

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

'Theolib' and the Nicaraguan model

Defying the Vatican's orders to keep out of party politics, Marxist clergy may have ignited a political time bomb in Brazil.

Following its success a decade ago in Nicaragua, under its Sandinista government, the evil, Marxist doctrine of "Theology of Liberation" scored one of its greatest successes in the hemisphere with the unexpected victory of its candidate, Luis Ignacio da Silva, in the Nov. 15 first round election for the presidency of Brazil. "Lula," as he is called, won with the backing of the Workers Party (PT), a party composed of Marxist, pro-communist, and even pro-terrorist, tendencies, founded almost 10 years ago on the basis of Theology of Liberation.

It has now been revealed that a large contingent of bishops, priests, seminarians, and even a cardinal—leading protagonists of the so-called "Christian-Marxist dialogue"—openly worked for Lula's election, defying the Vatican prohibition against any participation of the clergy in party politics.

This intervention into an already red-hot electoral situation adds a dangerous politico-religious element that could unleash serious turbulence. The potential for this is growing, as the obscurantist, putative Christian sect Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) has already reacted negatively to Lula's success.

On Nov. 28, the *Jornal do Brasil* reported that according to information from the general staff of the Armed Forces, at least 20,000 masses were celebrated across the country the day before the election, at which the priests called from the pulpits for the people to vote for the PT. *O Globo* reported that the unexpectedly high vote for

Lula in the states of Minas Gerais and Pernambuco, which gave him his slim margin of victory to enter the second round of the election, was due to backing from the Catholic clergy.

Such massive backing resulted from the previous work of the Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs), which functioned as veritable party cells—there are more than 80,000 of them, with about 4 million active members; and from the work of the "Pastoral of the Land," a movement headed by Bishop Augusto Rocha, the group's national director. Rocha had declared that "there is no doubt that Lula is the candidate of the people."

From the date of its founding at the beginning of the 1980s, the PT was totally captured by several famous personalities of the Brazilian Theology of Liberation movement, at which point the early lessons of the Nicaraguan experiment with the CEBs were imported into Brazil. It should be noted that it was at the point of the PT's first electoral victories that the role of the Christian-Marxist dialogue also became more visible.

One of the PT's mentors was Friar Betto, the party's *éminence grise*, along with theologian Leonardo Boff, recently castigated by the Vatican for his semi-heretical writings. In 1979, Friar Betto became an influential adviser to the CEBs in Nicaragua, thanks to his close friendship with Father Miguel d'Escoto, the Nicaraguan foreign minister. It was through him that Betto met Fidel Castro, and from that point forward has been propagandizing on behalf of Castro's political and

cultural initiatives throughout the continent.

Also noteworthy is the role carried out by Cardinal Evaristo Arns, the archbishop of São Paulo, and sponsor of centers of intellectual activity, and of political activism, from which the PT was created. In January of 1989, Cardinal Arns caused a commotion in the Catholic hierarchy when he wrote a letter to Fidel Castro on the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, in which he said, "Christian faith reveals in the conquests of the [Cuban] Revolution the reign of God."

It is rumored that a Lula government would include Friar Betto, Boff, and the bishop of Duque de Caxias, Mauro Morelli, and would be a faithful copy of the gnostic semi-theocratic model implanted by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and repudiated by the Vatican.

The Catholic hierarchy has tried to stop the anti-Vatican rebellion of the Liberation theologians, by trying to get them out of politics. To this end, the Congregation for Catholic Education ordered a seminary and its annex, the Institute of Theology, in Recife, closed, since both had become hotbeds of Marxist cadres. Nonetheless, on Nov. 27, on the day of its closing, the seminarians held a support meeting for the PT.

Commenting on this problem, Cardinal Eugenio Salles, archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, who has written extensively on the damage to the Church dating from when it was dependent on the Brazilian monarchy, wrote an article Nov. 25, on the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Brazilian Republic, stating that "with the birth of the Republic . . . some evils didn't disappear, and new ones appeared. Just look at the problem in the seminaries. The infiltration by anti-Christian ideologies is as alive as in the past."