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## Book Review

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# Horror tales and liberation theology

by Valerie Rush

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### *Cry of the People*

by Penny Lernoux

Doubleday and Co.

New York, 1980. 535 pages. \$12.95

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With all eyes focused toward the upcoming North-South summit in Cancún, Mexico this October, the issue of Third World development is high on the international agenda. It is thus of special significance that a new book has begun to circulate in U.S. and Latin American circles which, disguised as a testament to the "people's struggle" in Latin America, is actually an assault on the essence of real Third World liberation—the right to economic development.

*Cry of the People*, by American journalist Penny Lernoux, is devoted to the story of "United States involvement in the rise of fascism, torture and murder, and the persecution of the Catholic Church in Latin America," or so the jacket copy claims. Its 500 pages—replete with hundreds of pornographically detailed torture stories and even an appendix of modern-day Church "martyrs"—inform us that a new "people's Church" has arisen in Latin America which, in the name of human rights, is leading the downtrodden masses to freedom.

The "freedom" Lernoux offers the oppressed populations of Latin America is, however, a blend of terrorism, cultism, and brainwashing, leading to self-destruction for entire nations on the model of that meatgrinder known as El Salvador. At the same time, Lernoux viciously slanders countries like Mexico, which today stands in the vanguard of Third World leadership for its ardent defense of the right to industrial development as the only guarantee of national sovereignty. The revolutionary heritage which imbues the Mexican people with a fierce patriotism and commitment to progress is dismissed by Lernoux as a myth which has merely served to engender "fatalism and apathy."

It is not accidental that Lernoux selects the Jesuit order's activities in the shanty towns of Chihuahua in northern Mexico for special praise; what she neglects to mention is that in the early and mid-1970s, these slums

became a well-known spawning ground for the terrorist gang, the 23rd of September League—under the sponsorship of the renegade Jesuit gang that infiltrated the Catholic Church in the 16th century.

### Development is the issue

The unwary reader can quickly become enmired in Lernoux's blood-and-guts horror stories. But her central thesis—that development is nothing but an imperialist conspiracy against the poor—is stated explicitly enough. "The issue is the model of development," she says. "Do you make refrigerators and air conditioners or shirts and shoes? Do you build sophisticated hospitals or rural clinics, universities or primary schools?"

"It is a matter of intense national pride with these people [national leaders] that their country has a steel industry, though there may be no economic or social justification for the expensive toy. . . . Petrochemical plants may reduce a country's imports and add a few points to the GNP but they do not promote human development."

Lernoux's book reads like a vast public relations job for the "Liberation Theology" faction within the Catholic Church which over the past decade has preached socialist revolution and zero-growth ideology. Top "liberationist" spokesman Gustavo Gutiérrez gets special mention for his thesis that "liberation is a more appropriate word than development in the context of poverty and repression." Lernoux's book is exuberantly dedicated to the Maryknoll and Jesuit orders who opened up their private files to make her book possible.

The traditionalist forces in the Church whose dedication to progress and the perfectability of the human soul makes them an obstacle to the depopulation strategies of the "liberationists" are singled out for special venom by Lernoux. The "conservative" Church, she says, is essentially still the Church of the Inquisition, defender of military tyrants, and ally of the multinationals and, of course, the CIA. The liberationists' aim is to turn the traditionalist Church in Latin America into a "tower of isolation," to split the Catholic Church and shatter the influence of the Vatican growth and development faction worldwide.

*Cry of the People* details some of the weapons in the liberationists' armory, which include:

- consciousness-raising sessions with backward peasants.
- "popular religiosity" such as the voodoo-based *macumba* cult of Brazil. By brainwashing Latin America's peasantry with cultist rites and Jacobinist "conscientization," Lernoux's liberationist friends hope to shape a battering ram against the continent's prodevelopment forces. With such "liberation" awaiting its populations, Latin America will stand little chance of making it to the 21st century.