

Introduction

An article in the January-February, 1963 edition of the United States Catholic Conference's (USCC) publication *Latin America Calls!* declared in its headline, "Line may twist but Red is Red."¹ The newspaper, along with its secular counterparts such as *The New York Times* and the United States as a whole, was in the throes of Kennedy-era, post-Cuban Missile Crisis anti-communist fervor. According to its pages, it seemed as if the Catholic Church's very mission to promote social justice in Latin America was linked inextricably to the extermination of communism: "Unless the Church and other willing groups can teach [in this case, Bolivian miners] to read, the people will be 'sitting ducks' for Communism."² By 1970, however, the very same publication that originally had been tasked with rousing the faithful to volunteer in Latin America was campaigning aggressively to raise awareness of and denounce pervasive torture in Brazil under that country's civilian-military dictatorship.

What could have caused so drastic a shift in language in such a relatively short span of time? Could this transformation in opinions simply be the expression of other developments in the larger American political sphere and the changes it underwent during the turbulent 1960s? The Vietnam War and the rise of the New Left in the United States surely had softened formerly unwavering opposition to any political movement remotely associated with communism, and the Civil Rights Movement had helped create a somewhat more open, tolerant American society.

Perhaps, however, there in fact was something exceptional about the circumstances surrounding the progression of *Latin America Calls!*'s language. Could either local or global events in the evolution of the Catholic Church more directly account for the change in *Latin America Calls!*'s rhetoric? The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), which met from October 1962 to December 1965, created a dramatically more liberal Church that was newly dedicated to

social justice for all Christians. The phrase “the spirit of Vatican II” became a malleable rallying cry for all manner of liberal social justice movements, and Pope Paul VI was instrumental in perpetuating this “spirit.” More locally, the murder of Father Antonio Henrique Pereira Neto in Recife in May of 1969 set off a firestorm both in the streets of that city and on the pages of *Latin America Calls!*. Many who labored to expose the repressive apparatus of the Brazilian dictatorship during the 1960s and 1970s were first galvanized to act by the passage of Institutional Act No. 5, the December 13, 1968 decree that ushered in the most brutal era of the dictatorship, but that act’s introduction is barely mentioned in *Latin America Calls!*’s early 1969 issues. Father Henrique’s murder, on the other hand, receives pages of coverage across months of issues of the publication. In particular, Father Louis M. Colonnese, member and later director of the Latin American Bureau of the United States Catholic Conference, seems to have been instrumental in shining a light on the tortures the Brazilian government had committed on Catholics. By framing the campaign against the dictatorship in that country as an effort to protect the lives of his Catholic brothers, Colonnese was able to effectively synthesize his fairly radical political views into a productive weapon in the international campaign against torture. Though these efforts often placed him in conflict with his more traditional superiors at the USCC and eventually cost him his job, Colonnese’s voice was still a decisive factor in the shift in politics in *Latin America Calls!*. It is clear from USCC records that without Colonnese and those who assisted him, the Latin American Bureau would not have become so important a leader in the battle to expose the crimes of the Brazilian civilian-military dictatorship.

This essay intends to explain in depth the shift from 1963 through 1970 in political opinion espoused through the articles of *Latin America Calls!*. It will pay particularly keen

attention to the evolving context in which the newspaper was published, including an assessment of both religious and non-religious factors that influenced the evolution of its language.

The Context for Change: The Cold War and Vatican II

In the same month that Vatican II opened in St. Peter's Basilica, President John F. Kennedy ordered the United States military to DEFCON-2 readiness for nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Never was the specter of nuclear annihilation so very real as during those 13 days in October. In 1959, radical nationalists in Cuba had ousted President Fulgencio Batista and established a government there under Fidel Castro. To contain Communism, President Kennedy sent military advisers to aid the government of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam. Even after the disgrace of Senator Joseph McCarthy, attitudes toward Communism in the United States were, to say the very least, extraordinarily hostile. In this context, the lack of support from American policymakers for Brazilian President João Goulart's policy of "basic reforms," including land reform, should not be a surprise. Nothing about communism in *Latin America Calls* was outside the political norm for 1963; "Red is Red" was an accepted truth.³

The evolution of the opinion of *Latin America Calls!* toward Communism did not occur in a vacuum. The 1960s were the catalyst for landmark social change in both secular and religious respects. It was the decade of not only the American civil rights movement but also the single most radical modernization of a major religion ever conceived. If one were to select a Catholic clergyman from 1862 and transport him a century into the future he would likely find the Church he encountered more recognizable than would a priest plucked from 1962 and placed a mere decade later. The Second Vatican Council transformed just about every facet of Catholic worship, from the format of Mass to the very aesthetic of many churches.⁴ In the three years it was open, Vatican II produced about 1,000 pages of documents in an attempt to answer the

question, “What is the Church?”⁵ The Council, among dozens of other major reforms, authorized communal prayer at ecumenical gatherings, renounced the goal of making Catholicism the official religion of all nations, and redefined the Church as “the People of God.”⁶ The Council rejected the Tridentine Mass, the standard structure of weekly worship since 1570, instead favoring the performance of much of services “in the vernacular.”⁷ In accepting the Church as a “Pilgrim Church” in November 1964, the Council understood “the institution was traveling toward perfection, but it was not yet perfected.”⁸ Though not a complete rejection of the infallibility of Church teachings, the concept of the Pilgrim Church certainly could have provided liberal Catholics with a launch pad for further reform, particularly in the realm of social justice. That the Church was traveling toward perfection – that it had not yet arrived there – could serve as a source of inspiration to those looking to further its development and modernization. Progressive teachings, not tradition, would drive the Church forward toward perfection.

Perhaps the most important document promulgated by Vatican II was *Gaudium et Spes*, The Church in the Modern World. Released on December 7, 1965, it committed the Catholic Church to conducting itself as Christ did in his life. To this end, “the Church must not have any earthly ambitions... Like yeast in bread, the Church must work as a leavening agent to make the whole of society rise.”⁹ There would be no more grand cathedrals that would take centuries to construct. This dedication of the Church to charity and justice above all else was a direct source of inspiration for those who, in the words of Vice President Hubert Humphrey, “believe in the dignity of man,” and sought “to help other people help themselves.”¹⁰ Furthermore, and perhaps even more surprisingly, *Gaudium et Spes*’s indictment of atheism did not, as many conservatives had hoped, directly attack Communism. It instead reprimanded “those political systems... which

hamper civic or religious freedom, victimize large numbers through avarice and political crimes, and divert the exercise of authority from the service of the common good to the interests of one or another faction or of the rulers themselves,” whether capitalist or not.¹¹

The rhetoric of Vatican II, of course, did not appear from thin air. Years before the release of *Gaudium et Spes*, Cardinal Richard Cushing was already urging his Boston congregation to volunteer in Latin America. Papal Volunteers in Latin America (PAVLA) was a USCC program well before December 1965. Perhaps, then, this program was a product of Kennedy-era cries for service through the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps. There obviously were deep reform currents behind the various Constitutions of Vatican II. Nor would all of the Council’s decisions be implemented overnight. Indeed, particularly in the United States, local clergy had become used to a modicum of autonomy from the Vatican.¹² This fairly unique, independent streak in the American Catholic Church would later account for the “uneven” implementation of Vatican II’s reforms and lead to future tensions between more liberal and conservative aspects of organizations such as the USCC.¹³ Younger, more liberal priests such as Father Louis M. Colonnese were obviously more inclined to adapt to this modernizing effort than were their more traditional counterparts. It is certainly plausible that a man such as Colonnese, swept up in the post-Vatican II reform fervor, could have caused tensions with his superiors by trying to leverage the rapid implementation of the declarations of Vatican II into an increased focus on human rights in Latin America.

***Latin America Calls!:* A Political Inversion, 1963-1969**

As mentioned earlier, the 1963 and 1964 issues of *Latin America Calls!* were permeated with the standard anti-communist rhetoric of the day. The January-February, 1963 edition of the periodical noted – under the headline “Who wins in Brazil?” – “One of the world’s most

desperate struggles continues in Northeast Brazil, where Roman Catholics and communists are locked in combat over the fate of 23 million peasants threatened by starvation.”¹⁴ The enemy in this case was not simply starvation; social justice seemed secondary to overcoming “communists well practiced in antireligiousness” and directly connected to sinister foreign governments like China.¹⁵ The Church was determined to directly link Catholic social justice with the defeat of Communism, creating a zero-sum game for the faithful. The Latin American Bureau’s 1962 “Statement of Purpose” may have focused on the dispersion of the Catholic message to the “priestless millions,” but its fundraising campaign was strictly political.¹⁶ Cardinal Cushing even went so far as to advertise his “Latin America Victory Fund” with the tagline, “Wanted: Workers for the victory of Christian justice over the Reds in Latin America!”¹⁷ *Latin America Calls!* harshly branded those who attempted to organize farmers for land reform as communists,¹⁸ and was also quick to point out the sinister nature of attempts to create progressive student groups.¹⁹ Though it is unlikely any members of the future Brazilian civilian-military dictatorship subscribed to *Latin America Calls!* in 1963, the military certainly used peculiarly similar paranoid language to denounce all reformers in Brazil as subversives just a few years later. Some headlines in the periodical bordered on propaganda in their nature and punctuation. The May-June, 1964 issue included the headline, “Where Communists are Strongest, So is the Church!” adding a shrill nature to the already militaristic nature of *Latin America Calls!*

Peculiarly, the 1964 coup that brought the dictatorship to power almost escaped mention in the publication. The same coup that inspired *Reader’s Digest* to print a rather hyperbolic special edition titled “The Country that Saved Itself”²⁰ about Brazil was, according to *Latin America Calls!*, simply the third in a series of four “victories” for 1964 described in a brief front-page article; the coup was not even the foremost success for the year.²¹ Indeed, the anti-

communist rhetoric of the publication was not necessarily political in nature. It instead was concerned with defending Catholicism against what it alleged to be a godless, monolithic Marxism. Though Brazil was safe from a possible communist take-over, the “Reds” still supposedly had “name[d]” seven countries “their targets in lands to conquer” in May of 1965.²² The article instead identified “Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Haiti, and Panama” as more susceptible to communism than Brazil.²³ Perhaps the editors of *Latin America Calls!* genuinely believed the government of Humberto Castelo Branco had extinguished any legitimate leftist threat in its 1964 coup. Nevertheless, the publication still brusquely referred to communists as “a threat to all” as late as 1965’s October-November issue.²⁴ Though the periodical’s language would eventually become less hostile toward communism, it still ran the advertisement “A hungry kid makes a hardy rebel” in a full-page spread each issue from March, 1965 to September, 1969.

Eventually, however, the paranoid nature of *Latin America Calls!* softened, and the publication was able to divorce fervent anti-communism from a desire for social justice. As the Second Vatican Council wound down, the USCC seems to have made a conscious effort to more clearly focus its primary news publication’s articles on antipoverty measures in Latin America. Stories about the imminent communist threat throughout the region, though not completely absent, largely disappeared, replaced instead with, for example, tales of the Archbishop of São Paulo’s trip to a new macaroni factory, the goods from which would be used to combat hunger.²⁵ When *Latin America Calls!* published alarmist articles about the Northeast, they instead took on tragic stories designed to pull on readers’ heartstrings to inspire donations: an entire set of quintuplets died just after birth, and “it is believed that the four who were born alive might have survived if medical attention had been available.”²⁶ The publication’s anti-communist bent, to

the extent it still existed, instead focused on the philosophy of revolutionaries and their followers' propensity for violence in spreading their own gospel. Pope Paul VI remarked that "[Communism] proposes and fosters violent revolution as the only means of solving the problems" the poor face.²⁷ The publication even covered multiple Church land redistribution campaigns during 1966 – the same sort of programs that were anathema to *Latin America Calls!* three years earlier – and published an editorial by Archbishop Dom Helder Câmara that provided a rather balanced criticism of Communism: "Let us not be afraid of sound ideas merely because they have been exploited by the Communists or distorted by non-communists. It would be disastrous to let the fear of Communism carry us to a falsification of values."²⁸ That *Latin America Calls!* would carry the leftist analysis of a man American ambassador to Brazil John W. Tuthill would later describe as part of the group of "radicalists" that made up 10-15% of the Brazilian Church surely demonstrates that the publication had gained a surprising degree of nuance in its views of communism just a few years after the use of its most virulent, conservative language.²⁹

As word of the repressive nature of the Brazilian civilian-military dictatorship and others like it spread to the United States, *Latin America Calls!*'s language became increasingly liberal and anti-authoritarian. Just as anti-communism had given way to more apolitical appeals for help in Brazil, these appeals were slowly being replaced with reports of torture and oppression. In the same March 1967 article in which Dom Helder Câmara denounced guerrilla warfare as a means to create social justice, the paper acknowledged the existence of a report signed by 15 bishops from the Northeast "accusing the government of having submitted the people of Brazil to misery and injustice."³⁰ The dictatorship immediately branded the signatories "as subversives and troublemakers."³¹ That same issue of *Latin America Calls!* included an editorial by Marina

Bandeira, director of Brazil's Movement for Basic Education, who cautioned, "hysterical fear of Communism has no less disastrous consequences [than communism itself]. The unthinking species of anti-Communism confuses the legitimate aspirations of the people with Communism itself."³² Clearly the editorial board of *Latin America Calls!* either had recently drastically changed in composition or was suffering from collective amnesia, for it would seem that many articles from the publication in 1963 could be considered symptomatic of the same "unthinking species of anti-Communism;" in a rather short time, the publication had moved significantly to the left on the political spectrum. Dom Helder further defended his social justice campaign of "conscientization" – the "opening of the eyes" of the people – in an April 1967 editorial that claimed, "He who dares to conscientize the masses is accused of being a communist" in Brazil.³³ That *Latin America Calls!* would publish the editorial of a man considered a *persona non grata* by the Brazilian dictatorship further corroborates the publication's increasingly anti-authoritarian stance. The December-January 1967-1968 issue covered the pledge by 17 bishops from throughout Latin America to support "revolutions for the common good" and did not in any way denounce it.³⁴ In at least tacitly acknowledging that many communists in fact held similar motives to Catholics – "reforms of the social and economic structures... for the common good" – *Latin America Calls!* was able to eliminate the shrill nature of its earlier issues and at the very least humanize Christianity's former sworn enemies.³⁵ The next issue of the publication even gave exposure to Dom Helder's praise of radical guerrilla priest Camilo Torres and the archbishop's calls for "dialogue and cooperation between Catholics and Marxists."³⁶ The paper marked Che Guevara's death not with a celebration, but with a caution that "revolution is" still "unavoidable in [Bolivia] unless there are bold and effective social reforms."³⁷ By the spring of 1968, *Latin America Calls!* had clearly reversed its formerly paranoid anti-communist stance. A

year later, the paper would even eliminate its ubiquitous “A hungry kid makes a hardy rebel” advertisement, replacing it with a now more relevant appeal, claiming, “We’ve stopped building cathedrals and started rebuilding the Church.”³⁸

Although anti-communism was now largely absent from the pages of *Latin America Calls!*, it would take another year or so for the paper to become a proper standard-bearer in the international campaign against torture. Though the USCC had already declared human rights the theme of the 1969 Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program (CICOP) conference, the passage of Institutional Act No. 5 (IA-5) on December 13 1968 received minimal attention in the pages of *Latin America Calls!*³⁹ The December-January, 1968-1969, possibly already sent to print by the time the act was passed, did not mention its existence at all. The March 1969 issue only briefly noted that the Brazilian Bishops’ Conference had written a letter to President Arturo da Costa e Silva imploring a return to democracy “as soon as possible.”⁴⁰

Did the aforementioned change in the language of *Latin America Calls!* articles represent anything more than a reflection of the softening of anti-communism throughout the American political landscape? Tad Szulc may have whipped up fear of “leftist agitators” in the “Red stronghold”⁴¹ of Northeast Brazil and *Look* magazine may have asked “How Red is Brazil?”⁴² in the early 1960s, but these articles were certainly much rarer – though they certainly still found an audience in the United States – by 1970. Instead, by that year, many considered horrors such as the Kent State shootings, in which four students protesting the invasion of Cambodia were shot and killed, were the unintended consequences of such anti-communist alarmism. Both internal documents of the USCC and the very text of *Latin America Calls!* in 1969 and 1970, however, would seem to indicate that circumstances specific to the Catholic Church beyond any shift in prevailing political thought had a direct influence on that publication’s rhetoric.

Father Colonnese and Padre Henrique: Galvanizing Forces for Change in Life and Death, 1969-1970

By June of 1969, the pages of *Latin America Calls!* had become permeated with articles covering the campaign against the Brazilian dictatorship. That month's issue included editorials by Darrell Rupiper, an American priest arrested two days after the passage of IA-5, and Márcio Moreira Alves, whose very presence in the Brazilian Congress was part of the motivation for IA-5's creation in the first place. Rupiper's letter is an excellent lens into the alienation many felt while trying to assist friends in Brazil: "What good does it do to talk? The American people are victims of a social order that is systematically selfish and profoundly irrational."⁴³ Such anti-establishment rhetoric surely had no place in *Latin America Calls!* in past years. The alienation Rupiper felt upon returning to the United States likely contributed to the angry nature of his letter. Indeed, upon their return home, many Peace Corps volunteers and PAVLA participants felt a similar degree of disgust with American materialism and prosperity in comparison with the horrific poverty of Latin America.⁴⁴ Another event, however, proved to have much farther-reaching consequences for *Latin America Calls!* than IA-5 would.

On the night of May 26, 1969, Father Henrique Antonio Pereira Neto, an aide to Archbishop Dom Helder Câmara, was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered. Though his death garnered no immediate mainstream English-language press coverage of note, *Latin America Calls!*, perhaps attempting to compensate for the lack of exposure the priest's murder had received, exploded with fury and seemed bent on bringing Father Henrique's story to the faithful. The same issue of the publication that included Rupiper's and Alves's editorials dedicated over an entire page to the coverage of Father Henrique's murder. The obvious culprit was the Communist Hunt Command (CCC), which reportedly had sent death threats to Father Henrique for his social justice work in Recife in the weeks leading up to his murder.⁴⁵ According to one

article, Father Henrique was allegedly “one of a list of 32 persons marked down to die.”⁴⁶ In another, Dom Helder complained that “this brutal killing emerges from a pre-established plan, well announced through threats and warnings;” the government had allegedly mandated a “news blackout” of coverage of Father Henrique’s murder.⁴⁷ The third article discussing the gruesome murder included a statement signed by the 575 priests of the archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro: “We feel that we must condemn the neurosis of anti-communism taking grip of the country.”⁴⁸ *Latin America Calls!* was campaigning against the faults of an older version of itself.

Though it was the passage of Institutional Act No. 5 that led the United States State Department to place its foreign aid to Brazil under review on December 15, 1968, that event elicited nowhere near the same rage from the pages of *Latin America Calls!*.⁴⁹ It took an event clearly relevant to the Catholic Church’s work in Brazil for the publication to fully dedicate itself to the campaign against the civilian-military dictatorship. Why, then, is the only coverage of the arrest of Father Rupiper a March, 1969 article in which he requests the United States cut off foreign aid to Brazil?⁵⁰ Perhaps the sheer violence of Father Henrique’s murder – indeed, the CCC had rendered his face “almost unrecognizable” – spurred the USCC to act.⁵¹ His murder brought to the Church’s doorstep the sort of violence Brazilians had been victims of since the introduction of IA-5. The possibility also exists that many more USCC clergymen had become activists in the roughly half a year between the promulgation of IA-5 and Father Henrique’s murder. Indeed, the anti-Vietnam movement was gaining steam daily during that period, and its liberal ideology undoubtedly influenced more members of the younger cohort of priests working in Washington, D.C to embrace human rights as a guiding doctrine in foreign policy. In any event, from June, 1969 on, *Latin America Calls!* had a new mission: to expose the atrocities the Brazilian government was committing against Catholics both American and foreign.

The August-September, 1969 issue of the publication detailed the expulsion of Belgian priest Father Jan Honore Talpe, “the 11th foreign priest to be expelled from Brazil in the last year.”⁵² The ultimate goal of the article seemed to be to illuminate the pathological paranoia of the oppressive apparatus in that country. “At the least suspicion,” Talpe complained, “you are arrested and taken to the torture chamber. The simple fact that we were living in a worker’s section was enough for police to justify their suspicion.”⁵³ The December-January, 1969-1970 issue of *Latin America Calls!* covered the Brazilian Bishops’ Conference’s completion of a dossier of the torture of prisoners in Brazil, including “signed and sworn statements describing tortures, naming persons who allegedly inflicted torture, and identifying political prisoners currently being held incommunicado.”⁵⁴ The same issue also reported on conscientization efforts in Paraguay and noted two priests had been expelled from the country for alleged Marxist ties. *Latin America Calls!*’s focus on Brazil did not mean it spared other nations who committed similar crimes against humanity.

The following month, the paper noted that an editor of a prominent Brazilian Catholic magazine held for the past five months had managed to send out a message detailing his tortures.⁵⁵ The March, 1970 edition of *Latin America Calls!* covered the murder of 64-year-old Dutch priest Father Pedro van Zanten in Belo Horizonte. The article noted that “both [this murder and that of Henrique Pereira Neto] were described by police as ‘crimes of passion’ involving homosexuals. This is a widely used smear technique.”⁵⁶ Acceptance of homosexuality in Brazil clearly was a long way off. As the spring went on, *Latin America Calls!* also exposed the attempted suicide of Father Tito de Alencar after he was tortured for more than 12 hours,⁵⁷ the Brazilian Army recommendation to indict four priests and two bishops for subversion,⁵⁸ and

the USCC's official denunciation of torture on the first anniversary of Father Henrique's murder.⁵⁹

The May 1970 issue of *Latin America Calls!* marks yet another critical turning point for the publication. Its pages contain not only a two-page spread commemorating the murder of Father Henrique a year prior, but they also revealed the USCC's request for an immediate international investigation into tortures in Brazil and a cessation of foreign aid to that country. The Division for International Affairs statement read in part: "As Christians we cannot be silent... because we believe that injustices anywhere diminish freedom everywhere."⁶⁰ That DIA's statement shared such similar language with the Protestant National Council of Churches' pamphlet *Terror in Brazil: A Dossier* is no accident. Louis M. Colonnese had in fact signed that pamphlet's opening statement, "We Cannot Remain Silent."⁶¹ That Colonnese would represent the Catholic bishops in an otherwise largely Protestant pamphlet like *Terror in Brazil* confirms his embrace of ecumenism, a key tenet of the resolutions of Vatican II. The USCC clearly could have delivered this statement on December 13th, 1969 – the first anniversary of the introduction of IA-5 – but did not do so; the Conference's flagship publication was already aggressively campaigning against the pervasive use of torture in Brazil on that date. The choice of May 26th, 1970 as the date for the release of such a landmark denunciation that carried the entire weight of the American Catholic Church behind it clearly indicates that the murder of Father Henrique, more than the introduction of IA-5, served as the catalyst for *Latin America Calls!*'s crusade against torture. The release of this denunciation was the culmination of years of gradual change in the politics of its articles; *Latin America Calls!* had become unrecognizable from its form in 1963.

Who, then, made the decisions to so drastically alter the language of *Latin America Calls!*? Father Louis M. Colonnese, Director for Latin America for the USCC, clearly was instrumental in this evolution. Colonnese had replaced Father John J. Considine, a much more traditional clergyman, as Director for Latin America in the months before the introduction of IA-5. Steeped in the ideals of liberation theology, he clearly embraced the campaign for “conscientization” in his extensive 48-page statement of goals and purposes for the Latin America Bureau of the USCC. That report, from the summer of 1969, declared emphatically: “the Church must assume the role of advocate-intermediator between the disinherited and the privileged in society.”⁶² He encouraged an “activist laity and clergy” to help exhort those who had campaigned against the Vietnam War to shift their focus to Latin America and even wondered, “Will the Church speak out about military and intelligence agencies of the American government[‘s]...effort to deflate the Churches’ [sic] legitimate power of moral suasion?”⁶³ The paper was in fact so incendiary and radical that the Department of International Affairs (DIA) for the USCC rejected it on September 24th, requesting instead that Father Colonnese submit “a four or five page proposal which would be more positive in its orientation.”⁶⁴ Cardinal John Krol was rather wary of the prospect of a member of the USCC using the Church’s records to attack its political stance “without giving [it] the benefit of the right of defense and of ‘due process.’”⁶⁵

After the frenzied response to the murder of Father Antonio Henrique Pereira Neto, Colonnese wrote an editorial under the headline “The way I see it” in the October, 1969 edition of *Latin America Calls!*, explaining, “We felt the responsibility to share with Catholics in the United States the knowledge that the Church in Latin America is producing martyrs capable of responding to this challenge.”⁶⁶ He then, however, seemed to backtrack on his earlier statement:

We have decided to devote ‘Latin America Calls!’ to an exposition of the progress being accomplished through the active implementation of the Church’s missionary role in those countries. We do not deny the existence of grave socio-economic issues which are precipitating

confrontations between advocates of change and defenders of reactionary conservatism. When time and our limited budget permits we plan to publish a separate opinion journal aimed at stimulating an increased awareness of the theology, sociology, and economics of underdevelopment.⁶⁷

This ambiguously worded statement seems to indicate that the Latin American Bureau's publication would neither publish such strong indictments of the Brazilian civilian-military dictatorship nor report on the crimes of that government anymore. Future issues obviously would not hew to this vague promise; the publication covered multiple cases of torture in gruesome detail throughout 1969 and 1970, including the personal testimony of Father José Antonio de Magalhães that was smuggled out of his prison cell.⁶⁸ One cannot help but wonder if Colonnese's superiors had attempted to silence his activism after the submission of his declaration of the goals and purposes for the Church in Latin America. Perhaps the continued reports of torture coming from Brazil made Colonnese feel as if he had no choice but to expose the repeated crimes of that government in spite of any attempts his superiors had made to muzzle him.

Colonnese would continue to act in what might seem an insubordinate manner. On March 24th, 1970, he wrote to USCC General Secretary Joseph L. Bernadin essentially recommending ways the latter could execute his job more effectively, including creating a more "fraternal relationship" instead of a "paternalistic attitude" and giving divisions of the USCC the ability "to act and speak as specialized units of the USCC."⁶⁹ Clearly Colonnese's attempts at reform could be taken as rather grating. Though Father Colonnese was not alone in his attempts to push the DIA to act decisively on reports of torture in Brazil – among others, Thomas Quigley and Father Frederick McGuire actively did so, though to a less aggressive extent⁷⁰ – he had been working tirelessly to improve CICOP and *Latin America Calls!* since the publication was based in Davenport, Iowa.⁷¹ Colonnese had earlier locked horns with other clergymen when helping select

speakers for the 1969 human rights-themed CICOP conference. He neglected to seek approval for all speakers from the episcopal moderator who had to endorse a list of all those suggested to appear at the conference.⁷² As a part of the generation of priests steeped in the language of Vatican II, he had his own vision; the wishes of his superiors seemed secondary. Colonnese even proposed including the international peace symbol in the January 1970 appeal for the National Annual Collection for Latin America.⁷³ It may not be a coincidence, then, that two months later Bishop Bernadin suggested the Collection for Latin America be moved from USCC jurisdiction to that of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB).⁷⁴

In a statement attached to the release of the May 26th, 1970 DIA denunciation of torture in Brazil, Father Colonnese remarked somewhat pessimistically, “My deep love for the people of Brazil compels me to ask whether such Church statements could become meaningless rituals with almost no pragmatic potential... unless there is an affirmative response from U.S. Catholics.”⁷⁵ This seemingly innocuous statement provides a rare window into Colonnese’s fears that his efforts may fail, and his frustration echoed Darrell Rupiper’s earlier remarks in his letter from the June, 1969 edition of *Latin America Calls!*. Indeed, though Colonnese had been the “driving force behind the pronouncement,” he had already encountered stiff opposition to his attempts to more overtly politicize the Latin American Bureau and may have felt he had few allies in his efforts.⁷⁶ The “deep” emotion associated with his efforts to conscientize demonstrates the exceptional nature of his commitment to Latin America and to Brazil in particular.

In the summer of 1970, Colonnese submitted his comments on the USCC Goals Statement for the following year. The fingerprints of liberation theology are clearly visible in his overall dissatisfaction with the current condition of the document: “The terminology expressed in

these statements is hardly in keeping with the definition of the Church as the People of God” as it had been in the Second Vatican Council⁷⁷ “Nowhere,” Colonnese complains, does the Goals Statement discuss “‘transcendent’ goals.”⁷⁸ The Latin American Bureau had become part of the vanguard for the implementation of Vatican II and liberation theology, with which many of Colonnese’s superiors were clearly unfamiliar or uncomfortable given the Goals Statement’s original language.

Conflict between Colonnese and the rest of the USCC again flared over the response to the murder of American operative Daniel Mitrione in Uruguay in August, 1970. In an interview, Father Colonnese rather obliquely accused Mitrione of “complicity” in the torture of political prisoners in both that country and in Brazil.⁷⁹ A Uruguayan congressional investigation implicated the police force that Mitrione was counseling in gruesome tortures that included electric shocks.⁸⁰ Perhaps Colonnese’s quotation of *The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, a key publication from Vatican II, sheds light on his motives: “Whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body and mind, attempts to coerce the will itself... They poison human society... They are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.”⁸¹ Vatican II had clearly been a beacon of inspiration in Colonnese’s attempts to influence the USCC and stop human rights abuses throughout Latin America. Incensed, Bernardin wrote a letter to Mitrione’s wife apologizing for Colonnese’s comments and penned a memo to his subordinate, excoriating him for speaking on behalf of the entire Conference.⁸² Not only had Colonnese not gotten the proper clearance to make such a statement, alleged Bernardin, but he also had utilized poor timing in soiling Mitrione’s “integrity and good name unfairly and without sufficient evidence.”⁸³ That Father Colonnese had been chided once before for his missteps in speaking too candidly in public about New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller’s

1969 fact-finding visit to Brazil likely further angered his superiors.⁸⁴ In his response to Bishop Bernardin, Father Colonnese accused the Director of ignoring the doctrine of subsidiarity – the belief that a central authority should only perform those tasks that a local authority cannot perform more effectively and a cornerstone of post-Vatican II Catholic policy – in condemning his public comments.⁸⁵ In addressing this indictment that December, Bernardin addressed the more general issues with the Latin American Bureau’s increasingly political stance: “Some concern has been expressed by the episcopal members of the Committee on International Affairs regarding the program and the general stance of the Division for Latin America... More specifically they are concerned that you... may commit the Conference to positions with which many others would not agree.”⁸⁶ It seems Bishop Bernardin had grown tired of years of trying to rein in Colonnese’s attempts to transform the Latin American Bureau into a hotbed for activism, particularly against the Brazilian civilian-military dictatorship.

Conclusions

Given his rebellious history, it should be come as no surprise that Louis Colonnese’s activist tactics eventually became too irksome for his superiors at the USCC to bear. He was removed from his post in 1973. During his years at the DIA, however, it is clear that he worked tirelessly to direct USCC policy toward a more liberal stance in the international campaign against torture. Perhaps Bishop Bernardin, likely an older clergyman, and his colleagues simply were not as receptive to the spirit of Vatican II as presumably younger priests such as Father Colonnese or laymen such as Thomas Quigley were. In this way, the infamous generation gap between Baby Boomers and their parents that was at the root of many of the tensions of the 1960s seems to have replicated itself within the power structure of the American Catholic Church. In this case, however, the catalyst was not Rock and Roll, sexual liberation, or

marijuana; it was, instead, the legacy of Vatican II. One can see a clear parallel between the despair of the idealistic young Americans who placed their hopes in organizations such as Students for a Democratic Society and the alienation expressed in communications from both Colonnese and Father Darrell Rupiper. Young activists in both cases attempted to effect massive change, but they ran headlong into a well-entrenched establishment whose members had no appetite for the rapid reform on which the new generation insisted.

On one hand, the evolutions in the Catholic Church through Vatican II and in the USCC the activism of Father Colonnese seem at first glance to be products of a larger age of liberalism and revolution, making the evolution political language in *Latin America Calls!* through the 1960s a seemingly unexceptional event. On the other hand, it is clear that tremendous individual effort on the part of Father Colonnese was instrumental in undoing the conservatism and anti-communism of his predecessor John J. Considine and his other superiors. A true test of whether the fuel for the transformation of *Latin America Calls!* was simply the turbulent nature of the 1960s would be, of course, to replace Louis Colonnese with a more traditional clergyman and to observe the outcome. Though such an experiment obviously is impossible to carry out, it seems unlikely that the Latin American Bureau and its main publication would have dedicated such enormous resources to the coverage of the murder of Father Antonio Henrique Pereira Neto had Father Colonnese been absent. There is indeed something exceptional about the way in which *Latin America Calls!* developed; Louis M. Colonnese was not simply a man who found himself in the right place at the right time.

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² "Reds Blow Up Catholic Station to Stop Truth," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), January-February 1963.

³ "Line May Twist but Red is Red," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), January-February 1963.

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- ⁴ Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 209-210.
- ⁵ John W. O'Malley, "The Style of Vatican II," *America Magazine*, last modified February 24, 2003, http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2812.
- ⁶ McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 91.
- ⁷ Second Vatican Council, "Inter Oecumenici - Sacred Congregation of Rites," Eternal World Television Network, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDWINOEC.HTM>.
- ⁸ McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 94.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.
- ¹⁰ "Personal Diplomacy," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), November, 1966.
- ¹¹ Second Vatican Council, "Gaudium et Spes - Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Vatican Archives, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
- ¹² McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 119.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ "Church Combats Reds, Poverty," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), January-February, 1963.
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- ²¹ "Four Victories," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), November, 1964.
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- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ "Need and Resources in Latin America," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), October-November, 1965.
- ²⁵ "Macaroni New Weapon in Church's War on Poverty," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), October-November, 1965.
- ²⁶ "Poverty's Quints Die Quickly," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), December-January, 1965-1966.

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- ²⁸ "Urges Renewed Efforts," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), August-September, 1965.
- ²⁹ John J. Considine to Joseph L. Bernardin, memorandum, April 24, 1968.
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- ³² Marina Bandeira. "A Christian View of L.A.'s Political Choices," *Latin America Calls!* (Washington, D.C.), March, 1967.
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⁷⁸ Ibid.

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⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Joseph L. Bernardin to Mrs. Daniel Mitrione, September 17, 1970.

⁸³ Joseph L. Bernardin to Louis M. Colonnese, memorandum, September 11, 1970.

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⁸⁶ Joseph L. Bernardin to Louis M. Colonnese, memorandum, December 21, 1970.