

# The Vatican sends contrary signals

by Augustinus

Three major events since late August have sent out contrary signals from the Vatican: the injunction against the priests in the Sandinist government of Nicaragua; the condemnation of Liberation Theology; and the Boff case.

Put together, the evidence suggests that the recent, much-publicized Vatican attacks on the Theology of Liberation may have more to do with a political agreement between Henry Kissinger and the Vatican State Secretariat, than with concern for Church doctrine.

Kissinger's crowd is agitating to pull U.S. military forces out of Western Europe and send them into Central America for a "showdown" with the "communists." But, as was underlined by then Kremlin chief Andropov in an interview with the West German newsweekly *Der Spiegel* in April 1983, according to the "New Yalta" deal the Soviet Empire would get control of Europe and the Middle East, and the United States would be left with control of the Pacific, Caribbean, and Ibero-America. The Vatican's potential role in this is pointed up by the fact that almost half the world's Catholics live in Ibero-America.

With the document on the Theology of Liberation (see *EIR*, Sept. 25, p. 45), prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (ex-Holy Office), the Vatican reasserted its doctrinal and hierarchic hegemony over the countless centrifugal thrusts characterizing the Church in the Ibero-American countries. The many messages of support which have arrived from all the bishops' conferences, as well as the General of the Jesuits, Father Kolvenbach, have assured this operation a good probability of success.

Shortly before the Vatican document was issued came the injunction to the Sandinist priests of Nicaragua, ending the 1981 compromise between Vatican Secretary of State Agostino Casaroli and the Managua government.

A high-level Sandinist delegation rushed to Rome to negotiate the question of priests who are also government ministers, who include: Miguel D'Escoto of the Maryknoll missionaries, foreign minister; Ernesto Cardinal, a Trappist monk, culture minister; and Fernando Cardenal, Ernesto's brother, a Jesuit and minister of education.

The delegation stayed in Rome for nearly one week, and had numerous meetings with the "Kissinger of the Vatican," Mons. Achille Silvestrini. When these talks were over, they met just once with Cardinal Casaroli. Significantly, they were *not* received by the Pope himself, who did grant an audience to the president of the Nicaraguan conference of

bishops, Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, who informed the Pope on the atrocities committed by the Sandinists, comparable only to the previous Somoza regime.

Interviewed by journalists while en route to Canada on the fate of the priest-ministers of Nicaragua, the Pope responded, "We will act according to the procedures of canon law," which in fact prohibits members of religious orders from taking on political duties: an immovable position on the part of the Church of Rome.

The foreseeable consequences will be the suspension *a divinis* of the rebel priests, who certainly will not accept resigning from their political offices. This break with the Church will facilitate the plans of those U.S. forces plotting an armed intervention into Nicaragua.

According to well informed diplomatic sources, Monsignor Silvestrini regularly meets with CIA and State Department representatives to discuss the strategic situation. The Vatican has become a major consultant of the State Department, so much so that President Reagan asked permission from the Holy See before lifting the embargo against Poland, and the Nunzio to Washington, Mons. Pio Laghi, is in very close touch with the administration. As a quid pro quo, Laghi intervened with the Catholic hierarchy of America to end their criticisms of Reagan. This is the context of the American church's repeated attacks on the Mondale-Ferraro team.

## The Boff affair

How little doctrine may count when it comes to tightening hierarchical control in Ibero-America was signaled by the Boff affair. Boff, a Franciscan monk from near Venice and a noted Liberation Theologian, was called into the Vatican for his writing, "Church: Charisma and Power," considered dangerous to the faith.

On Sept. 7, Father Leonardo Boff was received by Cardinal Ratzinger in the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to be "tried." To the general surprise he instead had a cordial talk with the cardinal. Questioned as he came out by journalists as to whether he had actually been tried, Boff smiled and calmly said, "Oh no, Ratzinger is a personal friend of mine." He added that they had discussed Liberation Theology and the Cardinal told him: "We are preparing the second document on the subject; we will treat the praiseworthy and positive aspects of that theology and will consult the bishops and also all the theologians of Ibero-America."

Boff himself said in a subsequent interview: "For certain the future of the Church is not in Rome. The Pope is intelligent, he listens carefully. The Church is thinking in centuries, in millennia. . . . The Pope is within our fundamental option, as we are in his. We are moving together toward the year 2000."

The head of the Holy Office, Cardinal Ratzinger, comes from the same ranks of "rebel" theologians as Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Yves Congar. During Vatican II he acted as a point man of the "innovators" group. As usual, the rebellions are the products of the Inquisition!