Sul-1 was Dom Mauro Morelli, bishop for São Paulo's Santo Amaro region. Dom Celso Queiroz, who came from São Paulo's Ipiranga sector, later became Sul-1's General Secretary.

¹¹ Quoted from Beozzo, *Op.cit.*, p. 497.

¹² Author's interview with Dom Mauro Morelli, 16/12/88.

¹³ In note 6 (above) I indicated that the concept of planning was a generally accepted proposition. By the mid 1970's, however, there was a marked shift away from the paternalistic aspects of the PPC. This comes across most clearly in the Church's document *Diretrizes Gerais da Ação Pastoral da Igreja no Brasil, 1975-78.*, Edições Paulinas, 1975, which provided a four year framework of reference for subsequent national, regional and local plans. The tone of the document is summed up in the comment "it is natural that we do not only refer to fundamental principles...but that we also try and discover their most adequate formulation in relation to the reality of today which we hope to affect." (*Ibid.*, p. 7.) In the concluding sections the Brazilian bishops discuss a wide range of issues - the structure of the Church, which must become genuinely more participative; the necessary role of hierarchy; the need to support lay sectors and Catholic movements and enter into a reciprocal dialogue with these sectors; and even the nature of ecclesiastical language, which must become more concrete and specific in its reflection of social problems. (See *Ibid.*, especially pp. 42-85.)

¹⁴ Author's interview with Anísio Batista de Oliveira, 27/7/88.

¹⁵ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ An internal study carried out by PO in the early 1980's found that throughout the Sul-1 area "only about ten dioceses say they have a Workers' Pastoral. Each of these only has a few members. ...In general, the resources available are extremely low... On occasions, the approaches are very divergent." (Source: Equipe de Pastoral Operária Regional Sul-1, FASE, *Mundo do Trabalho.*, mimeo, ND (circa 1982), p. 22.)

¹⁸ Frei Gilberto Gorgulho, "A Pastoral Ambiente se Organisa", *O São Paulo.*, April 12-18, 1975, p. 6.

¹⁹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88. The process was wider than the relationship between Dom Angélico and the militants. Padre Luciano Mendes (later appointed a bishop of São Paulo and later still as President of the CNBB) had worked on the formulation of PO proposals to CNBB Sul-1, as had another bishop from Sul-1, Dom Cândido Padim. That said, there is little doubt that the militants and Dom Angélico enjoyed a special relationship which was of central importance.

²⁰ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

²¹ *Ibid.*

X ²² *Ibid.* Waldemar Rossi was one of these militants who suffered the repression of the military regime and spoke to the bishops' conference. He had been arrested ~~arrested~~ only the previous year, in 1974, and had been held for four months in prison, during which time he was subjected to electric shock treatment. For his part, Dom Paulo spoke of "some 20 or 30 great militants who could today lead an easy life but preferred instead to help us in the CNBB Sul-1 and in the Archdiocese of São Paulo". (Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.)

²³ Arquidiocese de São Paulo, *Op.cit.*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. loc.cit.

X ²⁸ Amongst the most glaring examples of the Vatican's increasingly heavy-handed intervention within Brazil are: (1) its silencing of the leading liberation theologian, Frei Leonardo Boff, in 1985; (2) the replacement, against local wishes, of Olinda and Recife's radical archbishop, Dom Hélder Câmara, with an extreme conservative, Dom José Cardoso Sobrinho in 1985; (3) the series of "intimations" in 1988 directed at Dom Pedro Casaldáliga (bishop of São Félix do Araguaia) with the aim of curbing his support for Nicaragua's Sandinista regime; and (4), the carving up of the Archdiocese of São Paulo in 1989 in a manner that was quite contrary to local wishes, and which resulted in the undermining of radical Catholic

influence within the region. Most important of all, however, is the Vatican's systematic appointment of conservative figures to bishoprics or their elevation to cardinalships (as happened in the cases of Salvador and Brasília in 1988). Given that the Vatican cannot rule by dictat, it realises that one of the most effective means of curbing radicalism and assuring that its will is carried out in the localities, is simply by altering the balance of power and appointing new bishops. It is far less provocative than silencing opponents because it is an institutionally accepted mode of conduct. The legitimacy of radical protests is thereby undermined.

²⁹ Author's interview with Joaquinção, 20/9/88.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, "A Igreja na Vida do Povo em São Paulo", *O São Paulo*., Sept 20-26, 1975, p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

³³ Comissão de Justiça e Paz, *São Paulo 1975: Crecimento e Pobreza.*, Edições Loyola, São Paulo, 1982. (On the issue of the economic miracle see note 6 of the introduction to the present thesis.) According to the study, some 19 per cent of employees in Greater São Paulo received up to one minimum wage, 54 per cent up to two minimum wages, and 75 per cent up to three minimum wages. "In order to cover basic items, considered essential - like food, housing, transport, clothes etc. - the worker who receives the minimum salary would currently have to work 466 hours and 34 minutes per month.. Put another way, assuming a value equal to 100 for the minimum wage in 1970, this value, four years later, falls to 82." (*Ibid.*, p. 45) The study also contrasted declining rates of infant mortality in the 1940's, '50's and early '60's, with "the last 13 years in which it rose by 45 per cent." (*Ibid.*, p. 47) It also noted that "the population in the capital served by the water network declined from 61 per cent in 1950 to 56 per cent in 1973." (*Ibid.*, p. 47.) It also gave the figure of 52 per cent of the capital's population as being undernourished, a figure that rose to 73 per cent when the metropolitan area of São Paulo was considered as a whole. (*Ibid.*, p. 47.) In essence, the study painted a picture of vast pockets of poverty and unsatisfied needs in the midst of what, in the late 1960's and early '70's, had been remarkable rates of economic growth.

³⁴ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

³⁵ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

³⁶ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

³⁷ In 1975 PO was the fastest growing sector within the Opposition. It began to provide a new generation of Catholic militants, especially from the city's southern zone. According to one of those militants, "The decision to mount a slate was our decision. from militants more from the Workers' Pastoral." (Source: author's interview with Anísio Batista de Oliveira, 27/7/88) This was not official PO policy, it was more the result of an esprit de corps.

³⁸ Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, "Dia do Trabalho: Força e Libertação", *O São Paulo*., April 26 - May 9, 1975, p. 3.

³⁹ Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, "Respeito e Garantido ao Trabalhador", *O São Paulo*., April 26 - May 9, 1975, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Author's interview with Antonio Flores, 7/8/89.

⁴¹ Author's interview with Franco Farnasi, 6/12/88.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁴⁵ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, *Pastoral Operária: Porquê e como?.*, Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1978, p. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 22/11/88

⁵⁰ Interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, "E as máquinas pararam", *O São Paulo.*, June 3-9, 1978, p. 9.

⁵¹ Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, "Sofrimentos e esperanças na caminhada", *O São Paulo.*, April 29-May 5, 1978, p. 5.

⁵² Bishops of Sul-1 quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁵⁴ Interview with Waldemar Rossi, "Contestando a exploração", *O São Paulo.*, June 17-23, 1978, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Frei Gilberto da Silva Gorgulho, 14/7/88.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ In the 1978 elections 118 out of a total of 160 ballot boxes were found to have irregularities of one sort or another. Although the Ministry of Labour's own procurator recognised this state of affairs, the then Minister of Labour went on to validate Joaquinção's "victory". For details of fraud see "Metalúrgicos: Intervenção no Sindicato de São Paulo?", *Jornal da Tarde.*, July 3, 1978.

⁵⁸ See for example, "O maior sindicato da A.L. se prepara para eleições", *O São Paulo.* May 27-June 2, 1978, p. 5.

⁵⁹ One of the Opposition demands was that the wage rounds of the metalworkers of the region should be united. That would have raised the possibility of strikes involving even larger numbers of metalworkers and, in the short term, might have left Joaquinção outflanked by the more radical initiatives coming from union leaders in São Bernardo do Campo

⁶⁰ Author's interview with Franco Farinasi, 6/12/88.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁶³ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

⁶⁴ The term ABC denotes the municipalities of A: Santo André; B: São Bernardo do Campo; and C: São Caetano do Sul. The municipality of Diadema is sometimes included and the group referred to as ABCD. Effectively the term is frequently used to refer to the other municipalities (Mauá, Riberão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra) which go to make up the Diocese of Santo André. (See figure 3 in the introduction to the present thesis.)

Chapter Three: Church, State and Metalworkers - The Roads to Conflict, ABC 1975-1980

3.1 Introduction

Between 1978 and 1980 a wave of metalworkers strikes engulfed the ABC region of São Paulo (see note 64 of previous chapter) on a scale and in a form that was quite unprecedented in the country's post coup history. All participants agree that the Catholic Church of the region was closely involved in these momentous events - indeed, in a revealing comment at the time of the 1980 dispute the President of the Republic went so far as to suggest that the Dom Paulo was "inciting the strike", an offence punishable by imprisonment.¹ Other politicians went even further in their condemnation. One such, the secretary of Industry, Commerce, Science and Technology in São Paulo state, Oswaldo Palma, suggested that he would personally like "to send Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns to hell".² The reason for the furore was simple. The Catholic Church openly took the side of the workers against their employers and against the labour laws themselves. Once again it found itself in conflict with the state.

One of the major aims of this chapter will be to look at the historical and philosophical contours of that conflict, in other words, at how the Church of the region progressively came to intervene, and secondly, at how it sought to justify these actions. Another related aim, will be to compare this intervention with the forms that were chosen in the Archdiocese of São Paulo. Were there major differences between the two, and if so, were these formal or substantive? Lastly, I shall give an assessment of the impact of the Church upon the constitution of labour struggles in the ABC region.

I will begin, however, with a brief historical analysis of the labour movement and ecclesiastical terrains of the region. By understanding their specificities one can better grasp the true nature and significance of the dynamics that later developed between the two, as well as make a more meaningful comparison with the situation in the city of São Paulo itself.

3.2 History and Configuration of the Metalworkers and Catholic Church in the ABC Region

3.2.1 The Church

Adjoining the Archdiocese of São Paulo to the southeast, and founded in 1954, the Diocese of Santo André comprised the municipalities of Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, São Caetano do Sul, Diadema, Mauá, Riberão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra. More so even than São Paulo, Santo André (hereafter also referring to the other municipalities unless otherwise specified) was characterised by industrial production, and

in particular, the presence of a significant number of multi-national enterprises which were involved in the vehicle component and assembly industries.

Set up in the 1950's and 1960's, the distribution of these leading industries which formed the heart of metallurgical production was far from even. Rather like São Paulo, there were certain areas which even by the early 1980's were confined to dormitory status - like Riberão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra, for instance. Mauá and Diadema did have industrial production but they also served as dormitory towns. This left the big three; the cities of Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo and São Caetano do Sul. What is of fundamental importance is that these too exhibited markedly differing characteristics. In terms of size, for instance, São Bernardo had, by 1979, more than double the number of metalworkers of Santo André, which in turn had more than double the workers in São Caetano (130,000, 60,000 and 25,000 respectively). But this was not always the case. As the former leader of the Santo André Metalworkers Union during the 1980 strike pointed out to me, his was the union which began production in the region and from which, during the 1950's, the unions of São Bernardo do Campo as well as São Caetano were dismembered. In the 1950's and 1960's, then, all eyes were upon the Santo André Metalworkers' Union. Albeit that São Bernardo's metalworker base surpassed that of Santo André in the 1960's, the latter nevertheless remained the political focus for radical Catholic and Communist militancy.

As well as a major pole for industry, Santo André also served as a magnet for labour throughout Brazil. The first bishop of the region, Dom Jorge Marcos, speaks of how upon his appointment in 1954 he was immediately struck by the:

overwhelming and unprepared multitude that was arriving from the northeast, Minas [Gerais], and from the south of the state of Rio... They were very poor people...who came here, they began in totally unspecialised occupations, shifting buckets of concrete for the construction of the factories, the automobile industries, or the large buildings that were already springing up here.³

He was also struck by how brutally they were exploited by "the men of money who wanted to make profits via the use of cheap labour."⁴

In view of the working class characteristics of the region, and Dom Jorge's own sensitivity towards these problems, the Church made workers' issues one of its top priorities from the outset. Dom Jorge introduced novel aspects into the Church's approach. Rather like Frei Sartori, who had foregone the use of the cassock and provoked some consternation amongst clerical ranks, Dom Jorge was ahead of his time because he too urged the priests to get closer to the workers. Indeed, it was partly in response to such an atmosphere that French "worker-priests", whose task was to evangelise the working classes in both a factory and parish setting, decided to settle in this part of Brazil.⁵

According to Heloisa de Souza Martins, who has studied the Church of Santo André during Dom Jorge's period of office (between 1954 and 1975), what underlay the bishop's outlook was a more modern conception of the Church's social doctrine. Rather than stressing the inevitability of poverty, the need to combat Communism, and so on:

In the *specific* case of the Church of the diocese of Santo André, the social doctrine gave a vision of the worker which consisted in recognising him as a 'human person', as 'son of God' with a series of 'rights': the right to work, to a just remuneration, the right to the distribution of the advantages that result from labour, that is to say, the right to health, to medicine, to the constitution of the family, and to education. In reality, the Church of Santo André demanded for the worker the rights of *citizen*. What was surprising to many was the fact that not only the bishop and the priests said this in the pulpits as, also, the fact that they went to the public squares and the doors of the factories to accompany the workers in their demands. Truly, an attitude like this one represented an advance inside the Church which, up until then, had always been committed to the dominant classes.⁶

She gives the example of a factory strike in April 1956 which lasted 87 days and in which the Church "helped to organise a strike fund to assist the workers with food and money, as well as carrying out the work of localising them in the neighbourhoods where they lived."⁷ There is also the example of father Afonso Birk who achieved notoriety in a 1959 chemical workers strike "due to his participation in the picket lines at the side of the strikers."⁸ And finally, there was Dom Jorge's own involvement further afield in the strike of cement workers at the Perus factory (which itself led to the formation of the FNT), and his "assumption of the leadership of the negotiations"⁹ in the Aymore factory strike of 1960 (which again enjoyed the participation of FNT militants).

In an earlier chapter we noted the ambiguity of the FNT's early doctrine and how, *de facto*, FNT militants came into conflict with their Communist contemporaries inside the unions. This kind of dynamic was not absent from Santo André where, in 1947, the Communists had succeeded in electing more than a dozen councillors, and where Communism was also the most powerful force in the organised labour movement. Indeed it has led one author to suggest that Dom Jorge skilfully sought first to weaken Communist influence within the labour movement, thereby creating a vacuum for Christian trade-unionism to take its place.¹⁰ This thesis is somewhat difficult to prove or refute. Dom Jorge admits, for instance, that there was indeed a conflict between the Church and the Communists but he also argues, in a fashion quite similar to the FNT militants in São Paulo, that it was not the "ideology" as such that was the source of conflict, but that:

It was more a struggle against the Leninism and Stalinism of the absolutist party¹¹.

I find this neat separation a little hard to believe, a sort of post hoc rationalisation, since to this day the Godless nature of Marxism and Communism remains a significant strand in the thinking of an organisation like the CNBB (which is widely recognised as one of the world's most progressive bishops' conferences)¹². During the late 1950's and early 1960's, when the cold war reached its peak, that ideological conflict with Communism was, if anything, more rather than less accentuated.

Quite whether Dom Jorge's early motivations were ideological or organisational is a difficult question to resolve. There are genuine ambiguities in his position. He claims, for instance, a considerable degree of respect towards a number of Communist

intellectuals as well as for a leader of the metalworkers union at the time, Marcos Andreotti, whom he regarded as "practically a Communist leader".¹³ To a large extent those ambiguities resolved themselves as the 1964 coup liquidated Communist elements within the unions, and Dom Jorge became preoccupied with the institutional defence of increasingly radical Catholic workers organisations like JOC and ACO, which themselves were the subjects of accusations of Communist infiltration. His stout defence of these two organisations in particular, at a time when they had very few friends inside - let alone outside - the Church, was in sharp contrast to the situation in São Paulo where, as was shown earlier, militants continued their activities "despite Dom Agnelo Rossi."¹⁴

The impact of the military coup on the Diocese of Santo André bore a number of similarities with the situation in São Paulo. Some conservative Catholic militants, with principally Workers' Circle connections, were appointed as union leaders by the government whilst their more radical Catholic contemporaries either dropped out of union activity altogether or went on to form part of the opposition to the government appointees. In other words, the process of differentiation between the various ecclesio-political groupings was accelerated and accentuated. This is evident in the elections to the Santo André Metalworkers' Union in 1965 where, as in São Paulo, alliances were made between radical Catholics and Communists on the one hand, against leaders of more conservative Catholic outlooks on the other. As Heloisa Martins explains:

two slates ran for the first election after the intervention: one linked to the interventors, headed by Antonio Casagrande, whose general secretary, Benedito Marcilio, was a former Marian Congregational¹⁵; the other had Theodoro Thieche in the presidency and José Nanci, a Catholic militant who belonged to the Marian Congregation of Carmo Cathedral, as secretary. The latter slate resulted from a composition of forces between the PCB and the 'progressive wing of the Church', as the Communists themselves used to say.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the bishop's support of ACO and JOC, these groups suffered a fate similar to their São Paulo counterparts. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was the national situation, to which Santo André was no exception. One of JOC's national advisers described to me how in 1970 he sought out the papal nuncio who asked how many JOC members were being detained or persecuted. The answer was 80. The nuncio felt that this was nothing given a population of 100 million; but for JOC this spelt disaster (as well as a certain disappointment with respect to the nuncio's grasp of events). Its room for manoeuvre was severely restricted. The adviser who gave these statistics, Padre Agostino Pretto, was himself forced into semi-clandestinity, continuing to act discretely and giving safe cover to people who were sought or watched by the authorities. Thus, the situation nationally was very much one of retrenchment, wait and see, and, in the intervening period, an outflow from the bases.¹⁷

In local terms the situation was exacerbated by the resistance of some clergy towards Dom Jorge's views. The original expansion of ACO and JOC in the area was carried out very much on the back of the French worker priests who had considerable expertise in

the field but were not all that numerous, amounting to about five.¹⁸ This contrasted with the situation in São Paulo where in the southern sector alone about 30 progressive priests were active. Under Dom Jorge's stewardship the hierarchy led its clerical bases from the front rather than followed them, in contrast to Agnello Rossi in São Paulo who tried to dampen down radical Catholicism. Thus, when Dom Jorge fell into ill health more or less three years before he left, in 1975, a sort of power vacuum was created. Since he was no longer able to lead from the front, and given that this had been one of the primary instruments of change in Santo André, this state of affairs was neither going to be propitious to the formation - nor the retention - of ACO militancy as a power in the region.

One of the major questions which emerges in regard to this period is why the Workers' Pastoral only came to be formed in Santo André (municipality) in 1972, and not in São Bernardo until 1980, especially given the close ties that would later be developed between the diocese and the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union. In part, the answer is simple. The Church tended to accompany trade union realities and trajectories of the late 1960's and early 1970's (and the kinds of socio-economic factors upon which these were based) rather than precede them. Historically, it had itself begun life in the town of Santo André, and, following the rapid demographic developments there, later pushed out into the towns of São Caetano and São Bernardo. When the worker priests first came to the region in 1961, for example, they concentrated the bulk of their efforts in the municipality of Santo André. It appears that that historical bias was simply reproduced until the late 1970's, when it became apparent that the new focus of labour activity was, indeed, São Bernardo, and the Church therefore made a conscious effort to switch activities to that area. As will be shown later, this decision took place under a new bishop and a completely new labour situation.

These factors help to explain why there was a bias towards the municipality of Santo André, but it still leaves open the question as to why PO was confined here, and even then it proved weak. Some clues are given by Padre Mahon, a worker priest who came to the region in December 1961 and who therefore had an insight into the ensuing developments. He suggested that the reason why:

Santo André tended more towards ACO than on the side of the Workers' Pastoral could be a little bit because we, the Sons of Charity,¹⁹ came from France with a large experience of ACO, and in France the Workers' Pastoral did not exist. So we supported ACO, and as there were not many priests who supported the workers' movements, Santo André grew a lot in terms of ACO.²⁰

He went on:

I think that the support of the priests of São Bernardo was a little lacking with respect to these movements. In Santo André there were more priests absorbed in struggling with the workers, and São Bernardo, up until today, had fewer.²¹

Frei Betto, who was put in charge of developing the Workers' Pastoral in São Bernardo

in 1980, was less diplomatic in his comments. Asked what constituted the greatest difficulty facing a predecessor, Padre Carlos Tosar, who was charged with organising PO in the ABC region as a whole, Betto answered:

I believe he faced the largest obstacles inside the very clergy of ABC itself which is predominantly conservative and I wonder, even, whether they accept the pastoral priorities of the diocese.²²

All these comments are highly significant. If one recalls, for a moment, the nature of pastoral organisation in São Paulo, and indeed, many of the successes it scored in relation to the labour movement in general and Metalworkers Opposition in particular, it was made clear that the commitment of radical priests was an integral part of these successes; in many ways they constituted PO's infrastructural backbone. This "dependency" of PO was only to be expected. After all, the very meaning of pastoral activity implied, amongst other things, a greater insertedness in the life of the local parish Church. Thus, notwithstanding Dom Jorge's own belief that a Workers' Pastoral should be created and exist alongside organisations like JOC and ACO, the fact was that the absence of a dynamic clerical base mitigated its creation. The bishop, therefore, was somewhat dependent upon his French worker-priests for spearheading initiatives in this area.

That priests like Padre Tosar were amongst the very few capable of developing a pastoral is somewhat ironic. There is no doubting his commitment, but in the late 1960's and early 1970's, many militants from JOC and ACO were sceptical as to the nature of a Workers' Pastoral. In the case of São Paulo, for instance, there was the specific fear that Dom Agnelo's version would serve as a strait-jacket. That kind of debate does not appear to have arisen in Santo André. Rather, there was a questioning of why the groups should co-exist, whether PO would compete with or complement ACO, and so forth. Padre Pretto, who had both JOC and PO credentials,²³ recalls a discussion he had with one worker priest from Santo André who was not entirely convinced. Pretto argued the following:

Whilst maintaining the methods and content of ACO we have to create a second line of action...we must turn towards the inside of the Church - without the support of the institutional Church we will not be able to sustain ourselves here.²⁴

As a senior ACO figure he was also presenting a new kind of argument:

We must rearticulate the Church here and overcome all and any temptation to closed militancy, create a service and not a movement, an inclusive service - one that deals with the world of the young all the way to the world of the old. ACO and JOC are involved a great deal with the workers - with a tendency towards skilled workers; the Workers' Pastoral must involve itself with all the ecclesial world; with the liturgy, the catechists, and with the Eucharist. ...One cannot simply position oneself as a movement because this impoverishes. In the movement I have to enter the movement, in the service I circulate freely, organising myself according to my vocation.²⁵

By no means should the doubts of the young worker priest concerned be taken to imply that this constituted a major obstacle to PO's development. The real obstacle was the lack

of support or open opposition of parish priests themselves. However, given understandable fears that PO might in some way substitute PO there was a certain degree of reorientation and re-education required. People had to be convinced of the fact that, in Pretto's words, "The service can never replace the movement".²⁶ That said, one of the leading lights behind the formation of the Workers' Pastoral in the region was Padre Mahon, where the reasoning was heavily influenced by tactical considerations.

Mahon, who was entrusted with the task of coordinating PO in Santo André, estimates that there were at this time (the early 1970's) anything between 100 and 200 Catholic militants, a number that was acknowledged to be relatively small for such a large region. It was further accepted, on the other hand, that PO had certain characteristics that could help it to aggregate a greater mass of people to its ranks. As he says:

ACO demands from its militants a commitment of struggle with the workers, the Workers' Pastoral encourages its militants to fight but it does not demand it. Thus, it is the movement that attracts more people because the movement which makes more demands will obviously receive fewer militants than the more open one.²⁷

These mass qualities and unification were urgently needed at this moment of acute repression. A further advantage during this period was, of course, the fact that in political terms it was an easier way for the bishop to manifest support for exactly the same militants. As Tosar comments, "ACO was reduced in membership and the people simply participated in the wider Workers' Pastoral."²⁸

Despite these changes, i.e., the need for a new *modus vivendi*, and the local bishop's willingness to provide it, the fact remains that PO did not acquire the kind of dynamism evidenced in São Paulo. The greatest obstacle was the conservative nature of the clergy; but there was another factor which, as it were, limited PO's dynamism, and that was the actual trade union situation itself and the differing ways in which radical Catholics felt they could respond to it.

3.2.2 *The Metalworkers*

In São Paulo, part of PO's dynamism, and by this I mean a high profile with respect to the metalworkers' union leadership, had come from its remarkable degree of insertion in an increasingly organised and effective opposition. There was a clear polarisation of forces, with the radical left (including Catholics) being forced to organise themselves outside the union and, one might add, being happy to pursue this extra-trade union line of activity. If one takes the example of the FNT in São Paulo, for instance, it will be recalled that a fundamental theme running throughout its existence was the idea of breaking with the union structure, and, in particular, with the "imposto sindical", or union tax. As Salvador Pires explained, the idea was not so much to take power within the "fascist" union structure but to break completely with the system.²⁹ Not surprisingly, therefore, the union regarded the FNT as a parallel structure. The Metalworkers' Opposition, to the extent that it was able to articulate its forces on a continuous, rather

than a purely electoral basis, was also regarded by the union as a parallel entity. Its critique extended beyond just the rebuttal of the forces around the president, Joaquinção, there was also a firm belief in the factory commission as a parallel unit of power capable of exerting pressure upon the union leadership - i.e., from without.³⁰

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain in detail why the metalworkers' unions of ABC followed a different pattern of development from the São Paulo union. However, there is a striking feature which immediately draws one's attention, and that is the contrasting capacity of the union leaders to reform their political discourse before their membership. The most classic example of this is that of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, better known as Lula.

He was the protege of Paulo Vidal, elected to the post of president of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union between 1969 and 1975. Vidal was no great reformer. He is widely credited as a scrupulous adherent of labour legislation and as a political operator who worked very much through the benefits (i.e., medical, recreational, etc.,) that could be provided by the union. Mass mobilisation was the last thing on his mind. In this sense he fits very much within the mould of Joaquinção in São Paulo. Nonetheless, there do appear to be significant differences. There was, for instance, a desire on Vidal's part to pull his union out of the control of the São Paulo State Metalworkers Federation as far back as 1970. In part this was simply because the specific demands of the union were neutralised in the course of the general settlements obtained by the Federation; but, according to Oswaldo Bargas and Luis Rainho, it was also because there was an increasing perception amongst the São Bernardo union leaders as to the:

"pelego" character of the leaders of the Federation who always ended up selling out...to the bosses on the occasion of the wage round.³¹

What is significant about these comments is not so much the particular issue at stake (whose resolution came at a later point in time) as the fact that it indicates the existence of at least some political fluidity within the union during the early 1970's.

This question of fluidity should not be exaggerated, the union had a long way to go before it could be described as openly combative, but it was, nevertheless, in sharp contrast to the situation in São Paulo where militants from the Opposition felt they were frequently given away by their own union. Vidal was never accused of such practices.

In 1975, Lula was elected president of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union. His own radicalisation is the clearest sign of the contrasting fortunes faced by radical militants in São Paulo and São Bernardo do Campo. Indeed, at about the time of Lula's election some of São Paulo's Catholic militants expressed their fear that Lula might in some way swallow up opposition elements. Militants from São Bernardo, on the other hand, argued that whilst their union president was politically backward he was certainly no "pelego" and that there was real scope for action within the union.³²

It was upon these objectively differing trade union terrains that radical Catholic

militancy went forward and divided. By 1978, for instance, there was a remarkable degree of unanimity amongst all political factions in São Paulo as to the need to defeat Joaquinção. A year later this would be followed by a bitter strike in which the Opposition acted as a quasi-parallel union to forestall the demobilising tactics of the president. In São Bernardo, on the other hand, that current which had a natural political affinity with the São Paulo Opposition was, by 1978, either rapidly gravitating towards activity within the union of metalworkers, where it was felt a genuine space for their activities now existed, or was already closely integrated.

By no means does the above imply that radical Catholic militancy within the ABC region did not exist. In the 1965 elections to the Santo André Metalworkers' Union, for example, Popular Action, (Ação Popular, AP) which had roots in JOC and Catholic student organisations,³³ was one of the leading factions contesting the elections with the PCB and against leaders like Benedito Marcilio (president from 1967 to 1980). AP's activities, however, came to an end at the beginning of the 1970's as the dictatorship succeeded first in infiltrating and then in liquidating it almost completely.

Within the union matters were complicated by changes in PCB policy. As Souza Martins explains, with the 1967 Santo André Metalworkers' Union elections:

the PCB came to adopt a new trade union policy, allying itself with the trade union leaderships that had emerged from the [government] interventions as a means of regaining control over the trade union. Thus began a process of the alliances between the Communists and currents more to the right of the trade union movement, distancing itself from the more authentic and combative forces.³⁴

It was perhaps, in part, for these reasons (i.e., the integration of certain sections of Santo André's opposition) that a former leader of the Santo André union was moved to make the following comments:

The Union of Santo André (if compared with unions generally known as "pelegos") was a democratic union, you had complete freedom within the union. The right of comrades to manifest themselves freely, democratically, was never barred. Meetings were held in the union and documents were never asked for. There was never any attempt to impede the participation of comrades, it was always an open democratic and free union. Even in the difficult years of the dictatorship, there was democracy in there...when comrades were not affiliated, they voted with their employment card, at times this was not even requested.³⁵

This would appear to contrast starkly with São Paulo where the entry of certain Communists into leadership positions only came about in the early 1980's and where, according to one source:

the group of government appointees under the leadership of Joaquim dos Santos de Andrade [Joaquinção], came to annul the affiliation of about 1,800 workers.³⁶

Again, one should not overstress the question of latitude for political self-expression within the Santo André Metalworkers' Union at this stage in time. The wider situation rendered this highly problematical, with the AP never being able to project itself openly. Moving to the mid 1970's, however, there it does appear that meaningful room for

manoeuvre did indeed develop as leaders like Benedito Marcilio, so to speak, recycled themselves. Between 1979 and 1982, for example, he was elected to the São Paulo state legislature as a deputy for the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT). A major part in his success had been his recent record as a combative union leader alongside Lula. As with São Bernardo, then, a serious extra-trade union, i.e., parallelist, form of activity against the union leadership was not on the political agenda.

3.3 The Development of a New Relationship Between the Church and the ABC Metalworkers - The Development of an Old Conflict Between Church and State, 1975-1980

The last two sections indicated two significant features of Catholic militancy within the ABC region. The first was its numerical weakness. By 1974 JOC, ACO and AP were broken and it was evident, despite the support of the bishop, that PO did not have the conditions to fill the breach. The second feature was the differing trade union situation to which this limited militancy had to respond. Its full potential would only be realised in the years after 1975.

Whilst shifts in the trade union situation were fundamental to providing a new opportunity and basis for the articulation of Catholic militancy, we must first look at some major changes which took place within the Church of Santo André itself.

The most important of these changes came about in 1975 with the appointment to the region of the new bishop, Dom Cláudio Hummes. As had been the case with Dom Paulo, Dom Cláudio's appointment was initially greeted with some trepidation by local Catholic militants. As he himself explained, it was mainly because he had the reputation of an academic with little if any contact with the problems of workers, "I was a professor of philosophy, I was the provincial of the Franciscans, that was how I came here."³⁷ He went on:

They [the militants] told me later that initially, they even preferred to maintain a certain distance, believing that the bishop would perhaps hinder more than help, and for this reason they met at a distance; there was no great interchange.³⁸

In contrast to the days when Dom Jorge had led very much from the front, the following comments of Dom Cláudio give a clear indication as to the kind of tone and method of action his episcopacy would adopt.

What there was on the part of this group which was called the Workers' Pastoral was that they kept themselves at a considerable distance, and it was I that had to - and ended up - calling them for a chat to put forward my initial proposals. But in truth, I was not able to put these at the first meeting because the story - all the matters they put to me - gradually rendered affairs such that I listened because my proposals were completely out of touch. ...the first meeting lasted more than two hours in which I listened to them from the beginning to the end without saying practically anything. I was discovering that in reality I did not understand the life of the workers, and therefore I did not have a proposal to make.³⁹

Whilst Dom Cláudio's apparent willingness to listen to the militants helped to quickly

establish a positive working relationship between the curia and these individuals, it did not in itself provide an immediate solution to certain long-standing difficulties. Unlike the Archdiocese of São Paulo, which first conducted a long consultation exercise amongst its members in 1975, subsequently produced a pastoral plan, and finally gave the Workers Pastoral more teeth and renewed vigour; the Diocese of Santo André proved incapable of producing such a plan. In the view of the bishop, which is backed up by other sources, the reasons for this were clear. As he explains:

I encountered the diocese here, which was given to me at the end of 1975, and initially there were not the conditions to make a plan - at least, at that time I judged there not to be sufficient conditions to make a pastoral plan because this is something which demands a series of elements; of mentality, of will, of work together, etc. With the passage of time this desire gradually emerged, also on the part of the clergy itself, as well as the people, to make a plan. And this took some time to do, we must have worked on it for at least two years.⁴⁰

Dom Cláudio's explanation of the inability to produce a plan highlights two important features of the diocese at that particular moment in time. One was historical, i.e., the absence of a sufficiently cohesive and numerically organised group for pushing such a plan forward. There was also the added difficulty of a certain degree of resistance amongst more conservative clergy to contend with. The second feature concerns the new bishop himself and his own evaluation of the situation. As has already been indicated, the new bishop was not about to impose a plan upon the region. It quickly became clear to him that he would have to "listen a lot more"⁴¹ precisely in order to firstly come to grips with and then develop an adequate response to the new situation he faced. Like a minister reading him/herself into a new brief, it would be sometime before Dom Cláudio could make any major proposals. Furthermore, as far as he was concerned, to be worth their while, these proposals would have to be successful in practical terms rather than mere paper formulations. As he put it:

One of the theses I have always defended is that there is no rush. What is important is that it is done and that it involves the maximum possible and that the people participate. The very elaboration of a pastoral plan is already a great innovation, a great participation. At times the best results are those at the time when the plan is elaborated - better than what is done afterwards.⁴²

The years following Dom Cláudio's appointment were ones of re-education and rearticulation. JOC was all but dissolved in the region. This left ACO as the major force. Technically, though, the activities of ACO were undertaken in the name of the Workers' Pastoral. As Dom Cláudio explains:

beginning with the meetings that we held, from there on ACO had been very present in the group of the Workers' Pastoral. So they were no longer like ACO, all of them labelled themselves as PO. They were almost the dorsal spine, which is to say the force, the most qualified group, the group that had the most vision was this group of ACO within the Workers' Pastoral, only that the Workers' Pastoral was composed of other people who were also not of ACO, they were other Christian workers. So it was a wider group.⁴³

This turn of events naturally led to some debate and confusion as to what the respective

functions of the two groups were and should be; a debate which was, if anything, heightened some years later when ACO again felt free to hold meetings in its own name. As noted earlier, one of the most powerful reasons for the existence of ACO was the quality of training of its cadres, as well as their independence vis-a-vis the local hierarchy; but with the emergence of bishops like Dom Cláudio, even these issues were put into question as he stressed that "a closer communion with the local Church would not put at risk its autonomy".⁴⁴ Within the Church there was also a wider re-evaluation of the virtues of a specialist training. The opinions of Frei Betto, the leading progressive priest and Church intellectual who was imprisoned for his militancy in the early 1970's and closely involved in the 1980 metalworker's strike, symbolise this shift. In comments to myself, he acknowledged that to the extent that ACO was elitist and PO and the CEBs more popular, the decision of the hierarchy after 1964 to destimulate ACO was not entirely wrong.⁴⁵ This was not withstanding his own membership of the Young Catholic Student's (Juventude Estudantil Católica, JEC) national executive back in the early 1960's. Similarly, as we saw earlier, Padre Agostinho Pretto (who was directly involved in the national coordination of ACO between 1968 and 1979), perceived the need for an evolution in forms of Catholic militancy. His view was that "if we create a Workers' Pastoral - large and inclusive - ACO will be born and reborn".⁴⁶

These opinions did not represent a rejection of specialist training. Its virtues, i.e., the ability to provide militants who formed the backbone of PO, had been demonstrably evident in Dom Cláudio's own comments. But what was being proposed was a shift in the orientation and context into which that training would be inserted. There was also a widespread feeling that the efforts of the various Church groupings within the field of labour should be better coordinated. Dom Cláudio recalled one small incident that illustrated the lack of practical integration between ACO and PO when two militants stood up at a metalworkers' meeting to debate widely differing proposals. Only afterwards did they realise that one was from ACO and the other from PO.⁴⁷

All these questions were pushed into the background as a clear set of priorities was put to the top of the agenda with the strikes of 1978-80. And it is to these that we must now turn.

By June 1977 PO evidenced greater signs of organisation, with the bishop, lay persons, and a number of priests from various parishes participating in a day of study on the question of unemployment. From the report of that meeting it emerges that the group which attracted most attention was the metalworkers of the region. From newspaper and worker accounts it was found that there were high levels of layoffs in major firms like Brosol, General Motors, Volkswagen, Ford, General Electric, Chrysler and Scania, amongst others. The report of the day's proceedings went on:

Regarding the number of unemployed in ABC, the information obtained is not coincidental. More or less the figures stand at a total of about 12,000 employed [Sic,

report should read "unemployed"]. Just the metalworkers of São Bernardo and São Caetano account for 8,667 unemployed since the beginning of the year, with dismissals confirmed by the union.⁴⁸

What is important in this account is not so much the figures as the fact that no other group of workers was given such detailed treatment or, for that matter, dominated the local economy to such an extent.

Regarding the leadership of the ABC unions, the report also indicated a certain ambivalence of PO members towards their activities. Some felt that the unions "were not reacting" to the problem of unemployment, whilst others thought that they were but "in a concealed form"⁴⁹:

All this provoked an exchange of opinions upon the union, upon its validity and real possibilities. It was borne in mind that the union is not the leaderships, nor the headquarters, but that it is the whole body of the workers.⁵⁰

All of this began to change in September 1977. In the light of official admissions that inflation statistics between 1973 and 1974 had been manipulated by the government of the day, the leadership of the São Bernardo metalworkers set in motion a campaign for a catch-up increase of 34.1% in its members' salaries. It was also joined in this struggle by the metalworkers of Santo André, under the leadership of Benedito Marcilio.⁵¹ What is of importance to the present study, is that whilst individual Catholic militants welcomed the assertion of more radical union policies, they were in no position, i.e., were organisationally too weak, to influence them. Initially, it was the union leaders who set the agenda for the movement, and in turn the movement, with the surprise strike of May 1978, which began to set the agenda for the leadership. For its part the Church, and organisations like PO began to take their cue from these wider developments, and not the other way around.

That the stimulus for change came from within the labour movement itself, and the Church, whether it liked it or not, was marginal to this process, can be seen not only in the rearticulation that was going on within the Catholic militant groupings themselves, of which more in a moment; but also in the attitudes of the metalworkers leaders towards the Church.

In the case of Santo André, for example, there were memories of the AP slate which had stood against the incumbents. Furthermore, for being a leadership which had a fairly strong Communist component (approximately 5 out of 24 directors⁵²), there was some hostility on their part to any Church incursions of whatever kind. Asked whether prior to the strikes of the late 1970's the Church had any pretensions to power within the union, Benedito Marcilio was quite forthright:

They always had that aim, there is no doubt about that. They always had their people attempting to take over the union.⁵³

So there was, at least in the mind of the directorship, a clear concept of separate

identities:

we had a movement that came from the left via the Communist Party and another scheme altogether.⁵⁴

Furthermore, as will become clear when I discuss the role of the Church in the strikes of 1978-80, there was a notion that these identities should continue to remain strictly separate.

The case of São Bernardo was slightly different. The leadership had neither faced a notable opposition from Church sectors, nor was there a particularly strong showing from the Communists. But those views that were expressed, however, do not lead one to believe that the Church was looked upon favourably.

Asked, in a February 1978 article, whether he saw any possibility of alliances with the Church, Lula gave the following highly critical answer which merits full citation:

As far as I am concerned, the Church is carrying out the actions of someone who is feeling guilty. I was an altar boy, I held the priest's gown, I made my First Communion and a load of things, and I got fed up with hearing the priest asking us not to fight, because those who suffer today reach the reign of heaven tomorrow. The Church also contributed, and a heck of a lot, to the situation in which the working class now finds itself. Now, one part of the Church wishes to redeem itself in the eyes of those whom it injured. I have read a few things of the Workers' Pastoral and I did not like them, because they are putting the worker at a low level; he appears there like a 'Mr Nobody' and they as the good guys. What the Church cannot do is to create movements that are parallel to the trade union movement. It helps if it carries out a good job of educating the worker so that he acts within the union. I think that frequently the Church puts itself in the same position as the radicals of 1968, but the worker is not prepared for radicalisms.⁵⁵

Whatever the nature of the rupture Lula might be carrying out with the union apparatus, it was clear that as far as he was concerned, the Church had little part to play in those designs except, perhaps, by teaching the workers to participate within their unions rather than outside them.

Whilst Lula's comments are rather emotional, there was a certain - if not completely accurate - truth to them when it came to the alleged parallel activities of the Church. It is possible that Lula had in mind the situation in São Paulo, and PO's close alignment with the Metalworkers' Opposition. Whether that was truly parallelist or not is a question open to debate. But it appears that in São Bernardo there was, in fact, an articulation of, amongst others, Christians. This was the so-called "Grupão", literally, the Big Group.

The origin and aims of the "Grupão" are given detailed coverage by Bargas and Rainho in their book on the events of 1977-79.⁵⁶ There, the reader learns that the group was essentially aimed at uniting more combative militants as well as focusing more specifically upon the union of São Bernardo:

The 'Grupão' was born from two small groups which had been meeting. One in order to evaluate the strike of May 1978, and the other in order to discuss the specific problems of the grassroots inside Volkswagen. ...they united with other workers from the other main factories and some who militated in the region linked to organised political tendencies.⁵⁷

What is not mentioned, however, is the fact that the various "political tendencies", which

numbered militants from the Revolutionary Movement of October the Eighth (Movimento Revolucionário Oito de Outubro, MR8), Socialist Convergence (Convergencia Socialista), and Socialist Democracy (Democracia Socialista, DS), also included militants from ACO and JOC. More interesting still, is the fact that for a time they all met under the name of the Workers' Pastoral. Instead, they confine their comments to the idea that the "Grupão" basically united militants who were, to varying degrees, critical of the São Bernardo leadership because participation in the union's policy-making was limited to the directorate rather than offering real possibilities for activist input. Apparently Paulo Vidal, who still retained a strong "personal influence" in the union, was opposed to any moves that might strengthen the "the conditions of action of those workers militating at a shop-floor level."⁵⁸

In an interview with myself Bargas clarified the relevance of the Workers' Pastoral:

We went to São Bernardo in 1978 and needed to find a good excuse to be able to unite the most diverse militants from the most diverse factories. So we needed to find a space. I, for example, had a certain space in the Church [as a member of ACO], along with my comrades. So we went to the Church of the Matriz in São Bernardo do Campo and said that we are creating a Workers' Pastoral of São Bernardo, but this was very much more of an excuse to acquire a space for these militants to meet because at the time such a space did not exist within the union.⁵⁹

In other words, the Workers' Pastoral at this time was little more than a shell for the activities of the "Grupao".

When the Third São Bernardo Metalworkers Congress was held in October of 1978, the "Grupão"/PO split into two. One faction believed that the Congress had finally opened up genuine possibilities for action and that therefore it now made sense for militants to participate - on an individual basis - in the activities of the union. The other faction, which was composed of organised political tendencies, held to the view that the "Grupão" should be strengthened, carry out a vanguardist role, and even proposed that they themselves should carry out the 1979 salary campaign independently of the union.⁶⁰ Catholic militants were amongst those who decided to opt for activity within the union. Thus, by the time Frei Betto arrived to develop a Workers' Pastoral in São Bernardo, in 1980, all that was left was a rump. As he put it:

There was a Workers' Pastoral in São Bernardo, but it was a Workers' Pastoral in inverted commas. it was a political group - Communist, anti-clerical, and it disguised itself as the Workers' Pastoral as a means of being able to get into the union of metalworkers. This is in 1979/80. In São Bernardo there was a small political group, linked to MR8, which posed as the Workers' Pastoral. And when I arrived there in January 1980 I found that they had become demoralised to the point of leaving the area. Nobody can say they were real Christians.⁶¹

Given the apparent disarray of "PO" outlined by Frei Betto, together with the highly sceptical - if not openly hostile - attitude of the metalworkers' leaders of Santo André and São Bernardo do Campo towards the Catholic Church, it is remarkable that little more than two years later the selfsame leaders should be acknowledging its importance to their struggles and, in the specific case of Lula, that he should have a Dominican friar

living in his house at the height of the 1980 dispute. By any account, this was a breathtaking pace of change for both unions and Church alike, and it forms the central theme of the next section.

3.4 From the Margins to Centre Stage - The Catholic Church and the ABC Metalworkers' Strikes of 1978-1980

On the May 12 1978, workers at the Saab-Scania factory in São Bernardo clocked on as usual, put on their overalls, went to their machines and stopped them. This act, which came to be known as the strike of the "Braços cruzados e máquinas paradas", literally meaning, crossed arms and halted machines, was to have wide-ranging repercussions.

Ostensibly, the workers simply wanted a wage increase of 20% over and above the rate of inflation. However, their historic stand went on to spark a wave of similar actions throughout the ABC region involving tens of thousands of workers, and later it spilt over into other districts picking up hundreds of thousands of strikers on the way (see table 1 overleaf). In all, some half a million workers from various categories would be involved in the strike wave of 1978 (see table 2 overleaf). Even more important than the colossal numbers involved was the fact that the action represented the most decisive qualitative break with the past and the dictatorship since the events of Osasco in 1968, with the added difference that this latest action proved an unprecedented success, taking both government, employers, and, to a certain extent, even the unions themselves by surprise.⁶²

The importance of the dispute lay in a number of key areas. Firstly, in the fact that the unions quickly recognised the legitimacy of their own members' actions (after all, technically speaking these began as wildcat actions) and therefore signalled a break with existing legislation which limited the right to strike. This was a political statement of major significance. Secondly, the employers themselves signalled a willingness to come to some kind of accommodation directly with the unions involved, instead of working through the existing government machinery. Again, this too represented a break with past practice (even if the motive was that of resuming production at the earliest possible opportunity rather than wishing to give the workers a fair settlement). And finally, for the government, which was completely taken by surprise and in the throws of a very carefully staged "abertura", or political opening, the dispute represented a severe test of the real and imagined limits to that opening. An accord was signed directly between the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union and the employers on May 31 without state intervention of a military or judicial kind. Potentially, this spelt the death-knell of a system of labour relations which, since the mid 1930's, had been based on the use of the state as a so-called arbitrator, and sometimes the arbitrary use of state repression, for the resolution of conflicts between organised labour and capital.

With regard to the Catholic Church, its activities in the dispute of May 1978 were principally confined to a number of declarations from various groups involved in the

Table 1

Metalworkers' Strikes, São Paulo, 12 May-13 July 1978

Week	No. Factories Going on Strike	No. Workers Going on Strike	No. Towns Affected*	Total Workers on Strike
1	24	60,500	3	60,500
2	12	17,450	3	77,950
3	21	17,990	5	95,940
4	27	29,470	9	125,410
5	38	39,694	9	165,104
6	32	22,967	9	188,071
7	17	23,441	9	211,512
8	21	19,803	9	231,315
9	21	14,620	9	245,935

*First and second weeks, Santo André, São Bernardo, São Caetano; third week, São Paulo, Osasco; fourth week to ninth, Jandira, Taboão da Serra, Cotia, Campinas.

Source: Maria Helena Moreira Alves, State and Opposition in Military Brazil, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1985, p. 197.

Table 2

Strikes in 1978

Sector	No. Strikes	No. Strikers
Metallurgical	5	357,043
Port	1	1,200
Urban transport	1	170
Tobacco	1	400
Glass	1	450
Ceramics	1	2,000
Textiles	1	5,390
Chemical	1	2,750
Banks	1	10,000
Health	1	7,500
Primary & secondary teaching	3	138,634
University teaching	1	800
Medicine (doctors & residents)	5	11,500
Rural	1	1,200
Total	24	539,037

Source: Ibid., p. 196

World of Work. As will become clearer when I discuss the disputes of 1979 and 1980, a major factor in limiting its involvement was the sheer speed and relatively unpolarised nature of the events themselves. In São Bernardo, for instance, an agreement was reached with the employers in under twenty days. Although the strike was officially declared illegal, and hints were given to the employers that troops could be called in, this did not happen. Instead, it was the strike law itself that suddenly appeared to become inoperable. Union leaders were not removed from their posts, nor were their headquarters occupied by government appointees. At this moment in time, employers appeared willing to negotiate. They had not adopted a united front. A number of firms, like Otis, Pirelli, Alcan, and Scania itself, settled early. Indeed, following the termination of its agreement with the workers, the head of Industrial Relations at Pirelli, Emanuele Sessarego, made a remarkable admission to a national magazine (which could hardly have helped his managerial colleagues in firms still on strike) that "if the workers were not to demand it, the increase would not be given."⁶³

The unions were both willing and capable of conducting a trade dispute successfully without any outside assistance; under such conditions, then, the question of Church involvement did not even arise. Consequently, union leaders neither sought its help, nor did the Church feel any pressing need to make itself available.

This does not mean, however, that the Church simply remained a neutral bystander. On May 27, militants from ACO, the FNT, PO in Santo André, the Mission to the World of Work in São Paulo, and Church related human rights organisations like the National Secretariat of Justice and Non-Violence, and the Justice and Peace Commission of São Paulo produced a manifesto of "Support for the Workers of ABC".⁶⁴ Although this document did not provoke much commentary at the time, it was, nevertheless, significant in a number of respects. Firstly, after it had been produced by a cross-section of groupings from São Paulo and ABC, it was shown to Dom Cláudio Hummes and Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino (as the bishop in charge of the Mission to the World of Work). In itself this was a recognition that the boundaries of the dispute transcended the immediate confines of the ABC region, and that there was a very real link between São Paulo and Santo André. Not only had the strikes spread to São Paulo (indeed, a similar manifesto was produced by Catholic groups in Osasco when the strikes reached there after three weeks) but also, a large number of ABC workers lived in its eastern region. This regional perspective and coordination of the Church's attitude to labour would prove a central element in future disputes.

A second feature worthy of note was the desire, on seeing the document, of both bishops to sign it. Dom Angélico did not sign it as an individual but on behalf of all the bishops in the Archdiocese of São Paulo, such was the collegial nature of power there. Indeed, later statements by Dom Paulo would be very much in keeping with the thrust of the manifesto. As for Dom Cláudio, his signature represented a clear confirmation that the militants and himself were thinking along similar lines, that earlier difficulties had

been ironed out, and that here was a bishop who, like his predecessor, was willing to make a public declaration of his allegiances.

And finally, there is the content of the document itself. Although the manifesto made reference to the conditions which had given rise to the strikes, and the illegal conduct of the employers themselves before the law, asserting that "Only the salaries are controlled; profits are not", its real thrust was a moral critique. On three separate occasions, reference was made to the peacefully conducted nature of the dispute:

the workers have given proof of responsibility and of firmness, continuing with the stoppages without violence, demonstrating that the strike is just and legitimate.⁶⁵

Again, this theme of legitimacy through non-violent action would be a recurring theme in later disputes. So too was one of the manifesto's concluding points, which suggested that the workers were simply in pursuit of a basic human right:

We believe that the time has come for us to conquer once and for all the right of free trade union organisation at the point of the firm, with direct negotiation, as well as the right to strike, which is recognised world-wide as a just and legitimate instrument of the workers for the defence of their rights.⁶⁶

Perhaps most important of all, the document recognised that although the strikes were technically illegal, this illegality was "based on an unjust and outmoded law".⁶⁷ Such a position is never conducive to good relations between its proponent and any state, since it challenges - in one of the most direct forms possible, short of actual physical force - the latter's monopoly on power and freedom to decide as it sees fit. In effect, it undermines the sovereignty of the state from within. And yet, this position merited little media or government attention. Quite simply, the eyes of the generals were fixed elsewhere, and the weight of the Church within the dispute was too small to provoke closer scrutiny.

With regard to the involvement of the Church in 1979, one cannot say that it had a formidable organisation on hand, ready to swing into action at the behest of the unions. It was only nine months earlier that Dom Cláudio had finally succeeded in appointing a priest, Padre Carlos Tosar, as the full time organiser of the the Workers' Pastoral. São Paulo, on the other hand, had its own bishop to do the job.

This belated public recognition of "the fundamental importance of the Mission to the World of Work" in the Diocese of Santo André, together with the need "to secure better conditions for its implantation and development throughout the area",⁶⁸ only came after and was highlighted by the strikes of 1978. An effective specialist machinery was in its infancy and, as the earlier comments of Frei Betto indicate, even with the appointment of Padre Tosar, the latter still faced formidable obstacles and an uphill struggle. Such machinery as existed, then, remained to be proven and even discovered in the course of the dispute.

It is, perhaps, in the very nature of the Church as a voluntary association of individuals

with personal rather than mandatable links between one another, that it remains a collection of possibilities rather than a well structured machine (of course, here I am referring to the activities of its lay rather than clerical ranks, since the latter are, indeed, subject to hierarchical control and form part of a highly structured organisation). Whilst one can more easily predict the potentialities of a labour movement, which has demands and a structure that are oriented around specific factors like pay, organisation in the work-place, and so on, such specificities are quite deliberately rarely embraced by the Church. This is because unlike a trade union, it seeks to strike the delicate balance between the sacred and the profane, preferring the certainties of the former. Paradoxical though it might seem, intervention in the profane - even by the Church's most radical members - is viewed as a strictly temporary exigency rather than as a full-time occupation. For this reason, many of the structures exhibited in the course of a major ecclesiastical intervention are by necessity structures that are developed during the course of events; that is to say they are new and improvised, at the very least, they involve the grafting of new functions onto traditional institutions like the parish Church itself. Although by no means unique, the response to the 1979 strike is a particularly powerful case in point. It well demonstrates the capacity of the Church to crystallise its stance and develop new practices around a particular problem in hand.

The basic motives for assuming a pro-union ecclesiastical stance in 1979 were quite similar to those advanced in 1978. It will be recalled that in the latter case reference had been made to the just and peacefully executed nature of the strikers demands, together the workers' fundamental human right to take strike action in the face of a law that was both "unjust and outmoded". Essentially the attitude taken by the Church in 1979 was a repeat of its 1978 stance. In the course of the dispute Dom Cláudio would make it plain that:

Since the beginning of the strike I, as Diocesan Bishop, have supported the strike because I consider the demands just and because the strike was peaceful.⁶⁹

and that:

The Church, with its participation, does not aspire to any objective other than, as a pastor, to defend the fundamental human rights of the metalworkers and support their just demands.⁷⁰

In terms of rhetoric, then, there was continuity; but in terms of practice there were a number of qualitative departures. Most notable amongst these was the front line role assumed by the bishop himself, and the infrastructural support given to the unions by an extensive network of Catholic activists and churches.

As mentioned earlier, the basic cause for this shift lay in the pace of events and, in particular, the degree to which they became polarized. Only two days after the strikes broke out they were declared illegal, and within eight days, on March 23rd, the unions' headquarters were in the hands of Labour Court appointees. Arrests and violence against

the strikers quickly followed. Juridically and objectively speaking, the unions soon found themselves in an almost impossible position with their leaders removed from office, and offices removed from leaders and members alike. They also faced the legal threat of sequestration of their strike funds, with further moves made to ban mass meetings in public places. The viability of the strike was rapidly undermined as, from their point of view, the government and employers sought to use the full force of the law to bring the dispute to a successful conclusion.

It was in this highly pressured, charged and sometimes chaotic atmosphere⁷¹ that the rapprochement between the Church and unions took place.

The initial point of contact, which would later mushroom into a series of others, came over the issue of a strike fund. It arose because the union of São Bernardo saw itself faced with a simple but seemingly intractable dilemma. Although supplies and monies for the support of the strikers had begun to arrive at union headquarters in largely spontaneous gestures from the public, the union felt somewhat constrained as to what it could do with these contributions. This was because technically speaking these funds could be regarded as union assets and the courts could in effect sequester them if it so decided. The dilemma was heightened still further when it became apparent that a quick settlement would not be forthcoming, and therefore that alternative funds would be crucial to the sustenance of the dispute. Finally, when the spectre of intervention within the union itself did, indeed, appear a distinct possibility, a solution had to be found. It was in this context that Catholic militants from the union of São Bernardo, accompanied by a number of other activists, first approached Dom Cláudio with the idea that the Church should help directly.

The origin of a number of these militants was the "Grupão"/"PO", in other words, that faction which had chosen to throw in its lot with the union leadership of São Bernardo, and which had maintained active links with the Church. The real significance of these individuals did not lie in the novelty of their proposal, which in any case had been anticipated by Dom Cláudio's publicly stated willingness to help the strikers in the collection of foodstuffs should it arise. Rather, it lay in their first-hand knowledge of Church and union militancy, together with a basic understanding of what the needs of the two organisations were, what their respective structures could offer one another, and how they could be brought together most effectively. In other words, they could act as a bridge between the two.

This meshing function is apparent from the events themselves. It was a Catholic militant from within the union who first latched onto Dom Cláudio's earlier press statement of support. The commission which subsequently went to see the bishop discussed various forms by which the Church could help gather funds. For his part, Dom Cláudio made it clear to the unionists that the Church was:

disposed to collaborate in services which were at our level and that we could do, and that they might need.⁷²

However, that did not entail coming up with a plan of its own.

The Church never proposed anything because we always thought that it was they that must propose, if not we would make new plans that we thought superb, but that in reality were not the best. In short, the necessity to listen.⁷³

Thus, the commission fleshed out some basic proposals for cooperation with the Church and went back to the union leadership to discuss these more fully, and make any amendments if necessary. Given that the mediating function of the militants was between two camps which wanted to cooperate, agreement was quickly reached and, as Dom Cláudio continues:

it was from there that we made available our parishes where collection of goods could be made... This was later centralised by the union.⁷⁴

Initially the role of the Church was confined to that of providing a network by which foodstuffs could be gathered, centralised and then passed on to the union for distribution. This was in keeping with a desire to preserve their mutual autonomy. However, with the rapid pace of events, the two organisations soon found themselves caught up in the need to reassess that relationship by deepening it still further. As Dom Cláudio explains, it quickly became apparent that:

the government had the right to intervene within the union and therefore it could simply lock up all the accounts and take all that had been collected and give it another destiny. In fact it did intervene. Thus, so that there would not be any risk that all this collection was diverted, the Church, in 1979, assumed the strike fund as if it was its own, so juridically speaking this was material of the Church. ...this was a juridical instrument which the union proposed and which we accepted.⁷⁵

The improvised nature of cooperation between the Church and the union of São Bernardo can also be seen in the comments of a priest who was based at the Church of the Matriz in São Bernardo (the principal distribution point). As his account makes clear, whilst there was a real sense of urgency on the part of those most closely involved, none of them could have foreseen the precise course events were about to take, or, for that matter, their sheer speed and scale:

on the eve of the intervention in the union...Dr Maurício [a union lawyer for the São Bernardo union] rang me saying: 'Look, we have a lorry load of provisions and we predict the arrival of troops to take over the union, we do not have anywhere to store these provisions... Do you have a room to look after these provisions? The day after tomorrow the boys will be along to distribute them to the families.' Not even I imagined that on the following day we would have here, on the ground floor of the parish hall, two hundred metalworkers, with a queue of a kilometre, or so, of metalworkers requesting food and the police already circling the square...⁷⁶

Furthermore, on that day, with the security net tightening around the union leadership following the intervention, a union director informed the priest that he was now provisionally in charge of the organization and distribution of foodstuffs.

In the Santo André Metalworkers' Union, on the other hand, matters developed

somewhat differently. The determination of the union leadership to maintain an independent relationship with respect to the Church appears to have been that much greater, and in certain instances this critically affected the nature of their cooperation. As Benedito Marcilio explains:

in Santo André we formed a strike fund with an independant commission. The Church would subsequently come and ask how it could help, and we gave it the ground rules.⁷⁷

In other words, these union leaders, who had never been keen on a close relationship with the Church, quite consciously sought to circumscribe its activities. Whilst Lula, and the trade unionists grouped around him, might be a little more open, or even sympathetic, to the overtures of certain Catholic militants, Santo André's leadership was far more wary - coming as it did from a decidedly secular, infact, Communist, tradition. Marcilio notes, for example, that:

In the whole of our leadership we did not have one person that was linked to the Church. Not one.⁷⁸

Further evidence of these contrasting perspectives can be seen in the differing ways in which the two unions handled the issue of personal appearances by Dom Cláudio and the correct role he should adopt.

Initially, Dom Cláudio's physical presence in the dispute came as a direct result of union appeals to forestall a mounting tide of police violence. As Bargas and Rainho explain:

The repressive action [of the police] was principally directed towards the pickets where, day by day, the violence was progressively increasing. For this reason, the leaders of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union asked Dom Cláudio Hummes to appear at the gates of Volkswagen. At four in the morning, on Tuesday the 20th, the bishop drove to the headquarters of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union, where he met with leaders of the union, activists and some parliamentarians from the MDB [Brazilian Democratic Movement]. Immediately afterwards they went to the gates of Volkswagen. The bishop and members of parliament talked to the senior officer, requesting him to avoid violence against the pickets.⁷⁹

With this emergency over it was suggested by, amongst others, Bargas himself (who had been a leading Catholic militant from the now defunct "Grupão"), that the bishop be invited to address union meetings. The idea behind this invitation was simply to inject new drive into the regular series of mass meetings which frequently lacked a concrete agenda. Dom Cláudio accepted the request and, as Bargas explains:

it was from there, in the assemblies, that we began to recite the Lord's Prayer, and we saw that everybody was praying. Thus, the trade unionists began to discover the religiosity of the masses.⁸⁰

To the extent that the religiosity of the masses might foster conditions through which the Church could somehow dictate the pace of events, and undermine what was seen as a lay tradition, these moves were not at all welcome by the Santo André leadership. Comparing the two unions, Benedito Marcilio was quick to point out that:

In our case we did not have the support of the mayor, so soon after, we had to organise our people on the patio of the Church of the Bomfim [as no municipal space was available] - *but on the patio*; no priest or bishop came to speak, no one came.⁸¹

Asked directly why the bishop did not pray in Santo André as he did in São Bernardo do Campo, Marcilio was quite forthcoming:

It was the view of the leadership itself, we did not want it. ...our movement was very well secured, well coordinated, so there was no necessity to have a calling from without the movement to be able to organise it.⁸²

In his Masters Thesis on the 1979 metalworkers' strike of Santo André, Eli Pimenta suggests that the Church may:

on occasions have stopped being an instrument *of* government, but we do not believe that it has abandoned the desire to govern, and an effective route by which it can realise this aim is to place itself opportunistically in the midst of great human masses who are going through critical moments in search of "new" forms of self-government.⁸³

The question of whether the Church had any desire - or really possessed any independent capacity - to organise the strikers from without is open to serious doubt on a number of counts. Firstly, because not only does it run counter to the rhetoric of the Church, but, more importantly, also to its practice. Secondly, and most crucial of all, it also overestimates the power of the Church whilst underestimating the autonomy of the unions concerned. Thirdly, it is an undifferentiated concept of the Church which, as I have indicated throughout this thesis, is not a monolithic institution.

With the exception of prayers at meetings and the structures of the respective strike funds, in actual fact there appears to have been little that separated the conduct of the two unions in relation to the Church. An examination of bulletins from the Santo André Metalworkers' Union quickly confirms that Churches were a central point of union, especially after the government took away its headquarters. Even the strike fund operated from behind the Church of the Carmo, in the centre of Santo André. And Marcilio was quite open in affirming that "Like it or not, the Church gave a big support to the movement."⁸⁴ Indeed, it should be recalled that any differences which arose were - albeit with the mediating function of Catholic militants - at the ultimate behest of the union leaders themselves, rather than the Church. In any case, neither of these differences appears to have been of critical importance in shaping the precise politics or outcome of the dispute. That was something exclusively for the unions themselves to decide in relation to the objective constraints of the day. To this extent, the Church was of marginal significance.

It cannot be denied, however, that the Church, especially through the person of the local bishop, enjoyed a remarkably high profile. At one point Dom Cláudio even came to sit at the negotiating table with the government, employers and representatives of the unions. But whilst the role of the Church was rapidly and qualitatively upgraded in the course of the dispute, there was one principle which throughout regulated its mode of

conduct, providing it with continuity of purpose, consistency in action, and a very clear set of parameters. This benchmark concept, upon which all the Church's own actions were to be judged accordingly, and which is fundamental to any understanding of the institution, was the view held by the bishop that it must recognise the absolute sovereignty of the unions. As the following comments indicate, he held the principle to be inviolable, almost sacrosanct:

In the past it was quite possible, when a bishop supported a strike, that he felt he had the right to tell the workers what they should do and he would thus end up leading the strike... He became the strike's reference point, or the local parish priest, etc. Just as it could be the exact opposite, which is to say, it was he who would denounce the strike, at times in the pulpit, saying that this strike makes no sense, that the workers should do this, that, or the other. Which is to say, ascribing to himself the right, in the pulpit, to tell the workers what they should or should not do. The worker was thus not given the right - even if he was wrong - to decide; but I had to respect this decision of the worker. This for us was very clear. And it is for this reason that we always rejected the idea of making a programme for the workers...but we proposed working *with* them. And this signified listening to them and what *they* really needed. And, on the other hand, to respect absolutely what they decided or what they said in this respect - they being the union leaders (what was at the level of the leaders), and the assemblies of the workers (that which was at the level of the workers' assemblies). It could be that the Church did not agree with the decision, but it had to respect it. It could not wish to impose another decision.⁸⁵

It is against this background that Dom Cláudio's subsequent actions need to be judged. Those actions can be listed in terms of three key areas: (a) Church involvement in material and logistical support; (b) involvement at private and public union meetings; and finally (c), involvement in the negotiating process itself. In all three cases it will be seen that throughout the unions were in control. Their political autonomy was never undermined.

With regard to the first of the fronts, i.e., material and logistical support, the Church was not in the business of writing a blank cheque. Union autonomy was a fundamental principle but it also had to be reconciled with the Church's own criteria for involvement and continued support. The Church initially entered the 1979 conflict because as far as it was concerned, a number of basic criteria for doing so had been met. In essence, it continued to subscribe to the view held in 1978, i.e., that the workers, in trying to improve their conditions of pay and employment, were also merely seeking a number of basic human rights. Amongst these were the right to strike, a free trade union, and democratic representation. The difference now, of course, was that because of violent employer and government resistance, the unions and their members were physically prevented from exercising these rights. Their leadership was barred from office, headquarters confiscated, public meetings banned, possible meeting places occupied by the military police, and extensive arrests of strikers made.

For this reason, on March 24, one day after the intervention in the metalworkers' unions, Dom Cláudio made it plain that in his view the strikers:

have a right to a place whereby they can continue to meet freely... In support of this fundamental right...and faced with the impossibility of their meeting, the Church of ABC has been offering the

parish rooms of the diocese as a place for the workers to meet, discuss and decide. Furthermore, the parishes have been opened in order to receive foodstuffs destined for those families of strikers undergoing hardship.⁸⁶

Although the Church's support of the strikers was whole-hearted, it nevertheless retained its right to qualify that support as it saw fit. This was of fundamental importance to the preservation of its own autonomy and religious mission. In his *Note of Clarification* on the strike, Dom Cláudio made it clear that:

The parish halls of our Churches remain open for meetings of workers who are trying to maintain their organisation, on condition that they do not mix with other ideological or party political ends.⁸⁷

In other words, theoretically speaking those halls could have been withdrawn had those conditions been breached. No records exist to suggest, however, that this issue ever became of any weight as far as relations between the Church and strikers were concerned. The former was not imposing a real constraint upon the latter since both were in agreement on the principle. Instead, the statement was directed at another constituency altogether. It was intended not only to clear up any genuine misunderstandings, reservations and fears that might exist in the minds of the general public - i.e., to clarify the contingent nature of ecclesiastical intervention; but also to head-off all those forces - be they employers, politicians, or indeed, conservative elements within the Church itself - who might seek to attack the Church for supposedly meddling in politics.

With regard to the second major front of action, involvement at union meetings, there is no evidence to suggest that the Church departed from its principle of respecting union autonomy. Again, this was tempered by certain basic prerequisites to support, like, for instance, its view that the strike should remain a peaceful undertaking. At a service given in honour of the strikers, and attended by some 10,000 of them who were awaiting the symbolic return of Lula to the head of the movement, Dom Cláudio emphasised the need to continue along a peaceful road. In his view:

violence builds nothing. It will simply put at risk the gains of the metalworkers. And violence has never built and never will build anything.⁸⁸

Again, there is nothing to suggest that this represented a constraint upon the union leadership which had previously and publicly stated that its dispute was a "just and peaceful" one, and that it too "had never been interested in a radicalisation of positions".⁸⁹ On the contrary, there was a very real desire amongst the leadership that conflict be avoided with the police.⁹⁰ As for the membership, Dom Cláudio let it be known to the same crowd that:

The Church is trying to stay on the side of those suffering injustices, it wants to give the utmost possible. But it is you who must take the reins of the movement, to assume your destinies.⁹¹

These comments leave little doubt as to the priority the Church accorded to both the opinions and the sovereignty of the mass gatherings.

In spite of this, Pimenta suggests that towards the end of a decisive meeting, when the leadership of São Bernardo urged its members to accept an offer that was virtually identical to the one it had earlier rejected, the Church played a less than impartial role. As he explains:

The speakers were strategically distributed, as much in the order of address as in its content: it was necessary to sweeten the pill... And who better to lead with fire, especially when the burnt are someone else, than an official of the Society of Jesus, and for this reason the first speaker of the assembly was the bishop Cláudio Hummes. The bishop said that the strike movement 'was (sic) a historic struggle of the Brazilian worker', and that the accord made with the Ministry of Labour had the intermediation of the CNBB.⁹²

In fact, as Dom Cláudio himself would make clear in his March 30 statement:

Throughout the whole of the strike, and above all in the decisive assembly which decided upon the return to work in the factories of the workers, at no moment have I said to the workers what they should decide, in other words whether or not they should continue the strike, but I always insisted that the decisions and orientations should depart solely from themselves, and that they should maintain themselves united with their leaderships.⁹³

But even if the Church had wanted to, it is doubtful whether it could have done anything to sweeten what was an exceptionally bitter pill for both directorship and members alike to swallow. The strikers' sense of taste was not that easily dulled, nor were they so easily convinced. Instead, much of the hard discussion which followed was both directed by and concentrated upon the union leadership's view that its headquarters must be restored if the movement was to stand any chance of success. There was no question of appealing to religious sentiment - and by implication obfuscation - in order to help secure the required result. Such mystificatory actions would have been in total conflict with the whole spirit of the movement to date, a movement one of whose major characteristics was precisely that of the validity of mass participation in key decision-making. This was, after all, one of the principal features which rendered the unionism of São Bernardo worthy of the title "new unionism".⁹⁴

As for the Church's role in the matter, it seems curious in the very least for Pimenta to argue that the Church was a strategic actor in trying to get the strikers to accept what was by all accounts a universally unpopular decision, and yet at the same time argue that in its desire to govern it will "opportunistically place itself in the midst of great human masses".⁹⁵ Opportunism and allying oneself with an unpopular decision hardly seem to go hand in hand. In the case of Santo André, neither of Pimenta's arguments are proven. Instead there is a tendency to overstate, or rather over-imply, the importance of the Church.

The peripheral nature of the Church in the substantive decisions at mass meetings is further exemplified during the most important of these on May 13. At this meeting, which finally elected not to go back on strike, accepting the government accord instead, once again the central issue which dominated was that of regaining control of the union headquarters. On this occasion, however, the leadership of São Bernardo backed up its

argument in the clearest possible terms. Lula turned the vote into a vote of confidence in his leadership. In this way, the issues were starkly and, one might add, honestly put to the members. There was no trickery. The decision was thrown back into their hands and they chose to support him and thereby reject calls for a resumption of the strike on May 15. In short, they swallowed the bitter pill without reference to the Church. The fact that prayers were or were not held made no difference to this central political fact; the leadership of the union traded on its own resources rather than on external ones.

When it came to dealings with the government and the employers, however, there it can be said that, to varying degrees, the unions were indeed willing to trade upon external resources, including those of the Church if it proved necessary. Quite simply, the unions needed all the resources they could possibly muster.

As has already been indicated, this was certainly the case as far as material and logistical support was concerned. But the weight of the Church also came to figure in the negotiating process itself. In the latter instance, however, it is important to point out that this weight was very much on behalf of the unions and their members rather than instead of them. In other words, the Church acted as a junior partner - taking its cue from the unions themselves - rather than acting as an independent force in the negotiations.

This is graphically illustrated in two key instances. The first concerns a meeting organised by the CNBB with the Minister of Labour to which Dom Cláudio was invited. The meeting took place two days after the government appointees took over the unions. Ironically, that last move had not only created serious difficulties for the unions concerned (as was the state's intention) but it had also deprived the Minister of worker representatives with whom he could effectively negotiate. For this reason, one of the Minister's requests was that the CNBB should help to reopen lines of communication between the various parties. But as far as Dom Cláudio was concerned he was not there as an honest broker but rather to represent the workers, given that they were legally impeded from doing so themselves. It must be noted that that representative function did not and was never intended to entail the capacity to negotiate, the bishop was most emphatic about this.

When I was invited by the CNBB to go to Brasília for a meeting with the Minister of Labour, at no point in time did either myself or the CNBB present ourselves to the Minister as mediators or conciliators, but yes, we went there purely in order to defend the rights of the metalworkers, and we insisted in the prompt suspension of the intervention in the unions and the immediate reopening of negotiations.⁹⁶

This position is confirmed by the bishop's actions immediately prior to his visit. Although technically the meeting was one arranged exclusively between the Church and the government, he anticipated it by holding a long discussion with both Lula and Benedito Marcilio. During those discussions, the two union leaders stated their basic positions and the need to resume negotiations. What Dom Cláudio therefore presented to the Minister was these views plus his own criticisms as to the hasty nature of the

intervention, the brutality of police action, and the partisan nature of government action generally.⁹⁷ Dom Cláudio was, in effect, acting as a line of communication, even if his sympathies were well known to all the parties concerned. In the event, however, other lines of contact were opened up that same day with informal discussions held between Lula, some employers and the Minister back in Brasília.

The second major instance in which the weight of the Church figured prominently was in the tri-partite commission of government, employer and worker nominees, set up in order to hammer out an accord. Although in practice the union leadership continued to enjoy the full confidence and loyalty of the strike movement, juridically speaking it was still barred from speaking for itself. For this reason, three trusted nominees were appointed to constitute the workers' element of the commission. One of the three (who included Dr. Maurício Soares de Almeida and Dr. Almir Pazzianotto (two union lawyers)), was none other than Dom Cláudio himself. As Rainho and Bargas indicate, the motive behind the appointment of the latter was the belief that:

his presence would help the employers to act with greater seriousness in the negotiations.⁹⁸

Whether this was a correct assessment of the influence of the Church is debatable. Although key figures in the negotiations like Murillo Macedo and Dilson Funaro, vice-president of the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo, FIESP), were also colleagues in the Association of Christian Directors of Firms (Associação de Dirigentes Cristãos de Empresa, ADCE),⁹⁹ and whilst this Christian component may have influenced their individual actions,¹⁰⁰ it most certainly did not influence the actions of either the presidential palace or the São Paulo employers as a whole, from whom these men took their cue. Nonetheless, Dom Cláudio's presence was an important symbolic gesture since he went on to the commission not at the request of the government, but at the express request of the leaders of all the unions involved and with the sole purpose of representing their views. Here was yet another graphic instance in which at least one section of the Church quite deliberately shed any pretensions towards any form of supra-class conduct in the national interest. As Dom Cláudio emphasised at the time of his appointment:

I participate neither as a mediator, nor as a conciliator, but as a defender of the rights of the metalworkers, giving voice to those who no longer have a voice.¹⁰¹

Once again, it is important to emphasise that Dom Cláudio's presence on the commission did not imply a usurpation of union power. Firstly, because he was put there at the behest of the union leaders. Secondly, because the commission's own power was from the very beginning circumscribed by the built in requirement that it present its findings to a union mass meeting for ratification. And finally, because in practice, the commission's own power was quickly undermined by the attitude of the employers and the pace of events themselves. An informal arrangement grew up in its place which

involved direct negotiations with the two workers' lawyers (Almir Pazzianotto and Maurício Soares de Almeida) together with other leading union figures. For all these reasons, and Dom Cláudio's own view that his role should remain basically an auxiliary one, the Church was not involved in the substantive and detailed negotiations which took place. Nor, as was shown earlier, did it have any weight in the eventual decision to go back to work.

3.4.1 *The Church and the Metalworkers' Strike of 1980*

To many rank and file members of the metalworkers' unions as well as activists, the absence of an economic victory in 1979 itself represented a political defeat.¹⁰² A head of steam had been built up for the resumption of strike action on May 15, but the leadership won the day on May 13 and dashed these hopes. That tactical victory, however, was tempered by the realisation on the part of the union leadership of São Bernardo that confidence in their sincerity had been undermined. As Lula himself later commented:

I have heard thousands of interviews: 'Blimey, Lula, in 1979 you were cowards'¹⁰³.

This realisation was to temper the actions of the leaders in the 1980 dispute. As Ricardo Antunes convincingly shows, they did not so much lead the strike as:

create the organic conditions for its realization and effective conduct.¹⁰⁴

In contrast to the 1979 dispute, when the leadership decisively sought to bring it to a halt, Lula admitted that in 1980, when a similarly critical juncture was reached:

Not even those who were leading the strike, neither the advisors and the people who were in prison, had the stomach to take a decision. ...nobody had the courage to arrive in one of these assemblies and say: everyone, let's stop, let's go back to work.¹⁰⁵

It is not the concern of this study to assess the merits and demerits of the leadership's position. That is a matter with which Antunes deals in considerable detail. Our concern is with the fact that the Church, by renewing its support for the ABC strikers in 1980, effectively wedded itself to a movement that could go on indefinitely if the strikers so wished. In conformity with its actions during the two previous years, it did not befall the Church to dictate or influence the terms upon which any possible settlement might be based. As had already been made clear on repeated occasions, the Church felt that ~~that~~ was a question whose solution lay within the exclusive realm of the workers and their elected representatives - albeit that the balance between the latter two had changed somewhat in 1980. Whether a strike lasted five or 25 days was irrelevant, the task of the Church was to stand shoulder to shoulder with the strikers for its duration. As it was, the 1980 dispute lasted an historic 41 days.

In its essentials, the basis for Church cooperation with the unions continued as before. It provided symbolic and logistical support whilst they carried out their executive

functions. However, a number of factors would contribute to a heightening of its profile beyond the levels reached in 1979.

Not least amongst these was the lengthy duration of the strike itself. As a function of this, the issue of solidarity action would prove of tremendous strategic importance and once again the Church would be the principal channel of support. As the distributor of foodstuffs and supplies it was at the heart of a network that stretched nation-wide and even internationally. Although that network was certainly not confined to Church organisations, the dispute was noticeable for their presence. The actions of the base ecclesiastical communities achieved nation-wide and even international fame.¹⁰⁶

Ironically, perhaps the single most significant factor which raised the profile of the Catholic Church during the dispute - sometimes out of all proportion - was one which was completely extraneous to the dispute itself. Indeed, it only occurred some months later when the newly elected Pope, John Paul II, paid his first visit to the country. Were the strike not to have occurred media attention would have been upon the Church all the same. As it was, the impending visit provided the more conservative elements of the media (of which there is no shortage) with a wonderful opportunity to juxtapose the radicalism of the São Paulo bishops, and even the CNBB itself, with what they portrayed as the exclusively spiritual and therefore more level-headed concerns of the new Pope. And in truth, as we shall see, it must be said that that conflict was no mere figment of the media's imagination. Although newspaper editorials frequently sought to exploit differences in the crudest possible terms, the fact remains, nevertheless, that a number of those differences were real and profound ones - even if the Brazilian Church sought to minimise them or deny their existence.

During 1980, then, the Church was not simply the subject of media attention, it was the subject of overwhelmingly hostile attention. As the dispute between the unions, employers and government once again gathered pace and polarised, so too the Church's decision to throw in its lot with the workers became the subject of intense scrutiny. More than ever before, all aspects of its support, including, for example, the actions of the Archdiocese of São Paulo and Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, were subject to concentrated and critical debate. Before addressing these issues, however, let us now turn to a brief analysis of the Church's motives for renewing its support.

One of the most interesting aspects of the 1980 dispute, which illustrates the transformation which the Church of Santo André had undergone in the course of the previous strikes, is the more offensive nature of its intervention. Dom Cláudio did not wait for the legalised decapitation of the union leaderships before he intervened. Instead, within forty-eight hours of the strike's commencement, on April 1, and almost a full two weeks before a second sitting of the Regional Labour Tribunal would declare the strike illegal and thus open the way to intervention in the unions, he issued a note to all the priests and coordinators of the communities. In it he once again asked them to collect

foodstuffs and donations for the strike fund. Amongst the reasons cited in favour of support were the fact that the struggle was "just and peaceful". But he also used language which indicated a hardening of attitude. Not only did he offer his support for the strike but he also made it clear that:

1. ...I believe that everyone must support it.
2. The struggle of the metalworkers is not merely theirs, neither is it purely for their benefit, but it helps all the workers because, in virtue of the power that the metalworkers of this region possess, they put pressure on the government itself so that the social and economic structure of this country are changed.
3. The government and the army are clearly on the side of the employers. Thus, the strike negotiations are rendered all but farsical if not completely so.
4. Already, before the Tribunal was about to declare the strike illegal, today, April 2, the helicopters of the army circle at a low level above the peaceful assemblies of the metalworkers, in a clear provocation towards violence.
5. The Ministry of Labour has never intervened in a union of the bosses, which are constantly infringing the law in the day-to-day treatment of the workers in industry, but the moment the workers' unions even begin to stir already the Ministry of Labour threatens with intervention.
6. People speak in terms of political opening and the right to strike, but all strikes are almost always declared illegal and the strikers, therefore, handed over to the whims of the repression. In reality, the strike law is so convoluted that it cannot be observed and thus the government can always declare strikes illegal.
7. It is necessary to educate the people to participate in and support all just and peaceful strikes so that the unity of the people becomes strengthened.¹⁰⁷

Points 2 and 7 are notable in that they indicate a strategic perspective on the part of the Church. That is to say, Dom Cláudio was not merely seeking to defend the existing rights of the workers, but also aiming to assist in their longer term organisation with the ultimate goal of major social-structural change in mind. Points 3 and 5 are significant in that they laid bare the blatantly partisan, i.e., class character of the Brazilian state. And finally, points 4 and 6 illustrate the more offensive character of the Church's posture in relation to matters generally, i.e. by anticipating a series of events which, on the basis of recent history, were likely to happen.

In fact, the Regional Labour Tribunal took everybody by surprise by ruling itself to be incompetent to judge the case. By 13 votes to 11 it held to a 1979 judgement of the Superior Labour Tribunal with the result that "neither the Constitution nor any law give normative competence to the Labour Court to declare the legality or illegality of the strike".¹⁰⁸ The immediate consequence was that the strikers' action would remain legal until another authority found otherwise.

In part this represented a victory for the workers. As a direct result of the decision, both government and employers agreed to pay a recommended increase of seven per cent for workers receiving up to three times the minimum wage, and six per cent for those who received over and above three minimum wages. That was a slight improvement on the employers original offer of a top rate of five and a half per cent. As far as certain sectors of the media were concerned, this was the moment at which the unions should have settled. In the words of one leading magazine, *Veja*:

there was a certain moment at which the employers and the strikers had a minute difference of 0.8% separating them... At that moment Lula put forward the issue of employee stability of a year. If such a demand were to be accepted, for the period of twelve months labour turn-over would be restrained and not one factory could dismiss any employee even if he was of proven incompetence.¹⁰⁹

The Church's perspective on this issue was somewhat different. Frei Betto, whom Dom Cláudio appointed as the key link-man between the Church and the unions during the dispute, summed up the decision of the Tribunal as a partial victory in that for the workers:

It signified that the strike was just. But not a sufficient victory to justify the return to work. The Tribunal refused important demands which the employers themselves had already accepted, like accident insurance, like the payment of 100% for Sunday and holiday overtime, and the base wage rate of each category. The press did not give this coverage. ...The workers wanted an increase of 15% ...it was not a real increase, it was simply a readjustment capable of compensating the workers for the erosion of their salaries suffered in the last twelve months.¹¹⁰

And with regard to the question of stability of employment, which *Veja's* article reduces to an irresponsible eccentricity, Betto also had another approach. He pointed out that:

The rate of labour turnover in ABC is extremely high, 4% a month. One of the highest in the world. This rate of turnover is responsible for the low wages. With it, the wage increases conquered by the workers on paper never reach their pockets.¹¹¹

For his part, Dom Cláudio was to note, one of the features which rendered the strike of 1980 yet another milestone of labour struggle was the fact that workers were not:

simply struggling for a quantitative issue, like a wage increase, but above all for a qualitative question, such as the stability of employment, the trade union delegate, and the 40 hour working week. These are social guarantees which, for the first time, acquire priority in the demands of the category.¹¹²

But perhaps the most most revealing indication of the clarity with which the Church of Santo André saw the issues involved in the 1980 strike would come in Dom Cláudio's own summing-up for the Permanent Council of the CNBB. Two points in particular merit citation. The first concerned the question of the Church's support for a movement which the state regarded as illegal. The bishop's explanation was clear and simple:

it is necessary to distinguish between legality and legitimacy. The criterion is that of justice. A strike, merely because it is declared illegal, does not necessarily lose its legitimacy nor does it stop being just. A right does not automatically receive the adherence of the Church for the simple reason that it is rendered legal, as is the case of the law of divorce in our country.¹¹³

The second point concerned the political implications of the Church's support, an issue over which the government, media and employers made much play during the dispute. Again, Dom Cláudio was quite direct:

no attitude is politically neutral. Even those which seek to affirm themselves as neutral, assume a political stance. We do not fear the political consequences of our support, especially considering the liberating character of these consequences.¹¹⁴

All the above comments - both in terms of their willingness to embrace detailed issues

as well as in terms of their broader strategic perspective, powerfully illustrate what a long way the Church of Santo André had come. When the bishop had first arrived in the region he had been very much aware that "I would have to position myself within this problematic of the workers".¹¹⁵ And already in 1976 he went so far as to make pronouncements in favour of the workers, but by his own admission these had been "very generic and very timid".¹¹⁶ His comments in 1980 demonstrate that the Church had moved from the generic to the specific, and from the defensive to the offensive. It not only gave a tactical/reactive definition of justice, i.e., that of defending certain rights, but also began to define its broader strategic contours. For example, as far as Dom Cláudio was concerned, one of the great lessons of the dispute was that:

it showed us the limit of the government's political opening which, in fact, excludes the most humble, the poor. This therefore demands a new form of conduct by the Church in the current situation which is within the line of the options of Medellin and Puebla.¹¹⁷

This process of self-criticism and increased self-awareness on the part of certain sectors of the Church was bound to prove a controversial option since it ran counter to the interests of many of the nation's most powerful groups, like the army, large sectors of the state bureaucracy, and industrial capital. It also ran counter to the perspective of certain leading conservative Catholics, including some grouped around the figure of Pope John Paul II himself. Finally, the Church's stand proved controversial because it took place against the background of a supposedly emergent democratic regime rather than a dictatorial one. Some forces at the time regarded the actions of the strikers as a threat to a stable democratic transition. As such, the Church was urged by these self-appointed arbiters of democracy to keep its distance rather than pledge its support. In the following section some of the key points of controversy focused upon by the leading participants will be examined.

3.4.2 Conflictive Implications of the 1980 Metalworkers' Strike -Polarisation Within the Church, Polarisation Between the Church and State

On most occasions the instances of conflict concerned the presence or actions of particular individuals, for example, Dom Paulo, Dom Cláudio, Frei Betto, etc; but underlying these detailed instances of attrition was: (a) the conflictual relationship between the Church and the state; and (b) the conflictual relationship between the Church's own progressive and conservative wings. The basis of these conflicts was a differing interpretation as to the philosophical, and, more importantly at that time, practical definition of both the general limits to Church intervention together with the precise political colouring that this should or should not assume.

Elements of all these issues are clearly apparent in the question of Frei Betto's participation in the dispute. As indicated earlier, Frei Betto was the Dominican Friar appointed by Dom Cláudio in January 1980 to revitalise the Workers' Pastoral within

São Bernardo and Diadema. He had chosen to work in the ABC region and Dom Cláudio had recommended to him that he work in São Bernardo do Campo because it was the most important labour pole but still virtually bereft of pastoral support. Frei Betto had already met Lula in 1979, and the two would later strike up a close personal friendship which helped the former to act as a sort of bridge between the leadership of the Church and the leadership of São Bernardo during the 1980 strike.

The most controversial aspect of Betto's involvement was the fact that he lived with Lula's family, especially after the union president was arrested. This move gave rise to press suggestions that Lula was being advised by radicals, an indirect reference to Betto's past political activities and imprisonment for four years for alleged links with the clandestine left.¹¹⁸ The government's Minister of Social Communication, Said Farhat, even went as far as to affirm that:

Some priests from São Paulo are leading the auto workers' strike, breaking Canon Law, and ignoring the recommendations of Pope John Paul II.¹¹⁹

Although the Minister declined to comment upon which of John Paul II's norms of conduct had been broken, he went on to stress that "as priests and citizens everybody owes obedience to the current laws of the country".¹²⁰ Nor did Said Farhat specify whether the government would take measures against those individuals who did not comply.

The Minister's comments were nothing short of a calculated mixture of misrepresentation, insinuation and veiled threats. For example, with regard to the issue of a leadership role for priests during the campaign (or any other sector of the Church for that matter), Betto's openly radical views were quite consistent with the line adopted in previous years. Betto was emphatic that the Church:

must not influence the destiny of the campaign, it must not attempt to direct the campaign, it must not get in the way of the campaign, but must simply put itself at the service of that which the category, which the workers are deciding.¹²¹

And in point of fact, if one looks at Betto's role during the dispute (which the press chose to ignore), it becomes apparent that he regularly visited the houses of all the imprisoned leaders, not just Lula, giving pastoral support to their families, making sure that there was a meal in prison, keeping in touch with lawyers, helping to organise news for the outside world, and helping to mobilise international support. Whilst such activities constitute affirmative forms of solidarity, which was one of Betto's primary objectives, by any criterion they fall a long way short of constituting part of a leadership role, let alone any fictitious subversive conspiracy.

In order to lend legitimacy to Farhat's charges, to give, as it were, a blessing to the Minister's views, John Paul II's alledged views had been raised without actually being substantiated. This curious form of argumentation betrays a serious underlying issue; that was the attempt by the state to coopt papal versions of Catholicism, or more accurately, this particular Pope's version of Catholicism, as a means of delegitimising and ultimately

silencing more progressive views. The strike of Sao Bernardo was so important simply because it was a test case on the eve of the papal visit and was thus the subject of everybody's attentions.

On April 23, the conflict between the Church and state reached its climax. That day saw three important events. The issuing, by both Dom Paulo and Dom Cláudio, of an official note pledging support for the strikers; a heated debate in the Senate over relations between the Church and the state; and finally, an interview with President Figueiredo in which he commented upon the actions of the Church.

The note rebutted the charges of Farhat:

With regard to the precepts of Canon Law, the priests of ABC and also of São Paulo know them very well and that they are not infringing them, quite apart from being absolutely certain in the knowledge that they are not contradicting the guidance of Pope John Paul II. The rights which are being violated at the moment are those present in the Constitution and the laws of the country and it is not the priests who are violating them.¹²²

It also made crystal clear its order of priorities:

The Church does not propose strikes; it does not organise strikes; it does not seek to orient the decisions of the strikers; and it never attempts the absurdity of deciding for the workers. Carrying out its spiritual mission, which it realises on the temporal plane, it is offering spiritual and material support so that the strikers may decide as free men...¹²³

The bishops also argued that it was in defence of fundamental human rights, rather than any desire to impose a defeat upon the regime, that the Church continued its support even after the strike was declared illegal:

there is no sense of challenge to the authorities or incitement to practise illegalities. With the declaration of the strike's illegality and the intervention in the unions, the workers continue to be human beings, whose fundamental rights, affirmed and guaranteed by the Constitution, must be protected.¹²⁴

These tempered words could not avoid severe criticisms in the Senate which debated the role of the Church in the strike. Senator José Lins suggested that:

What is happening is not the responsibility of the Church, but yes of a few priests and their leaders.¹²⁵

Much more serious even than the senate debate were the comments made by the President of the Republic himself. In a brief interview, João Figueiredo expressed sentiments similar to those of Senator Lins and lent his support to the view prevalent amongst more conservative sectors of the establishment that the actions of the Church in the São Paulo region were those of a tiny and irresponsible minority.¹²⁶ Asked what he thought of the Church's participation in the strike, Figueiredo answered:

I see it badly, very badly. But it is not the Church, they are merely certain elements of it. Many bishops have sought me out and manifested a position contrary to that assumed by the Church in São Paulo, saying that they do not agree with it.¹²⁷

This notion that there were two Churches, a responsible and an irresponsible one, was bluntly elaborated when Figueiredo made it plain that as far as he was concerned "The CNBB is not the Church...the Church is divided."¹²⁸

Although Dom Paulo counter-attacked and demanded that the President produce concrete evidence, divisions - albeit from quarters from whom it might be expected, and in predictably small numbers - did exist. Cardinal Vicente Scherer, amongst Brazil's most outspoken conservative bishops, suggested that:

Now that the [Labour] Tribunal has already judged the situation, then evidently its sentence must be adhered to by all, by the strikers and all the more by the Church. We speak in terms of respecting the law and an intense movement was conducted in the last few years in order to establish the law as a criterion for all activities. Now the laws are in place which are not adhered to, evidently there is no coherence for lack of logic.¹²⁹

There is little doubt that these sentiments were very much in line with Figueiredo's own view that the priests were:

giving the impression to public opinion that they are placing themselves against the law.¹³⁰

But perhaps the most controversial aspect of the President's interview were comments reserved for the Cardinal of São Paulo himself. Figueiredo said:

I do not know him. I have never had contact with him, but from the information that I have he is inciting the strike.¹³¹

It is difficult to overstate the seriousness of all these comments. If found guilty of inciting the strike, Dom Paulo could be charged under article 36 of the National Security Laws and, in the last instance, be imprisoned. Indeed, Dom Cláudio was himself included in a security service report for possible charges along these lines.¹³² As for the CNBB, the President had suddenly declared that, to all intents and purposes, this, the single most important organ of the Brazilian catholic Church, was irrelevant.

Although the leader of the government in the Senate, Senator Jarbas Passarinho, attempted to backtrack with a series of verbal gymnastics,¹³³ there is little doubt that this episode represented one of the most serious breaches in relations between the Church and state since 1964.

In this instance, priests were not being arrested, imprisoned, tortured or deported, as had occurred repeatedly throughout the past 16 years. What rendered this conflict such a serious one was the fact that it came under what the government claimed to be altogether new conditions, i.e., ones in which the conflicts of the past had been left behind in favour of a democratic and socially consensual transition. Instead, the exact opposite happened. Social conflict was on the increase and had assumed mass proportions. Furthermore, in the case of the metalworkers, the agenda of contestation was progressively being expanded. By 1980 they had moved from primarily quantitative questions in their list of demands to include qualitative ones, such as a union delegate, stability of employment

and a 40 hour working week. That the Church, as a major pillar of society, did not condemn, but, on the contrary, sanctioned these moves, whilst at the same time criticising the actions of the state, was obviously the source of considerable concern to the government.

The involvement of the Church in the 1980 strike most dramatically illustrated what a long way leading sectors of the institution had come from the cold war rhetoric and practice of 1964. Now, instead of supporting claims that Brazil was in the throws of a democratic transition, the Church questioned the validity of these assertions. In the words of Dom Cláudio:

the strike helped to show us the limit of the government's political opening.¹³⁴

It was not only from the state's point of view that Church actions represented a critical landmark. Paradoxically, these moves also caused serious difficulties for the Roman Catholic bishops themselves. For the most part, the dramatic historical changes which had taken place within the Catholic Church during the 1960's and 1970's came about as a direct response to the Brazilian situation. However, they had also taken place against the background of equally dramatic shifts in international theological thinking, powerfully represented firstly by Vatican II, and later by its Latin American re-workings at Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979.

At the Latin American meetings one central concept in particular had come to the fore. This was the "preferential option for the poor". Many commentators rightly saw the attainment of this priority as an important step forward for Liberation Theology and, one might add, a step forward for the vast majority of Brazilian bishops who had supported its adoption. Similarly, they also regarded the 1978 appointment to the papacy of the conservative Polish cardinal of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla, as a partial reaction to such developments. Certainly, over the coming years the relationship between, on the one hand, Liberation Theology in general (and its Brazilian exponents in particular) and, on the other, the Holy See, would be fraught with difficulties.

By 1980, the new Pope's conservative credentials were public knowledge. For the Brazilian state, this shift in perspectives at the highest levels of Roman Catholicism presented it with an important opportunity to coopt and seek solace in a particular theological reading which carried weight with the Brazilian public.

This process of attempted cooption, at the expense of more radical and critical perspectives, can be seen most clearly in the controversy which surrounded comments made by Pope John Paul II to a correspondent from Reuters in May 1980 regarding the actions of the Brazilian Church at that time.

Q: Your Holiness is going to Brazil in July...

A: Yes.

Q: ...where the Brazilian bishops are involved in a struggle on behalf of the unions and against the government. Does your holiness support this policy of the bishops?

A: I think that above all it is necessary to make ...let us say, an analysis of the words you used in

order to be able to say what I do support and what I do not support, what the bishops are doing and what I should do going to Brazil, because it is a case of a social problem which has its ethical dimension and this is the role of the Church, in which it may be interested. And it cannot be any other way. Another thing altogether is the politicization of this. This is something that the Church must avoid.¹³⁵

Sectors of the government and the conservative media immediately took these words to be a vindication of their stance, whilst progressive sectors of the Church, including the Catholic weekly journal *O São Paulo*, were left to define and contextualise them and give emphasis to the ethical aspects of Church intervention.¹³⁶

This incident gives an indication of how the papal centre of gravity had moved significantly to the right, for whilst it must be admitted that the question asked of the Pope was a loaded one, he could, nevertheless, have chosen to give the simple answer that he stood by his bishops. In itself this would not have precluded a subsequent and more subtle definition of precisely what the role of the Church should be. Such a course of action, however, would not only have sent a clear signal of support to the bishops concerned at a critical moment in time, but it would also rightly have been construed as a less than veiled criticism of the Brazilian government's policies on the eve of an important state visit. Quite simply, this the Vatican was not prepared to countenance. Instead the Pope opted for a looser definition of the problem which left sufficient scope for the government to carry on as before. As for the issue of whether it truly gave the government sufficient grounds to suggest that it now had papal backing, is a secondary and highly debatable proposition altogether. Of much greater significance was the political impact of the Pope's carefully constructed phraseology. Quite clearly, it was hard to reconcile his comments with Dom Cláudio's view that:

no political attitude is neutral... We do not fear the political consequences of our support, especially given the liberating characteristics of these consequences¹³⁷.

It was precisely these kinds of differences that the government would seek to exploit to the full. And it was on this occasion that a spokesman for the government concluded with evident satisfaction that "Rome has spoken, the subject is closed."¹³⁸

In fact, the subject, or rather, the real tension which underlay relations between the Brazilian Church, the government, and the Vatican, was far from closed. On the contrary, it was only just beginning. As we shall see in a later chapter, conflicts of a similar nature would re-emerge during the papal visit itself when he addressed a primarily working class audience in the Morumbi stadium in São Paulo.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how from the late 1970's onwards the Catholic Church of Santo André came to forge strong links with one metalworkers' union in particular, that of São Bernardo do Campo, and how thereby a radical form of Catholicism assured itself a privileged place in the development of what later came to be termed "new

unionism".¹³⁹ It must be emphasised, however, that significant though the Church's contribution came to be, the approximation between Church and unions was contingent upon a fundamental restructuring and reappraisal of union organisations and strategies which was carried out: (a) by their own leaders and members, and (b), in response to a primarily secular, i.e. working class dynamic. The simple fact is that "new unionism" preceded any significant Catholic interpenetration. Indeed, one may go even further than this and say that "new unionism" significantly contributed to the rearticulation of radical Catholic struggles within the ABC region.

This basic priority of the secular over the religious is particularly evident in the 1978 dispute where, to all intents and purposes, the weight of the Church was negligible. Certainly, in terms of the leadership make-up of both the São Bernardo and Santo André unions the Church carried little weight or favour. And at a grass roots level all evidence points to the lack of a well articulated or numerous militant body of the kind seen in São Paulo. Such as it existed, for example, the Workers' Pastoral of ABC was on the periphery of union affairs.

There is little doubt that the major qualitative shift in these relations came about in 1979. All key participants agree on this point. 1979 was the year in which the Church threw itself fully behind the demands of the strikers in both a public and a practical form. The reason for the change was not so much a spontaneous rethinking of attitudes on either side (in fact the Church had already made its favourable disposition towards the strikers clear in 1978). Instead, it basically arose under the pressure of circumstances. In the light of a progressively polarizing situation, the various union leaderships came to the view that cooperation with the Church was essential for the successful pursuit of their dispute. The hope, which proved well-founded, was that the Church would constitute an important weapon in what was a rapidly diminishing armoury.

It must be stressed, however, that the invitation to participate was not an unconditional, i.e., open-ended one. This is most powerfully illustrated in the case of Santo André's union leadership which actually debated the pros and cons of the issue and, in the light of this, made a conscious effort to limit the influence of the Church. But even in São Bernardo, where a political sensitivity of this kind did not exist and the perceived danger of Church support was not such a big issue, there was no question of the Church usurping executive functions. On the contrary, in these matters one can say that the wishes and role of the Church were strictly subordinated to the decisions of the union leadership. To this extent there was little to separate the two unions from one another.

One crucial element which permitted the forging of a viable and sustainable relationship between the unions and the Church was the personality of Dom Cláudio himself and, more precisely, his view that support for the strikers should be made more or less unconditional; in other words, from the outset he accepted the principle of union sovereignty. This view stemmed from his basic philosophy that:

the Church must respect the autonomy of the legitimate organisations of the workers and of civil society generally, the temporal society not just civil society....in the same way that it must respect the autonomy of the sciences...¹⁴⁰

As he openly admitted, the ultimate practical consequence of this perspective was that:

It could be that the Church did not agree with a decision [of workers and their elected representatives], but it had to respect it. It could not wish to impose another decision.¹⁴¹

As I have shown, a detailed examination of the record of the 1978-80 disputes well illustrates this point. Despite the Church's very high profile there is no available evidence to suggest that it developed a private agenda of its own which it sought to impose upon the union movement from without. On the contrary, it accompanied the peculiarities of all three disputes from one year to the next. In the first it accompanied with declarations of solidarity; in the second, it accompanied the São Bernardo executive in its recommendation to go back to work; and in the third, if one accepts the earlier comments of Lula, it accompanied the executive in its decision not to confront the strikers in a similarly courageous manner to the year before. Evidently, therefore, the course of these disputes was dictated by the political and economic exigencies of the day together with the unions' own varying capacity to respond adequately to these. Indeed, even if, for the sake of argument, one accepts Pimenta's argument regarding Church participation in the 1979 strike, then it too may be cited as yet one more example of how the Church was drafted into the dispute in a secondary capacity. Whether this constituted opportunism is a question I shall come on to later.

For a number of reasons, the Church's supportive role did not imply a loss of its sovereignty. Firstly there is the obvious, but nonetheless highly significant point that leading figures in the Church did not identify themselves with just any form of unionism, but rather with a historically significant variant which was a practical critique of past structures and modes of conduct. As far as radical Catholic currents were concerned, then, the phenomenon of "new unionism" represented the most powerful translation to date of many of the views which they themselves had long advocated. If, for instance, one takes the case of Dom Cláudio it is apparent that he did not cede the right to advocate a systemic break. On the contrary, his view, like that of many others at the time, was that the metalworkers were actually helping to bring this about:

in virtue of the power that the metalworkers of this region possess, they put pressure on the very government so that the social and economic structure of this country are changed.¹⁴²

The bishop's approach was not one of uncritical support; essentially what had happened was that a critical evaluation of the situation had been made prior to giving support. The movement was seen not merely as compatible with the Church's own social criteria, but also a means by which they could be advanced in a secular form. It is in this sense, therefore, that offering solidarity can be regarded as a means by which the Church could actually extend its sovereignty - though not so much over the unions themselves as

much as over general paths of national development. In other words, whilst the Church could not and was even reluctant to influence the body of union opinion¹⁴³ it could at least help to ensure that the movement had a greater chance of success. As a direct consequence, the government and Church eventually found themselves on a collision course.

Far from being diminished, then, ecclesiastical sovereignty, in the sense of the power to influence society at large, was extended by its alliance with the unions.

The Church's refusal to engage in any form of conduct that might undermine the sovereignty of the union leadership or membership (for example, telling the strikers what they should or should not do) did not prevent it from making certain fundamental criteria quite clear. The most important of these criteria was that of the need for non-violent action. Had the policy of the union leadership been to encourage or defend a tactic of violence then there would have been a serious conflict of interests; but as it was, the Church was able to sustain its own deeply held conviction whilst supporting this operational aspect of union policy.

The Church also passed judgement on a number of the strike's other operational aspects. For example, the need to maintain unity between the leadership and membership and a democratic form of conduct. Again, the basic reason why it could pass judgement upon what in point of fact was an internal affair of the union (and which in other historical situations would quite possibly be regarded as overstepping the limit of its authority), was the fact that the expression of its sovereignty was compatible with that of the union leaderships. In reality, the Church was not telling the unions what they should do. Instead, it was reaffirming and publicising an accomplished fact.

A similar approach also underlay the Church's comments in 1980 to the effect that infiltration from outside groups was to be avoided (although here there was the additional desire to combat slurs upon the movement coming from reactionary quarters¹⁴⁴). As an official note of the CNBB accurately pointed out:

The authentic workers' leaders have always repudiated infiltrationist manoeuvres of those interested in manipulating the people for objectives foreign to the very popular consciousness....¹⁴⁵

Hence, the Church was not introducing anything new onto the strikers' agenda, but backing it up. At one mass meeting, for instance, the workers physically ejected what they themselves regarded as an infiltrationist and provocative element within the crowd. This was with the full and impassioned backing of Lula.

From the above examples it is clear that the Church would only pass judgement on operational matters which were already accepted by the unions and to this extent within the public domain. No instances of conflict arose precisely because the Church was pursuing an openly partisan line. Its principal job, therefore, was not to question the conduct of the strikes but to support them provided, of course, that they retained their democratic and non-violent character.

To many observers the proposition put forward at the beginning of this section, i.e., that the emergence of "new unionism" significantly helped in the rearticulation of progressive Catholic struggles, might appear as a somewhat radical formulation, even as an inversion of reality. In putting forward this view I am not seeking to minimise or deny the existence of a Catholic contribution but the opposite, to put it in as accurate a perspective as possible.

In the case of São Paulo, it was shown that the links between radical union perspectives and Catholic militancy was an organic one, that is to say: (a) Catholic militants were at the forefront of articulating certain trade union values; (b) they were historically significant, being amongst the first to do so; (c) they were numerically significant, accounting for a large proportion of the Metalworkers' Opposition membership; and finally (d), they were strategically significant - at the time of the 1978 metalworkers' elections, for instance, two leading Catholic militants contested the presidency and vice-presidency of the union.

Taking a wider view, it was also shown that progressive Catholic articulation in general was at a considerably advanced stage. Already, in 1975 a pastoral plan was produced for the city of São Paulo which placed workers' issues very high up on the agenda, and it was as an indication of this priority that a bishop was appointed to oversee its progress. The relationship between hierarchy and militants was a highly productive and mutually educative one. As for the relationship between militants and priests, this too was very well advanced with a solid and quite numerous core of clergy providing a major support to all militant initiatives either through well developed networks in the communities, or more directly in terms of infrastructural support. There was, then, a striking degree of cohesiveness and complementarity between the various echelons of the Church. In the case of the 1978 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union election, for example, there was a highly sophisticated and relatively friction free division of labour amongst these various groupings.

It is given these continuities that one can say that not only was there an organic relationship between Catholic militants and radical sectors of the labour movement, but also a more organic relationship between the Archdiocese of São Paulo as a whole and the labour movement.

Turning to the ABC region, it is apparent that a large number of these elements were absent when the strikes broke out in 1978. It is in this very real sense that "new unionism" was to precede any form of Catholic interpenetration in a manner that was in marked contrast to the situation in São Paulo.

Taking the strategic and numerical significance of radical Catholicism within the ABC unions first, what emerges there is essentially a picture of relative marginalisation. For whatever reasons, the leaderships of the unions in São Bernardo and Santo André regarded any form of ecclesiastical involvement with a mixture of scepticism and hostility. Lula's comments three months before the strike of 1978 left little doubt that he

regarded the Church generally, and the Workers' Pastoral in particular, with considerable scepticism. The best they could do would be to educate the workers to join the union. As for the leadership of Santo André, here there was the added determination to preserve what they saw as the secular political integrity of the movement.

With regard to the numerical significance of Catholic militancy within the ABC region one cannot speak with equal certainty simply because there is an absence of available statistical data. However, there are certain important circumstantial factors which strongly suggest a weakness. For historical reasons, which were detailed earlier, the development of militancy within the region had primarily come via ACO and not PO. This was in sharp contrast to São Paulo where already by the mid-1970's PO was the principal motor and expression of Catholic militancy.

Dom Cláudio is one amongst many other key observers who has noted that one of the defining characteristics of PO, as opposed to ACO, is precisely the fact that it:

aims much more to reach a greater mass, which is to say, to be able to unite workers in larger groups, even if they do not have the commitment of being militants immediately.¹⁴⁶

But when he arrived there in 1975, the ABC region had the much more specialised training - and therefore restricted membership potential - which was to be associated with a militant infrastructure that was primarily based around ACO.¹⁴⁷ Compounding this internal qualitative constraint was a powerful external limitation: the military repression. Whilst this had not eliminated ACO in the region, as had all but happened in Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, the fact was that ACO remained in the sights of the military. This had hardly acted as a recruiting sergeant.

Paradoxical though it might appear, further evidence which points to the absence of a truly organic relationship between Catholic militancy and progressive unionism in ABC is available if we look at another vital aspect of how militancy constitutes itself, that is, in relation to the Church. Quite simply, many of the sorts of continuities which I mentioned earlier in relation to São Paulo, i.e, the close relationship between Catholic militants and all levels of the clergy which helped militants to project themselves to much greater effect within the union movement, were absent in the Diocese of Santo André. Perhaps the most graphic example of this lack of practical ecclesiastical integration, and a powerful indicator of the state of health of the diocese, is the fact that it took three years to produce a pastoral plan of Santo André. Even when it was produced, those aspects which related to the Mission to the World of Work frequently met with a mixture of resistance and indifference from local priests. Again, this was not the ideal base from which to articulate and launch initiatives, or to act as a pole of attraction for new members.

The suggestion that the advent of "new unionism" significantly helped in the rearticulation of radical Catholic militancy in no way implies that a gelling of ecclesiastical forces was not already underway. Dom Cláudio came in as a cautious

reformer and caution was gradually exchanged for mutual commitment as militants taught him many of the realities of the diocese and he in turn actively responded. But there is little question that these processes of reorganisation and realignment received a tremendous qualitative boost with the eruption of labour militancy in the region. The history of the Workers' Pastoral in São Bernardo is the most notable example of this.

As we saw, the earliest record of PO in São Bernardo is that of its formation in 1978 as an umbrella organisation for radical Catholics and secular militants alike (also known as the "Grupão"). It should be emphasised, however, that this was after the May strikes and not before. In fact, it was a direct response to the ferment that these events had generated and the subsequently overwhelming need felt by activists from numerous factories to come together and discuss trade union issues. This cross-fertilisation continued when Catholic elements left PO (the "Grupão") and passed directly into the union because to them it appeared that Lula was opening it up to more combative perspectives, like theirs. By the time Frei Betto arrived in São Bernardo, PO was a spent force.

That he should have been sent to this city rather than to those of Santo André or São Caetano was far from coincidental. Santo André already had a history of Church activity whilst São Caetano apparently offered little scope for organisation. São Caetano had a history of repeated failures at forming a PO. One priest with a good knowledge of the area described it to me as the "centre of reaction in trade union, religious and political terms."¹⁴⁸

Quite why this should be so is difficult to say. One possible factor might be that the municipality had one of the highest incomes per capita in the whole of Brazil. Frei Betto described the city as encompassing a rising working class, i.e., with improving housing and graduating towards a lower middle class. Thus perhaps the clergy did not feel or even need to respond to the anxieties of the people in quite the same way it had to in places like the eastern zone of São Paulo or São Bernardo do Campo with their many slums. PO's own statistics (taken from the *Jornal do Brasil*, September 13, 1987) found average annual incomes in Santo André, São Bernardo and São Caetano to be \$2,366, \$3,866, and \$4,231 respectively. Unfortunately, however, this question of the progressive Church's apparent failure to gain a foothold was the one and only area of enquiry which Dom Cláudio refused point-blank to comment upon.

With regard to São Bernardo, according to Frei Betto, the view taken by Dom Cláudio was that since it was an area of such strategic importance and lacking in any serious pastoral support, then it was here that he should go. Subsequent events would appear to vindicate this decision because it did not take Frei Betto long to get a Workers' Pastoral off the ground. By December 1987 the municipalities of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema (the area covered by the São Bernardo union) had between them nine active groups, three groups under formation, and an average total of 115 participants. This compared most favourably with Santo André's (municipality) total of three active groups (plus another two in formation) and an average number of 32 participants. Indeed, by

1987 São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema had between them the majority - some 61.5 per cent of the diocese's PO activists.¹⁴⁹

Why did Frei Betto succeed where others had failed before him? The answer to this question is complex since essentially it entails an historical process rather than a single individual, event or conscious act. Thus, for example, whilst Dom Cláudio's decision to concentrate on the region and Betto's skills as an organiser and communicator improved PO's chances, there was another important factor which lay beyond their direct control, which was essential to any chance of success, and which, happily for them, was moving decisively in their favour. That was the receptivity of workers to such an initiative.

A survey carried out at the time of the 1980 strike found that people in the São Paulo and ABC regions generally had a positive view of the Church's actions. In answer to the question did the Church act rightly or wrongly in the position it took up, 69 per cent of the sample answered yes, 17 per cent no, and 14 per cent either did not know or did not pass an opinion.¹⁵⁰ Another question, which from the point of view of my study has limited value, supplied a list of personalities and asked people to identify the ones whom they "most admired".¹⁵¹ Significantly, it was Dom Paulo who came second only after Lula. A third question, which asked respondents whose side they thought the Church was on during the dispute left no doubt as to the institution's partisan image. Whilst 23 per cent of the sample felt that it had not taken sides, an overwhelming 73 per cent felt that it had taken the side of the workers as opposed to a mere three per cent who thought it had taken the side of the employers.

In order to give greater focus to this generally favourable picture, I interviewed 50 Catholic metalworkers (from within the boundaries of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union) to see what effect the actions of the Catholic Church of Santo André had had upon them during the strikes of 1978-80 - in essence, whether it had left a positive or negative impression of the institution. Clearly, the results of such a procedure, taking place as it did eight years after the events, and amongst such a comparatively small group of workers, must be viewed with caution. The results should merely be treated as an observation of the 50, and as a complement to my detailed interviews with militants, rather than taken as the basis for hard and fast generalisations about Catholic metalworkers as a whole.¹⁵²

In spite of the eight year gap, consciousness of the Church's involvement was extremely high. To the question "Did you know that the Church supported the strikes of ABC in 1978/79 and 1980?", 46 out of the 50 interviewees answered yes. To the question "Do you think that the Church of Santo André was right in taking this attitude towards the workers?", a similarly high number, 45 out of 50, replied yes. The rest were divided into three who did not know, and two who thought it was wrong. Amongst this group of 50 rank and file metalworkers, at least, the Church's decision was an overwhelmingly popular one. Amongst those who participated in the strikes (39 interviewees) this also proved to be the case. Only one felt that the Church should not

have intervened on grounds of principle. i.e., because, in his words, "it is political." This individual also happened to be the same and only one who answered yes to the question "Did the fact that the Church supported the strikes of 1978-80 affect your attitude towards it - for the worse?" Quite remarkably, 23 workers said that it had changed their attitude towards the church "for the better". An equal number said that it had not changed their attitude, whilst the remaining three did not express an opinion either way.

All this provides at least some grounds for suggesting that there was considerable scope for an improvement in the Church's image prior to its intervention, and despite its history of involvement in labour struggles. In the instances of activists who subsequently joined the Workers' Pastoral, whom I interviewed in detail and did not form part of the survey, this certainly proved the case. The example of Vicente Paulo da Silva (also known as Vicentinho), a member of the Workers' Pastoral and elected leader of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union in 1987, is typical and worth citing in detail because his case powerfully indicates how, from a relatively low esteem enjoyed by the Church within the union, the two would increasingly intermesh in the light of the strikes and the Church's positive approach.

Having been forced to leave his home state of Rio Grande do Norte for economic reasons in 1976, Vicentinho came down to São Bernardo at the invitation of relatives and began working in a small metalworking factory. He moved to the multinational Mercedes Benz in 1978, where he works to this day. In his home town of Acari he had participated in the local Church's young persons group, but on arriving in São Paulo he did not feel at all comfortable with the Church. This was partly because he had already begun to question the nature of the group which was somewhat introspective and had no global perspective. A second reason was that on arriving in São Bernardo he realised that:

the priest here was worse than the one back home; firstly the priest back there was a friend, the one here had absolutely nothing to do with reality. no correspondence whatsoever.¹⁵³

All that, however, was to change:

and suddenly, in the strikes, in the strike movement of 1979 and 1980 I re-encountered with the *companheiros* of the Church here, only with another vision, they are *companheiros* of the Workers' Pastoral.¹⁵⁴

In other words, for an activist like Vicentinho, what would bring him out of his two years of local ecclesiastical isolation was the eruption of the strike movement. With the support of Dom Cláudio and Betto amongst others, progressive Catholics were encouraged to manifest their opinions and a radical practice. They also had a framework in which they could do this openly despite the resistance of some local priests.

Although the testimony of another PO member and union official, Adair Boy, is not as critical of his local parish ("I always used to go with the priest to celebrations because he was ill" ¹⁵⁵), he also left it in no doubt that:

I came to feel more at home to the extent that the Church opened its door to us the workers. The Church had to gain, indeed, I myself was a Christian who did not participate in the Church.¹⁵⁶

Thus, in a manner that was quite unprecedented the strikes permitted the Church to activate its bases, both in the sense of bringing militants out of their isolation, and in the sense of acting as a pole of attraction to less committed Catholics by projecting a new vision that corresponded more favourably to the realities faced by the mass of Catholic metalworkers. As one PO activist put it to me:

many workers who had a vision of a conservative Church, a Church that was always on the side of the employers, always on the side of the exploiter, at that moment they saw something different. They saw, for example, the presence of the bishop in meetings, the presence of priests, nuns, of workers who were leaders of the base communities also present in demonstrations. ...So it created a new fact. A new vision of the Church came to be held, one that was no longer the one of the bishop hidden in the diocese, inside the curia, inside his house, or the priest only there at the altar, or the lay person, who was the leader in the community, remaining in his little group; instead it was of another Church that was present in the conflict together with the workers.¹⁵⁷

Thus, it was not simply a question of "new unionism" of the late 1970's opening the way for the Church, rather, that had to be combined with decisive action on the latter's part. The strong lead taken by the hierarchy, together with its progressive colouring, helped open the way for worker initiatives like the Workers' Pastoral because it showed that practical connections could be made between Catholicism and the workers' day-to-day existence. To this extent, the Church was an architect of its own destiny rather than a passive observer of changes to which it sought to adapt.

Of course, none of this means that every Catholic metalworker became a member of PO overnight. That said, it should be noted that activists do not spring from thin air. In almost all instances they are initially drawn from the rank-and-file. Thus a significant improvement in grassroots attitudes is likely to favour the emergence of militancy through a qualitative and a quantitative widening of its potential recruitment base.

It was on a progressive ecclesiastical terrain, which had been considerably strengthened, that Frei Betto could now go forward and develop a Workers' Pastoral. Whilst in the past the idea of a Mission to the World of Work might have appeared somewhat alien to workers, i.e., ranging from an irrelevance to an unwarranted intervention in their affairs and an unacceptably politicised role for the Church to carry out, recent events had done much to reverse this current of thought. To his credit Frei Betto conceded that:

many workers who were not close to the Church, to the pastoral action, beginning with this testimony of the Church, became more sensitive and more open to the pastoral proposals.¹⁵⁸

One of the most interesting issues which surrounds this whole episode is the question of what would have happened if the Church had not given the support that it did. Frei Betto's own opinion was that had Dom Cláudio refused union requests in 1979:

I think that it would have created a divorce between the Church and the working class. The costs

would have been almost irreparable. ...To be a participating worker could not be synonymous with a participating Christian, one would have to choose between two roads.¹⁵⁹

It is difficult to prove or refute this proposition definitively because it is a counter-factual conditional. In the specific case of the 50 rank and file workers themselves, the survey showed a more complex picture. Their loyalty to the Church transcended both events close to home, and the stance it took. Asked the question: "If the Church of Santo André had not supported the strikes of 1978-80 would you have distanced yourself from the Church?", 42 workers said no. Only two workers said that they would have left, whilst five either did not know or were unsure. (One person did not reply.) The motives for this loyalty varied. In some instances it was immutable. As one worker put it to me "I have faith independently of the Church so I would not change." And another made it clear that he would "never leave". But other respondents were more qualified in their answers. As one commented, although he would not have left, such inactivity on the part of the Church "would have left a bad impression " Another said that "I would have stayed to see if their vision was in the interests of the workers." His opinion of his colleagues was that "They would become critical but they would not leave."

Betto's notion that a contradiction would have arisen between individuals in terms of their radical working class identity and a Christian identity certainly holds true in the cases of all the union militants whom I interviewed. In certain instances (for example an official in the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union) people said they would have contemplated leaving the Church. In the vast majority of cases, like Vicentinho's, the Church would have maintained its staid image and not acted as a pole of attraction. As for those individuals who were already both union and Catholic militants, like Oswaldo Bargas, it is quite probable that they would have continued their dual role but that this would have been rendered highly problematic - if not completely unsustainable - with scepticism encountered from both rank and file metalworkers and union militants alike. This is quite apart from the self-questioning and division that could have arisen amongst Catholic activists themselves over the question of the Church's viability as an organ for progressive social change.

In the light of the views expressed by militants above, it would appear that the Church's existing militant base could have been internally weakened at the same time as its potential external bases, i.e., as represented by its ability to act as a pole of attraction, were undermined. For these activists, the institution would have been widely perceived as at best an irrelevance, and at worst as an instrument of the bourgeoisie. More specifically, it is hard to imagine that the links which came to be established between the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union and the Church would have come about. That is symbolised by the dramatic about-turn in Lula's own attitudes. In an interview given to Frei Betto at the end of the 1980 dispute, and published in the journal *Istoé*, the metalworkers' leader asserted that:

The conduct of the Church in the last few years, and especially now, leaves no doubt that, after Medellin and Puebla, a large part of its members put themselves effectively on the side of the most needy. It is precisely this which irritates the government and the employers. They know that on the side of the people the Church has much to contribute towards our liberation. One only has to look at the good that people like Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns and Dom Cláudio Hummes do for our people. In contrast to the conservatives who accuse these bishops, the CNBB and even yourself as interfering in our struggle, I think that precisely what the Church needed to do was to define itself. Its place is at the side of those who suffer and the exploited, as we see in the life of Christ. The boss and the employee, the torturer and the tortured cannot sit together on the same Church bench. I am convinced that Brazilian society will gain a great deal with the rapprochement between the Church and the working class.¹⁶⁰

To sum up. The aim of this chapter has not been to negate the weight of the church during the momentous events of 1978-80, but rather, to contextualise and define it more accurately. As a result of this I have contrasted the more organic nature of links between radical Catholic labour militancy in São Paulo and progressive unionism, with the less organic links which existed in the ABC region at the time of "new unionism's" emergence.

I have primarily concentrated on organisations like PO and ACO; however, even if the scope were to be extended to include CEBs, Neighbourhood Friends' Associations (Associações de Amigos de Bairro), and other grass roots movements where the action of the Church is unrivalled, then here too the qualitative differences persist. In 1980, for instance, when the union leadership of São Bernardo was removed from office and a highly decentralised form of activity in the neighbourhoods became the order of the day, it was the eastern zone of São Paulo - with its well established grass roots networks - which became the principal support for the strike movement,¹⁶¹ and not Santo André where such work was comparatively limited.¹⁶² This was one of the major reasons why cooperation between Dom Paulo and Dom Cláudio was an essential and indeed characteristic feature of the Church's role in the dispute.

I have also argued that "new unionism" significantly helped in the restructuring of radical Catholic militancy within the region. At times this entailed pulling existing militants out of their isolation and aggregating their previously disparate struggles; but above all it entailed attracting new members to their ranks.

Evidence of this upsurge is given in Padre Oscar Tosar's 1979 annual report where he noted that the fortunes of PO had considerably improved with "many new militants who are full of enthusiasm".¹⁶³ Amongst the external reasons he cited for this positive result was:

the growth in working class consciousness and the desire for justice for the working class which there was on the occasion of the strikes of metalworkers, public transport, teachers, etc...¹⁶⁴

This does not mean the church was not an architect of its own destiny, or partly responsible for this turn about in its fortunes. On the contrary, the lead taken by Dom

Cláudio was essential to a revival in militant fortunes; but it was a lead taken in the context of a major new historical development that was beyond his control. One can only view such actions as opportunistic, as Pimenta does, if we divorce them from those agents who took them. This, in my view, is a major flaw since it was not "The Church" in general which intervened on the side of the metalworkers, but a particular concrete manifestation allied to the Theology of Liberation. Indeed, it was precisely in its willingness to pursue policies of this kind, i.e., of a clearly working class character, that the Church in Greater São Paulo would come into serious conflict with increasingly powerful conservative elements inside the Vatican. For all their apparent parallels, the Church of Santo André should not be confused with the Church inside Poland of the early 1980's, or subsumed under the abstract, and in this case erroneous notion of the "desire to govern".

Notes

¹ Quoted from "Para Figueiredo a Igreja se Conduz Mal", *O Estado de São Paulo*., April 24, 1980.

² Quoted from "Passarinho: nao ha Conflito Igreja-governo", *O Estado de São Paulo*., April 25, 1980.

³ Quoted from Heloisa de Souza Martins, "O Testemunho de D. Jorge Marcos", *Tempo e Presença*., November, 1985, p. 7.

⁴ Quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁵ In the case of Brazil, the term "worker-priests" is not entirely accurate since it also denotes a specific group with the same name which began in France towards the end of the Second World War. The group (also from France) which did come to Brazil in large numbers was the Filhos de Caridade (Sons of Charity). Founded in 1918, its original aim was to work with France's working class, but with industrialisation overseas, its ambit spread to countries which currently include Canada, the U.S.A., Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Spain Portugal, France and some nations in Africa. For convenience, people within Brazil generally refer to the Filhos as worker priests, and in truth, the basic aims of all these groups was essentially the same, i.e., that of evangelising the working class in parishes, factories, and neighbourhoods.

⁶ Heloisa de Souza Martins, *Igreja e Movimento Operário no ABC: 1954-1975*., Doctoral Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo. 1986, pp. 53-54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁰ See especially the comments of Candido Giraldez Vietez, (*Reforma e Contra-Reforma em Santo André: a Política do PCB no Coração do ABC Paulista - 1956-64*., Doctoral Thesis, São Paulo, 1986) cited in Souza Martins, *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹¹ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹² That the CNBB should differ from Marxism's non-transcendental vision is only natural. However, it is noticable that since 1979 it felt the necessity of emphasising these differences. In paragraph 70 of its document *Subsídios para uma Política Social*., published in August 1979, the CNBB argued that "In offering these guidelines for the elaboration of a broad and courageous social project, we are attempting to be faithful to the vigorous condemnation confirmed at Puebla of the great contemporary ideological systems, 'capitalist liberalism and Marxism, (which) are inspired in humanisms which are closed to any transcendental perspective. The former, due to its practical atheism; the latter, on account of its sistematic profession of militant atheism.'" (Reprinted in *O São Paulo*., September 14-20, 1979, pp. 6-7.) Ironically, in order for the bishops to discuss Brazilian politics and society in detail (which was the principle aim of their document) they had to parade their supposedly non-ideological credentials.

¹³ Quoted from Souza Martins, "O Testemunho de Dom Jorge Marcos", p. 7.

¹⁴ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

¹⁵ The Marian Congregation was a lay Catholic movement of men and boys which had considerable influence throughout Brazil and was closely tied to the parish structure. It was not a specific organisation of workers, but many of those whom I interviewed had passed through its ranks as young men. It conducted spiritual retreats, processions, parish feasts, in short, was a kind of auxiliary to the local parish priest. Many of the workers whom I interviewed regarded it as introverted, conservative, and, at best, somewhat irrelevant to their needs.

¹⁶ Souza Martins, *Igreja e Movimento Operário no ABC*., p. 157.

- ¹⁷ Author's interview Padre Agostinho Pretto, 16/9/88.
- ¹⁸ Figures supplied by Filho de Caridade, Padre Mahon in interview with author, 9/8/88.
- ¹⁹ See note 5 above.
- ²⁰ Author's interview with Padre Mahon, 9/8/88.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.
- ²³ From 1968-74 Padre Agostinho Pretto was on the national steering committee of ACO based in Recife. He was also on national committees for the period 1974-79, when ACO's main base moved to Rio de Janeiro. This involvement at a national level was transferred to the Workers' Pastoral where he served on PO's first National Commission from 1978-80, and its National Executives from 1982-87.
- ²⁴ Author's interview with Padre Agostino Pretto, 16/9/88.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Author's interview with Padre Mahon, 9/8/88.
- ²⁸ Author's interview with Padre Carlos Tosar, 1/9/88.
- ²⁹ Author's interview with Salvador Pires, 26/7/88
- ³⁰ In the 1979 strike, Joaquinção was both totally discredited and, for a time, out-manoeuvred by the Metalworkers' Opposition and its factory commissions which, to all intents and purposes, led the strike. For more details on these events see Chapter Four below, first paragraph of section 4.2 together with accompanying note 3.
- ³¹ Oswaldo Bargas and Luis F. Rainho, *As Lutas Operárias e Sindicais dos Metalúrgicos em São Bernardo (1977/79)*, Volume I, Associação Beneficente e Cultural dos Metalúrgicos de São Bernardo e Diadema, São Paulo, 1983, p. 29.
- ³² Source: author's interview with Oswaldo Bargas, 24/1/89.
- ³³ For more information on the origins, nature, and dissolution of AP, see the work of two of the organisation's founders, Haroldo Lima and Aldo Arantes, *Historia da Ação Popular: Da JUC ao PC do B.*, Editora Alfa-Omega, São Paulo, 1984.
- ³⁴ Souza Martins, *Igreja e Movimento Operário no ABC.*, p. 176.
- ³⁵ Quoted from Eli Pimenta, *Aspectos da Greve Metalúrgica de Santo André em 1979.*, Masters Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1985, pp. 50-51.
- ³⁶ Aloizio Mercadante Oliva (et al), *Imagens da Luta. 1905-1985.*, Sindicato dos Trabalhadores nas Indústrias Metalúrgicas, Mecânicas e de Material Elétrico de São Bernardo do Campo e Diadema. São Bernardo do Campo, 1987, p. 130.
- ³⁷ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Source: author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Padre Agostinho Pretto, 16/9/88.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁴⁸ *Boletim Diocesano de Sto André.*, Ano II, No. 14, June-July, 1977, p. 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵¹ It is not the concern of this study to explain why this shift in perspectives came about; issues of this kind are dealt with in an extensive and growing body of literature on the subject (see note 7 of my introductory chapter). Suffice to say that after ten years of containing labour (a period during which, as the case of São Paulo shows, militancy had not disappeared but had simply been forced underground) the underlying problems remained unresolved and ready to explode. Once the military began to draw back from its policy of open repression, it was only a question of time before labour would once again flex its industrial muscle publicly. In the event, it was the publication of a World Bank report revealing the extent of government manipulation of inflation statistics during the period 1973-74, which provided the unions with an opportunity of making a public stand.

⁵² Source: author's interview with Benedito Marcilio, 1/2/89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Quoted from Bernardo Lerer. *Mundo Carta*. "Lula: o Antipelego e Seu Mundo", *Isto É*.. February 1, 1978. p. 9.

⁵⁶ See especially Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, pp. 98-101 and p. 207.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁵⁹ Author's interview with Oswaldo Bargas, 2/1/89.

⁶⁰ Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, p. 99.

⁶¹ Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.

⁶² At the time of the strike Gilson Mendes was both a grassroots activist of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union and the leading militant at Scania negotiating with the management. He informed Lula, on the eve of the strike of the impending action and says that Lula was sceptical, "I think he did not believe in it really...He thought that one day, at some point, things would explode...but at the time when things were about to happen, not even we ourselves believed in it really." (Quoted in Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, p. 68.)

⁶³ Quoted from "Em paz, mas em greve", *Veja.*, May 31, 1978, p. 72.

⁶⁴ ACO de São Paulo, Comissão Justiça e Paz de São Paulo, FNT, Pastoral do Mundo do Trabalho de São Paulo, PO de Santo André, Secretariado Nacional Justiça e Não-Violência, *Apoio aos Trabalhadores do ABC.*, May 27, 1978, mimeo.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, point 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, point 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, point 5.

⁶⁸ Quoted from *Boletim Diocesano.*, Diocese de Santo André, Ano III, No. 23, June 1978, p.10.

⁶⁹ Dom Cláudio Hummes, *Nota de Esclarecimento.*, March 30, 1979, point 1, mimeo.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, point 6.

⁷¹ At one stage, for example, there was a visible sense of panic amongst many workers and leading activists as Lula, in the light of his formal removal from office, was seen to be absent from the coordination of the strike. The absence of this symbolic figure was felt all the more acutely because the police went on to the offensive, physically attacking strikers, arresting them, and surrounding the union headquarters. For his part, Lula expressed the concern that his presence might exacerbate an already unpredictable situation, but these fears were overcome by the reports of militants who emphasised that this was precisely the moment when bold leadership from the front was required both for the workers on strike, and in order to prevent elements from outside the union taking over the movement's conduct. For a detailed account of these events see especially Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, pp. 133-143.

⁷² Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Quoted from Heloisa de Souza Martins, Henrique Pereira Junior and Carlos Alberto Ricardo, "A Igreja na Greve dos Metalúrgicos São Bernardo - 1980", *Religião e Sociedade.*, No. 6, 1980, p. 16.

⁷⁷ Author's interview with Benedito Marcilio, 1/2/89.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, p. 130.

⁸⁰ Author's interview with Oswaldo Bargas, 2/1/89.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Benedito Marcilio, 1/2/89.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Pimenta, *Op.cit.*, p. 233.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Benedito Marcilio, 1/2/89.

⁸⁵ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁸⁶ The March 24 declaration was reproduced as an article "Os Sindicatos aos Seus Legítimos Donos", *O São Paulo.*, March 30-April 5, 1979, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Dom Cláudio Hummes, *Nota de Esclarecimento.*, point 8.

⁸⁸ Service of Sunday March 25, quoted from Aloizio Mercadante Olivia (et al), *Op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁸⁹ The first quotation comes from the "Carta Aberta aos Brasileiros" (Open letter to the Brazilians issued, on March 20, 1979) by the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union, reprinted in Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, p. 216. The second quotation comes from an official communication which Lula issued on March 23, 1979, reprinted in *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

⁹⁰ Towards the end of the March 27 meeting Lula made the request that his members give a demonstration of calm and show once again that they were not interested in rowdy behaviour.

⁹¹ Quoted from Aloizio Mercadante Olivia (et al). *Op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁹² Pimenta, *Op.cit.*, pp.153-4.

⁹³ Dom Cláudio Hummes, *Nota de Esclarecimento.*, point 4.

⁹⁴ On the question of "new unionism" see below, note 139.

⁹⁵ Pimenta, *Op.cit.*, p. 233.

⁹⁶ Dom Cláudio Hummes, *Nota de Esclarecimento.*, point 3.

⁹⁷ Source: *Veja.*, April 4, 1979, p. 27.

⁹⁸ Bargas and Rainho, *Op.cit.*, p. 145.

⁹⁹ In essence, the ADCE may be described as a body of Christian employers who have a sense of social responsibility which is grounded in post Vatican II social teaching. Amongst the more radical affirmations that ADCE's Latin American parent organisation (UNIAPAC Latinoamericana) has made is that "it is not a case of waiting for an increase in productivity in order to make concessions to the workers; it is a matter of beginning with these concessions so as to guarantee an increase in productivity." (UNIAPAC Latinoamericana, *A Empresa e o Empresario Cristão Hoje.*, ADCE/UNIPAC Brasil, 1979, p. 11.) In the specific case of Brazil, the ADCE has affirmed the need to "recognise the right to association of the employees of a firm, be it manifested in the trade unions, or when it is manifested in the form of strikes." (ADCE, *Carta de Principios do Dirigente Cristão de Empresa.*, São Paulo, June 1988, p. 12.) These kind of statements distinguish ADCE members from the reactionary outlook of so many Brazilian employers. However, even here, there are limits. Because, in their view, "The firm is the fundamental economic nucleus, an organised and hierarchical community" (*Ibid.*, p. 13), it follows that trade unions "abuse their power" when, amongst other things, they "try and control the administration of firms, when they try and carry out trade union action in terms of the class struggle, when they subordinate trade union activity to political ends." (*Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.) The firm, in their view, is a "community of work, in whose life there must be the active participation of all those who collaborate; adequate organs must be developed to allow for the workers' voice to be heard at management level, but without executive posts." (*Ibid.*, p. 14.) With regard to the 1979 strike the ADCE did not take up a formal position on the matter. Members merely expressed their position in an individual capacity inside FIESP. Generally speaking the ADCE does not take up specific positions on individual issues. The fact that it chose not to break with this policy in 1979 is remarkable in view of the fact that not only Catholic worker organisations felt able to take a public stance, but so too did the Church itself.

¹⁰⁰ Lula praised the integrity of Murillo Macedo who also showed himself most responsive to the Church at his first meeting.

¹⁰¹ Dom Cláudio Hummes, *Nota de Esclarecimento.*, point 5.

¹⁰² Although well above the employers original offer, in real terms the final deal approved by the workers meeting on May 13 was at best a marginal improvement over the employers second major offer which had been made to forestall the initiation of strike action. The result certainly fell well short of the union's own expectations.

¹⁰³ Quoted from Ricardo Antunes, *A Rebelião do Trabalho: O Confronto Operário no ABC Paulista: As Greves de 1978/80.*, Editora Ensaio/Unicamp, São Paulo, 1988, p. 89, note 49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 89, note 49.

¹⁰⁶ The comments of one CEB militant, Isaias, from the eastern zone of São Paulo are especially interesting. He noted that prior to the strike a handful of people were participating in the CEB which he attended, but that with the announcement of the strike, and subsequent government intervention, those numbers escalated dramatically to about 400. (Source: Heloisa de Souza Martins, Henrique Pereira Junior, and Carlos Alberto Ricardo, "A Igreja na Greve dos Metalúrgicos - São Bernardo - 1980", *Religão e Sociedade.*, No. 6, 1980. See especially pp. 22-27) Thousands of groups like this throughout the country would gather foodstuffs and money for the strike funds. As Maria Helena Moreira Alves notes, "in this way the strike fund was able to distribute an estimated six tons of food per week over the six week period of the strike. Although this effort reached only some 15 percent of the affected families, it was crucial for the maintenance of the strike." (Maria Helena Moreira Alves, *State and Opposition in Military Brazil.*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1985, p.206.) The support of the CEBs went beyond just the material and the psychological. There was also physical support as well (see note 161 below).

¹⁰⁷ Letter reproduced in Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, "As Greves do ABC e a Igreja", *Cadernos de Documentação 3.*, CPV, São Paulo, December 1980, p.5.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted from "Os Riscos do ABC", *Veja.*, 9 de abril, 1980, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Dom Cláudio Hummes and Frei Betto report to the National Commission of the Workers' Pastoral (originally given on June 14, 1980), reprinted in *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira.*, Volume 40, fasc. 160, December 1980, p. 724.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 724.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 728.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹¹⁵ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Hummes and Betto, *Op.cit.*, p. 728.

¹¹⁸ Frei Betto was originally imprisoned for some days in July 1964, following the military coup. At the time he was involved with the radical Catholic student organisation, JEC, which neither the military nor the Church were keen on. He was arrested again, in November 1969, for aiding the flight of individuals sought by the dictatorship for political activities. He was condemned to four years of imprisonment, two years of which were spent as a political prisoner and two years spent with common prisoners. Freedom came in 1973.

¹¹⁹ Quoted from Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil: 1916-1985.*, Stanford University Press, California, 1986, p. 158.

¹²⁰ Quoted from "'Alguns Sacerdotes' São os Líderes, Afirma Farhat", *O Estado de São Paulo.*, April 23, 1980.

¹²¹ Quoted from "Frei Betto: Força e União", *O São Paulo.*, May 2-8, 1980, p. 5.

¹²² Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, Dom Cláudio Hummes, "A Igreja, a Greve e a Lei" (April 23, 1980) reproduced in article "Igreja não Decide pelos Trabalhadores", *O São Paulo*, April 25-May 1, 1980, p. 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

¹²⁵ Quoted from "Relações entre a Igreja e o Estado Preocupam Senado", *Jornal do Brasil*, April 24, 1980.

¹²⁶ The prevalence of this view in key sectors of the state is evident in press coverage. For example, one article quoted sectors of the army as assuming the existence of "communists in cassocks" within the clergy. The aim of these "progressive catholics" was said to be "'an attempt by this wing to prevent the government from capitalising upon the visit which the Pope will make to Brazil'." ("Exercito Apreensivo com o Envolvimento do Clero", *O Estado de São Paulo*, April 25, 1980.)

¹²⁷ Quoted from "Para Figueiredo, a Igreja se Conduz Mal", *O Estado de São Paulo*, April 24, 1980.

¹²⁸ Quoted from *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Quoted from "Cardeal Gaúcho: 'Politica e com Políticos'", *O Estado de São Paulo*, April 24, 1980.

¹³⁰ Quoted from "Para Figueiredo, a Igreja se Conduz Mal", *Op.cit.*

¹³¹ Quoted from *Ibid.*

¹³² "O Bispo no Relatório de DOPS", *Jornal da Tarde*, May 2, 1980.

¹³³ In denying the existence of a conflict between the Church and the government he argued that President Figueiredo had not denied that the CNBB was an organ of the Church and added that "What the President, in a short phrase, wanted to emphasise is that there is not always an identity between what the CNBB leadership affirms and that which the Church as represented by its most senior hierarchy sustains." (Quoted from "Passarinho: Não ha Conflito Igreja-Governo", *O Estado de São Paulo*, April 25, 1980.)

¹³⁴ Hummes and Betto, *Op.cit.*, p. 728.

¹³⁵ Alex Gambirasio and Giuseppe Morabito, "João Paulo vs Paulo? Nao e bem assim...", *Istoé*, May 21, 1980, p.20.

¹³⁶ See for example the article by Isabel Martignago, "O Papa Nao Teme o Povo Trabalhador", *O São Paulo*, May 23-29, 1980, p. 7.

¹³⁷ Hummes and Betto, *Op.cit.*, p. 728.

¹³⁸ Alex Gambirasio and Giuseppe Morabito, *Op.cit.*, loc.cit.

¹³⁹ One definition of the principle characteristics of this "new unionism" has been given by the author José Alvaro Moises. He lists a whole range of factors: "one must observe that one is talking of new protagonists: no longer are they contingents of certain firms controlled by the state, like the railway men and dockers in the past. The dorsal spine of 'new unionism' are the workers of the advanced sectors of Brazilian capitalism; and they are fully aware that they belong to a strategic sector of the country's economy. In the second place, one must note the evolution of the demands of this 'new unionism': having emerged from a series of struggles for wage increases above the rate of inflation, rejecting the wage-squeeze, the metalworkers unions of ABC introduced a criterion of 'egalitarianism' in the Brazilian trade union struggle; first they demanded higher wages for those who gained less and lower ones for those who gained more;...finally, ...they introduced demands of a national character, like the demand for a national unified minimum wage and job stability (eliminated after 1964); beyond this they reaffirmed clearly social and political demands, like the right to strike, union autonomy and the union delegate in the firm." (José Alvaro Moises, "A Estrategia do Novo Sindicalismo", *CEDEC*, mimeo, São Paulo, 1980, p. 19.) In terms

of the method of operation, there too, "'new unionism' has distinguished itself from trade unionism of the past: today we face a real mass movement, but this notion refers not only to the plebiscite assemblies held in the football stadiums, but also to the efforts to democratise the very conduct of the union, attempting to broaden grass roots participation." (*Ibid.*, p. 20.) Finally, there is the question of the "integration of economic, social and political demands: since its emergence the movement has turned towards the conflicts which emerge inside the large units of production" (*Ibid.*, p. 22.) that is in contrast to the "'political unionism' of the 'fifties and 'sixties [which] frequently impeded the emergence of *factory problems* as themes of workers' struggles (rate of exploitation at work, rate of production, discipline, etc.) and which devoted almost all attention towards trade union militancy which addressed the question of influencing the process of national development." (*Ibid.*, p. 21.)

¹⁴⁰ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Letter of April 2, 1980, to the vicars and coordinators of communities, reproduced in Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, "As Greves do ABC e a Igreja", *Cadernos de Documentação* 3., CPV, São Paulo, December 1980, p. 5., point 2.

¹⁴³ This reluctance is highlighted in comments of Frei Betto. He emphasised that "Never did any one of us [and he included the bishop in this list] propose that a Mass or prayer be held. We always attended *their* requests, including when Tancredo Neves was ill, during the [metalworkers'] strike [of 1985], ...they called me requesting that I say prayers for the health of the President because that represented and reflected an anxiety of the working class." (Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.) He added that the Church often "refused to speak in the meetings despite the union offering the microphone"; and ended with the comment "We never imposed ourselves on the union, if anything to the contrary. I'll even confess to you something. ...I think that if anything we were too discrete. If we were opportunists we could have a much stronger presence within the union, but we always maintained the attitude of waiting for the union to search us out." (*Ibid.*)

¹⁴⁴ The Commander of the Second Army had accused the unions of infiltration by Communists.

¹⁴⁵ Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros, "Nota Oficial" of April 22, 1980, reproduced in Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, *Op.cit.*, p. 11. One reason why, on April 24 1979, Lula returned to the head of the strike movement was precisely the fact that other persons had gone to address workers' meetings in his absence. In his own words, "I am once again assuming command of the movement in order to avoid the possibility that strangers try and give marching orders that are foreign to the metalworkers. ...we want to avoid marching orders that are not given by the metalworkers." (Quoted from Rainho and Bragas, *Op.cit.*, p. 141.)

¹⁴⁶ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

¹⁴⁷ In the specific case of São Bernardo, for instance, PO did not even exist, whilst in the city of Santo André it remained highly dependent upon ACO militants.

¹⁴⁸ Even as late as December 1987, long after the diocese's first pastoral plan and the emergence of labour militancy, São Caetano still only possessed one group of PO with a total of 10 participants in all. (Source: Pastoral Operaria de Santo André, unpublished survey, 1987.)

¹⁴⁹ Source: *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ The survey was carried out by Gallup amongst 614 people of various social classes when the strike was nearing the end of its first month. It was published under the title, "Ficou o desgaste", *Isto É.*, May 21, 1980, pp. 12-17.

¹⁵¹ The limitation lies in the fact that, for example, Dom Cláudio was not put on the list. Thus, the field was considerably restricted. Nor was provision made for the respondent to supply an alternative name. Secondly, people could give a positive answer to several candidates instead of just one. Had this not been the case perhaps Lula would have received many more votes, Dom Paulo fewer, and so on. The table merely permits the reader to identify popular figures rather than to definitively say that X was the "most

admired". In this sense it is self-defeating.

¹⁵² The danger of overstating the significance of the survey results is evident in just one of the survey's findings, that three out of the 50 interviewees were members of the Workers' Pastoral. Mere mechanical extrapolation on this basis would change the Workers' Pastoral of São Bernardo and Diadema's true membership figure of 115 to one of 6,680 based upon Catholic metalworkers alone! (This figure is arrived at using the 1988 DIEESE estimate of 140,974 metalworkers in the category, my exclusion of 28,000 of them (i.e., two out of ten) as being non-Catholics, and then calculating 6 percent of the remaining 113,000.)

¹⁵³ Author's interview with Vicentinho, 30/09/88.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Author's interview with Adair Boy, 10/8/88.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Author's interview with José Albino. 8/8/88.

¹⁵⁸ Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88. This notion of a socially involved rather than isolated Church touched a chord amongst the metalworkers in my survey. They were asked whether the Church of Santo Andre "should limit itself to baptisms, marriages and things of this kind, or can it also speak about social problems?" In the event that the answer was yes, a supplementary question was asked, "Can this include issues which have to do with the workers like trade unions, salaries, inflation, and things like that?" 46 workers answered yes, with three negatives and one don't know. Of the 46, only one felt that the Church should not pass judgement on issues like trade unions, salaries, and so forth. In other words, a remarkable 45 out of 50 respondents felt that talking about workers issues in considerable detail was a perfectly legitimate form of conduct by the Church. Of course, a socially involved Church does not necessarily mean a socially progressive Church. As Dom Cláudio commented, in the past clerics had both led strikes and criticised them. However, in the case of the sample from São Bernardo, the two would appear to go hand in hand in view of the fact that 45 respondents also said that the Church's progressive actions in support of the strikes of 1978-80 were entirely justified. Furthermore, 38 out of the 39 workers in the sample who actually took part in the strikes supported both the Church's actions on those occasions, and the general proposition of its involvement.

¹⁵⁹ Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted from Frei Betto, "Reflexões Depois da Cadeia", *Isto É.*, May 28, 1980, p.25.

¹⁶¹ In the eastern zone it was precisely the dormitory zones which were particularly active. There was no prior plan as such, what counted much more was the prior existence of local structures which could adapt to the contingency. That is why places like Vila Alpina, Parque São Lucas, St Rafael, Sapopoemba, Itaquera, São Mateus, and even Santo Amaro to the south were so effective in their support. The kind of support given in the area of São Mateus, for instance, ranged from collecting for the strike fund; working on the picket lines; establishing a system for stopping buses on the principal motorways and taking out the strike-breakers; to photographing strike-breakers and distributing the photographs in the neighbourhood. These activities were coordinated from a room that had previously been set aside for workers' issues but which was now devoted full time to supporting the strike.

¹⁶² This is partly inevitable given the fact that grassroots work of this kind by definition takes place in the neighbourhood, and the earlier mentioned fact that a substantial number of metalworkers - particularly from São Bernardo - resided in the eastern zone of São Paulo.

¹⁶³ Padre Carlos Tosar, "A Caminhada da Pastoral Operária", *Boletim Diocesano de Santo André.*, Diocese de Santo André, Ano IV, No. 34, December 1979, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter Four: The Restructuring of Relations Between the Church and the Trade Unions - 1979-1985

4.1 Introduction

In the period 1979 to 1985 a fundamental rearticulation of relations between the trade unions and the Catholic Church took place. In some senses it had to happen because both parties were forced to define, adapt, and reorganise themselves in relation to a new political and economic moment. Amongst other things, this moment brought with it a political amnesty (1979); new political parties (1979); a prolonged and deep recession (1980-85); a decline in worker confidence immediately following the ABC metalworkers' strike (1980); and free elections (1982). This new situation not only demanded, but it also offered the opportunity for the creation of new instruments of struggle long sought after by many militants.

Although, therefore, the timing and conditions were not of their choosing,¹ militants did manage to seize and create new opportunities for the articulation of workers struggles. Foremost amongst the instruments that would be created were (a) the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT)(1979), and (b), two trade union confederations - the CUT (1983) and the CGT (1986) - which reflected sharply polarized strategic visions.

Whilst the creation of the Workers' Party had repercussions for Catholic militancy and vice-versa, a detailed sociological analysis of this issue is not the concern of this study. It has - and continues - to receive extensive treatment elsewhere.² The last chapter will, however, tackle the question in a more thematic manner, i.e., as part of the debate over the relationship between the Church, the party-political, and the ideological. In the present chapter the main concern is with the much neglected issue of the changing reciprocal relationship between the trade unions and the Church during the former's extensive restructuring period of the early and mid 1980's.

This topic will be tackled principally in terms of metalworker struggles and Church relations in the Greater São Paulo region. As stated in my introductory chapter, the validity of such an apparently narrow focus lies in the disproportionate political weight historically attached to the metalworkers' unions and oppositions of the region. Many of the most significant national trade union conflicts and debates that marked the period took place within this category, and it was far from coincidental that the first General Secretaries elected to the CUT and the CGT were none other than presidents to the São Bernardo and São Paulo Metalworkers' Unions respectively. Thus, how the Church of the region situated itself within this overall conflict is of special importance. Indeed, the uncertainty over the Church's role would be accentuated still further as a new dynamic - Brazil's painfully slow move away from an unelected dictatorship and towards greater

electoral accountability - brought into question the automaticity of relations between corrupt trade union leaders, the dictatorship, and thereby the Church's own function as an umbrella for opposition elements and democratic values.

4.2 1979 - The Assassination of Santos Dias da Silva - Condemnation and Polarisation

In late October and early November of 1979, the metalworkers of São Paulo conducted a short but extremely bitter strike. In a manner akin to 1978, there was a serious split between the official union leadership, who were supposed to be conducting the strike, and the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition, which in practice took the initiative and went onto the offensive. The Opposition partly achieved this by organising effectively through union meetings, but mainly by mobilising its real power base, the factory commissions, many of which had sprung up the year before in the context of a more confident and combative labour force. The bitterness crept into the dispute for two reasons. Firstly because the leadership of the union was widely perceived as not having any real desire to fight but, on the contrary, of wanting to demobilise its own members,³ and secondly, because, as had happened in the ABC region, both government and employers showed a preparedness to fight back with all the tools at their disposal. One of these tools was violence, and along with arrests and beatings it brought the death of a metalworker and leading figure of the Opposition, Santos Dias da Silva.

For the most part the Church's response to these events was uncompromising, echoing views expressed during the ABC strikes. At a national level, whilst on a solidarity visit to São Paulo, the then president of the CNBB, Dom Ivo Lorscheider, commented that:

It is not the role of the Church to call strikes, neither did it call for a strike here in São Paulo. It was not the Church which organised the pickets. But the Church wishes that the workers feel its support, clear support, that it is on their side when they ask for what is just, as is the case in this strike.⁴

However, he also added that:

The Church preaches the autonomy of the unions and for this reason does not wish to diminish nor substitute the workers' leaders.⁵

A closer look at the history of São Paulo shows this last sentence not to be entirely correct given that the word "authentic" was not placed before the term workers' leaders. We have already seen, for example, that whilst the Church of São Paulo did not directly engage in electoral union politics, it was, nevertheless, heavily involved in the support of what it regarded as authentic workers' leaders in various struggles, including that against the incumbent leadership headed by Joaquinzão. Indeed, it was precisely Santos Dias da Silva, both in his life and his death, who would become one of the most potent expressions of this fact.

The untimely and brutal manner of his assassination, by a police bullet on a picket line outside a factory in the city's southern zone, led to his adoption as a symbol of resistance

by both Church and the Opposition. This was hardly surprising in view of his history as both a leading militant of the Church and of the Opposition. Apart from his grass-roots ecclesiastical work with CEBs and the Movement Against the Cost of Living (Movimento Contra A Carestia), he had been active in PO's (São Paulo) radical reorganisation of the early 1970's, moving on to assume executive functions at regional and São Paulo state levels. In so doing many bishops came to know him well and he also became a close personal friend of Dom Paulo. Within the Opposition Santos Dias was a leading and much respected figure. Particularly active from 1975 onwards, such that by 1978 he was able to dispute the vice-presidency of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union in what became the Opposition's most successful election campaign ever.

Neither of these two groups would therefore permit his death to go unnoticed. For the Opposition the loss of Santos Dias was a painful blow. His memory would be revitalised two years later when they fought the 1981 union election campaign under the heading of the Santos Dias Slate. As for the Church, on hearing of the assassination, Dom Paulo and Dom Angélico Bênardino rushed to the Instituto Medico Legal and demanded access to the corpse, which they eventually got. The impact on both was profound to say the least:

I found myself with Santos. He was naked on the table, and the bullet of the soldier crossed his breast. [At this point Dom Angélico points to his own rib cage and gestures as to where the bullet entered and left the body of the victim.] At Sunday Mass I said that I had never in my life experienced such a strong sense of Christ, dead - that one, the historic, when the lance of the soldier pierced his side, this one, when the bullet of the soldier crossed from side to side.⁶

For Dom Paulo, who was the first person to gain access to the corpse - even placing his finger in the bullet hole - the fact that Santos Dias had been shot in the back whilst restraining workers hit home powerfully:

Thus, in my view he was a perfect model: a father of a family, he was a perfect model of a Christian...and a perfect model of struggle, but of non-violent struggle. I was the first to arrive at his corpse and I thought that I should pay homage throughout my life to this figure because he appears to me to be one of the most perfect figures of modern times; of a worker who knows how to be good in the home, who knows how to be good to the poor, but who knows how to be very strong against oppression.⁷

During his homily at Santos Dias' Mass, Dom Angélico not only criticised Brazilian capitalism in the most clear-cut possible terms, but also linked this general problem with the struggle for a particular vision of trade unionism as a vehicle for social change. Santos Dias, he said:

understood that to opt for the working class, for the oppressed, for the poor, signifies being in struggle against the factory which manufactures the poor, that is to say, the savage and dependent capitalist system, responsible for the wealth of the privileged few; for the selling of the nation to interests of foreign groups at the cost of the misery of our people. ...he was always on the side of those who fight for a trade unionism free from ties with the Ministry of Labour and from false leaders of the very class itself; for a trade union with deep roots in the factory, totally given over to the cause of justice, truth and fraternity.⁸

Although for various reasons the Church itself was reluctant to assume the banner of

the struggle against "false" leaderships, Dom Angélico's comments underline the de facto existence of a relationship and close ideological identity between the Church and a specific current of trade unionism. In a later interview the bishop would acknowledge that:

The strike was a truly difficult time. The Church, through the Workers' Pastoral, was, in my opinion, marking a very serious frontal position - not because by definition we wanted to be at the frontiers. ...the Church does not wish to command, it never had this aim, it had the aim of being inside the workers' movement with its contribution of Christian militancy, it knows that it is not its mission to command, to dictate rules.⁹

In other words, the situation at that time was particularly difficult. In the view of bishops throughout the region it demanded a critico-prophetic form of action on the part of the Church. Prophetic, here, can be defined as including physical acts of solidarity as well as verbal ones like those mentioned above, i.e., criticism of the system and even of individual acts. As one close adviser to Dom Paulo explained to me:

The prophetic role should always have in itself two parts; to denounce what is wrong, and to announce ways out.¹⁰

The problem with this concept, of course, lies in the fact that the process of annunciation, if it goes beyond all but the most generic and platitudinous of comments, brings with it a whole host of contradictions associated with the concretisation and increased specificity of ecclesiastical options. In theoretical terms, for instance, there is the very real difficulty of the extent to which, once embarked on a road of this type, one must concretise such options, but without falling into purely ideological formulations (thereby undermining the spiritual dimension of the Catholic faith together with the autonomy of civil society itself). It was precisely this kind of problem, only as manifested in the specific context of the 1978-80 labour disputes, with which Dom Cláudio had had to grapple. The particular solution he reached was the support of the strikers.

Although the hostility and difficulties he faced should not be minimised, there was a certain simplicity to the problem in hand; that is to say, the choice was essentially between workers united behind their democratically elected leaders, and employers. But in São Paulo, on the other hand, the situation was far more complex. The labour movement was fragmented and polarised between, broadly speaking, two main currents each of which could claim at least some degree of representativeness. A partisan struggle as between labour and capital the Church was willing to undertake; but as between various factions of labour itself, now this was a more delicate issue about which all levels of the Church - both bishops and militants alike - were aware. They did not wish the Church to be construed as a union faction, either within the institution itself, or from within various sectors of the local labour movement. Instead, Catholic militants were to be the principal mediators of ecclesiastical perspectives and agents of change.

Furthermore, they were to retain absolute autonomy of thought and action in the execution of these roles.

4.3 *The 1981 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union Elections - Innocence by Association*

One only has to look at the internal politics of the Metalworkers' Opposition itself to begin to appreciate why the Church sought to stay one step removed from embracing particular workers' factions. Whilst there were fundamental points of agreement which shaped the Opposition's identity, (e.g., democratisation of the union, rejection of centralised union organisation, criticism of the labour laws, emphasis on organisation within the factory, emphasis on the formation of factory commissions independent of union control - in short, a break with existing union practices) there were, simultaneously, clear differences of emphasis upon tactics. These differences were not merely present as between the different groupings that went to make up the Opposition (e.g., supporters of the journals "O Companheiro", "O Trabalho", "Em Tempo", "Convergencia Socialista", militants from the PCB, Trotskyist groupings, and independent socialists). They frequently also penetrated Catholic circles themselves.

This latter situation was far from extraordinary in view of the fact that Catholics had, quite deliberately, never organised themselves as a political grouping or bloc, choosing instead to immerse themselves in the dynamics of the movement. That was precisely why, for instance, at the First Congress of the Metalworkers' Opposition in 1979, Santos Dias was able to side with those who withdrew from the proceedings, whilst Waldemar Rossi chose to stay - without either of them in any way undermining or calling into question their links with PO.¹¹

By 1981 there was a considerable degree of reconciliation between the two positions and this permitted the construction of the "Santos Dias da Silva" slate led by Waldemar Rossi. That unanimity, however, did not extend to the group focused around the journal "Tribuna da Luta Operária" which chose to back the candidacy of Aurelio Peres instead.

Once again, as had been the case in 1978, the Church did not formally take sides. Apart from the fact that the election contest was run between three slates (of which at least two could claim some degree of representativeness) there was the added complication that Aurelio Peres was a figure close to Church circles. He had been an active member of PO in the city's southern region where, amongst other things, he had been heavily involved in the Movement Against the Cost of Living. Whatever differences might have arisen between himself and the Opposition,¹² and himself and the Church,¹³ the fact was that he enjoyed considerable popular support. In 1979, for instance, he began his São Paulo state deputy's mandate - officially as a member of the PMDB, but in reality closely aligned to the PC do B. That mandate was heavily oriented towards workers' issues, and would eventually constitute an important base of support during his 1981 metalworkers' campaign.

In terms of the indirect nature of Church support, the 1981 campaign was quite similar

to the 1978 campaign. Once again, the Opposition was the principal beneficiary of Church support whilst no such links were established with Joaquinzão's slate. One major difference, of course, was that the campaign took place in a climate of considerable labour uncertainty. The recession was biting hard, and strikes had dramatically fallen off from their 1979 peak. For the time being at least, the heady and highly confident atmosphere of 1978 was over. So too, was the degree of mobilisation, with many militants being thrown out of their jobs. It was in this context that the Opposition sought for the first time in its history to make an issue of its links with the Church during the campaign process itself, clearly in the belief that this would be electorally advantageous. As we shall see in a moment, this was a tactic rich in irony.

Only one year earlier (1980) the Pope had visited Brazil. On that tour he had stopped off in Sao Paulo and given a speech to a vast crowd of workers at the Morumbi stadium. He received homage from an individual chosen to represent the workers. That individual was none other than Waldemar Rossi. The content and controversies surrounding their respective speeches is not the subject of this chapter, that will be discussed in detail later on. For the moment, suffice it to say that there was a clear difference in orientation and that the meeting of Rossi and the Pope on stage had been anything but a meeting of minds. Indeed, so great was the difference that Rossi was unable to deliver the full text of his speech.

These conflicts notwithstanding, when it came to propaganda for the election the Opposition printed hand bills which made reference to the meeting and showed a photograph of Rossi embracing the Pope. The Opposition also produced wall posters with the slogan "Vote Slate 2 - Santos Dias da Silva - with Waldemar Rossi, the worker who welcomed the Pope". Beneath this was a very large photograph of the Pope, Dom Paulo, and Waldemar Rossi giving his speech and below the photograph appeared the slogan "A forty hour working week, without reductions, to defeat unemployment".

Whilst the Opposition was not trying to depoliticise the campaign, there is equally little doubt that it was trying to introduce an element of sanctity, or innocence by association, into the proceedings.¹⁴ No other slate was in a position to do this. The choice of the martyred figure of Santos Dias da Silva as a figure-head for the Opposition was quite legitimate and consistent with its history; he was, after all, a man who had died fighting for their cause. But the quasi-cooption of the Pope, whose outlook was somewhat at variance with both the Opposition's and PO's class perspective, was another matter altogether.

This tactic was immediately criticised by the supporters of Joaquinzão. Under the heading of "Rossi, the Anti-Christ", an article in Slate One's bulletin noted that:

The Pope puts his message of peace and love in the service of humanity. To put it at the service of a trade union slate is an offence to all good men and Christians. This merely shows the contempt Rossi has for the principles of the Catholic faith, breaking the second commandment of God's law: 'Thou shalt not take thy Lord's name in vain.'¹⁵

The significance of this controversy must not be exaggerated, but it does raise two important issues. Firstly, there is the question of how Opposition militants themselves viewed this tactic, and what this says about their view of Catholic influence amongst ordinary metalworkers. And secondly, there is the question of how that squared with reality, i.e., did the tactic succeed, as they hoped, or backfire, as the supporters of Joaquinzão hoped it would?

Taking the first of these points, I found that the concept of ecclesiastical support in itself was both appreciated and relied upon by activists. Internal documents talk of "the need to involve" the Church because "it is very strong"; others mention the need to request space within the centre of the city from Dom Paulo. The participants at internal meetings frequently read like a who's who of Church related organisations, ranging from PO, ACO, the FNT, and the Youth Pastoral, to more research oriented organisations like the Centro Pastoral Vergueiro and the Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação (an ecumenical religious organisation). But this kind of support, which was internal, was only to be expected in the light of the 1978 elections when similar support had been forthcoming. However, the idea that religious connections should be rendered explicit represented a departure from past practise. Surprisingly, perhaps, this new tactic - with its emphasis upon the links between Waldemar Rossi and the Pope (two figures who in reality were ideologically far apart) - was adopted with little resistance from within militant ranks. Those activists who expressed doubts did so more in hindsight and from a strategic point of view than a tactical one. As one activist put it to me:

I thought that it showed the very weakness of the Opposition and the very weight of the Church. So I agreed and I disagreed. ...many thought that it could even give us victory; but I think that the majority of more prepared militants thought that it was a backward step. But it was accepted like that in a more or less tranquil form.¹⁶

Although the above interviewee was not a Catholic militant, and therefore prone to questioning the weight of the Church in the workers' struggle, his point is not a sectarian one. It could just as easily have come from a member of the Workers' Pastoral. He went on to develop his criticism as follows:

To the extent that you develop a policy in this manner you are leaving aside a series of other ideas that people have. From the question of paternalism to the question of creating a process where the people participate from a conscious stance. So when you begin to develop a political action in this manner it is evident that these ideals, these objectives, are prejudiced - there is not the slightest doubt of that.¹⁷

It is in the nature of elections generally, of which Brazilian trade union elections, with their emphasis on presidentialism, are no exception, that there is a bias towards personality. The genuinely educational and participatory aspects which were so much a part of the Opposition's *raison d'être* were therefore forced into the background while the electoral machine ran its course. Militants appeared to realise this, and therefore the use of the Pope was merely seen as a short-cut to support. In a poll conducted by the

Opposition prior to the metalworkers' elections, one of the key conclusions arrived at was that:

only a small portion of metalworkers know Waldemar Rossi by name, and that percentage rises when we mention that he was the person chosen by the workers to bring the political message to the Pope. This indicates that we must strengthen his name amongst the category.¹⁸

The question which now arises is whether the tactic of linkage proved well conceived. Was there a receptivity amongst the metalworkers themselves to these Catholic overtures?

Of one thing there is little doubt, the Pope's visit to Brazil had had a great impact, receiving extensive media coverage. Not surprisingly, therefore, when I interviewed 103 Catholic metalworkers from firms within the jurisdiction of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union to see whether they had witnessed the events in Morumbi - be it on television or at the stadium itself - 87 answered that they had. However, when it came to the question of whether they knew that a metalworker had addressed the Pope, these figures dropped off considerably. Only 37 metalworkers out of 103 said they were aware of such a meeting. Clearly, for reasons which are similar to those mentioned in relation to the 50 São Bernardo do Campo metalworkers surveyed earlier (i.e., elapsed time and the relatively small numbers involved), data of this kind needs to be treated with some caution. Nonetheless, the data is useful in helping to question assumptions which are rarely tested.

From the point of view of the Opposition the picture is much better than might at first appear. It is a fact common to much of Brazilian trade unionism that numbers voting in elections represent but a fraction of those in any particular category.¹⁹ The crucial question, therefore, is not so much what the general levels of consciousness were, but whether those who voted either saw the Pope and/or were aware of the meeting of a metalworker with him. In my sample, 42 metalworkers out of 103 voted in the 1981 elections (not an inconsiderable number in view of the fact that just under 43,000 workers actually voted in the final round). Of the 42 voters questioned, 38 saw the Pope's speech, and 21 went on to affirm that they knew of the meeting between the Pope and a metalworker. This compares very favourably with the 59 metalworkers who did not vote, of whom only 16 were aware of such a meeting. It is impossible to say with any certainty whether such an elevated figure was due to the 1981 campaign itself, or to the fact that such a large proportion of voters had accompanied the visit. Nor is it of central concern. Far more relevant instead is the question of whether, once in possession of this information, this did indeed affect voting patterns.

The answer appears to be that it did not make any difference whatsoever. When asked the question:

Did the fact that one of the candidates of the Opposition, Waldemar Rossi, met the Pope in Morumbi and that his slate mentioned this in its campaign affect your vote in any way at all?,

not one of the 21 respondents who was aware of a connection said that it had affected his

vote in any way at all. As for the other 21 who had voted but were not aware of a linkage, they were asked whether possession of this knowledge would have affected their vote. Three were "don't knows" and one person did not give a reply. The other 17 said that it would not have made any difference. In other words, nobody amongst the 42 voters questioned said that the Opposition's tactic had or would have affected their vote.

These results are interesting because they appear to strongly suggest that religious loyalties are not as transferable or electorally useful as is so often assumed. Frequently, particularly at governmental elections, it is asserted by observers that the Church holds enormous sway over the faithful, as if somehow a radical religious perspective will automatically lead to a radical political position and thereby deliver a vote. Indeed, it was based on hopes of this kind (although in this case by using a conservative religious figure to enhance the reputation of a radical) that the Opposition played its religious card. What these results indicate, however, is the highly mediated nature of Church influence. This is not to deny substantial ecclesiastical influence amongst grassroots activists. There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate extensive links between the two - be it in the party political sphere, the sphere of rural unionism, or, as is the case with this study, in the sphere of urban trade unionism. But it is to question the precise nature of those links and the influence of the Church over non-militant grassroots individuals. In effect, not even the Pope embracing the figure of Waldemar Rossi could help to get the latter elected; and Aurelio Peres, who neither made reference to nor had the support of Church sectors was able to secure a quite respectable vote of 7,000 in the first round of voting.²⁰

One question which arises is whether this tactic backfired on the Opposition thereby assisting in Joaquinzão's victory. In the course of interviewing, one respondent put it to me, for example, that "Religion and elections do not mix" and there is no doubt that the campaign of Joaquinzão tried to exploit these sentiments by asserting that the followers of Rossi were - quite literally - committing a cardinal sin. Even close advisers to Dom Paulo have questioned the advisability of overt references to the Church within union campaigns and suggested that it might have played into the hands of Joaquinzão.

It may come as a surprise, therefore, to find that not one respondent suggested that he was negatively affected by the Opposition's tactics. Other matters were firmly to the fore. In the context of São Paulo's union ballot, and in sharp contrast to the São Bernardo strikes of 1978-80, the issue of religious involvement was largely viewed by the workers as an irrelevance. Neither the Opposition nor the union president's slate were able to change that fact and exploit religious feeling to their advantage either in this or future union elections.²¹ Innocence or guilt by association proved a failure.

4.4 1979-1986: CUT versus CGT; the Polarisation of Brazilian Trade Unionism and the Reproduction of Religious Polarities in a New Trade Union Framework

At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that the emergence of a new political and economic conjuncture both demanded and offered the possibility for the creation of new

instruments of union struggle. The necessity was not of itself new; as we shall see in a moment. Many of the inadequacies of Brazilian labour relations were inscribed in and dated back to the Labour Laws of 1943. The context of the early 1980's recession therefore merely served to provide yet one more graphic example of these structural inadequacies, i.e., labour's legislative and de facto weakness in relation to capital, thereby highlighting the need for change. What was qualitatively new, however, was the context of organised labour itself.

With the massive strike waves of the late 1970's the labour movement had become immensely politicised. The very emergence of the Workers' Party - a party dedicated to the interests of the working classes - was but one manifestation of this process. Another was the profound re-examination of labour's structural inadequacies.

Certainly, the events of the late 1970's alone did not provoke that re-examination. A look at the experiences of the factory commissions at Cobrasma and Contagem (in 1968)²² together with the activities of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition powerfully demonstrate that searching questions were being asked and alternatives put forward by workers themselves a long time before. What was new, however, was the quite unprecedented level of labour mobilisation - not just a few factories or a particular category, but millions of workers throughout the country. This major shift, and the widespread nature of the upsurge in political consciousness, turned the issue of developing labour organisations able to function at a national level into a real historical possibility for the first time in more than a decade and a half. The events of the late 1970's then were not so much the fuse as rather the explosion of long-standing grievances on a massive and enabling scale.

The political and legal problems facing Brazilian trade unions were formidable, and what follows is a very schematic summary.²³ Since 1943, the government of the day could (if chose to use its Ministry of Labour powers) so restrict a union's scope for action to the point where the strike weapon was rendered inoperable. A network of laws was established which, amongst other things, forced unions (a) to deposit all their monies in a government bank; (b) to receive income via the government rather than directly from members; and (c), to subject union expenditure to state scrutiny.

The real and potentially crippling effects of these fiscal arrangements only become more evident when set alongside the range of other laws which establish the parameters of legitimate union conduct. These parameters are extremely strict. To exist, a union must receive recognition from the Ministry of labour. The basic unit of association is the municipality. Workers from a particular category are normally represented within this geographical area. Thus, in the case of the metalworkers of Greater São Paulo, for example, there is an artificially imposed division between the unions of Osasco, São Paulo, Santo André, São Bernardo, São Caetano, Guarulhos, etc. Once in existence there are a whole host of other restrictions to face. Unions cannot affiliate to international labour organisations; they cannot bargain directly with management but must do so via

the government - the so-called "dissidio coletivo", which frequently amounts to state imposed arbitration against the workers' interests; they cannot coordinate activities between different occupational groups, i.e., solidarity or secondary strikes are ruled out, as is the weapon of the general strike. Even coordination between unions of the same category is restricted since it is the state which decides upon when the annual round of wage negotiation will be phased. Taking the metalworkers of Greater São Paulo as an example, in practice that has meant that the metalworkers of the ABC region negotiate and, where necessary, conduct strike action; but they may only do so at a different time of year from their colleagues in the city of São Paulo. Solidarity action between the two groups is thereby ruled out. Finally, those elements of unity which the law does allow for, at regional, state and national levels, are confined to federations and confederations of workers belonging to the same branch of production; for example, the National Confederation of Industrial Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Indústria, CNTI), the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, CONTAG), and so on. In other words, no legal provision is made for cooperation between these confederations.

The extensive provisions made by these laws, together with the military dictatorship's appetite for using them, saw to it that union bureaucracies were largely purged of left-wing, and most especially Communist influence. Even with the emergence of a combative union movement in the late 1970's in such a strategically significant area as São Paulo's industrial heartland; and even with the ruptures which this caused, it remained clear to most participants that the odds were stacked decisively against them. Any attempt by a union to break with these laws, could, if the government of the day so chose, lead to the termination of funds, arrests, imprisonment, sequestration, and so on. Whilst the Catholic Church was a useful and important ally in those struggles, it was no substitute for major structural changes. Since external legal changes were unlikely from the government at that time (although that was one goal which the Workers' Party set out for itself), unions had to push for certain *de facto* changes in the same way that they had done in the period 1978-80. In other words, the only real option available was an internal restructuring of the movement which would more adequately respond to its own needs.

It was precisely in this definition of Brazilian trade unionism's needs that the polarities so long present within the movement emerged with renewed vigour. Amongst those at the forefront of the debate and discussion were sectors linked to (a) the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition, (b) the union leadership of the São Paulo metalworkers, and (c) the combative unions of São Bernardo do Campo and Santo André - all three with their own distinctive approaches to the question. Essentially, these groups would quickly coalesce into two opposing camps; the first composed of currents (a) and (c), and the second headed by (b) - in what later became to be known as the Single Workers' Confederation (Central Única dos Trabalhadores, CUT) and the General Workers' Confederation (Central Geral dos Trabalhadores, CGT) respectively.

Prior to this, all these forces had moved forward together in search of some form of national organisation that would assure the unity of the working classes. An intensive series of preparatory meetings involving literally thousands of activists were held at local and state levels. These culminated in 1981 with a national meeting to hammer out strategy, the first National Conference of the Working Classes (Conferência Nacional das Classes Trabalhadoras, CONCLAT), which brought together more than 5,000 delegates from over 1,000 organisations. However, ideological divisions and incompatibilities quickly emerged. One group (of which the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union leadership was a part) favoured the postponement of the second CONCLAT (planned for 1982) under the argument that more preparation was necessary. The other camp (which included in its ranks the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition and the union leaders from São Bernardo do Campo) felt that there was no time to lose and that this was a rationalisation by what were, in fact, more conservative sectors of the labour movement. These divisions manifested themselves in a multiplicity of forms and on a number of issues. To add to the difficulties, these were cross-cut by a series of very complex party-political dynamics. For instance, there were fears on the parts of forces like the PCB, PC do B and MR8 that, in the words of the PCB's regional president in Rio de Janeiro:

The CUT can transform itself into the labour department of the PT, and by its underestimation of a policy of alliances, lead to the tendency of isolation, which is also one political line of the PT, and the underestimation of the democratic question.²⁴

For their part, sectors of the PT saw the manoeuvrings of these groups as part of a crude attempt to secure hegemony over a newly emergent labour movement.

There was also a genuine conflict over what the attitude to the democratising process should be. The stagist conception of these clandestine parties, i.e., that first the bourgeois national-democratic revolution had to come only then to be followed by a socialist transformation, brought with it a policy of political alliances (principally via the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, PMDB)) in order to defeat the forces of the dictatorship's nominee, the Social Democratic Party (Partido Democrático Social, PDS). Any detraction from this goal, they thought, amounted to divisionism. As such, the very formation of the PT was divisionist; so too was the decision by some sectors, principally aligned to the PT, to push for a union confederation at the earliest possible opportunity.

These sorts of conflicts were inlaid by more detailed controversies; for instance, over whether Joaquinção or Waldemar Rossi should be put on the National Commission for the formation of a national union confederation. Supporters of the former argued that he had a recent election and a union structure behind him and that this trade union criterion should be the basis of selection. Their detractors pointed to Rossi's long track-record of grassroots militancy and argued that this democratic orientation towards the bases should be a fundamental constituent of a future trade union confederation. Amongst other

things, they characterised the trade unionists from the former faction as: (a) class conciliatory, (b) too interested in occupying union machinery as the principal locus of power and to the detriment of grassroots activism, (c) unwilling to use the general strike weapon, (d) supportive of "pelegos" and reformists, and (e), unwilling to construct a union confederation via delegates - choosing instead to subject it to the control of cliques.²⁵

These divisions finally culminated with the formation of the CUT in August 1983 by the more radical sectors of the Brazilian labour movement. Only in January 1986 did the CGT formally bring itself into being and complete the circle of polarization.

In view of the network of reciprocal relations established between radical Catholic militants and the more combative elements of Brazil's union movement, it is not surprising to find that radical Catholic militants polarised along similar lines to their secular counterparts, thus passing directly into the CUT as it would later emerge.

The joking comment of Gilmar Carneiro (CUT's National General Secretary) that "we have a holy trinity here in Brazil which is the Church, the PT and the CUT"²⁶ perhaps exaggerates the connections somewhat. But there is equally no doubt that an affinity in terms of ideas, and a considerable identity in terms of militancy, exists between this union confederation and radical sectors of the Church. As he also rightly points out, "It is a complementary and not a dependent relationship."²⁷

As we shall see in a moment, this kind of relationship and attitude is almost wholly absent from the CGT for both historical and philosophical reasons.²⁸ Joaquinzão, the organisation's first president, was much keener to emphasise the separation that exists between Church and workers struggles than his CUT counterparts, although they too make distinctions. Joaquinzão's comment was that:

I think that the CGT bases and forms itself on trade unionism and not at the door of the Church.²⁹

Just to what extent the CUT might have formed itself "at the door of the Church" is a matter of debate since it very much depends upon the observer's conceptual starting points of which there are number of quite different but nevertheless complementary possibilities which need to be taken as a whole.

If we take as our starting point the formation of the constituent components of the CUT (remembering that our focus is exclusively upon metalworkers from the region of Greater São Paulo), then it is evident that a very real connection exists. One segment from the Metalworkers' Opposition of São Paulo was directly composed of Catholic militants, whilst other, secular strands, are quick to acknowledge that they too quite literally had to use the Church as a logistical framework for articulating their struggles. In this sense, therefore, it was not merely a question of forming oneself at the door of the Church, but actually in and through the Church.

If we take the metalworkers of ABC, one of the most important groups inside the CUT, then once again it is plain that the success of their struggle was at the very least partially

contingent upon Church support. On several occasions, the leadership of São Bernardo actually had to form itself within the doors of a Church. In both the instances then, i.e., of São Paulo's Metalworkers' Opposition and the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union, the power of these groups was partially underwritten, and to this extent articulated, via grassroots Catholic networks. The union of Joazeiro, on the other hand, neither needed nor desired such links. His contribution to the CGT (i.e., a union representing some 400,000 metalworkers) was made without reference to the Church - if anything, it was made in contradistinction to it.

A second level of association concerns the extent to which the proposal to form a national workers' confederation was channeled through Catholic activist networks. In this case, what needs to be recognised at the outset is that the historical moment was a different one altogether. As we have already seen, the Church's contribution to many of the CUT's constituent organs was a formidable one indeed, but it took place primarily against the background of severe government repression, a repression that ranged from the banning of meetings to the torture, imprisonment, and even assassination of activists. Put simply, this was not the kind of context that would later be faced by the CUT during its formative years. On the contrary, activists were basically free to deliberate upon the formation of a national entity without the hindrance of the state. Although technically speaking they were breaking the law, no moves - certainly not comparable to the treatment handed out to the metalworkers of ABC and the Opposition of São Paulo during the 1970's - were made against them. The State Meetings of the Working Class (Encontros Estaduais da Classe Trabalhadora, ENCLATs), CONCLATs, and finally plenary meetings which set up the CUT and CGT, took place openly.

Another dimension to this historic change was the re-emergence of trade union and party-political identities with their own potent set of dynamics. A liberalising political climate facilitated the articulation of radical trade union, opposition, and party political discourses. These groups thereby increasingly found themselves able to develop their own cadres rather than being physically forced into the arms of the Church. Certainly, this did not in any way imply that progressive Catholic sectors abandoned their activities. On the contrary they continued to encourage their own followers to perceive the necessity of trade union activity. But it did mean that an alternative and unmediated discourse was simultaneously available for the articulation of resistance, and more particularly, of workers' struggles.

With these changes in mind, one can now examine the issue of a Catholic contribution via activist networks. Although more qualified than during the 1970's, it is clear that the contribution was quite substantial. One progressive Catholic militant and a leader of the Rio de Janeiro Metalworkers' Union in 1988 put it thus:

The majority of these people participated in meetings or seminars at a national level where they met other militants - be they of the north, east, or south, who acted in the CUT, in the union movement, in the pastoral movement, which gave a certain national vision of the Christian in the construction of

the CUT³⁰.

Another militant, Anísio Batista de Oliveira, from the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition, explained how apart from giving support towards national and regional initiatives like the CONCLATs and ENCLATs, Catholic militants also brought discussions concerning the importance of forming a CUT down to the grassroots. He personally put the question and defended the proposition of a national trade union confederation to worker meetings in his factory, also raising the question in his neighbourhood, where workers from various categories (including metalworkers and bank employees) met to discuss this and other issues.³¹

This localised form of cross-category reunion, where historically speaking the Church had been in a class of its own, represented an important contribution since the CUT was not only seeking to break out of single category legal constraints, but also hoping to do so by generating a truly active local membership rather than national alliances with a fictitious base. By contrast, even supporters of the CGT (at that time known as the National Coordination of the Working Class (Coordenação Nacional da Classe Trabalhadora, also CONCLAT, and not to be confused with the National Conference of the Working Class) like Ivan Pinheiro, were willing to admit that the organisation tended towards "cliquishness", "immobilism", a "lack of combativity", and "an underestimation with respect to grassroots organisation".³²

This brings us on to the question of whether radical Catholic sectors made, as it were, a specific ideological contribution to the formation of the CUT.

Of the fact that a contribution was forthcoming there is no doubt. As to whether it was uniquely Catholic is another matter altogether. In an earlier chapter I discussed in detail a number of the defining features of radical Catholic militancy as opposed to other forms of militancy. There, we observed a basic characteristic, i.e., its dual theoretical and practical orientation to both the labour movement and the Catholic Church. One characteristic which did not receive or merit such great attention at that point was the issue of its commitment to grass roots activism. This was for the simple reason that it is not a feature unique to Catholic militancy although it is very much a part of its make-up.

Historically, other individuals and groups with a secular conception were perfectly willing and capable of developing grassroots discourses and practises. The Brazilian tradition of anarcho-syndicalism, for instance, is a very rich and long one which well preceded a widespread radical Catholic approach by several decades. And the more recent histories of Osasco's factory commission, São Paulo's Metalworkers' Opposition, and the metalworkers of ABC, similarly demonstrate that that spectrum of commitment to grassroots activism extended far beyond just Catholic circles, whether or not the latter initiated, accompanied, or joined in the struggles at a later date.

With these important qualifications in mind, we can now address the issue of a Catholic contribution. Asked what he thought this might be, CUT's General Secretary

said that:

I personally see militants who were trained by the Church as much more open, far less prejudiced than the militants of the organised left, a lot less. They are a group of people whose work is more oriented towards everybody than oriented towards the priority of strengthening their particular organisation; this is a very marked characteristic.³³

Although the use of the word prejudiced is emotive, it is, nevertheless, evident that a real difference between Catholic sectors and sectors of the organised left did exist - indeed, it was bound to do so, by definition. As was noted earlier, a fundamental characteristic of radical Catholic militancy, in contrast to more conservative neo-Christendom visions, was precisely its renunciation of narrowly defined private (in this particular case specifically Christian) - organisational aims within the labour movement. It is difficult, on the other hand, to see how any vanguardist party could possibly have embraced an approach of this kind, i.e., the renunciation of private organisational objectives, since that would have amounted to relinquishing its very identity. Of course, this could be done under temporary circumstances, as in fact happened with Trotskyist groups and others like the PCB, PC do B in the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition of the 1970's. But tensions did arise, with the some groups finding it particularly difficult to co-exist within the framework of a front of workers rather than as a front of tendencies negotiating with one another. From an organisational point of view, however, members of the Workers' Pastoral had no such difficulties or reservations. There was no incompatibility, if anything, quite the reverse. The Opposition was a natural extension of the pluralistic aspects of their philosophy.

Whether this represented a virtue or a drawback is not the issue at present. It is generally accepted, for instance, that there is a certain lack of ideological coherence to Catholic sectors. Again, however, rather like the clandestine political parties, this difference is an inevitable one. It therefore needs to be judged on its own terms. That is to say, the Church is not in the business of equipping militants with a distinct ideological framework; it openly renounces this task. Thus, to say that it fails at a task which it never set out for itself is a meaningless form of comparison. To criticise the nature of that venture, i.e., the equipping of militants with a limited set of theoretical tools rather than a global framework of analysis, is another matter altogether and one that has begun to receive the attention of some leading Catholic scholars.³⁴

To recapitulate, then, there were certain inherent differences which made it easier for Catholic militants to engage in the construction of a CUT. To the extent that persons were not - and could not be - mandated to join this or that particular organisation, and Catholic organisations did not have a specific list of demands to extract from the union confederations before support would be forthcoming, the intra-organisational dynamic was attenuated. Catholic groups subordinated their identity to the interests of the broader projects in hand since individual rather than collective commitment continued to be the primary basis upon which association was decided and defined.

Whilst the principle of radical Catholicism's organisational openness is an important one - which can if necessary be made to stand on its own - it would be artificial to do so. Instead, it must be related to another major concern of the time, the question of grassroots activism. Put simply, it is very difficult to imagine that progressive Catholic activists could have gone any other way than with those forces ranged behind the formation of the 1983 CUT given their own and these other forces' solid commitment to an active and interventionist membership base. To this extent, a de facto collective identity did indeed assert itself. There is no question, for example, that a discussion was taken to the grassroots of the Church. As one former metalworker and member of the Youth Pastoral explained:

I remember people coming to the community [CEB] and talking about CUT, and they called people to discuss the importance of a national confederation of unions, ...we had this discussion, and those unionised comrades who were leaders of the union movement and were inside the CUT effectively participated in the construction of CUT.³⁵

In other words, whilst the CEB was not made to vote on the issue, there was a high degree of unanimity amongst its membership over certain basic values, and a corresponding desire by Catholic union activists to activate these forces in a certain direction. An analysis of internal and publicly available Church documents reveals a very real bias on the part of these key activists.

A March 1986 letter to bishops signed by, amongst others, Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, Dom Cláudio Hummes, and Waldemar Rossi, for instance, included the following comments:

Agreeing with the exclusion of the "CUT T-shirt", we underline the fact that the previous suggestion of placing it on "one of the arms of the cross" at the side of "the shirt stained with blood" is due not to mere ideological motivations, but yes, to the fact that to this Union Confederation (and not the others) of the workers' movement, identified with principles of the social doctrine of the Church (by way of example: trade union autonomy, the 1987 convention of the ILO), belong innumerable martyred militants in this country; only last year more than 200 were victims.³⁶

These are particularly interesting comments because they illustrate (a) that a favourable attitude on the part of progressive Church sectors was held towards the CUT, (b) the belief in a certain identity between this union confederation and the social doctrine of the Church, and (c), the balance struck between the first two points and the general principle that the Church should not be ideologically motivated. The net result of all this was that an explicit reference to CUT via the T-shirt design was withdrawn.

A recapitulation of this theme of the theologically rather than ideologically motivated nature of Church support and affinities comes in Dom Cláudio's own speech to the 1983 plenary of the CONCLAT (which went on to found the CUT). He said:

It is one of the biggest advances of the last few years in Brazilian trade unionism. Everything that has been achieved in these last years in terms of trade unionism which is combative, of the base, democratic, and which defends the liberty and autonomy of unions, the participation of the very workers in their unions and in national life, is reunited here in the CONCLAT. They are things which

the Church has supported and defended, in the name of its own faith, of human rights. If we are here it is because we are happy. The Church is not here to direct, but to demonstrate its happiness and support.³⁷

When it came to the attitude of the Workers' Pastoral, there was equally little question as to where its real sympathies lay. A 1983 editorial in PO's National Bulletin made plain its view that the CONCLAT and subsequent formation of CUT were to be seen:

as a step forward in the organisation, conscientisation and independence of trade unionism and of all the working class.³⁸

This contrasts starkly with the analysis of some parties on the left that it was a divisive and damaging move. As for PO's own role in the proceedings, the editorial was also quite specific:

PO positions itself not as a mere observer of the facts, neither as a promoter of them. It places itself as a participant of a struggle which it assumes even more with everyday that passes. It does not take possession of this struggle, it does not take control, let alone dictate norms or obligations. It merely positions itself as a participant which serves and, as such, serving, helps, gives means, indicates avenues, guides. It is not a group or movement of people which turns itself into an entity with power and decision. It is, without doubt, a pastoral. Understood as on pasture, the road forwards, in search of sustenance, of rest, of protection for the flock.³⁹

In other words, whilst openly supporting the formation of the CUT (a position which was reaffirmed in its December 1983 National Assembly which urged members to "support the emergence of combative union leaderships" and "reinforce and strengthen the CUT"⁴⁰) it too held back from any analysis that might be construed as a complete break with its pluralist organisational and ecclesiastical philosophy. In the last instance, it was for the individual member to decide his or her loyalties. This they overwhelmingly did in favour of the CUT.

Of course, the question of whether these various propositions did in fact constitute a non-ideological stance is a very debatable one; but this is a theme which will be tackled in greater detail in Chapter Five (which discusses theology and ideology). What can be noted at this stage, however, is that the ability of progressive Church sectors to assume a quite specific trade union stance - without threatening internal fragmentation - was both contingent upon, and the natural outcome of, a dominant view held at that time, namely, that the CUT was a natural extension of their own struggles. Given that grassroots oriented union struggle was such a dominant characteristic of radical Catholic activism, it was difficult to stop this from articulating and asserting itself at a national level during a time of rapid polarization. Under these historical conditions any theological misgivings were, for the most part, pushed to one side as members joined in the struggle.

In spite of this, some readers may be surprised to find that there is considerable unanimity in both the outlooks and practice of the CUT and the CGT over one - perhaps the fundamental issue; the question of the de-secularisation of Brazil's labour movement. Indeed, this common outlook, i.e., an open and emphatic rejection of any Church

demands or encroachments upon union autonomy, even extends to radical Catholic militants themselves. Despite their clearly differing rhetorics and conceptual starting points, parties concerned appear in agreement over the need to preserve union independence from the Church, or any other external forces like political parties for that matter.

4.5 The Rhetorics and Realities of Secular Unanimity - From CLAT to the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union Elections of 1984

The philosophical basis of this unanimity is well illustrated by the attitudes of these groups to the formation of the Latin American Workers' Confederation (Central Latino-Americana de Trabalhadores, CLAT), which is basically the trade union arm of Christian Democracy throughout South America.

Although this trade union confederation has links with Brazil dating back to the 1950's, it has met with little success in spite of attempts in the late 1970's and early 1980's by more conservative elements of the Latin American and Brazilian Catholic Church to revitalise it. Thus, it only embraces a handful of union leaders. It was against this background that I asked the president of the CUT, Jair Meneguelli, why he thought that a CLAT type proposal had been so firmly rejected by the overwhelming majority of Brazilian unions. His answer was as follows:

I think that it was and must continue to be rejected because in Brazil I do not think that we should have a confederation of the PT, of the PDT, of the PMDB, or of the PSDB, in the same way that I do not think that we should have a confederation of Catholics, a confederation of protestants, a confederation of who knows what, Jehovahs Witnesses. This is not the role of the Church. The Church must work with its faithful. It must educate its faithful so that they participate in the social movement, so there will be Christians in the CGT, in the CUT. Now it is widely known that CLAT had and still has the intention of making a Catholic confederation, i.e., which restricts or limits the participation of the workers, or identifies or labels the participation of the workers, and this we cannot agree with.⁴¹

Albeit in a different context Joaquinzão, president of the CGT, expressed almost identical pluralist and class defined sentiments. Indeed, his own trajectory and move away from the Workers' Circles movement in 1958 (which themselves enjoyed links with the CLAT) had partly come about because these were confusing the unions with the Church; in his view, there was a concerted attempt by Workers' Circles in São Paulo and other Brazilian states to "substitute the unions". He objected when they began to complain about working conditions and organise workers into cross-category groups:

I believe that this was material that belonged to the unions to carry out and on this question I never confused things; Circle is Circle and union is union.⁴²

On the more general question of class and pluralism versus an exclusivistic religious definition of worker loyalty he was equally forthright:

I think that the clergy gains a greater space from the moment that it shares, not attempting to substitute itself for the union, but attempting to strengthen the unions and advising the Catholic

workers to a greater militancy, a more permanent one in their class organisations⁴³.

CLAT's acceptance of Church/religious leadership thereby represented a deviation from this path.

Significantly, by far the most explicit and forthright of all CLAT's critics are none other than radical Catholic militants themselves. This is all the more telling in view of the fact that the latter's practice was historically predicated upon a break with and the supersession of both the forms and contents of neo-Christendom.

In an important move which entailed the production of a detailed and carefully worded eight page document (signed in February 1986), the executives of, amongst others, ACO, JOC, the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão da Pastoral da Terra, CPT) and the Workers' Pastoral Commission (Comissão da Pastoral Operária, CPO) made plain their strong reservations over CLAT's implantation in Brazil. Whilst defending the principle of CLAT's right to organise, they asserted their corresponding right to question its real motivations. Politically they noted the organisation's "anti-Marxism" together with its narrow and "reductionist" interpretation of the social doctrine of the Church, i.e., exclusively through the "eyes of Christian Democracy". Despite a superficial and beguiling radical rhetoric, this outlook left the organisation deaf to, or conspicuously silent about the failings of Christian Democracy in Latin America:

In its practice, the CLAT appears more interested in the fight against...Marxism and Communism in Latin America, than against the oppression of capitalism.⁴⁴

Worse still, in their view, was the fact that:

by setting itself up as the one and only legitimate representative of Christians (a sort of "trade union arm" of the Church in a vision of neo-Christendom the CLAT establishes a dangerous division between these active Christians - and between Christians and non-Christians - which signifies, in the last analysis, a grave danger for the advance of the workers' struggles.⁴⁵

The proof of this, for example, was the attempt by sectors linked to the CLAT to approach:

young unionists or trade union entities who still have not positioned themselves between the two large blocs extant within the trade union movement, the CUT and the CONCLAT.⁴⁶

With regard to their own strategy, the authors emphasised that:

as Christians, we do not wish to build parallel organisational entities (trade unions or parties of Christians) closed in upon themselves and competing in terms of power with other movements. Nor do we wish in the least to create socio-politico-cultural models that are exclusively ours. The political and historic models must be created inside the very struggle and together with our people, inside their organisations and not merely departing from principles.⁴⁷

From all the above comments, be they from radical Catholics or leading figures in the CUT and CGT, it is evident that a widespread consensus exists over the need to make class the fundamental starting point of trade union organisation whilst simultaneously

making sure that this is not overlayed or defined by either party-political or religious criteria. Even Dom Paulo was exceptionally forthright on this question:

I am *radically* opposed to a Christian trade union. I believe that the word of the Gospel is that the Christian must be ferment, light and salt, this is the only solution for a pluralist world. Now if the Church wishes to unite a group and defend it, it will always be a faction and will not reach the people, to the soul of the people. Thus I am opposed to Christian parties, to Christian trade unions⁴⁸.

In view of this apparent unanimity over what is at first sight a fairly simple proposition, it is most ironic indeed that nobody - not even, at times, radical Catholic militants themselves - can agree as to what this really means; that is to say, the rhetoric of secular unanimity gives way to a conflictual reality, or more accurately, a conflictual practise.

Rather than produce abstract typologies of how various groupings mediate the principle of secular integrity, it is perhaps easier to examine a concrete instance, in this case the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections of 1984.

There are several reasons for choosing this in preference to other examples. Foremost amongst these is the fact that matters became so polarised that the standpoints of the various parties, and thereby their respective arguments, came out with greater clarity. Basic principles of how, why and when ecclesiastical intervention should or should not take place were laid bare. A second reason is that the Church hierarchy itself chose to intervene in an explicitly partisan manner - a very rare and therefore significant event. Thirdly, there is the fact that Catholic militants not only chose to intervene in a partisan fashion but - in a move which threw up very real theoretical dilemmas and represented a break with the practice of the recent past - they opted for an official collective line instead of the usual individual choice approach. Finally, there is the fact that the elections took upon themselves an added dimension, i.e., they represented a classic conflict, a division of forces along CUT-CONCLAT lines, with each camp throwing its weight behind one of the two leading candidates.

It was this CUT-CONCLAT conflict which would set the political tone and framework for the 1984 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections. Only two slates ran; the first headed by Joaquinzaio, and the second by Helio Bombardi, a worker at the Irlemp factory. The contest was very much a heavy-weight one. Ranged in the CUT camp were not only members of the Opposition slate itself, but also figures of considerable national prestige like the veteran Communist leader, Luiz Carlos Prestes, the PT president and former São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union leader, Lula, and now younger figures like Jair Meneguelli, elected president of the São Bernardo do Campo Metalworkers in 1981 and later president of the CUT itself. The forces ranged behind Joaquinzaio included all those who had opted for the CONCLAT's cautious approach, i.e., the PCB, PC do B, MR8 and figures of the traditional right. Everybody from both camps recognised that securing the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union would represent an important tactical and psychological victory for whichever party won the day. Quite apart from the historical

significance of a change of leadership at this particular moment in time, there was the not insignificant matter of a wealthy union (with jurisdiction over 400,000 workers) to be gained by one or other camp.

It was in this context that on February 26 1984 the Workers' Pastoral for the Archdiocese of São Paulo finally decided to give explicit support to the slate led by Helio Bombardi. It set out its motives for this historic decision in the following terms:

- The São Paulo Metalworkers' Union, the largest in Latin America, has an enormous importance in the national conjuncture in socio-economic and political questions. Therefore, it is in the interests of the whole of the Brazilian working class that its leadership corresponds to the anxieties of the workers.
- The current union leadership does not correspond to these anxieties, and Slate 1 which is competing for the leadership of the union represents the continuation of this situation. ...
- The union practice and proposal of Slate 2 represents the guarantee of a class-based unionism and the strengthening of the most combative pole of Brazilian trade unionism. It also represents the guarantee of the participation of the workers in the decisions and questions which have to do with them. It is, therefore, a frontal and courageous combat against trade union peleguismo.
- In view of this, the group of workers who form the Workers' Pastoral of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, in conformity with the Church's evangelical option for the workers, supports Slate 2...
- Thus we ask all those who fight for justice to unite in support of Slate 2 in this historic moment for the metalworkers and for Brazilian trade unionism.⁴⁹

In what proved an equally if not more unusual step, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of São Paulo, with Dom Angélico as its spokesman, added its voice of support to the line adopted by the Workers' Pastoral. I am basing this direct linkage between Dom Angélico and the position of the hierarchy on an answer Dom Paulo gave me when I asked him what he thought of Dom Angélico having taken a personal decision to support Slate 2 in 1984. Dom Paulo's immediate answer was as follows:

I think that Dom Angélico never acts on his own behalf. He always acts in the name of all the bishops of São Paulo, and if there is a question of greater importance we the bishops meet and decide together.⁵⁰

There is little doubt that this decision was of exceptional importance. The archbishop also added that although Slate 2 did not win, "it had a great deal of influence over the elections because it is not always a victory that indicates whether or not it was worthwhile."⁵¹ In other words, in the course of the interview Dom Paulo did not seek to distance himself from these actions of Dom Angélico but, on the contrary, viewed them positively. As for Dom Angélico himself, he made the position of the hierarchy crystal clear in the elections with the following comments.

Normally, the Church does not enter into party-political and factional questions. This specific option is the job of militants in the day-to-day of life, and not for the Church as an entity. However, in determinate historical instances, certain movements and pastorals of the Church are led to adopt positions which we could call exceptional. That is what is happening now with the attitude of PO in the case of Slate 2. For innumerable reasons, we cannot accept the permanence of the current president of the Union of Metalworkers and his band, just as we cannot accept the continuity of the regime which took power in '64. The current president of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union is a result of the military movement of '64. I really mean it when I say that whoever is with Figueiredo,

with Maluf, should vote with Joaquinão.⁵²

Perhaps even more significant than the decision to take a stand, was the willingness of the São Paulo hierarchy to go beyond the usual Biblically and theologically couched discourse to reveal other strategic components as well. We can see this in an answer Dom Angélico gave to the question of what the consequences of a Slate 2 victory would be. He said:

It would signify a push forward for combative and authentic trade unionism and a blow for "peleguismo". It would signify the strengthening of the bases and of a participatory trade unionism and not privileged minorities fortified by continuous power, well paid and surrounded by luxuries. Can you imagine what would happen with a victory of Slate 2 - the union in common struggles of metalworkers unions from São Paulo, São Bernardo, Santo André, and São José dos Campos?⁵³

What concerns us is how and why the Church of São Paulo (militants and hierarchy alike) came to adopt these partisan positions at this particular moment in time. Why, for example, was there a sudden move away from the delicate division of labour which had been the hallmark and bedrock of previous intra-ecclesiastical relations, as well as relations between the Catholic Church and different sectors of the Brazilian labour movement; and was this shift away from a delicate balance achieved without conflict inside radical Catholic circles?

Taking the last question first, it emerges that this shift in PO's position was achieved with relatively little conflict. This is perhaps rather unexpected in view of the seriousness of the move involved; but as Padre Fernando Altemeyer, a participant in and supporter of the February 26 decision explains, the reasons were not hard to find:

There were more good guys and bad guys. The reality was not grey at that time. Perhaps we had not evolved enough in our formulations, we had greater ardour, we had come out of a very difficult situation, the dictatorship. Many young people in the trade union struggle were supporting [Slate 2] as were priests, seminarists, and student militants. It appeared very clear, 'we want to take the union'. ...Criticising Slate 1 was so easy due to its traditionally reactionary and reformist position. The Workers' Pastoral, almost in its totality, was [informally] supporting [Slate 2]; thus it was a very easy jump for the Workers' Pastoral to make from almost all supporting to officially supporting.⁵⁴

In other words, from a practical perspective, in the heat of the moment, it appeared a natural step. The key feature in this instance, rather like in the Diocese of Santo André in the late 1970's, was polarization. In the eyes of most militants it was a simple question of good versus evil. As Waldemar Rossi explains, the assembly of militants which discussed the question of support took the following majority view:

saying that it is a difficult hour, that on the one hand we have a pro-capitalist/pro-exploiters bloc, and on the other hand we have a bloc that struggles against exploiters. So we do not have three or four camps, we have two that are defined. One negates evangelical values, the other applies evangelical values, so at this hour we do not have any choice. It is support.⁵⁵

Ironically, both Waldemar Rossi and Dom Angélico were against partisan support. In their view, the principle of individual sovereignty should remain sacrosanct, i.e., the Workers' Pastoral should educate, inform and assist, but not organise as a bloc. To some

extent, however, this kind of objection and possible source of conflict was circumvented by making it clear at the meeting that the assumption of a partisan line by PO would not preclude any of its militants from supporting or even running in other slates which did not receive that official support. Instead, a member of PO who did this would be unable to speak in the name of the organisation, but would be speaking and acting in a purely individual capacity.⁵⁶

In view of the theological dilemmas and contradictions thrown up by this episode, it is remarkable just how forthright the Church was in its support for the line adopted by PO. Two factors appear to have weighed heavily in this decision. One was the Church's own appraisal of the problems at hand, which to a large extent coincided with PO's own analysis. As Dom Angélico explains:

in that concrete situation, the historical conjuncture led one to give some support, it was truly a serious struggle, for a value of unionism truly committed to the grassroots, not cliquish. I do not want to slander other comrades, no, but we had, as we have, a work of the grassroots, respecting the grassroots. So given these principles, which could advance still further with the conquest of the union, which was in the hands of inveterate "pelegos" who played with the working class in their own interests, I felt that in that conjuncture I could support [Slate 2].⁵⁷

What appears to have weighed even more heavily, indeed decisively, were the internal politics of the Church, or more accurately, ties of solidarity, rather than its external evaluations. Despite Dom Angélico's reservations over the taking of a partisan line by PO, he felt an overriding necessity to remain faithful to the militants. This was in spite of the fact that he was an independent actor - indeed one of the most powerful - and could, therefore, have chosen to have maintained a sort of relative autonomy. In no way was he bound by the decisions of PO's special conference.

Asked why he went beyond what was technically necessary by offering explicit rather than tacit support for a line with which he personally disagreed, Dom Angélico answered in the following terms:

I and the Workers' Pastoral, especially at that time, felt that my presence, as one of them, was to be with them. Whilst clear that fundamentally with the Workers' Pastoral who acts is the worker, I believed that it was not coherent with my beliefs simply at a moment like this to say - 'No'. No, 'you went, I am going with you', this was the gesture, and knowing that on that occasion I was pledging my authority also as a pastor, as a bishop of the Church, I felt that it was really what had to be done. And if today I were to be in those circumstances I would do the same thing, with tranquility.⁵⁸

In other words, at what was a decisive moment for the Workers' Pastoral and for the wider trade union movement, Dom Angélico made the conscious decision of adhering to PO's wishes (reached after extensive internal consultations and a democratic vote) rather than distancing the hierarchy from the result. In the words of Waldemar Rossi, he thereby "guaranteed unity".⁵⁹ By so doing, the bishop also gave a powerful demonstration of how PO could influence the policy undertaken by the São Paulo hierarchy itself, as well as the high esteem in which the bishops held the organisation.

What principle conclusions can be drawn from this highly unusual episode? One is that with Dom Angélico as the bishops' nominee for workers' affairs, and with Dom Paulo's strong backing, relations between militants and hierarchy could approach the organicity desired by militants who originally entered PO. In other words, there was real substance to the notion that not only should there be a reciprocal interplay between Catholic militancy and the labour movement, but also a reciprocity between hierarchy and Catholic militancy. On this particular occasion it proved of decisive importance to the conduct of the hierarchy.

A second conclusion is that the mediation of gospel principles, in this particular case their forging into a radical Catholic practice, is an inherently conflictual and contradictory exercise, whether it is inside any given group or amongst competing groups. Quite simply, there are vast grey areas. Rather like an unwritten constitution, the guidelines which orient the precedence that should be accorded to particular aspects of the Catholic faith are, in the last analysis, unavaliab^{le} (this is notwithstanding Catholic social teaching which, if anything, complicates the picture further because its own status is far from sacrosanct or immutable). Instead, the creation of an interlocking reality or hierarchy of principles is dependent upon human practice and interpretation for its concretisation. Hence that structured and contradictory whole is in a process of constant flux.

It is in this way that for the majority of PO's militants in 1984 the choice became one of a camp which put evangelical principles into action and another which negated these values. This polarised characteristic overrode traditional reservations about official/collective partisan statements (although an attempt was made to address the latter issue by permitting individual choice). On the other hand, other situations could, and historically did, see a precedence accorded to the latter aspect (for example the 1978 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections).

It is important to note that to the extent that each instance involved a real choice that was (a), mediated by individuals and (b), taken under the specific conditions of the day, then there was nothing inevitable, self-evident or self-regulating about the outcome. There existed a sort of open contingency, a contingency of possibilities. Simultaneously, however, there also existed certain very clear constraints which critically governed the latitude of those decisions. A sort of closed contingency. In particular, there was the existence of a structured theological and ideological approach - a series of givens - which placed factors like class combativity, an emphasis on grassroots autonomy and sovereignty, and so forth, high up on the agenda of Catholic labour militancy. This effectively precluded an alliance of progressive Catholic forces with what they openly regarded as the "pelego" forces supporting Joaquinzão. It also rendered the construction of the CUT a top priority. In this context, the issue of whether that construction should take place on an individual or official/collective basis became of secondary importance. The principle of collective non-partisanship was not abandoned but, in response to the

particular correlation of forces at the time, it was subordinated to other objectives that were widely perceived as overriding.

We can now return to the question posed a little earlier concerning the rhetoric of secular unanimity versus its conflictual realisation. The mystery which originally surrounded this issue is now shown to be nothing of the sort. Like other basic principles, that of the secular integrity of labour is subject to permanent qualification in its practice and, one might add, largely in accordance with the interests of various groupings. Therefore if these groupings are in conflict with one another, then it is hardly surprising to find that the ways in which they mediate these principles are frequently - although certainly not invariably⁶⁰ - also found to be at variance with one another. Thus, whilst everybody is agreed that the unions should not become the tool of the Church, it is quite another matter when the Church offers them support, since this is not considered the same thing as penetration or subordination.

For this reason, Jair Meneguelli, Vicentinho, Anísio Batista de Oliveira, the majority of PO militants, and the majority of Opposition militants whom I interviewed, agreed with PO's and Dom Angélico's decision. They did not feel that the secular integrity of the labour movement was violated by the Church's decision. And indeed, objectively speaking - from their point of view - it was not undermined since they did not tailor their actions to suit the needs or criteria of the Church. However, seen from the point of view of Joaquinzão and his followers it was - both subjectively and objectively speaking - a violation of their secular integrity since their slate was not free to conduct matters as it saw fit without the interference of the Church. As for the Church, its stance represented yet one more manifestation of the perennial problem of how to mediate the religious and the theological with the secular and the profane.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the complexity, contradictoriness and multi-dimensionality of the processes involved in the restructuring of relations between the Catholic Church and the urban trade union movement during the late 1970's and mid 1980's. In national terms these above all involved a decline in the Church's functions as the primary broker of resistance. That is to say, to the extent that the labour movement increasingly found itself capable of articulating its own struggles through autonomous structures, the Church correspondingly abandoned these functions. Dependency - the necessary outcome of a highly restricted room for manoeuvre on the part of left-oriented trade union forces - was progressively exchanged for a relationship of complementarity.

However, what confuses the picture somewhat is the fact that the boundaries between the articulation of affinities and open support are not always so clear cut - neither to the participants themselves nor to those whom they criticise. Viewed from the perspective of Joaquinzão (firstly as president of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union and later as president of the CGT) the difference was really one of semantics since the net result in all

cases was opposition to his rule. Whether this opposition came with the public or private blessing of the Church, whether or not it violated the delicate internal codes of radical Catholics, was of secondary importance. By any other name it was opposition and thereby constituted an unwarranted interference on the part of the progressive Church. For radical Catholic sectors, on the other hand, there were real differences, dilemmas and balances to be struck. In essence there was a conflict between their genuinely held desire to maintain the non-partisan characteristics of Catholic militancy, and simultaneously make these desires adequate and responsive to their own partisan trade union militancy.

The tools for bridging this gap changed over time and were bound to do so precisely because the existence of radical Catholic militancy had always been predicated upon its insertion in the profane. This linkage was conceived as a fundamental constituent element of its identity, i.e., militants were not dealing with abstract theorizations of Catholic doctrine. Instead, they were deliberately setting out to apply those principles from an historical perspective. In the last instance, then, both the precise weight ascribed to Catholic doctrine and the form of its practise was and (as we shall see in the following chapter) is negotiable.

All this does not mean that Catholic ideals were abandoned. On the contrary, they were the basic points of departure and of return, but their theoretical and practical weight was constantly qualified. That is why, for example, in 1978 the concept of non-partisanship remained intact. It was felt at the time that individual militancy (e.g., through the leadership of Anísio Batista de Oliveira and Santos Dias da Silva in the Opposition slate and the infrastructural support of the Church) not only was an inherently fine principle, but was also compatible with the challenges of the day. By 1984, however, the Workers' Pastoral reached the conclusion that a non-collective stance would be inadequate for the tasks at hand. It does not matter whether this was a correct evaluation. The main point that needs to be emphasised is that an incompatibility had arisen. Or, put another way, the distance between the pluralistic and the partisan positions was reduced as electoral polarities increased. With the latter came a corresponding increase in the strategic weight of a collective partisan stance amongst Catholic circles, such that it finally became, in the words of Padre Altemeyer, "a very easy jump." Indeed, it is by the same historically defined token that in 1987, when conditions had reverted to several slates contesting the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections, the Church and the Workers' Pastoral did not take an official stance. The ideal of non-partisanship was thereby reasserted in practice.

Given this framework of analysis there is nothing contradictory in the assertion made by the majority of militants with whom I spoke (as well as Dom Angélico himself) that were the conditions of 1984 to repeat themselves they would again assume a similar stance without any hesitation whatsoever.

If one tries to sum up what for both the progressive institutional Church and Catholic militants would constitute the ideal relationship between themselves and the trade union

movement, then we actually have an example. This is the relationship between the CUT and radical Catholicism. There is a relationship of complementarity between the two. Over a period of time that complementarity has been expressed in a number of ways, for example, in terms of similar strategic objectives and forms of conduct; a coincidence of personnel (which from the point of view of the progressive Church entails a virtual bloc transfer of its followers into the CUT as opposed to the CGT); a deliberate opening out of Church structures to the project of a union confederation prior to 1983, and so on. At times their affinity has even spilt over into open ecclesiastical declarations of support for the CUT. If we regard the CLAT as the trade union arm of Christian Democracy, then the CUT can legitimately be regarded as the autonomous secular expression of many of the ideals which progressive Catholicism also holds most dear.

Whilst Dom Paulo and Jair Meneguelli's calls for the Church to open itself out to both the CUT and the CGT is a valid concept from those ecclesiastical and trade union points of view which stress plurality as against factionalism and reductionism on either side; in point of fact, this notion that there could ever be an ideal relationship between the Church and the union movement as a whole is bound to remain a fiction - at the very least, for as long as that movement remains divided. The call is made for pluralism, but it is a decidedly hollow even if honest one.

In the following chapter this problem will be taken one stage further by looking at how the Church attempts to come to grips with the problem of class. Unlike the trade unions, which are traditionally constituted along class lines, the Church must attempt to reconcile its universalist discourse with a reality which is anything but ideally constituted. As we shall see, for sectors of the progressive Church in particular, that dilemma is most acute.

Notes

¹ By this I mean that not only was the economic situation unfavourable to the structuring and maintenance of any - let alone new - forms of trade union power, but also that the government and military exercised a powerful role in defining the rules and regulations of the political opening precisely with the aim of hampering the opposition groups' capacity to mobilise in mind. See, for example, Maria Helena Moreira Alves' chapter on "The 'Abertura' Period" in *State and Opposition in Military Brazil*, Texas the University Press, Texas, 1985, pp. 173-251.

² The amount of literature on the Workers' Party (PT) and the Catholic Church, especially the observed natural affinity between CEBs and the PT's structure, method of conduct, and political proposals, is copious if not always analytically rigorous. This theme is regularly updated at every major election, of which the 1989 presidential election was no exception. See also Antonio Ricardo Knippel Galleta's *Pastoral Popular e Política Partidária no Brasil* (Masters Thesis, Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba, São Paulo, 1985), which is one of the most useful detailed treatments of the relationship between the PT and radical Catholicism on a nationwide basis at the time of the 1982 gubernatorial and municipal elections. See also Margaret Elizabeth Keck, *From Movement to Politics: The Formation of the Workers' Party in Brazil*, Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, 1986, especially pp 134-140, "The Church and Popular Movements". See also Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza, "A Política Partidária nas CEBs", *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*, Volume 41, Fasc. 164, December 1981, pp. 708-727, which provides a careful analysis in some detail of the question of links between political parties and the CEBs. For the official Church view, see also Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros, "As Comunidades de Base no Brasil", *Documento da CNBB*, No. 25, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1982, which warns against the ideologisation of the CEBs, the reductionism that can happen, and the necessity of making CEBs a cross-class phenomenon.

³ An article in the *Folha de São Paulo* noted that at the mass meeting which opted to go out on strike (a) "the meeting was effectively led by the representatives of the sectoral commands - North, South, East, West, and Ipiranga - into which the city was divided [by the Opposition]."; (b) that "harsh criticisms and accusations were made against the union leadership, remembering in particular the acceptance of the accord after three days of general strike in the previous year, considered by the Opposition as a betrayal of the category."; and (c) that "Joaquim [Joaquinzão] practically only spoke after the strike was approved." ("Os metalúrgicos em greve", *Folha de São Paulo*, reprinted in Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos de São Bernardo do Campo e Diadema, *Suplemento Informativo da Tribuna Metalúrgica*, October 29, 1979, p. 1.) During the strike too, there were constant conflicts symbolised by the difference between the General Strike Command's [in effect the Opposition's] own assessment of the numbers of workers on strike, and the official union's estimate which invariably was considerably lower. On this question of divisions between the strategy and analysis of the Opposition and leadership of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union, see especially editions of the *Suplemento Informativo da Tribuna Metalúrgica*, October 29 to November 12, 1979.

⁴ Quoted from "D. Ivo: 'a Igreja só quer paz'", *O São Paulo*, November 9-15, 1979, p.1.

⁵ Quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁶ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

⁷ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/01/89.

⁸ Quoted from "Não está certo", *Tempo e Presença*, No. 155, November 1979, p. 6.

⁹ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Professor Ana Flora, 14/7/88.

¹¹ For a brief but very useful summing up of these positions in the late 1970's and early 1980's see Heloisa de Souza Martins, "Da União a Divisão: A Eleição dos Metalúrgicos de São Paulo" in Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação, "Trabalhadores Urbanos no Brasil: 1981", *Aconteceu Especial No. 11.*, CEDI, São Paulo, July 1982, pp. 20-21. In the article Martins makes clear that both sides progressively moderated their original positions: "Those who stayed in the Congress and had in the Factory Commission their ideological banner, gradually perceived in practice the gains, limitations and difficulties of the Factory Commissions. Especially beginning with the struggles of the unionists in São Bernardo they could perceive the possibility of action within the "fettered union". And those whom they in turn called "basistas" also came to review their positions, moderating their criticism of what they believed to be parallel unionism." (*Ibid.*, p. 21.)

¹² Peres was a figure increasingly close to the Communist Party of Brazil. Many militants with whom I spoke regarded his actions as emanating from and primarily responsible to that party rather than the Opposition, which had chosen to constitute itself as a front of workers and not tendencies. On certain occasions Peres would agree with a particular position but his party would then change its line and Peres with it. In large part, then, the conflict over the 1981 elections emerged from the desire of those forces backing him to negotiate certain guarantees and a presence for themselves in the slate. Their detractors, the vast majority, were simply not willing to give guarantees of this kind.

¹³ He commented that at the time Dom Mauro Morelli (bishop responsible for São Paulo's southern zone) was most preoccupied that the Movement Against the Cost of Living should not be instrumentalised by the Communist Party of Brazil. (Source: author interview with Aurelio Peres, 7/8/89.)

¹⁴ In one of its bulletins the Opposition captioned Dom Angélico in the following manner: "Dom Angélico, Bishop of the Workers' Pastoral, gives his support". The bishop mentioned his friendship with Waldemar Rossi and concluded with the comment that "Supporting his candidacy to the Metalworkers' Union for Slate 2 is a joy for all people who truly want a Free Union which is devoted to the interests of the working class." ("Todo apoio a Chapa 2", *Boletim da Oposição Metalúrgica Santos Dias.*, 1981, p. 4.)

¹⁵ "Rossi o Anti Cristão", *Boletim Especial da Chapa 1 Para O Metalúrgico.*, July 1981, p. 2.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Franco Farinasi, 6/12/88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ The poll was conducted amongst 215 union members at six of the largest factories (four in São Paulo's eastern zone and two in the western zone). The question of Rossi and the Pope was considered of relevance in part because, according to the survey, some 70 per cent of workers had not, at that stage, decided upon which slate to support. (Source: Oposicao Sindical Metalurgica de São Paulo, "Experiência da Zona Leste", mimeo, 1981.)

¹⁹ One aspect of "new unionism" was precisely that it sought to challenge this state of affairs. It questioned the political legitimacy of union leaderships which had for years sustained themselves in power on the basis of a relatively small number of union members and an even smaller number who voted (as permitted by law and encouraged by government). In order to break this vicious circle of insularity, radical unionists not only encouraged workers who were non-members to join their respective unions and vote; but also urged them to alter their wider political expectations of unions thereby subjecting leaders to more critical scrutiny instead of merely treating the union as a dispenser of social services.

²⁰ In the first round of voting 43,852 metalworkers voted. Aurelio Peres received 7,020 votes; the Opposition 15,469 votes; and Joaquinção 21,363. Aurelio Peres then combined forces under the banner of the Opposition. In the second round of voting total votes cast were 42,990. Joaquinção won this election with 22,697 votes and Waldemar Rossi (the Opposition) came second with 20,293 votes. (Source: *O São Paulo*, July, 1981.)

²¹ A look at the 1984 elections, where once again the profile of the Church would be very high (see section five of present chapter for further details), further suggests that the support of the Church was of marginal electoral importance. Of the 103 interviewees in my sample, 54 voted in those elections. Only 11 of these 54 actually knew that the Church took the step of openly supporting the Opposition slate. Of these 11, nine said that consciousness of this fact had not affected their vote either way, whilst one respondent said it had affected his vote in favour of the Opposition and another said that it had pushed his vote against the Opposition.

²² Contagem was a large industrial town situated in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. Like Osasco, some of its workers also went out on strike against the government's wage policies. They thereby found themselves in direct conflict with both employers and the state. For details of the similarities and differences between the two movements see Francisco Weffort, "Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco 1968", *Caderno 5*, CEBRAP, São Paulo, 1972.

²³ For a useful, brief but detailed introduction to the legal provisions of Brazilian labour relations law see Maria Herminia Tavares de Almeida, "O Sindicato no Brasil: Novos Problemas, Velhas Estruturas", *Debate e Crítica*, No. 6, São Paulo, July 1975. For a lengthier and extremely detailed study, see Hans Fuchtnier, *Os Sindicatos Brasileiros, Organização e Função Política*, Editora Graal, Rio de Janeiro, 1980. For a grasp of the wider political and historical aspects of Brazilian labour there are three classic texts: Azis Simão, *Sindicato e Estado*, Editora Dominus, São Paulo, 1966; Leonico M. Rodrigues, *Conflito Industrial e Sindicalismo no Brasil*, Editora Difel, São Paulo, 1966; and José Albertino Rodriguez, *Sindicato e Desenvolvimento no Brasil*, Editora Difel, São Paulo, 1968.

²⁴ Quoted from "Queremos uma Central Efetivamente Única", in Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação, "Trabalhadores Urbanos no Brasil: 1982-84", *Aconteceu Especial No. 16*, CEDI, São Paulo, 1986, p. 49. To the extent that the leader of the PT was Lula, and that the PT drew its greatest support from within the São Bernardo area, these fears of a loss of power were not without some foundation.

²⁵ This summary has been compiled using CUT and CGT documents. See for example, Secretaria de Formação da CUT estadual de São Paulo, "Centrais Sindicais no Brasil", *Caderno de Formação No. 2*, CUT, São Paulo, 1987; Central Geral dos Trabalhadores, *CGT: Central Geral dos Trabalhadores*, Ano I, No. I, São Paulo, April 1986. Both these documents contain a brief history of the CUT and CGT respectively, the reasons for the split, the initial aims and resolutions of the founding conferences, together with lists of affiliates. See also Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação, *Aconteceu Especial No. 16*, which gives detailed coverage to the split during the period 1982-84. For the relationship between the confederations and political parties see Antonio Ozai da Silva, *Historia das Tendências no Brasil*, Editora Proposta, São Paulo (n.d., second edition circa 1988) pp. 213-220.

²⁶ Author's interview with Gilmar Carneiro, 22/12/88.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ I am clearly taking here a restricted analysis. The Catholic Church has been keenly involved in rural union struggles. When it came to an open split between supporters of a CUT and those of a postponed CONCLAT, the agricultural union, CONTAG, opted for the deferred CONCLAT whose supporters eventually constituted the CGT. Having said

that, Jair Meneguelli (the president of CUT) commented that "we have close, I would almost say perfect relations with the CPT, the Pastoral of the Land. We have intimate relations, indeed, we have affinities with the CPT and with a large part of the Church." (Author's interview with Jair Meneguelli, 31/1/89.) Thus, in the rural sphere there is a close affinity of interests between radical Catholic militancy and the CUT, even if this is not as yet capable of encompassing CONTAG.

²⁹ Author's interview with Joaquinção, 20/9/88.

³⁰ Author's interview with José Cardoso "Ferreirinha", 16/9/88.

³¹ Source: author's interview with Anísio Batista de Oliveira, 2/7/88.

³² Quoted from "Queremos uma Central Efetivamente Única", in CEDI, *Aconteceu Especial No. 16.*, p. 50.

³³ Author's interview with Gilmar Carneiro, 22/12/88.

³⁴ This highly problematical question of the relationship between Catholic militancy and a clear ideological stance is discussed at length in a series of articles which were later published in Clodovis Boff; Frei Betto; Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira; Rogerio Almeida Cunha; Luiz Fernando Wanderley; Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza; Leonardo Boff, *Cristãos: Como Fazer Política.*, Editora Vozes, Petropolis, 1987. Most of the contributions focus in part upon the adequacy or otherwise of the Church leaving the question of a clear political or ideological stance up to individual militants. For example, in his article Clodovis Boff speaks of how, in certain cases, "For lack of an adequate political preparation and a defined ideological position, the people of the Church who go on to militate in the popular movement end up "aligned" to the "tendencies" present within and which dispute that political space. The participation of Christians therein thus becomes a dependant and subordinate one." (*Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.) For the follow-up to this debate, with special emphasis on notions of democracy and the party-political, see Leonardo Boff; Marcia Miranda; Clodovis Boff; José Americo de Lacerda Jr.; and Adair Rocha; *Os Cristãos e a Militancia Politico-Partidaria.*, Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos, Petropolis, 1988.

³⁵ Author's interview with Rubens Garcia, 9/8/88.

³⁶ Unpublished letter of March 31 1986 sent to bishops of CNBB Região Sul-1. Note that the last word used in the paragraph is, "vitimados", which literally means victimised. This is not a particularly helpful category since we do not know for sure whether they were killed or injured, whether this took place in land or urban conflicts, or whether these events happened to union members, sympathisers, or whom. The CPT itself gives a figure of 125 land and 14 urban related assassinations for the year 1985. (Source: Comissão Pastoral da Terra, *Conflitos no Campo: Brazil 1987.*, CPT, 1988, p. 22.) None of this, however, detracts from the central point made in both the letter and by myself, which is the sympathy of the Church towards this union confederation in particular.

³⁷ Quoted from Jo Azevedo, "O CONCLAT Decide a Formação da CUT", *O São Paulo.*, September 2-8, 1983, p. 10.

³⁸ "A Hora da Divisão e da Decisão", *Boletim da CPO Nacional.*, Ano IV, October/November 1983, Rio de Janeiro, p. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁴⁰ Quoted from "A Pastoral Operária Nacional Escolhe as Prioridades para 84", *O São Paulo.*, December 9-15, 1983, p. 9.

⁴¹ Author's interview with Jair Meneguelli, 31/1/89.

⁴² Author's interview with Joaquinção, 20/9/88.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Comissão da Pastoral Operária (CPO), Comissão de Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Juventude Operária Católica (JOC), Ação Católica Operária (ACO), Animação dos Cristãos no Meio Rural (ACR), *Movimentos e Serviços de Igreja e a CLAT.*, Rio de Janeiro, February 2, 1986, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁴⁹ "Vamos a luta!" (letter of the Coordenação Arquidiocesana da Pastoral Operária) published in *O São Paulo.*, May 25-31, 1984, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Quoted from "Quem Está com o Maluf Vota no Joaquinção", *O São Paulo.*, June 22-28, 1984, p.6.

⁵³ Quoted from *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁵⁴ Author's interview with Padre Fernando Altemeyer Jr., 19/7/88.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁵⁶ This question of supporting an alternative slate (i.e., that of Joaquinção) was made clear in an article at the time: Miguel Blazzo Neto, "Pastoral Define Posições para Eleições Sindicais", *O São Paulo.*, March 2-8, 1984, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Author's interview with Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, 26/10/88.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.

⁶⁰ The variability arises from the fact that conflicts can arise within organisations as to what constitutes their own "objective" interests. In other words, the objective is subjectively mediated. Taking the dominant view within the Opposition during 1981 elections, this was that ecclesiastical support would indeed contribute to their success. But one source close to Dom Paulo and Dom Angélico suggested that "you may regard the support of Dom Angélico for Slate 2 [led by Waldemar Rossi] as excellent, but Slate 2 lost because it had this support, and because it was people of the Church that led this slate. If it had not been so, they probably would have won the election. ...It needed someone much more linked to the metalworkers generally." (Author's interview with Professor Ana Flora, 14/7/88.) As we saw earlier, my survey indicated that this view is, at the very least, debatable. What is important here, however, is that the objective electoral terrain is subject to differing interpretations as to precisely what constitute its politico-religious dynamics. There is the second difficulty that even if one is able to assume that there is unanimity as to what these dynamics are, there still remain the problems of what constitute the objective interests of the group. Frei Betto, for instance took a critical view of PO's 1984 decision to support the Metalworkers' Opposition, saying that "I believe that we cannot compromise the name of the Church, the credibility

of the Church, and the pastoral sense of our work by identifying ourselves with a dispute with a partisan character of one slate against another to the extent that the two slates which emerge and are clearly representative." (Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.) Betto himself was willing to admit that "If it was a bosses slate then that is another matter." (*Ibid.*) Thus, given that objective interests may be conceptualised in the short, medium and longer term, there is nothing unusual in the fact that conflict may arise within a group sharing the same basic interests.

Chapter Five: The Theology and Ideology of Class - An Uneasy Compromise

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine some manifestations and causes of intra-ecclesiastical conflicts regarding the question of class - more specifically, the question of what stance the Church should take and how it should orient its faithful in relation to the issue of class conflict.

Once again, São Paulo provides one of the best examples for analysing this type of question. Not only is the local Church's history one of a marked orientation towards workers' issues in both documentary and practical forms, but there is also the added dimension of the current Pope's own keen interest in this particular geographical region and issue - a fact which makes it of more universal significance.

Evidence of this interest comes in various forms including: (1) John Paul II's visit to São Paulo's Morumbi stadium in 1980 where, amongst other things, his discourse made explicit reference to the issue of class struggle; (2) the request of the Vatican that Dom Cláudio should account for his and the Church's actions during the 1980 metalworkers' strike; (3) the "ad limina" visit made by bishops of the São Paulo region to the Pope in January 1986. On this occasion he took the opportunity to lecture them on "the great deviations that certain 'theologies of liberation', bring with them".¹ (4) The sequel to this meeting, John Paul's written reply to the bishops in April 1986, where once again the question of Liberation Theology was raised; and finally (5), the break-up of the Archdiocese of São Paulo in early 1989 - a break-up that was opposed by the local Church and which involved the transfer of Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino (the archdiocese's most outspoken member of the hierarchy on workers' issues) out of the area.

From the point of view of this study, what is most significant about the Pope's attitude is that it was and continues to be at variance with the outlook of many São Paulo bishops. Indeed, it is at variance with a large swathe of ecclesiastical opinion throughout Brazil, a divergence which came to a head with the silencing of the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff.

At a brief glance many of these conflicts are not apparent, at least if one takes rhetoric as the basis for judging the extent to which they exist. This is partly attributable to the Church's long-standing tendency - shared, one might add, by the vast majority of conservative and progressive bishops alike - to conceal conflict behind closed doors. There is, therefore, an absence of available material. Even when intra-ecclesiastical debates do enter the public domain there still remains the distinct tendency - again, shared by bishops of both conservative and progressive persuasion - towards the presentation of the issues through a highly refined diplomatic discourse which has the

ultimate aim of preserving a united front. Thus, what to the outsider may pass as conflict is frequently presented by ecclesiastical circles as nothing of the sort - witness, for example, the constant attempts by progressive bishops and the CNBB itself to argue that their actions are perfectly in accord with those of the present Pope even when common sense indicates otherwise. Similarly, common sense would also suggest that there is a certain divergence or discontinuity between theory and practice when on the one hand the Pope silences Leonardo Boff, as he did in 1985, and then a year later publicly declares that:

the Theology of Liberation is not only opportune but is useful and necessary².

It is important to emphasise that this tendency to present a united front is more than just mere rhetoric or the obfuscation of serious difficulties, although there is plenty of that. The phraseology of collegiality, loyalty, and communion between the various echelons of the Church possesses a substantive as well as purely formalistic or superficial significance in a way that is quite distinct from, say, a political party. These notions represent far more than just democratic principles or part of a democratic discourse. They primarily belong to a multi-, rather than uni-dimensional universe. That is to say, they are held to be an integral part of a divinely ordained scheme of things, a specifically Catholic vision of things.

To this extent it must be recalled that whilst cut across by class divisions which decisively mark it, the Catholic Church possesses an additional series of dynamics which are specific to it. Inevitably, therefore, certain aspects of conflict are mediated in forms which are unique. If one takes the case of Leonardo Boff by way of example,³ there we can see that the Vatican was not adverse to using the range of instruments at its disposal in order to ensure silence. At the same time, however, it is evident that Boff himself was willing to accept - or more accurately, to submit to - papal authority, and in so doing reaffirm his loyalty to the mother Church. An act of this kind can only be partially rather than fully understood in terms of a framework of class or power, since it also took place in the light of other related, i.e., theological assumptions, like that of papal infallibility, which are inexplicable solely in terms of a purely rational framework. The doctrine of loyalty and obedience to the higher authority of the Church forms part of Catholic faith as presently constituted. (Naturally, this in no way detracts from the fact that such doctrines can and, indeed, do constitute powerful instruments for controlling public opinion and dissent in the Church.)

For a combination of theological and political reasons, then, conflict between parties inside the Church is an immensely problematical issue. In essence, inside the institutional Church there exists an ideology of consensus. By this I mean that there is widespread acceptance of (a) the inherent virtues of both certain hierarchical structures; and (b), largely as a consequence of this, non-conflictive modes of conduct. Quite simply, the ideology of democratic contestation, and its corollary, the practice of democratic

contestation, do not constitute a part of Roman-Catholicism's institutionalised ideological universe or make-up.

In sharp contrast to civil society for which, ironically, Roman Catholicism extols the virtues of democracy, the Church possesses its own strict notions of hierarchy and subordination which are most potently expressed in the quasi-divine figure of the Pope. Were one dealing with a democratically constituted organisation, such contradictions would be unworkable, or at the very least, more openly questioned than they actually are. But in the Church such difficulties are largely avoided precisely because undemocratic practices are forcefully underpinned by notions of divine sanction. In other words, unlike most other social organisations and hierarchies, ecclesiastical hierarchy possesses its own natural/other-worldly verticality rather than a verticality which is of this world; Roman Catholic ecclesiology possesses a pyramidal structure of authority with the Pope at its peak and the lower orders (the laity) at the base. Thereby, in the last instance, it becomes unchallengeable by non-religious criteria whether exercised from within its ranks or from without.

Perhaps the most graphic recent instance of this constant blurring of the divine with institutional powers involved the Franciscan Leonardo Boff. In an article written well before his enforced silence, the theologian cited a phrase from his own book *Church Charisma and Power*.

'The issue at stake is not the legitimacy of the authority in the Church; it exists and is desired by God; what is questioned is the exclusionary *historical form* of its organisation.'

It is precisely here where the real question lies. ...The forms with which this power was exercised and organised varied historically.⁴

In effect, what Boff was seeking to do was to make a conceptual separation between the divine and the historical. This was rich in irony since conservative critics usually accuse liberation theologians of conflating the divine with the historical or material. Boff's real "error" was to separate the institutional from the divine, and it was this which ultimately led to his being silenced.

It was exactly this quality of divinely ordained and strict subordination, an unquestionable subordination, which for centuries made the Catholic Church such a powerful bulwark of feudal society and ideology. That power no longer exists in society at large. Indeed, in the case of Brazil, the Catholic Church has taken upon itself the task of questioning the status quo rather than slavishly supporting it. Within the Church, however, it is still difficult to question these issues closely since such examination risks bringing into question key aspects of the whole edifice as presently constituted. In spite of Boff's careful theological lines of argumentation in his book *Church, Charisma and Power*, these ultimately proved too much for the Vatican to take.

Whilst, then, genuinely far-reaching changes of a decentralising nature are taking place in the sphere of lay-ecclesiastical relations (for instance the mushrooming of CEBs and the moves towards increasingly participative pastoral organisations), most of the

theological fundamentals remain in place, especially as these affect intra-ecclesiastical organisation and conduct. The fact is that even when progressive bishops like Dom Paulo, Dom Angélico or Dom Cláudio speak out, they do so as members of an immensely conservative institution; a point reinforced by the fact that they speak with a special or superior authority which no lay person (or priest, for that matter), can be said to possess. However democratising they may be as individuals, they form part of a particular institutional - and in the sense described above - undemocratic framework which not only continually constrains them, but to which, paradoxically, they also continually reaffirm their unfailing commitment. As we shall see, the balance found is frequently an uneasy one.

None of the above should in any way be taken to imply that the Catholic Church is somehow devoid of or removed from conflictual processes. Quite the contrary. Upon closer examination it quickly becomes evident that controversy is not infrequent nor contestation unknown. That this is not always apparent in terms of public declarations principally stems from the fact that the Holy See, bishops, priests, and even lay Catholics themselves (albeit to a much lesser extent), are for the most part at pains to avoid open polarizations and juxtapositions. As indicated already, the language aims at a form of universality. Nevertheless, conflict is evident in terms of the simultaneity and above all incompatibility on a practical level, of the various global discourses realised. By way of an example one may cite the Vatican's increasing stress upon faith as opposed to politics; theology as opposed to ideology; and the sacred or spiritual as opposed to the profane. It feels that it has to redress the balance.

Of course, the discourse it employs is far more refined than a crude juxtaposition of the sacred to the profane: witness the Pope's comments on Liberation Theology above. But periodically, as in the case of Leonardo Boff; as in the case of the break up of the Archdiocese of São Paulo and the removal of Dom Angélico; as in the case of Waldemar Rossi's speech in the Morumbi stadium (see below); or in the assertion of papal authority over the São Paulo bishops, the lines of power and the ideologies of contestation become more readily discernible. In short, the theory gives way to a practice which removes the ambiguities.

Similarly, whilst those currents associated with Liberation Theology may use a non-specific or universalistic institutional discourse (witness, for example, Dom Cláudio's unwillingness to discuss the issue of divisions within his own diocese), they too feel the need to redress the balance - only this time in favour of a Catholicism which is firmly committed to a preferential option for the poor. Furthermore, just as the rhetoric of their conservative colleagues gives way to a specific, i.e., partisan practice, so too does their own, thereby dispelling many theoretical ambiguities and doubts. By way of example one need but recall the openly partisan attitude of the Church in São Paulo to the Metalworkers' Opposition throughout the 1970's; the attitude of Dom Paulo and Dom Cláudio to the workers, government and employers during the ABC strikes of 1978-80;

the stance taken by the São Paulo hierarchy during the 1984 metalworker elections vis-a-vis the issues at hand, and vis-a-vis their own active lay members; and the attitude of radical Catholic militants towards trade unions which, in their view, must be both secular and conflictive rather than formed along neo-Christendom lines with a policy of class conciliation.

What this chapter seeks to do, then, is to examine these positions with specific reference to the issue of class. To see, in other words, where the principal points of consensus lie throughout the ethico-political spectrum, as well as what the nature and principal points of conflict are in practice. Throughout, the underlying question will be that of what the Church's preferential option for the poor means, i.e., the real content with which it is invested, whether this is a class option, and finally, whether such an option is compatible with an institution like the Roman Catholic Church, which simultaneously possesses universalistic aims, structures and discourses.

5.2 Points of Consensus

Uniting the vast spectrum of Catholic opinion (a spectrum in which, as I indicated in my introductory chapter, I would place both Pope John Paul II, the bishops of São Paulo, the CNBB, radical Catholic militants, and leading liberation theologians) are a series of basic propositions concerning the role of the Church in relation to society, politics, and ideology. Broadly speaking, these points (which appear throughout much of post Vatican II social teaching as well as in the statements of Latin American bishops and the writings of liberation theologians) converge upon the inherent specificities of the Church's mission, i.e., as an institution entrusted with fostering the word of God, together with the need for a social mission which claims universality and at the same time possesses clearly defined limits.

What follows is a schematic and selective summary of what I believe to be amongst the most important of these orienting principles. These are:

- (1) The Church's aims are transcendental.
- (2) An integral part of that transcendental vision is a profound social commitment, so that there is also a material base.
- (3) Given that all socio-political organisation belongs basically to a moral order, the Church has the right and duty to offer socio-moral guidance.
- (4) Political organisation and conduct must at all times be the servant of the "common good", and subject to the Church's judgement in terms of a theory of justice. Any deviation from this path will therefore elicit or permit comments from the Church, provided that these are based in Gospel criteria rather than ideological criteria.
- (5) Faith is neither reduceable to, nor exhausted in, the political; it is much wider than this. The demands of faith include social justice, but go beyond it.

(6) Hence the Church cannot allow itself to be reduced to a political faction or to partisanship except under the most exceptional circumstances.

(7) On no account does the Church possess an independent political project. Its social teaching cannot be reduced to any one economic system, or ideology, or political party. It is not a "third way".

(8) Nor can the Church's message be reduced to a single ~~single~~ class, its message of salvation is addressed to all classes.

(9) This universalism does not imply a neutrality in the face of injustices.

(10) It is for this reason, amongst others, that the Church engages in a preferential option for the poor.

(11) It also asserts the priority of labour over capital.

(12) The pressing need to supercede the conflicts of classes.

(13) The unacceptability of liberal capitalism and collectivist Communism as presently constituted.

(14) And finally, that Catholicism is a faith and not an ideology. As such it is not the job of the institutional Church to instigate social change in its own name, rather, it must seek to illuminate reality according to the principles of the Gospel and encourage others to conform as closely as possible to those principles.

What quickly becomes evident in these points is just how much Catholic conservatives and progressives have theoretically in common with one another. What makes this common ground all the more remarkable is that it is precisely over these kinds of questions, i.e., the temporality of the Church and its relationship to society, politics ideology and class, that conflict seems to centre.

How can this paradox be explained? The answer is twofold. Firstly, the observer must be careful not to frame conflicts in terms of false juxtapositions. The fact is that on a large range of theoretical issues, persons throughout the ethico-political spectrum stand together rather than in mutually divided and antagonistic camps. This can be summed up in the notion (not always as self-evident as it might appear) that prior to being conservative or progressive these individuals and groups are Catholic. This is why, for example, an organ as comparatively progressive as the CNBB was able to declare that:

The appeal to "Marxist analysis" as an instrument for the comprehension of reality particularly preoccupies us as well as the appeal to the class struggle as the fundamental law of social change.⁵

It is also why, for instance, one of the most radical and politically involved bishops, Dom Hélder Câmara, could affirm that:

The Church will not opt for a political party. ...Today the Church orients its lay followers in the direction of each freely making his own party-political option.⁶

It is why the Workers' Pastoral of São Paulo argued that:

the Good News is not to be confused with a socio-political or socio-religious regime. It is universalist.⁷

And it is also why a more conservative figure like Pope John Paul II could make such an apparently radical affirmation that the Church supports:

the principle of the priority of "labour" in confrontation with "capital".⁸

What unites these statements and lends them a considerable degree of coherence and consistency is the long tradition of moral philosophy which is basic to Catholic social teaching. And because they are far from atypical statements, this dimension of common foundations must never be forgotten.

But, to address the second part of the paradox posed, these positions do simultaneously belong to quite different totalities. That is to say, when seen in terms of their broader theoretical and practical settings, they are found to be inconsistent with one another. In essence, this is because they undergo or arise from a series of practical and theoretical secular mediations which differentiate them, often quite profoundly. Nowhere is this more evident than in relation to the question of class, to which I now turn.

5.3 The Preferential Option for the Poor and the Mediation of Class Conflict

Although by no means the sole source of Catholic attitudes towards the issue of class, there is little doubt that throughout Latin America in general, and certainly in the case of Brazil, the preferential option for the poor (which was given formal standing in the conferences of Medellin and Puebla) has proved of central importance. It should be stressed at the outset, however, that this option is a clearly non-Marxist formulation. As one leading liberation theologian put it to me:

In the first place, the option for the poor in the Church has a non-political, i.e., religious-ethical root, which is to say, it bases itself upon the faith of the Church in Christ, for the Messiah, who was poor, who loved the poor, who surrounded himself with the poor, privileged the poor, etc. This is the fundamental root.⁹

Indeed, it is upon these ethical foundations that the Latin American bishops at Puebla noted the following in their discussion of the preferential option for the poor:

When we draw near to the poor in order to accompany them and serve them, we are doing what Christ taught us to do when he became our brother, poor like us. Hence service to the poor is the privileged, though not exclusive, gauge of our following Christ. The best service to our fellows is evangelisation, which disposes them to fulfill themselves as children of God, liberates them as children of God, liberates them from injustices, and fosters their integral advancement.¹⁰

Given such a strong identification with the poor, whom John Paul II has described as "God's favourites",¹¹ it stands to reason that the definition of the poor is of critical importance. Herein lies the linkage with social class and the source of much conflict. For having stressed the religious rather than political roots of the Church's option, Frei

Clodovis Boff, like all leading liberation theologians and much of the progressive Church, goes on to partially define (i.e., in a non-exclusivistic sense) the issue and answer it in the following manner:

How are these poor seen, experienced and encountered historically? ...The poor are constituted in classes. ...This concrete historical content of the poor organised in class is also incorporated within the option for the poor.¹²

This concretisation of the option for the poor does not represent a break with the Church's transcendental telos or any form of reductionism; it simply represents the necessary crystallisation of that option under specific circumstances. Neither, as its proponents are the first to admit, does it represent the last word on the subject. On the contrary, whilst the concept of the poor is inclusive of class, it is more than merely equivalent. It embraces other dimensions as well and in this sense, to use the words of Boff, "overflows the concept of class". He cites two principal reasons for this, one sociological and the other religious. The sociological he explains as follows:

In Latin America, class does not account for, does not include, all the phenomena of the oppressed masses due to the kind of dependent associated and exclusive capitalist development that we live here. So much so that we prefer to speak in terms of popular classes than in the proletariat. In order to include the proletariat, but also the "pobretariado" - which is to say the under-employed classes, the unemployed classes, the peasants, and all that sector which is not incorporated in a formal capitalist economy.¹³

The second reason he explains as follows:

the concept of poor, especially commencing from its Biblical and religious content, is richer than the concept of exploited or class. It also highlights the person who is rejected, who lives in anonymity, who is segregated due to his/her race, sex, etc. So it incorporates all these elements - not only infrastructural economic, but at times superstructural, of a cultural character. ...So it is a richer and more coloured idea, it has more internal determinations. And this is important at a practical level because it assumes that the task of liberation is not done only at the level of the class struggle and of economic emancipation, but is also done at the cultural and religious levels, the relations between the two sexes, at the level of race, black, white, of culture, if he is indian, if European immigrant, if Brazilian born here, etc.¹⁴

Clearly, then, the concept is a highly sophisticated one; but, in the view of progressive Catholic sectors, that richness and complexity does not divorce it from specific socio-political contents and consequences. As Boff goes on to explain:

This option for the poor, which incorporates the question of class and the class struggle, is globally opposed to a supra- or inter-class interpretation, because it considers that the poor person cannot be understood outside the context of the oppression of the struggle; which is to say that the poor person is produced, the poor person is impoverished, is marginalised, is maintained poor. So the poor is a conflictive reality.¹⁵

It is precisely this language of class and conflict, that on occasions uses Marxist analysis and gains Marxist overtones, which conservatives in particular find so hard to swallow.¹⁶ They would have observers believe that, amongst other things, this is because it reduces the motor of history to that of class and thereby denies the transcendentalism

of the Church, i.e., renders it materialistic. But, as I have already indicated at the beginning of the second section (to the present chapter) and as the comments of Clodovis Boff clearly indicate, the principle of the transcendental is not in question; on the contrary, it represents both a common point of departure amongst Catholics - and, indeed, differentiation between Marxists and Christians.

Perhaps more controversial and far-reaching, therefore, is the argument which the Puebla conference itself makes, namely, that the mere usage of elements of Marxist analysis is highly problematical because these belong to a totality which is at variance with Gospel teaching:

Some believe it is possible to separate various aspects of Marxism - its doctrine and method of analysis in particular. But we would remind people of the teaching of the papal magisterium on this point: "It would be foolish and dangerous on that account to forget that they are closely linked to each other; to embrace certain elements of Marxist analysis without taking due account of their relation with its ideology; and to become involved in the class struggle without paying attention to the kind of violent and totalitarian society to which this activity leads" (*Octogesima Adveniens*:34).¹⁷

What is all the more remarkable about this statement, quite apart from the fact that it originates from a conference with such major implications for the Catholic Church throughout Latin America, is that it appears to owe less to genuine theoretical analysis of the issues involved and much more to the resurgence and reassertion of traditional ecclesiastical hostility towards Marxism. After all, having questioned the feasibility of separating Marxist method from doctrine (a perfectly legitimate and necessary issue to raise), the bishops merely go on to imply that this cannot be done rather than to actually explain why this might be so.¹⁸ Although this is achieved by citing an encyclical written by Pope Paul VI (who, incidentally, was not adverse to a little political intervention and ideologisation of his own, when for example, during Italian general elections he effectively campaigned on behalf of the Christian Democrats and against the Communist Party), the Latin American bishops themselves leave little doubt as to where they stand. In the following paragraph they say:

We must also note the risk of ideologisation run by theological reflection when it is based on a praxis that has recourse to Marxist analysis. The consequences are the total politicization of Christian existence, the disintegration of the language of faith into that of the social sciences, and the draining away of the transcendental dimension of Christian salvation.¹⁹

Once again, these comments owe more to assertion and less to rigorous analysis. Their one saving grace, it has to be said, is that at least they do not use the term inevitable when talking of the havoc - intellectual, practical and moral - which Marxism is supposed to wreak upon Christianity.

Is there, then, a radical incompatibility between Marxism and Christianity? In one key respect, i.e., that of Marxism being closed to a transcendental vision, the answer is undoubtedly yes. But in other respects the answer appears to depend very much upon the standpoint of the observer: a fact which conservatives in particular find much harder to

admit than their more radical colleagues.

The problem can be summed up as follows. In order to approximate the principles of faith to reality, i.e., to operationalise them, Catholics must of necessity interpret that reality and therefore have recourse to social scientific data and frameworks of analysis. Ideally, from a radical Catholic perspective, the result is a permanent dialogue between faith and social science (which may on occasions include Marxist frameworks of analysis) - each respecting the autonomy of the other, but also each informing the other. As one São Paulo bishop who has extensively examined this question comments:

An evangelical vision of reality will always be interpretive and not simply descriptive. Whilst necessary, the cold statistical and economic data of a situation are insufficient. Economics is also a human science. It possesses its own methodology which confers upon it a certain scientific autonomy. But its indications are not final conclusions which can, alone, guide human life in society. Jesus has given us other criteria for seeing the reality which surrounds us.²⁰

What is of equal - if not greater - significance is the view held amongst some sectors of the progressive Church that this notion of a constructive dialogue between faith and social science must also extend to the relationship between faith and ideology. For them this does not mean the ideologisation of faith, in the sense of its total identification with one or other given theory of social action, but rather the recognition that faith is ideologically mediated, that is to say, ideology contests and purifies faith at a practical level, as praxis. This should not, however, subvert the primacy of their respective functions and status, i.e., ultimately it is up to faith in a negative sense to discern, select, and exclude certain proposals; but it is, amongst other things, the task of ideology to provide these positive proposals. One of the most succinct summaries of this position is provided by Dom Cândido Padin where he argues the following:

The ideal would be that Christian values, rendered explicit by theology, would come to inspire ideological projects assumed by determinate groups of militants. One is talking, however, of an inspiration and not an identification. Every ideological formulation is always partial and historical. It searches for an answer for a determinate social situation and a certain historical moment. It is never the only formula possible for the fostering of social change. It admits variants and, therefore, legitimate options. That is where the healthy freedom of the Christian is exercised, engendering the creativity for the best ideological formulations. The latter, however, are linked to his personal or group option, incapable of being presented in the name of the Church.²¹

If one uses this criterion of not presenting specific options in the name of the Church, but instead in individual or group capacities, it soon becomes apparent that conservatives fall far short of their pretensions to a non-ideological Church. The Pope's 1980 discourse to the workers in the Morumbi stadium is a classic example of this. Firstly, he categorically rejects the class struggle, - this in front of many metalworkers who only a few months earlier were being viciously attacked by the state and employers:

The class struggle is not the path which leads to social order, because it brings with it the risk of elevating the disfavoured to privileged, creating new situations of injustice for those who until now had the advantages. One does not build upon a base of disaffection and still less upon one that sees the destruction of others.²²

Having ruled out one weapon for the articulation of workers' struggles the Pope immediately goes on to offer his own substitute:

Repelling the class struggle is also to opt resolutely for a noble struggle in favour of social justice. The diverse centres of power and the different representatives of society must be capable of uniting, of coordinating their own efforts and of arriving at an accord over clear and effective programmes. In this consists the Christian formula for creating a just society!²³

This "Christian formula" appears to bypass a number of quite fundamental questions, most importantly that of what happens if these diverse centres of power are, in actual fact, mutually opposed to one another, as was shown to be the case in Brazil during the strikes of that year. And yet the Pope's formula (given to a specific audience soon after a highly acrimonious labour conflict of which he had been personally made aware) seems to take no account of this possibility. Indeed, it virtually rules it out of order as a matter of principle.

This crucial, and, I would argue, highly political evasion is rendered all the more problematic when one takes account of the fact that during the 1980 metalworkers' dispute both the Minister of Labour who negotiated in the dispute on behalf of the government, and the vice-president of the key employers federation involved were members of the Christian employers association, the ADCE, which itself was ostensibly devoted to the propagation of Christian social teaching in these circles.²⁴ Now either, if one uses papal criteria, this implies a failure on the part of the ADCE and its members at a critical moment in time, or, as I think is far more likely, it suggests and shows that their faith was mediated in a highly specific, i.e., class related manner. By the same token, one may either choose to believe that Lula did not do justice to his Christian beliefs, or, on the other hand, see those beliefs as being critically related to and mediated by his class situation. As for the Church, it simply had to choose sides. In short, there was no "Christian formula" for the creation of a just society, at least not as the Pope sought to conceptualise it in his address. Quite simply, the interests involved were antagonistic and, therefore, totally incapable of arriving at any kind of accord. In this particular instance, therefore, the Christian solution lay very much closer to Clodovis Boff's notion of an ecclesiastical insertion into a conflictive reality.

Does this elimination of certain options, especially Marxist ones, betray an ideological bias to which conservatives are unwilling to admit? Epistemologically it is noteworthy that whilst the Church, particularly in the formulation of its social doctrine, is highly eclectic - borrowing particular concepts from political economy, sociology, and so on, without worrying too much about frameworks of analysis which give rise to terms such as "democracy", "under-development", "Third World", "capital", etc., - it feels unable to extend that same pluralism to Marxist terminologies or frameworks of analysis.

Perhaps this helps to explain one incident in the Morumbi stadium, the truncation of Waldemar Rossi's address to the Pope.

Rossi was selected to give a speech because of his status as a leading Catholic militant. The official reasons given for its curtailment (only the first two and last three paragraphs were read out of the total of 14) were the pressured nature of the Pope's schedule, that there was rain, and that the Pope's health had to be borne in mind. But, as has been pointed out, there were other occasions during the visit when the Pope was either late or opened up his schedule quite unexpectedly. What seems to have been of greater relevance, was the openly denunciatory tone of Rossi's speech which discussed the Brazilian labour situation in the most uncompromising of terms. Significantly, in those parts of his speech that were cut, he spoke of the "fascist, corporative and vertical model", which inspired Brazil's labour codes and which "represses and impedes the independent organisation of the workers".²⁵ He also noted how in Brazil:

capitalism imposes violent conditions of work, it subordinates and corrupts, it decides its own laws. It is the savage capitalism of the multinationals.²⁶

He also noted the Brazilian Church's, and especially the Archdiocese of São Paulo's, strong commitment to the struggles of the Brazilian workers' movement. This language - its degree of specificity and angle of attack - hardly squared with the Pope's substantively non-conflictual vision and non-specific terminology, let alone with Vatican diplomacy. One priest therefore explained the truncation of Rossi's speech in the following terms:

it was the decision of the Pope's advisers due to the pressure of the Ministry of the Army that it not be read. Even the salutation was not to be read! It was a concession of the cardinal [Dom Paulo], a fight of the cardinal, that at least it would be possible to read that which was relevant. So it was not the rain or the delay.. it was that it was not of interest to have transmitted to 120 million inhabitants via national network a discourse which laid bare the capitalist system. It was a boycott of the army and the advisers of the Vatican.. a deliberate manipulation.²⁷

However, during his own cardinalship of Cracow in Poland, where the authoritarianism of the state came from a Communist regime, the then cardinal Karol Wojtyla went out of his way to give space to opposition elements linked to dissident trade unionism. In May 1978, for example, speaking before 150,000 miners and metalworkers, he publicly attacked the official (i.e., Communist) unions. Later that same year he championed the Church's support for the so-called Flying University, a group of dissident intellectuals linked to the opposition and whose activities the government of the day considered illegal.

Under these conditions, the future Pope recognised that an even-handed condemnation of the conflicting parties, i.e., a call to the centres of power and the different representatives of society to unite and reach an accord rather than collide with one another, was a complete fiction. Not only did he recognise that a trial of strength was inevitable, but he also emphatically staked a claim for the Church's openly partisan involvement in that struggle.²⁸ Apparently, in the case of Brazil, he did not feel the same way, or at the very least, he thought that under no circumstances could any such conflict

be allowed to be articulated in terms of the class struggle.

This shift in perspective on the part of the Pope away from a partisan stance should not solely be attributed to any political bias (although as one associate of Dom Paulo's admitted to me, the Pope's view on the subject in a conversation with the cardinal was that "'I believe in the Theology of Liberation, but I do not believe in the usage of Marxist analysis by Christians.'"²⁹), for there simultaneously exists a genuine difficulty regarding the question of hierarchy and the specificity of language that can be employed. It may be summed up in the simple proposition, a tendency rather than cast-iron law, which is that to the extent that one moves up the Church hierarchy and power becomes exclusive and specialised, so too language shifts in the opposite direction, becoming universalistic and all-inclusive. Similarly, if one moves down the scale, there is a corresponding increase in the specificity of formulations, albeit a specificity that is ultimately constrained by the widely accepted notion that a direct identity, i.e., between the party-political, programmatic, and ideological on the one hand, and Christian doctrine on the other is impermissible.

Although they move in opposite directions, these tendencies need not necessarily be incompatible insofar as they are merely technical, i.e., insofar as they reflect the differing breadth of the constituencies to whom they are addressed as well as the particular instances of application. It is a sort of division of labour. Thus, the language of the Pope carries with it not only a special symbolic weight, but also a series of special functions, amongst which is the capacity to address all the faithful at one and the same time. In short, it possesses a spacial and temporal universality; it attempts to be a living extension of Catholic doctrine.³⁰ Equally, to the extent that the Church renders itself locally concrete (from international bishops' conference, to national, state and city levels, as well as the move from bishop to priest, activist, Church to CEB, and so on), that language of necessity becomes ever more concrete, moving from the theoretical to the practical and applied. Even Waldemar Rossi was willing to assert this in relation to differences that arise between the CNBB's notion of class and PO's:

This is normal, you know, because the Workers' Pastoral is made up of workers who directly live exploitation. Our language is a concrete language; but the whole of the Church is more than this. There are other experiences. Elaborations upon reality are frequently more theoretically reasoned, even if we assume the same presuppositions.³¹

The key question, however, is whether they do indeed assume the same presuppositions, or rather, whether certain mediations proceed to set them apart. Can the concrete particularities really be encapsulated in a language of theoretical universality? If one inverts the question and relates it to a number of the 14 points listed in the second section of the present chapter, then the issue hinges upon just how one defines and then makes real the Church's profound social commitment; upon how one defines the ethical and moral aspects of a given problem as being worthy of inclusion in Church commentary; upon how one defines the "common good" and any subsequent deviations

from it and then proceeds to criticise these using gospel rather than ideological criteria; upon the underlying choices involved in the conceptual elevation of ordinary to exceptional circumstances, and hence the selection of the point at which partisanship becomes legitimate; upon how one firstly defines and then reconciles the Church's universalism with its preferential option for the poor; upon what one understands by the Church's assertion of the priority of labour over capital, and what content this notion is given; and finally, upon how, at any given moment in time, one is to ascribe an order, i.e., precedence, to these principles given that they may conflict with one another. As the following comments from Dom Cláudio make absolutely plain, whilst the conceptual points of departure may be relatively clear, the relationship between Christian theory and practice nevertheless remains an inherently ambiguous one:

I believe that you have to have certain theoretical clarities. For us this signifies having clarity as to what are the criteria of the Gospel - thus our faith, what are the criteria of human reason, what are human rights, etc, you must have a certain clarity, this is one thing. On the other hand, this clarity does not realise itself in the concrete, in history normally, it is always bound up with concrete ambiguities, which is to say, when something happens this event is never absolutely clear. You cannot assume a certain Cartesianism there, of having clear and distinct ideas when you act in history. History is full of ambiguities and in the meantime you have to decide something within the ambiguity...this is much more risky because you end up dirtying your hands as well.³²

A powerful example of this ambiguity, or dirtying of the Church's hands, can be seen in its varying practical and theoretical conceptualisations of the notion of the priority of labour over capital, to which I now turn.

5.4 The Catholic Church and the Priority of Labour in Relation to Capital

The concept has been given currency within the Roman Catholic Church through John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (*Human Labour*). In that encyclical he makes a strong plea for the subjectivity of labour:

the primary basis for the value of labour is man himself... Whilst it is true that man is destined and is called to work, however, above all, work is "for man" and not man "for work".³³

He counterposes this Christian concept of subjectivity, which also includes the idea that man should be a "free and conscious subject...a subject who decides for himself",³⁴ to liberal capitalist and Marxist visions. His argument is that:

labour is always a primary *efficient cause*, whilst "capital", being the totality of the means of production, merely remains an *instrument*, or instrumental cause.³⁵

This "*priority of 'labour' in confrontation with 'capital'*"³⁶ is a principle which must hold irrespective of the socio-economic system. That is where a conflict arises between the Pope's vision and what he terms:

"rigid" capitalism, which defends the exclusive right of the private ownership of the means of production, as an untouchable "dogma" in economic life.³⁷

The latter position he calls "unacceptable".³⁸

What is interesting about the Pope's comments is that whilst they represent a strong critique of what he terms "rigid" capitalism, they do by implication simultaneously leave the way open for a concept of flexible capitalism, a notion long advocated by Catholic social teaching. Indeed, he even goes on to assert the need for the:

participation of the workers in the management and/or the profits of firms, the so-called worker "shareholder", and similar things.³⁹

The requirement, then, is merely "to continually submit "rigid" capitalism to a revision".⁴⁰ As for its outright elimination, not a hint of this appears in the encyclical. On the contrary, John Paul II proceeds in the opposite direction and emphasises in italics that:

these multiple reforms so eagerly sought cannot be realised *with the aprioristic elimination of private property and the means of production.*⁴¹

This is because he notes that groups:

inspired by Marxist ideology like political parties...tend towards *the monopolisation of power in every society...*⁴²

which is a negation of man's subjectivity. The ideal, or at least one ideal as he perceives it, is that:

*the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, subordinated to the universal destination of goods.*⁴³

Earlier, I mentioned that aspect of papal discourse which attempts to project universal values, to speak to all the faithful, and which therefore has a functional tendency to lose its specificity. What I think is noticable in *Laborem Exercens* is just how far from this principle John Paul II departs. By way of a few brief examples we should note the following. On the one hand, the Pope devotes much attention - frequently italicised - to the historical tendencies towards the centralisation of power in Communist societies, and he cites the dynamics of revolutionary situations as one cause. On the other hand he turns a blind eye to the historically observable and inherent tendency of capital towards monopoly within capitalist societies, including its transnational monopolisation. There is no analysis whatsoever of the tyranny of the market, i.e., those dynamics which do not allow capital to stand still but which, on the contrary, impel it in the direction of yet greater concentrations. A systematic critique is replaced by an abstract moral postulate the existential basis of which is exempted from serious consideration. To attack "primitive" or "rigid" capitalism, as he undoubtedly does, is no substitute for addressing this vital issue. Rather, it represents a diversion of the Church's denunciatory resources in the direction of a nineteenth century straw man. As for the twentieth century, the call becomes one of reforming capitalism.

The encyclical also fails to address itself to the equally important question of how small capital has and might historically co-exist in alternative social structures, why it should continue to remain small, and what the implications of this would be for the totality of capital, let alone society as a whole. This, surely, is particularly important given the social convulsions that have rocked a country like China (since the introduction of its small scale capitalism), and the social convulsions through which the Soviet Union will increasingly go, and through which the Pope's own native Poland is already going. Questions of this kind possess ethico-political dimensions, and yet they are not the subject of papal consideration. This would appear to indicate a more narrow rather than universalistic series of priorities are at work.

With regard to the question of trade unions, John Paul's priorities once again speak for themselves. He makes little secret of the fact that he wishes to divest them of any class dynamic:

Catholic social doctrine does not believe that unions are merely a reflection of a "class" structure of society, just as it does not believe that they are the exponent of a class struggle, which inevitably governs social life. They are, yes, *an exponent of the struggle for social justice, for just rights of the men of work according to their diverse occupations.*⁴⁴

His vision is one of social harmony for:

In the last analysis, in this community as much those who work as those who dispose of the means of production or are the owners thereof must unite.⁴⁵

By now, the outlines of the Pope's agenda, in particular its strong ideological bias, should be clearer. He adopts a neo-capitalist perspective. i.e., the notion that its "primitive" version can and should be reformed but not abolished. Communism, on the other hand, is beyond redemption.

If for the moment these ideological questions are put to one side, then perhaps the main theoretical issue to emerge from the analysis of this encyclical is whether the postulation of ends - without at least giving some indication as to the means by which these are to be achieved - is an adequate basis upon which to proceed.

What makes this notion of ends without means of such fundamental significance is its almost universal acceptance throughout the ethico-political spectrum as both the correct and only practicable manner by which the Catholic Church can hope to proceed. As I indicated earlier, whilst the Church does not seek neutrality in the face of injustice (hence it engages in critico-prophetic action), neither does it believe that it can afford to propose or be directly identified with positive projects for the improvement of those conditions; by this I mean that it cannot afford to be equated with totalising political visions (e.g., party-political) or ideological (i.e., philosophical) projects. It can, however, be identified with piecemeal efforts for change - not in the sense of being isolated, ineffective, or short-term - but rather in the sense of being carried out on the basis of strictly ethical or Gospel oriented criteria. That may even necessitate long term projects

and open cooperation with party-political groupings, but throughout, the lines of subordination must remain clear. Any ethical incompatibilities which arise should ultimately lead to a break and the reassertion of those ethical criteria rather than their subordination to political or ideological loyalties.

A typical assertion of this division was given to me by Dom Paulo in regard to his own actions and the way in which both his critics and allies perceive them:

They think that I am very much of the left. In certain things I openly criticise the government, I am not at all reluctant to do this. This morning I spoke with Erundina [the candidate of the Workers' Party and elected Mayor of São Paulo in November 1988, a victory for which the Church was partly credited], but this afternoon I could complain about her... I think that is where we must guard our Christian independence and liberty, if not it will become a sort of ecclesiastical totalitarianism.⁴⁶

As a formulation, Dom Paulo's words possess a certain simplicity and therefore power. They seem to offer a clear way forward. They avoid the kinds of pit-falls associated neo-Christendom approaches, i.e., the representation of particular instances - be they trade union, party-political or ideological - as manifestations of divine will. In this way, it is hoped, the Church neither becomes a tool of outside forces nor a crude manipulator of social actors. Its own integrity and that of civil society are preserved.

In terms of a positive proposal, however, his statement appears to beg as many questions as it answers. If taken to its ultimate conclusion, for instance, one could argue that all that is being offered is a sort of political relativism. In other words, from the moment that an ethical disagreement arises then a break should take place. But this in turn raises the question of what criteria a supposedly free-floating and independent Christian will use to cope with the fact that political change necessarily operates in different forms and longer time-frames than moral postulates alone can handle or offer solutions to. What for instance, should be the attitude of a Christian towards a long-term policy whose immediate results are prejudicial to the "common good", particularly if it is a matter of political rather than moral judgement that this temporal separation exists and that the suffering will indeed come to an end? If one accepts, as Catholic social doctrine does, that institutional politics is a viable and necessary means of achieving social change, i.e., that it constitutes a legitimate method of obtaining certain results, then surely it is highly contradictory to advocate an immediatist or atomised critique (albeit from a Biblical perspective) which fails to adequately take account of these mediations?

The answer is that whilst theoretically speaking independence is guarded as an ideal in itself, in practice it is constantly mediated by political and ideological loyalties. Dom Paulo did not stand in equidistant relationship to Luiza Erundina of the Workers' Party or the Sarney government as his quote implies. Quite the opposite, political centres of gravity and dynamics made themselves felt. The Pope does not approach a Communist government with the freshness of a newborn baby, judging each and every act on a purely case by case basis. On the contrary, both figures (and, for that matter, all

members) of the Catholic hierarchy, put matters into an historical, political and even ideological perspective. They need to, if they are to make any sense of the world. Indeed, when pressed on this issue of a non-ideological Church, the Dom Paulo was quite forthcoming:

I think that it is very difficult for someone not to have an ideology. Everybody has an ideology. We try and be Christians and pass over ideology, but when we discover we always discover with a certain ideology. For example, my ideology is that labour should prevail over capital, or that the centre of the world is the working man. For others this is an ideology, but for me it is an evangelical consequence, a consequence of all evangelical doctrine.⁴⁷

The aim, then, is to try and reassert the specificities of Christian identity in a recognisably profane world. Paradoxically, this theory of a religious balance must constantly be reasserted despite the open admission in some quarters that its practice (be that in terms of how one interprets reality or acts upon it) is anything but simple. One is dealing with a permanent tension. Dom Cláudio gives a succinct summing up of this position:

The criteria of faith and of the Gospel are not and cannot be ideological. Now the moment that it is put into practice, it is clear that it, too, suffers ideological injunctions; in one way or another we all suffer from this. What we must always be alive to is to have a sufficient critical distance from our ideologies and not permit ideology to predominate the criteria of faith. This is what is important in terms of ideology. But ideology is something we all have because it signifies a concrete form of proposing solutions for a community⁴⁸.

If one expands this notion of ideology to include the Church's own analytical and denunciatory dimensions, rather than simply limiting it to the specifically programmatic (i.e., concrete solutions for a community which lay members of society themselves propose), then the tensions are rendered that much more complex. No longer is one dealing with a series of pure theories or doctrines which are separate from or which precede ideology and subsequently inspire it. Suddenly the very process is partially reversed and theological reflection itself is seen to be imbued with ideological ambiguities.

But why should our definition be expanded? In essence the answer to this question is that the process of religious denunciation entails the *de facto* presence or affirmation of (at the very least) partially concrete ideals, and not just the annunciation of abstractions which it is the job of lay individuals in society to interpret. Were it merely the latter then all hierarchical pronouncements would simply be a repetition of biblical texts. One might even go so far as to say that there would be no need for hierarchy (except for the propagation of future cadres). But as it is, all the Catholic Church's deliberative documents - from the Pope's encyclicals to the CNBB's discussion papers - are adaptations and interpretations of reality. They are contingent upon an accurate analysis of its contours. Furthermore, they represent a constant re-prioritisation of themes.

5.5 The Contradictory Mediation of Catholic Social Teaching - The Case of Laborem

Exercens

A powerful instance of the sorts of difficulties which arise from non-mediated and supposedly non-ideological discourses is evident in the reception that was accorded to *Laborem Exercens* by progressive sectors of the Brazilian Catholic Church, as well as socially concerned Christian employers. Here the emergence of contradictions between global discourses can be more readily seen

Obviously, by virtue of its status as a papal pronouncement, the Church's progressive sectors could hardly criticise *Laborem Exercens* openly. But in the case of Dom Cláudio, he went on to hail the document as "a great encyclical which made fantastic advances."⁴⁹ More significantly still, he went on to attack capitalism in the name of the encyclical. In a Mass held for workers in ABC he said:

we condemn all forms of capitalism, not merely its most brutal forms, as is our case, but all forms of capitalism: this is a radical condemnation.⁵⁰

Radical words indeed, which is probably why the following week he felt the need to qualify them in a letter to the journal *O São Paulo* which stated the following:

I based myself explicitly upon an affirmation of the Pope in *Laborem Exercens*. There, the Pope affirms that the Church teaches the priority of labour over capital. In this way I conclude that the Pope condemns at the root, that is to say, radically, each and every capitalism, because the essence of all capitalism is to give priority to capital over labour; that is why it is called capitalism "⁵¹

Were the Pope to have made the important and valid connexion which Dom Cláudio makes, namely that "the essence of capitalism is to give priority to capital over labour", then the Pope's support for the principle of the priority of labour over capital would indeed be a profoundly radical statement. But this does not happen, the concept is left in isolation. Whilst specific variants of capitalism are directly criticised, the systematic critique of its essence is not even touched upon. How else, for example, could John Paul propose the idea of submitting "'rigid' capitalism to a revision"?⁵²

Albeit carried out in the name of *Laborem Exercens*, Dom Cláudio's line of reasoning appears to follow a radically different course. He argues that whilst amenable to social demands these cannot be fully met without putting into jeopardy the priority of capital, its metabolism. Even neo-capitalism gives priority to capital. He argues that:

It is not a question of humanising, it is a question of giving priority. ...At the moment he puts man in the first place it stops being capitalism in its essential sense.⁵³

Furthermore, and once again in sharp contrast to the whole tenor of the encyclical, Dom Cláudio recognises that capital and labour, and the respective representatives thereof, are in antagonistic relation to one another. For labour there is no great moral dilemma to the extent that:

in the labour-capital conflict, the wronged one is labour and not capital.⁵⁴

But for the employer, especially the Christian employer, matters are more complex:

I profoundly believe that in the first place he must recognise that he is in a game of antagonistic interests, and one where the other side is being harmed.⁵⁵

Viewed from a radical Christian perspective, the ultimate consequence of this process of increased consciousness must be that:

he too must make an option for the poor. That is where the big conflict comes for him because he ends up making an option *against* his class.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, the Christian employers take a somewhat different view of the papal encyclical and the correct interpretation that should be placed upon it. They take solace from and focus upon the Pope's notion of the direct and indirect givers of labour (capitalists and workers respectively) and see no allusions to any structural antagonisms within the capitalist system, or any personal dilemmas for that matter.⁵⁷ On the contrary, they view John Paul's words as entirely compatible with their own desire to find a more humane balance in the firm. Hence their attempt to develop concepts like the "social balance of the firm". In their view, however, the search for greater humanity within the firm is of necessity circumscribed by certain capitalistically defined economic limits, an issue which the Pope manifestly fails to address. One leading member of the ADCE put this contradiction to me thus:

I think that whoever lives the preoccupation of living this link [i.e., between their faith and work or personal life] does not have any way of not having a more humane position before those who work with him. But this does not necessarily translate into his paying more - i.e., above the market - for his collaborators, because this also implies that the firm cannot lose competitiveness.⁵⁸

What is interesting about these two positions is that in their own ways they are far more coherent than the document in which they seek to base at least part of their justification. Furthermore, which is again quite remarkable, in their coherence they come to two mutually incompatible conclusions (again, using the same document): one represents a radical critique of capitalism's essence, whilst the other seeks to attenuate its excesses. As to the question of identifying which is closer to the mark, this is complicated by a number of factors, not the least of which is that the mark itself, i.e. the encyclical, is replete with ambiguities and mutually contradictory propositions. I have already made clear where I believe one of its major thrusts lies, namely - in the sustenance of a neo-capitalist perspective. But the fact of the matter is that there are several propositions which, if taken to their logical conclusions, would indeed lead to major structural changes; which would, in effect, negate or suppress other propositions. One of the most notable of the former is, of course, the principle of the priority of labour over capital itself which Dom Cláudio made clear stands radically opposed to any and all forms of capitalism. And yet, John Paul simultaneously champions the cause of private property without adequately defining how the two propositions may be reconciled. The result is an incoherent synthesis which it is the job of others within the

Church to give coherence to. The task becomes more akin to the selection of particular propositions and their reconstruction in mutually exclusive but coexistent totalities. These contradictory theoretical totalities, moreover, closely reflect the Church's own organisational dilemmas, i.e., its attempt to embrace mutually exclusive groups (sometimes mutually antagonistic ones) within its ranks.

One of the pivotal concepts which lends a highly qualified unity to otherwise opposed concepts of class and class conflict is the principle of non-exclusivity. This is a fundamental element of Catholic belief throughout the ethico-political spectrum. It even applies to those groups or individuals who denominate themselves as "classista", i.e.,:

as recognising the existence of the class struggle caused by the very structure and nature of capitalism.⁵⁹

The connection between conservative ecclesiastical perspectives and a non-exclusivistic class perspective is readily observable in the following comments made by John Paul II to slum-dwellers in Rio de Janeiro:

The Church of the poor speaks firstly and above all to man. To each man and for this reason to *all men*. It is the universal Church. The Church of the Mystery of the Incarnation. It is not the Church of one class or one cast only. ...The Church of the poor does not wish to serve that which causes tensions and makes struggles explode between men. The only struggle which the Church wishes to serve is the noble struggle for truth and justice and the true good, the struggle in which the Church is in solidarity with each man. ...In its evangelical struggle, the Church of the poor does not wish to serve immediate political ends, the struggles of power, and at the same time, it seeks with great diligence to avoid its words and actions being used for such ends, in other words, that they are "instrumentalised". The Church of the poor speaks, then, to "man": to each man and to all. *At the same time it speaks to societies*, to the societies in their globality and to the diverse *social layers* and to the *social structures*, socio-economic and socio-political.⁶⁰

The doctrine of non-exclusivity fits well with these words which are at pains to stress the universalism of the Church especially in relation to class and class conflict. How, then, do radicals, with their much greater emphasis on the necessarily class conflictual nature of Brazilian society, seek to square this belief with a non-exclusivistic option?

The answers to this question do, of course, vary considerably, but as the quotations below will indicate, there is much common ground between them.

Clodovis Boff explains his own position thus:

they [rich and poor] do not oppose one another in an absolute manner, because in a Christian vision there exist certain points, certain margins of contact between the rich and the poor, between exploiter and exploited in the following sense: that the two have a humanity. And for this reason the Church invites the exploiter, the rich man, to conversion and to associate himself with the work of the poor. The Church does not have great illusions as to the result from this kind of invitation, *but* there always exists the call to conversion, to change to justice in such a manner for the rich person to encounter his humanity in the fraternity with the poor person - but *converting* himself at the level of class, obviously. Stopping the reinforcement of his class in order to join with the people.⁶¹

For Waldemar Rossi, who uses the word "classista" to describe the work and perspectives espoused by Pastoral Operária:

The universal dimension does not really exclude anyone, but it does not include as a matter of obligation. ...any person can be on a mistaken side and tomorrow change his position. The opportunities are given. The minute he wants to change position he stops being your enemy. This includes from the class perspective and the evangelical perspective as well.⁶²

Frei Betto puts the issue thus:

in the Theology of Liberation you only make universal salvation by means of the preferential option for the poor. In the practice of Jesus the option for the poor is preferential but does not exclude the world of the rich. However, every time that someone from the world of the rich approaches Jesus, the first demand of Jesus is that first you have to assume the cause of the poor and afterwards you will be my disciple, as in the parable of the young rich man.⁶³

If one takes the case of Dom Cláudio, he rejects the self-denomination of certain pastoral organisations within the Church as "classista" but does not negate the necessity of taking a clear stance:

The Church is not "classista". The Church, by being in solidarity with the workers, of putting itself on the side of the workers, of being in solidarity with the poor, is not "classista" in virtue of this. I think that the "classista" option is a sociological analysis; it is not a pastoral-evangelical analysis.

So when the Church says that the consciousness of class must be promoted,^[64] it is to make clear to Christians and to people in general where each one is situated, so that each knows how to act in order to supercede this conflict. This does not contradict community (and that's where the ambiguity of the word "classista" lies), because the Church seeks a community where in fact all can participate as brothers. Now the consciousness of class is one of the apriori conditions for arriving at this, which is to say that you must recognise where you stand in order for you to finally make a step in the direction of a truly human community; while the word "classista" can suggest that you are simply limiting your horizons to the sphere of your class, the rest does not interest you - on the contrary, you are in antagonistic relation to the rest and you have a proposal for the struggle against the other people. ...The struggle should never be against the others. The struggle should be in favour of all, only that for being in favour of all at times in practice it ends up generating conflicts.⁶⁵

In short, then, there exist permanent calls to conversion by Christian radicals of those whom they regard as unjust and exploitative. However, those calls are systematically subject to temporal qualification, that is to say, they simultaneously exist alongside both theories which recognise conflict and, on occasions, practices which are themselves conflictive.

One of the most institutionally significant elaborations of this perspective, a perspective which is most akin to that put forward by Dom Cláudio, was produced by the General Assembly of São Paulo state bishops in their 1984 document entitled "A Igreja e o Mundo do Trabalho Urbano" ("The Church and the world of urban work"). This was a wide-ranging statement which addressed the state's local economic situation as well as how the Church should be inserted in that reality. In the section devoted to the question of "social conflict" they noted the following:

This World of Work is in conflict, it is in class struggle, not on account of the very nature of human labour, but by the form in which man structures it socially. Our temptation is to ignore this conflict or attempt to camouflage it in order not to disturb the "peace" of our community, when in fact this conflict is ever present. It does not help in the least to camouflage it. ...

The Church, in truth, does not promote the struggle of classes, let alone the armed class struggle as the only path of liberation. But if it does not promote, it cannot, on the other hand avoid marking its presence within that conflict, following the example of the Incarnation of the Lord. The question

is: what is the role of the Church within the conflict? It will concretely and efficiently have to stand in solidarity with the unjustly treated and put itself at the service of human and evangelical values, as well as illuminate and articulate the process of overcoming the conflict with the project of God, with basic reference to the death and resurrection of Christ.⁶⁶

In effect, this represents one of the clearest institutional calls for the Church to recognise the existence of class struggles and to insert itself within those struggles, albeit using an essentially evangelical perspective. Like the other statements above, it differs from current conservative ecclesiastical doctrine insofar as the category of class is used as a fundamental interlocutor towards concepts of universal salvation. Margins of contact are established between various classes, but so too are the prerequisites for their fruitful interaction. Ultimately, a concrete stance is taken. For John Paul II, on the other hand, the universality of the Church is asserted here and now and very much to the cost of a concrete stance. His emphasis is upon the non-instrumentalisation of the Church, upon its non-conflictual orientations, and its elevation from the immediate. This is presented as a statement of the obvious, i.e., as basic Catholic creed, rather than a partisan and ideologically mediated version of Catholicism; and it is against this institutional background which progressive Catholics in São Paulo must act.

5.6 Conclusion - Institutional Conflict Between the Church of São Paulo and the Vatican

A key theme running throughout this chapter has been the need to avoid making false polarisations of the various Catholic groupings most closely associated with the question of class. I affirmed, for instance, that prior to being conservative or progressive these individuals or groups are Catholic and, to this extent, defy simple categorization along political lines. I also listed a number of major themes (by no means all-inclusive) which they have in common. Furthermore, I described the existence and widespread acceptance of an ideology of consensus over certain hierarchical structures, and even non-conflictive modes of conduct. The power and legitimacy of these structures - and consequent practices - was said to be further reinforced by their semi-divine status, thereby severely constraining, although not completely eliminating, the process of theoretical contestation.⁶⁷

A second theme running throughout the chapter has been the de facto presence of conflict. One most certainly can speak in terms of an ethico-political spectrum, of progressives and conservatives, who take major themes of Catholic dogma and insert them into altogether different theoretical and practical totalities. Contradictory totalities.

Taking the example of the preferential option for the poor, it was noted from the very beginning that this is an option firmly rooted in ethical rather than political foundations. It is now a commonly accepted part of Catholic discourse throughout the ethico-political spectrum. The point of conflict or differentiation, however, arises in its mediation. Whilst progressives within the Church of São Paulo are unwilling to reduce this option to a question of class, they are also keen to stress its necessary linkage to such a category

which, furthermore, is conceived antagonistically. In the words of Clodovis Boff:

This option for the poor, which incorporates the question of class and class struggle, is globally opposed to a supra- or inter-class interpretation.⁶⁸

But, as was indicated earlier, it is exactly this kind of linkage with class and Marxist terms of analysis which conservatives find so hard to accept. As various citations from the Pope's 1980 speech in the Morumbi Stadium and the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* show, he holds to an altogether different view of social relations whereby objective antagonisms are capable of being superseded by mere moral postulates. In the case of Brazil, for instance, the class struggle is explicitly rejected in favour of a conception which holds to the notion that:

The diverse centres of power and the different representatives of society must be able to unite, to coordinate their own efforts and to arrive at an agreement over clear and effective programmes.⁶⁹

How is a reconciliation - or integration - of these objectively and globally opposed ecclesiastical positions to be achieved?

One of several answers to this question appears to be critically dependent upon the location, in terms of seniority within the Catholic hierarchy, of the individuals involved. In common with the vast majority of their episcopal colleagues elsewhere, São Paulo bishops reject theoretical juxtapositions, particularly if these are posited in terms of major ecclesiastical personalities. Thus is a strange separation to make (but one which I indicated at the very beginning of this chapter is a fundamental part of Catholic practice) in view of Roman Catholicism's own emphasis on the ideas and personality of the Pope. The result, paradoxically, is that the bishops of São Paulo are forced to validate their own theories and practices in terms of a papal discourse which is substantively opposed. Dom Cláudio, for instance, makes the claim that Pope John Paul II engages in a truly radical critique of capitalism, and the São Paulo state bishops argue that the Pope "recognises and confronts"⁷⁰ the issue of social conflict when in fact, as I have already pointed out, he does neither of these things. In the last analysis, therefore, there is no integration or reconciliation - nor indeed can there be between these mutually contradictory propositions. One kind of supersession which is frequently attempted, therefore, is merely semantic.

For other, i.e., lay sectors of the Church of São Paulo, like the Workers' Pastoral, the problem is somewhat different, since they are afforded considerably wider room for manoeuvre. Thus, whilst their language makes reference to and cannot ignore papal doctrine, it is certainly not subject to its strictures in the same way that ordained members of the Church are. As Waldemar Rossi indicated, PO's language is deliberately more specific and structured around conflictive concepts. Furthermore, any form of censorship by any senior Church figure is "inadmissible".⁷¹ At the heart of this situation, however, is an altogether different power structure; the assembly of PO is

sovereign and the relationship established between militants and hierarchy is one of dialogue rather than dependent subordination of the former to the latter.

If one looks beyond Pastoral Operária as an organisation and includes the interface between lay organisations in the World of Work generally and the Church, i.e., the Mission to the World of Work, then of necessity the lines of control and the nature of the discourse used shift considerably. Suddenly one is dealing with the institutional rather than purely group oriented prioritisation of certain themes. As Frei Gilberto Gorgulho, who was closely involved in this area for more than a decade notes:

pastoral action is the way of crystallising in a determined place and in determined circumstances, the concrete struggle of the people, which in the Archdiocese of São Paulo is concretised through the struggle for the pastoral priorities. The Mission to the World of Work manifests itself as one of those priorities; that is to say, it is an urgency caused by the problems raised, the very political reality, and the situation of the working class.⁷²

As was noted in an earlier chapter, militants from PO had considerable input and influence upon the final outcome of the state and archdiocesan plans of 1975 and 1976 respectively. Although in both these documents the language used was less specific than PO's (since it reflected the Church's own heterogeneity and tendency to provide statements of apparently universal appeal), what was most important, certainly in the case of São Paulo, was that these statements provided a genuine framework for progress. Whatever the latter's analytical shortcomings, the fact was that over the years progressive bishops within the Archdiocese of São Paulo were able to help Catholic militants give it real weight - to the point, for instance, whereby the outlook of the hierarchy over the 1984 metalworkers union election was critically affected by the vote taken at PO's special assembly. As was shown in an earlier chapter, what was essential to the viability of this process was a basic affinity of perspectives which was able to transcend differences of detail. It was only with this fundamental compatibility of purposes that a truly effective division of labour between hierarchy and militants could exist throughout the mid 1970's and early 1980's.

But what happens in those circumstances where such basic affinities do not exist and where there is, on the contrary, an apparent collision of interests? The short answer to this is that hierarchical authority tends increasingly to assert itself at the cost of the Church's so-called plurality. In other words, the fact of one group's subordination to another is increasingly brought out into the open and the real lines of power become more readily discernable.

There are repeated examples of this. In the first chapter, which discussed the conflict of the late 1960's between progressive militancy and a reactionary hierarchy, we noted how radical Catholics found their institutional bases completely undercut, how they were marginalised and weakened, and finally, how they were invited back into the fold but only under conditions which many feared would lead to their complete subordination. Rather than abandoning their struggle, those groups at variance with the prevailing

episcopal outlook chose to remain marginalised. The local Church hierarchy proved both unwilling and ultimately incapable of providing an adequate vehicle for the retention of these conflicting forces.

Ironically, the tables were later turned upon Dom Agnelo Rossi himself when Pope Paul VI saw fit to install Dom Paulo in his place thereby marginalising Rossi from Brazilian affairs.⁷³ Although on this occasion the net effect of the intervention was an opening up of the Church of São Paulo rather than a loss of pluralism, what must also be noted is that the lines of control were once again forcefully reasserted. In other words, it was only intervention from above, in the form of the Pope's nomination of Dom Paulo to lead the archdiocese, which could finally help to break the deadlock there. And although events were moving in their favour, subordinate levels of the Church continued to remain powerless. So much so, in fact, that at first there was considerable irritation felt amongst some priests at the very manner of Dom Paulo's appointment, i.e., without regard to their views.

Equally, it was a sovereign decision of São Paulo's Church hierarchy alone, and not the direct result of any pressure that militants were able to exert upon the bishops, which led to the institutional lines of gravity being shifted in favour of lay Catholics during the mid 1970's. Even after those changes had taken place, nothing could alter the simple underlying truth namely, that it continued to remain the hierarchy's exclusive prerogative to define the framework or relationship which lay sectors of the Church could or could not enjoy with the institutional Church. Consequently those lines of gravity could, in theory at least, be shifted back at any moment in time.

Given the presence of ethico-political conflicts within the Roman Catholic Church of the type outlined in the present chapter, this centralised power structure, and in particular the critical nature of episcopal appointments to any diocese, is an issue that is once again assuming greater importance. Elsewhere in Brazil, for instance, John Paul has shown himself to be a Pope who is willing to appoint highly conservative figures who are eager to bring about their particular vision of social and ecclesiastical change. One of the most notable examples of this was his appointment of a successor to Dom Hélder Câmara in the Archdiocese of Recife. In the matter of a few months, the new cardinal succeeded in reversing many of the progressive changes painstakingly made over the course many years. He even went so far as to expel priests who did not toe the line despite clear evidence that they enjoyed widespread local support and that their communities wished them to stay. What was particularly frustrating for these priests and local community activists was that the new archbishop possessed full legal authority to act in this way.

As yet, São Paulo has not suffered the same fate, but there are a number of signs which indicate that the archdiocese is firmly in the Vatican's sights, and that a staged reversal of policies is already underway.

In their January 1986 "ad Limina" visit to the Pope, the bishops of São Paulo state

were personally informed by Pope John Paul II of his desire to "reaffirm the communion" which exists between them and:

the perfect union of mind and heart which exist between your particular Churches and the Church of Rome.⁷⁴

He spoke, for instance, of "episcopal Collegiality".⁷⁵ Later on, however, collegiality and perfection was given a special, i.e., highly centralised, slant as he reminded the bishops of São Paulo about a few home truths:

The well known canon 333 of the Code of Canon Law, in noting that the Roman Pontiff is always in communion with the bishops and with all the Church in the advancement of its task, also notes the right which befalls him of determining the best way of carrying it out; and in the following canon it makes reference to, the *people and the institutions*, which he can mandate, in diverse forms, in order that, "in his name and for his authority", they carry out tasks, "for the good of all the Churches".⁷⁶

This emphatic reassertion of papal prerogatives was coupled with a number of carefully phrased warnings. The Pope went out of his way to remind the bishops of the need for the Church not "to reduce its mission to the socio-political" as well as the "great detours that certain 'theologies of liberation' bring with them."⁷⁷ He also reminded them of the great care that needed to be exercised in the education of new priests. In his follow-up statement to the bishops a few months later the Pope went on to indicate that his idea of a "useful and necessary" theology of liberation would be one which was in close connexion with and fell within the parameters set by the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Laborem Exercens*.⁷⁸

All this was by way of a prelude to changes which were finally imposed upon the Church of São Paulo. One such, which related to teaching practices within local seminaries, involved an investigation into these practices to see whether they conformed to Vatican standards. In effect, the seminaries were put on strict probation. But by far the most important change was the redrawing of the archdiocese's boundaries. In the past this had involved a consultation exercise with the bishops and local activists to see how best the archdiocese might be restructured to take account of changing conditions (e.g., demographic) and needs. In 1989, however, the restructuring took on an altogether new and more polemical aspect, betraying as it did the conflict of perspectives between the Vatican and progressive Catholic sectors. What was at stake was not whether a division should occur for, quite contrary to generalised reports, Dom Paulo had in fact advocated the division of the city since 1971. Instead, the issue was the manner of its implementation.

The proposal of the bishops was a division into 10 dioceses whilst conserving for each bishop a pastoral for the whole city, and allowing for the transfer of individuals between different regions of the city.⁷⁹ The Vatican's final response, however, entailed the dismemberment of the archdiocese into five smaller and separately administered dioceses leaving a much smaller portion directly under Dom Paulo's control. Already in

1988, one of Dom Paulo's progressive auxiliary bishops, Dom Luciano Mendes had been transferred to a more conservative diocese in the state of Minas Geras; but with the redrawing of the boundaries two more progressive auxiliaries, Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino and Antonio Gaspar Fernando Penteado, were transferred out of the region. Three new conservative bishops were brought into the newly created dioceses. The net effects of all these changes were drastic. Dom Paulo's own influence was reduced at a stroke. As for those areas, like the southern and eastern zones of the city, which had major social problems and, especially during the 1970's, had provided the major bulwark of progressive Catholic militancy, these were now administered by conservative figures. In the specific case of an organisation like Pastoral Operária, the transferal of Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino out of the region altogether, suddenly deprived militants of their principal episcopal ally. Furthermore, and in common with all the other pastorals, the Workers' Pastoral now found its efforts truncated between what were now separate dioceses.

Although these changes stem from a broader range of conflicts than simply that of class, this issue is a major part of the problem. The question of class conflict sits most uncomfortably within the Roman-Catholic Church. Not only are there theoretical incompatibilities between the positions espoused by progressives and conservatives, but, as the case of São Paulo illustrates, these theoretical incompatibilities ultimately give way to head-on confrontations. Pluralism is seen to have its limits. With the backing of the Vatican, conservatives have begun to gain the upper hand and have forced their radical counterparts either onto the defensive or, when a more amenable stance is not forthcoming as in the case of Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, out of office.

In the light of these changes quite what the future holds for the Workers' Pastoral in São Paulo is difficult to say. Much may eventually depend upon the successor appointed to take the place of Dom Paulo. What should not be underestimated, however, is the inherent vitality of the organisation - rooted as militants are in not only Church but also workers' struggles.

This is evident if one takes the case of the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro which is closely associated with current papal doctrine. There one encounters a generalised situation of conflict between a conservative hierarchy, led by Dom Eugênio Salles, and radical activists and clerics.⁸⁰ In moves that are reminiscent of São Paulo in the late 1960's, Dom Eugênio has sought to create a conservative version of a Workers' Pastoral which is both closely under his tutelage and reflects his outlook. He has even gone so far as to change the name from "Pastoral Operária", which has openly working class connotations, to the "Pastoral do Trabalhador", a term which refers to just about anybody who works. For this reason, then, there are regular contacts between the cardinal's organisation and the ADCE. As one member of the "Pastoral do Trabalhador" explained:

He thinks that the Church is a whole, that everybody must be together.⁸¹

In spite of the cardinal's strong backing for a class conciliatory approach, the results have not been entirely successful. This appears to have much to do with the trade union make-up of the area. As one Catholic and leading union activist familiar with the situation in Rio explained:

Even in the "Pastoral do Trabalhador", to the extent that the worker engages himself there is increased conflict, a conflict between the line of the diocese and the union line, because a large part of the militants - even of Dom Eugênio's Church - are active in unions linked to CUT, and many are in the Workers' Party. So this conflict, this contradiction appears. It's true that a large number of these militants do not open a conflict with Dom Eugenio, but at the same time they are far from being his mass de manoeuvre. Why? Because there is a conflict between his orientations and the reality of commitment.⁸²

It is this dual, i.e., class as well as religiously defined characteristic of Catholic labour militancy which, in a comparatively hostile ecclesiastical environment like Rio de Janeiro, allows it a considerable degree of autonomy and independence from an otherwise very intrusive hierarchy. This is in sharp contrast to organisations like CEBs which one leading theologian, and former adviser to Dom Hélder Câmara, Joseph Comblin, has described as "controlled by the bishops and the priests".⁸³ Clodovis Boff, who has extensive experience in both CEBs and PO, explains these basic differences thus:

the sociological status of a CEB is completely different to the sociological status of a Workers' Pastoral because the Workers' Pastoral is a movement, oriented towards the workers, which is to say it is a pastoral. The CEB is not a movement, it is an ecclesial community, it is a Church in miniature... Thus being a Church it needs a communion, a communion with the pastors, with the larger Church intrinsic to it...

The militant of the CEB enjoys an organic and much more profound relationship with the institution than the militant of ACO and PO because one is situated within an ecclesial dynamic, the other is situated within a social dynamic. The dynamic is more social; it is ecclesial in its inspiration, in its spirituality, but in the concrete struggles, in the programmes, in the unions, in the elections..it only carries with it a spirituality...but it does not bring technical solutions apart. Indeed, there is the whole critique of colateralism, parallelism, neo-Christendom..."⁸⁴

In attempting to explain why the Workers' Pastoral developed a class conflictual outlook in contrast to the institutional Church's clearly non-Marxist formulations of the preferential option for the poor, the leading Workers' Party deputy, Plinio de Arruda Sampaio, offered an answer which I believe is equally applicable to the situation in Rio.

the Workers' Pastoral [read the Pastoral do Trabalhador] is very influenced by the hegemony that Marxism has conquered amongst the union vanguard. Thus, for a Christian worker to have any voice in the union, any voice in the factory, either he assimilates this Marxism or he speaks from without.⁸⁵

The comments of Padre Agostino Pretto, who still retains extensive contacts with Catholic worker militants in Rio de Janeiro, also suggest that the insertion of these activists in union struggles and dynamics is of decisive importance. So much so, indeed, that:

the workers do not even think of themselves as being different to the workers of other dioceses. They have their great reference which is the working class, and they go forward with the working class, and they reflect with the working class, they assume the struggles of the working class. ...Groups of PO at the base do not ask themselves whether it is the Workers' Pastoral or the "Pastoral do Trabalhador", for they are meetings of workers who reflect in the light of the gospel. ...the existing groups of the "Pastoral do Trabalhador" in Rio are in perfect accord with the content of the Workers' Pastoral. They assume the process of a "new unionism"⁸⁶.

A concrete instance of this dynamic was given to me by a member of the Opposition to the leadership of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Construction union. The union bore many of the classic hallmarks of "pelego" management. At the time of the interview (1988), for instance, its president had been in power for a remarkable 38 years. The formal base of the union was some 350,000 members, but in the 1986 elections only about 3,000 had the right to vote. The victory secured on that occasion was roughly 1,850 votes to the Opposition's 550. And finally, in a situation akin to the metalworkers in São Paulo, it was the 1,200 voting pensioners who helped to secure his victory.⁸⁷

What is most significant from an ecclesiastical perspective, is the fact that both this militant - and the Opposition itself - emerged from a core group of activists who participated in Dom Eugênio's "Pastoral do Trabalhador". In a manner that was quite similar to the metalworkers' Opposition in São Paulo, these activists had throughout the 1970's received the support of certain progressive priests and thereby used the infrastructure of the Church to assist in their own organisation.

The idea, then, that a change in the ethico-political composition of São Paulo's hierarchy towards more conservative ideals may put an end to PO's radical trade union activities is far from certain. The example of Rio de Janeiro, where the cardinal is not adverse to using the full range of the powers at his disposal, is a case in point. Quite simply, lay individuals are not subject to the same lines of control as their clerical counterparts and to this extent the Vatican's offensive is bound to be muted. But what is possible, of course, is that their field of action within the Church may be severely diminished. This danger, however, is ever present for as long as current power structures are left intact. As I indicated earlier, essentially it is the exclusive prerogative of the hierarchy - irrespective of its ethico-political outlook - to define the framework and/or relationship which lay sectors of the Church can or cannot enjoy with the institutional Church. In their turn, the bishops, short of a revolt (which is most unlikely in the foreseeable future) are incapable of defining their own relationship with a Vatican which is determined to use its powers to the full.

Notes

¹ Pope John Paul II, "'Sentire Cum Ecclesia' para Anunciar uma Mensagem de Libertação Plena: Mensagem aos Bispos do Regional Sul-1", *Comunicado Mensal CNBB*, Ano 35, No. 397, January-February 1986, p. 12.

² Pope John Paul II, *Mensagem aos Bispos do Brasil*, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1986, p. 12.

³ In essence, the case of Frei Leonardo Boff arose because the Vatican took a dim view of his book *Igreja, Carisma e Poder*, (Church Charisma and Power) published in 1981. Rome viewed the theses of the book as un-orthodox and in the light of this, in 1985, imposed 11 months of silence upon Boff. This caused an outcry amongst many grassroots Church activists who viewed the move as part of a wider attack upon Liberation Theology. For its part, the CNBB issued a document stressing the need for absolute loyalty to the figure and actions of the Pope, emphasising that "this forms part of BEING Catholic". ("CNBB Faz a Todos um 'Convite a Reflexão'", *O São Paulo*., 7-13 June, 1985, p. 2.) In March 1986, Boff was given leave to return to his teaching and lecturing commitments.

⁴ Frei Leonardo Boff, "Segurança Eclesial e a Ecclesiologia Militante", *Jornal do Brasil*., July 25, 1982.

⁵ CNBB, "Carta aos Agentes de Pastoral e as Comunidades", *O São Paulo*., April 26-May 2, 1975, p.3.

⁶ Quoted from Estela Sampaio, "O Interesse da Igreja e Apoiar os Trabalhadores, não Substituir a Eles", *O São Paulo*., February 15-21, 1980, pp. 6-7.

⁷ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, *Pastoral Operária: Porquê e Como?*., Arquidiocese de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1978, p. 11.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens: O Trabalho Humano*., Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1986, p. 42.

⁹ Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88. The religious-ethical concept of "the poor" originally derives from the Old Testament story of the people of Israel who were liberated from slavery and delivered in the Exodus from Egypt. For a closer examination of the religious concept of the poor, its origins and subsequent interpretations, see Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff, *Opção Pelos Pobres*., Editora Vozes, Petropolis, 1986. For the significance of the Exodus in Liberation Theology see Enrique Dussel, "O Paradigma do Exodo na Teologia da Libertação", *Concilium*., No. 209, 1987, pp. 86-99.

¹⁰ Conferencia General del Episcopado Latino-Americano, *Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops: Puebla; Evangelisation at Present and in the Future of Latin America*., CIIR, Slough, 1980, p. 179, paragraph 1145.

¹¹ Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 179, paragraph 1145.

¹² Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Evidence of this distaste comes in the attack upon the association between Liberation

Theology and Marxist analyses carried out by the Vatican itself in August 1984. With the approval of Pope John Paul II, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, issued a document which was extremely critical of certain theologies of liberation. It spoke, for instance, of how these had made a "pernicious amalgam between the *poor* of Scripture and the *proletariat* of Marx. In this way the *Christian* sense of the poor is perverted, and the fight for the rights of the poor is transformed into the fight of classes from the ideological perspective of the *class struggle*." (Sagrada Congregação Para a Doutrina da Fé, *Instrução Sobre alguns Aspectos da 'Teologia da Libertação'*", Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1984, p. 39.) The document also went on to discuss at great length the inherent incompatibilities between Christian theology and Marxist approaches because of their totalising visions and radically different starting points. (See, for example, *Ibid.*, pp. 27-40.)

¹⁷ Conferencia General del Episcopado Latino-Americano, *Op.cit.*, p. 114, paragraph 544.

¹⁸ This does not mean that there are no explanations, I am merely questioning the adequacy of this particular one. For one of the best, i.e., intellectually most rigorous, critiques of liberation theology from a conservative perspective see Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, "Eclesiologizações Para Oprimidos", *Communio.*, No. 38, March-April 1988, Ano VII, Volume VII, pp. 112-144. The article is important for the clarity of its arguments; because of its extensive citation (rather than the usual paraphrasing) of sources from both sides of the theoretical divide; and because its author, who in 1982 was appointed bishop of Novo Hamburgo in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, discusses the Brazilian situation in detail. Indeed, his promotion is symptomatic of the stiffening of resistance to Liberation Theology perspectives within the upper echelons of the Brazilian Catholic Church itself. Ironically, Kloppenburg was at one point the teacher of Leonardo Boff, only later to become one of his fiercest critics and opponents.

¹⁹ Conferencia General del Episcopado Latino-Americano, *Op.cit.*, p. 114, paragraph 545.

²⁰ Dom Cândido Padin, "Nova Ordem Socio-Economica Internacional - Justiça Fraternidade" in Comissão Episcopal Regional CNBB Sul-1, *Necessidade de Novos Projectos Socio-Economico-Políticos.*, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1981, pp 61-62.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

²² Discourse of Pope John Paul II at Morumbi stadium on July 3, 1980, reprinted in *O Papa e os Operários em São Paulo.*, Comissão Justiça e Paz de São Paulo/Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, São Paulo, 1980, pp. 7-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁴ For further details regarding the ADCE see note 99 in Chapter Three of the present thesis.

²⁵ Discourse of Waldemar Rossi at Morumbi stadium on July 3, 1980, reprinted in *O Papa e os Operários em São Paulo*, Comissão Justiça e Paz de São Paulo/Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, São Paulo, 1980, p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Author's interview with Padre Fernando Altemeyer Jr., 19/7/88.

²⁸ Details of the Pope's actions in Poland are taken from Rubem Cesar Fernandes article "Wojtyla, o Ams de Cracovia", *Isto É.*, May 21, 1980, pp 20-21.

²⁹ Author's interview with Professor Ana Flora, 14/7/88.

³⁰ Of course, when I use the term living extension of Catholic doctrine I do not mean a mechanical extension. Nor does the Church's concentration on the universal preclude it from addressing the historical. In the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*Social Concern*) John Paul II emphasises that the Church's social teaching "is, on the one hand *constant*, because it maintains itself identical in its basic inspiration, in its 'principles of reflection', in its 'criteria of judgement', in its fundamental 'directives of action' and, above all, in its vital linkage with the Gospel of the Lord; on the other hand, it is always *new*, because it is subjected to necessary and opportune adaptations, which emerge from the change of historic conditions and through the incessant flow of events, which impinge upon the unfolding of the lives of men and societies." (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*., Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1988, pp. 7-8.)

³¹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 26/6/88.

³² Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

³³ John Paul II, *O Trabalho Humano: Laborem Exercens*., p. 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, loc.cit.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 2/1/89.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁵⁰ Quoted from "A Missa do Trabalhador no ABC", *O São Paulo*., May 7-13, 1982, p. 1.

⁵¹ Dom Cláudio Hummes, "A respeito da 'Missa do Trabalhador'", *O São Paulo*., May 14-20, 1982, p. 2.

⁵² Pope John Paul II, *O Trabalho Humano: Laborem Exercens*., p. 54.

⁵³ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ See for example the public statement of the ADCE/UNIAPAC national conference of 1982 on the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, reprinted as the article "Os Empresarios Cristãos e a 'Laborens [Sic] Exercens'", *O São Paulo.*, January 8-14, 1982, p. 7.
- ⁵⁸ Author's interview with Ulysses Brandão, 13/9/88.
- ⁵⁹ Pastoral no Mundo do Trabalho, *Op.cit.*, p. 33.
- ⁶⁰ Pope John Paul II quoted from Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, *Op.cit.*, p. 113.
- ⁶¹ Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88.
- ⁶² Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.
- ⁶³ Author's interview with Frei Betto, 18/8/88.
- ⁶⁴ The CNBB does this, for example, in its "General Guidelines of the Church's Pastoral Action in Brazil". This document notes how "work is 'the essential key to the whole social question', it is fundamental not to underestimate the importance of the mobilization in solidarity of the workers... The strengthening of community consciousness must not exhaust the consciousness of class, because only the latter possesses the conditions to confront global and longer term problems. ...the problems of the relationship between labour and capital will not be resolved through the exhaustion of class consciousness but, on the contrary, through its maturation, which will prepare it for the confrontations which are inherent to all democracy which sets itself the task of realising the common good, that is, for the good of all and without discriminations." ("Diretrizes Gerais da Ação Pastoral da Igreja no Brasil: 1987-1990", *Documentos da CNBB 38.*, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1987, pp. 26-27, paragraph 22.)
- ⁶⁵ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.
- ⁶⁶ CNBB Sul-1, "A Igreja e o Mundo de Trabalho Urbano", *O São Paulo.*, June 8-14, 1984, p. 3.
- ⁶⁷ One of the criticisms levelled at Liberation Theology by the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was precisely its tendency to question hierarchy: "a criticism is developed over the very structure of the Church. It is not merely the case of a fraternal correction directed at the pastors of the Church... It is a matter, yes, of putting into check the *sacramental and structural hierarchy* of the Church as the very Lord himself wished it." (Sagrada Congregação Para a Doutrina da Fe, *Op.cit.*, p. 40.)
- ⁶⁸ Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88.
- ⁶⁹ Discourse of Pope John Paul II at Morumbi stadium in *Op.cit.*, p. 8.
- ⁷⁰ CNBB Sul-1, *Op.cit.*, loc.cit.
- ⁷¹ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.
- ⁷² Author's interview with Frei Gilberto Gorgulho, 14/7/88.
- ⁷³ This took the form of a promotion to serve in Rome, but it is widely, and I believe rightly, perceived as a promotion out of harm's way.

⁷⁴ Pope John Paul II, "'Sentire Cum Ecclesia' para Anunciar uma Mensagem de Libertação Plena: Mensagem aos Bispos do Regional Sul-1", *Op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Mensagem aos Bispos do Brasil.*, p. 12.

⁷⁹ Source: author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 26/1/89.

⁸⁰ On these questions of conservatism and conflict within the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro see for example: Orivaldo Perin, "Ha Evidencias que o Documento Contra a Teologia da Libertacao Nasceu no Rio", *Folha da Tarde.*, September 13, 1984. This discusses in some detail what it calls this "silent war" as well as the archdiocese's close links with Rome. See also "Dez Seminaristas Expulsos pela Arquidiocese do Rio", *Folha de São Paulo.*, September 25, 1984.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Severinho Gomes Barbosa, 16/9/88.

⁸² Author's interview with José Cardoso "Ferreirinha", 16/9/88.

⁸³ Quoted from Dermi Azevedo, "Comblin Preve Dominio 'Conservador' da CNBB 'no Maximo em Dez Anos'", *Folha de São Paulo.*, January 16, 1989, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88.

⁸⁵ Author's interview with Deputado Plinio de Arruda Sampaio, 14/12/88.

⁸⁶ Author's interview with Padre Agostinho Pretto, 16/9/88.

⁸⁷ Source: author's interview with Severino Gomes Barbosa, 16/9/88.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis I have been concerned with two intimately related but distinct themes. The first was how, within the context of metalworkers' struggles in Greater São Paulo, the Roman Catholic Church practically and theoretically reconciled such contradictory elements as its own unity and universalising doctrine with the fact of a society divided by class conflicts. The second, was to chart the precise extent, forms, underlying motives and general limitations to Catholic intervention in metalworker affairs during the period 1970-86.

With regard to the extent of intervention we have seen that if the experiences in the Archdiocese of São Paulo and Diocese of Santo André are taken as a whole then it is difficult to find any aspect of metalworkers' struggles and politics with which the Church did not become involved at one stage or another. Clearly, the forms of intervention varied from moment to moment. Not every labour dispute, for example, was characterised by episcopal participation at mass meetings or negotiations with employers and government, as was the case during the metalworkers' strikes of 1980. But what is equally clear is that the Church, especially via its militants, had a remarkably consistent presence amongst this category of workers during the period 1970-86. That militant presence, furthermore, was supported rather than hindered by the Church hierarchy especially after the departure of Dom Agnelo Rossi in 1970.

As to the impact of the Church upon the metalworkers, that too was remarkable for its depth. Once again, due weight must be given to the regional and historical variability of that impact. In the Diocese of Santo André, for instance, I argued that "new unionism" - as evident in the 1978 strikes - preceded any significant Catholic interpenetration and acted as a major catalyst to the rearticulation of Catholic struggles; whilst in São Paulo there was a more organic connection between radical Catholic and trade union struggles well before the 1978 strikes. Overall, however, in both dioceses the impact of the Church - through its militants and hierarchy - was marked. Significantly, the critique of Brazilian trade unionism advanced by Catholic militants was one of only a handful of approaches that was able to constitute itself as a practical alternative to the status quo and not just as an intellectual protest against it. Indeed, in many ways it may be said that Catholic militants anticipated and crystallised many of the themes later associated with the "new unionism" of the late 1970's. They performed a range of important functions which, amongst other things, included: (a) questioning root and branch the nature of the labour relations system; (b) doing so at a time when such questions were considered subversive; (c) sustaining their proposal in the face of more than a decade's government repression; (d) offering support to other left wing militants not of Catholic origin; (e) making use of

the neighbourhood and its churches as a strategic locus of organisation; (f), pushing the institutional Church in the direction of articulating demands complementary to their own; and (g), acting as a bridgehead between the working class and the church.

For its part, the Catholic hierarchy took on board many of the demands made by the militants. The bishops came to articulate a discourse on the Brazilian trade unions which not only challenged military persecution, but also the whole system of government tutelage. That translated itself into a range of important practical actions. These included: (a) the attempted legitimisation of left-wing union militancy amongst Catholic circles; (b) verbal and logistical support for the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition; (c) occasional direct criticism of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union leadership; (d) verbal and logistical support for the ABC metalworkers' unions in their struggle with employers and government between the period 1978-80; and (e), verbal support for those sectors of the labour movement which opted for the construction of a nation-wide trade union confederation in 1983, again, in defiance of government legislation.

In the course of the thesis, then, we have seen that the Church played a highly interventionist role and to great effect. This may appear somewhat at variance with another finding, namely, the existence of the widespread conviction amongst both progressive hierarchy and Catholic militants, that the autonomy of the workers should not be encroached upon. It should be recalled, however, that these sectors defined autonomy in relation to two key criteria.

The first was the rejection of any triumphalist Catholic mentality that might entail the subordination of trade union struggles to Catholic social teaching and the institutional Church. Amongst other things, this precluded the creation of parallel Catholic organisations within the labour movement; it fostered the struggle of working class Catholic militants on an essentially class rather than a more narrow competitive organisational basis; and it confined the role of hierarchy within labour disputes to an auxiliary one. In this sense, worker autonomy was not undermined. Indeed, radical Catholics were amongst the most vociferous opponents of the CLAT-type proposal precisely because they regarded it as an attempt to somehow Christianise the Brazilian labour movement and subordinate it to a narrowly defined concept of Christianity.

The second definition of worker autonomy, however, was related to other more directly secular or political considerations. Whilst the institutional Church began from the premise that other things being equal it should avoid partisan involvement, it came to the conclusion that things were not equal. As such, it felt bound to intervene not in order to undermine worker autonomy, but rather to preserve and extend it in the face of what were seen as unfavourable odds - odds which ranged from the military regime's illegal use of violence against left-wing union militants, to the panoply of legalised means for ensuring labour's acquiescence.

There are several striking features about the Church's intervention. Firstly, it not only sought to affect the balance of social forces, but it attempted to redress the balance in

favour of the working class - even if that brought with it the prospect of social conflict. In itself this represented a fundamental qualitative break with a past in which the Church had feigned neutrality when it was convenient, had weakened the organisational capacity of the working classes, and had done so in the name of the need to preserve social harmony. From the experiences of São Paulo between 1970-86 it is evident that the Catholic Church substantially contributed to, and was an integral part of, the working class' alliances and struggles for liberty. This is one instance which lends support to Otto Maduro's thesis that:

Religions do not necessarily constitute an obstacle to the autonomy of subordinate classes, or to their alliances against domination.¹

Another striking aspect of the Catholic Church's involvement with the metalworkers of the region is the finding that the Church did not simply seek to redress the balance in favour of some generalised concept of the poor, let alone the working class, but that it also differentiated between different political factions of the same class. Put another way, for all its talk of universalism and use of a multi-class discourse, the Church carried out a partisan role as between and within social classes.

How does this apparent contradiction between theory and practise arise? In part I have argued that it is unavoidable. There is, as I emphasised earlier, a generally accepted desire to preserve the transcendental and universal aspects of the Catholic faith. This, as it were, constitutes the core element that unifies people throughout the ethico-political spectrum and gives them their specifically Catholic identity. However, there simultaneously exists the recognition that these ideas need to be adapted to historical conditions. It is not only the theologians of liberation who stress Catholicism's historical dimensions; even Pope John Paul II - for all his orthodoxy and talk of the constancy of Catholic doctrine - says that the latter must be "subjected to necessary and opportune adaptations, which emerge from the change of historic conditions".²

Herein lies the heart of the problem, for it is precisely beginning with these historical mediations of the Catholic faith - necessary and inescapable mediations - that conflict is generated. From the evidence of this thesis, at least, class constitutes one of the critical elements in this process of mediation.

The subjection of the Catholic creed to the realities of any class divided society pose difficulties for the Church; but in the case of a country like Brazil, where the divisions run so deep, these problems are particularly severe. As we have seen, the practical implementation of a universalising or multi-class discourse proved unsustainable on repeated occasions. In the context of acutely polarising social conditions leading ecclesiastical figures felt compelled to define more clearly their stance on issues of class and religion. In effect, they were forced to take sides and thereby qualify - or concretise - the universality of Catholic doctrine. Thus, for example, it was in the increasingly polarised social situation of the mid 1960's that the bishops of São Paulo originally gave

their backing to the military coup and its project of liquidating left-wing union militancy. Later still, in the context of the military repression of the early 1970's, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns came to clarify his own hitherto ambiguous identity and gave his firm support to militants from the Workers' Pastoral. It was in this situation too, that the suffering of Catholic militants would exert a profound impact upon the 1975 São Paulo bishops' conference; by all accounts, helping to push it towards the formal redefinition of the Church's stand on workers' issues. Similarly, militants contributed to Dom Cláudio's own move away from what he himself admitted had been "very generic and very timid"³ comments on labour. Above all, it was under the polarised conditions which accompanied the metalworkers' strikes of 1978-1980, that Dom Cláudio felt impelled to make his comments in support of workers' rights.

In some respects the appointment of Dom Paulo in 1970 represented an attempt to re-establish unity within a deeply divided Church. The critical question, though, was how to restore unity within a divided social sphere. Dom Paulo's rhetoric represented a continuity with tradition to the extent that he emphasised to Catholic worker militants that the "Mission to the World of Work cannot refrain, also, from concerning itself with pastoral care of the middle class and the upper class."⁴ This non-exclusivistic multi-class approach is, as we have seen, a fundamental point of departure for Catholics throughout the ethico-political spectrum. Making it a reality, however, even under Dom Paulo's expert hand, proved another matter altogether. Under the conditions of military dictatorship, the upper and middle classes were in no urgent need of a specialised pastoral organisation - certainly, not in the sense that it would develop for the workers in São Paulo, i.e., as a group for the defence of its members interests. Dom Paulo himself recognised that this was "a time of the persecution of the working class" where "there was almost no possibility of organising here in São Paulo".⁵ The Workers' Pastoral sprang out of these developments. The specificity of its language, the composition of its membership, the nature of their activities, all were very much geared to the active defence of workers' interests. In the process, workers' voices became a more powerful force within the Church of São Paulo and thereby reinforced its defence of their interests.

Whilst the maintenance of a non-exclusivistic multi-class discourse had to be maintained by the institutional Church, and was even accepted by its most radical followers, we have seen that the mediation of Catholic social teaching in accordance with class interests, in effect its selection to correspond to certain needs, was an ever-present and extremely powerful factor. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, for instance, we saw how more progressive Catholic employers, like members of the ADCE, advanced a class conciliatory vision of Catholic social teaching which, amongst other things, preserved their role and that of private capital. In their view, workers formed part of a Christian community and the firm should reform in order to reflect this. Their envisaged liberalisation, however, could not be used as a pretext for giving workers a voting place on the board of directors or too high a wage. In effect, the sustenance of vertical power

structures and fostering profitability within the firm became fused with the Catholic notion of the "common good". Radical metalworker leaders, on the other hand, advanced an altogether different vision of the Church which corresponded more directly to their perceived interests. Their vision was of a Church which, in the words of Lula, should be "at the side of those who suffer and the exploited".⁶ Similarly, rather than seeking to submerge class differences and offer palliatives, Waldemar Rossi argued that "the class struggle is a reality, and the struggle to overcome class divisions is a Gospel imperative."⁷ Finally, for its part the Brazilian state advanced its own highly selective version of ecclesiastical doctrine and papal teaching. During the course of the 1980 metalworkers' strike the government made it quite plain that, as far as it was concerned, the main Gospel imperatives facing the Church were those of obeying the law of the land and keeping out of the dispute.

We have seen that far from simply inspiring the ideologies of others, the Church constantly had to make political and not just theological choices of its own. Pope John Paul II's non-conflictive so-called "Christian formula" for the solution of social problems was completely unworkable in the Brazilian context (indeed, as I already mentioned, it had proved unworkable even under Polish conditions). Furthermore, in the Brazil of the 1970's, the Church did much more than simply defend the workers from the excesses of the dictatorship; it also possessed a strategic (if not completely well defined) conception of society. Hints as to such a strategic conception, specifically in relation to the metalworkers, are evident in many of the comments made by the bishops of São Paulo. During the 1980 dispute, for instance, Dom Cláudio said that:

The struggle of the metalworkers is not merely theirs, neither is it purely for their benefit, but it helps all the workers because, by virtue of the power that the metalworkers of this region possess, they put pressure on the government itself so that the social and economic structure of this country are changed.⁸

Similarly, during the 1984 São Paulo Metalworkers' Union elections, Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino asserted that a vote for a particular slate:

would signify a push forward for combative and authentic trade unionism and a blow for "peleguismo".⁹

Whilst it is certainly true that these comments were made under exceptional circumstances, they can in no way be deemed uncharacteristic. The evidence contained in my thesis shows that there was an underlying conception of what constituted "good" trade unionism and that this constantly regulated the actions of the Church throughout the 1970's and into the mid 1980's. That was precisely why, for example, when the labour movement was so deeply divided over the formation of a national union confederation in 1983, Dom Cláudio Hummes showed no such reserve and affirmed that the formation of the CUT was "one of the biggest advances of the last few years in Brazilian trade unionism."¹⁰ Other groups, who went on to form the CGT in 1986, saw the matter quite

differently.

In the course of this thesis I have emphasised that whilst the Church sought to influence these developments, it was not seeking to desecularise the Brazilian trade union movement or somehow govern it. Apart from anything else, the mechanisms and will to govern had been challenged from within the institution by new theological perspectives. We have seen that in the specific case of São Paulo left-wing Catholic militants had played a key role in helping to redefine ecclesiastical perspectives on trade union issues and that their own trade union vision was an essentially radical secular one. Had the Church wanted to govern, it was these sectors that would have had to have been mobilised, but it was precisely these individuals that were not prepared to be instrumentalised by the official Church which in any case - for reasons of conviction rather than opportunism - had come much closer to their vision. What the progressive Church did seek, however, was a compatibility of objectives and this emerged with the formation of the CUT which was a clearly secular organisation.

The Church's repeated ability to embrace short term partisan commitments does not mean that it effectively abandoned its theological roots. In spite of dramatic shifts in episcopal attitudes, we have seen that these actions - however intimately connected with the events of the time - were said, by their authors at least to have been carried out on the basis of essentially Gospel or theological criteria. Bishops like Dom Cláudio and Dom Angélico, for instance, saw the CUT as more closely corresponding to the principles of Catholic social teaching. Support for such initiatives, and others like the São Paulo Metalworkers' Opposition and the strikes of 1978-80, were not, in the minds of the bishops, pushed through on the basis of class or ideological criteria. I have suggested that class influenced the reading of basic texts and, furthermore, that this manifested itself as a latent and sometimes open conflict of the religious agents involved; but I have also emphasised the specificities of the Catholic Church, that its organisational and doctrinal features actively mediated those social forces which circumscribed it. Thus, for example, the fact that the Catholic churches of São Paulo and Santo André came to articulate a discourse in favour of the working class should not be confused with the wholesale adoption of class politics. As I have repeatedly emphasised, the Church's message was addressed to all social classes; in the words of Clodovis Boff, rich and poor "do not oppose one another in an absolute manner, because in a Christian vision there exist certain points, certain margins of contact".¹¹ It is in this ultimate sense that the Church's point of departure - even when it entailed the recognition of the class conflictual nature of society - was a pastoral-evangelical one. Indeed, taking the Church's preferential option for the poor as a whole, it was noted that whilst this option arose as a direct response to the sufferings of the vast majority of Latin America's people, its proponents at all levels of the Church - whether on the left or the right - stressed that it possessed, in the words of one liberation theologian, "a non-political, i.e., religious-ethical root".¹² It was not a Marxist formulation.

That said, neither could the concept (nor any of the bishops' actions, for that matter) remain free from earthly injunctions. As we saw, Clodovis Boff asked the key question of how the poor are encountered historically, to which he gave the answer that, amongst other things, they are constituted in classes. To many Latin American bishops, his subsequent assertion that "This option for the poor, which incorporates the question of class and class struggle, is globally opposed to a supra- or inter-class interpretation"¹³ constitutes an ideological rather than a theological formulation. What we have seen in the course of the thesis, however, is that it is most difficult - if not completely impossible - to neatly separate theological and ideological formulations from one another. Dom Paulo's own view that "labour should prevail over capital", or that "the centre of the world is the working man" was, for the archbishop, "an evangelical consequence, a consequence of all evangelical doctrine"; but, he admitted, "For others this is an ideology".¹⁴ Equally, I indicated that Pope John Paul's encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, was much more than an exercise in moral philosophy, it owed a great deal to a free market analysis of society. Even the universalism of papal discourse possessed ideological constituents.

Dom Cândido Padim echoed the sentiments of Catholics throughout the ethico-political spectrum when he suggested that "The ideal would be that Christian values, rendered explicit by theology, would come to inspire ideological projects assumed by determinate groups of militants".¹⁵ That certainly would appear to be a fair - if only partial - description of the trade union role of militants from the Workers' Pastoral. However, it is the comments of Dom Cláudio Hummes which draw attention to the practical constraints upon, or double-sidedness of, these Gospel ideals. Whilst he maintained that "The criteria of faith and of the Gospel are not and cannot be ideological", he argued that they are "always bound up with concrete ambiguities... You cannot assume a certain Cartesianism there, of having clear and distinct ideas when you act in history. ...ideology is something we all have because it signifies a concrete form of proposing solutions for a community".¹⁶ His solution to what, I would argue, is an intractable dilemma, was for Catholics to attempt "to have a sufficient critical distance from...[their] ideologies and not permit ideology to predominate the criteria of faith."¹⁷ The task of this thesis has been to indicate, with special reference to the struggles of São Paulo's metalworkers, the importance of these issues and the difficulties involved in working out practically viable and lasting solutions.

Notes

- ¹ Otto Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts*., Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1982, p. 136.
- ² Pope John Paul II, *Solicitude Social*., Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1988, p. 8.
- ³ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.
- ⁴ Quoted from Equipe de Formação, "A Igreja no Mundo do Trabalho da Grande São Paulo: Relatório do Dia 12 de Agosto de 1973", *Caderno no. 5*., São Paulo, August 12, 1973, p. 4.
- ⁵ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 2/1/89.
- ⁶ Quoted from Frei Betto, "Reflexões Depois da Cadeia", *Istoe*., May 28, 1980, p. 25.
- ⁷ Author's interview with Waldemar Rossi, 12/6/88.
- ⁸ Dom Cláudio Hummes, Letter to the Priests and Coordinators of Communities, in Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, "As Greves do ABC e a Igreja". *Cadernos de Documentacao 3*., CPV, São Paulo, December, 1980, p. 5.
- ⁹ Quoted from "Quem Está Com Maluf Vota no Joaquinção", *O São Paulo*., June 22-28, 1984, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ Quoted from Jo Azevedo, "O CONCLAT Decide a Formação da CUT", *O São Paulo*., September 2-8, 1983, p. 10.
- ¹¹ Author's interview with Frei Clodovis Boff, 3/11/88.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Author's interview with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, 2/1/89.
- ¹⁵ Dom Cândido Padim, "Nova Ordem Socio-economica Internacional - Justiça Fraternidade" in Comissão Episcopal Regional CNBB Sul-1, *Necessidade de Novos Projectos Socio-Economico-Políticos*., Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, 1981, p. 64.
- ¹⁶ Author's interview with Dom Cláudio Hummes, 29/9/88.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*

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