

Rio Report by Silvia Palacios

Kremlin blesses Brazil's 'theolibbers'

Brazil's theologians of 'liberation' trek to Moscow to pay homage to the cult of the Third Rome.

In one of the most serious challenges to Pope John Paul II's authority to date, prominent Ibero-American leaders of the so-called "theology of liberation" have laid out the welcome mat to the imperial plans of Gorbachov and the Russian Orthodox Church. As a result of the official opening between the liberationists and Moscow, terrorist groups under Soviet sponsorship across the continent are now assured open access to an important faction of the Ibero-American Catholic Church.

On July 12, the Seventh International Solidarity Encounter began in Rio de Janeiro, presided over by the Brazilian theologians Leonardo Boff and Father Betto, Bishop Mauro Morelli, Mexico's former archbishop of Cuernavaca Sergio Méndez Arceo, and Mexican theologian Miguel Concha. Their slogans read: "Only the cowards yield, men die on their feet" and "We revolutionaries will be like Che." Nearly 300 leaders of the liberationists' *comunidades de base* gathered from Central America, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina, together with U.S. and European representatives, to discuss plans for the "Popular Church" over the next two years, following the gnostic examples of Sandinism in Nicaragua, the Salvadoran guerrillas, and the indigenous movement of Guatemala.

This well-planned movement—a product of the "Marxist-Christian dialogue"—seeks to propagandize Fidel Castro's proposed solution to the continent's foreign debt crisis, which envisions the downfall of the West. It

was not accidental, therefore, that Mexican theologian Miguel Concha contemptuously dismissed as "moderate," the Vatican debt document issued this year by the *Justitia et Pax* commission, while attacking the sovereign solution adopted by the Alan García government of Peru.

Said Concha, "The Peruvian comrades have informed us that Alan García lies and has paid more than 35% of his exports in interest payments on the debt."

However, the pace of the meeting was set from Moscow. Leonardo Boff, who inaugurated the event, and Father Betto had just returned from a trip to the Soviet Union, on invitation of the Soviet Communist Party and the Orthodox Church, during which they effectively formalized their sympathies for the Russian war against Western Christian culture, sympathies fully shared by Méndez Arceo and Miguel Concha.

The trip of the Brazilian theologians was organized by the Soviet Culture Ministry, under Konstantin Karchev, which according to Father Betto is the government agency in charge of promoting an alliance between the liberation theologians and the Russian Orthodox Church.

On June 23, on the eve of that trip, Father Betto—one of Fidel Castro's favorite mouthpieces—declared that Gorbachov "is interested in recovering the spirituality of the Soviet Union, not in the religious sense as we understand it in the West, but in the ethical plane." He added, "The visit had two goals: preparation of the 1,000th an-

niversary, in 1988, of the introduction of Christianity to old Russia, and the 70 years of the Bolshevik revolution."

In a July 10 interview published by the Novosti press agency, Leonardo Boff said that the final objective of his trip was to get to know the Russian Orthodox Church, "previously considered conservative and closed." He said that, after getting to know the Orthodox clergy, "a totally different reality" was revealed to him.

In his challenge to Pope John Paul II, Boff lied that there is religious freedom in Russia, and that "socialism and religion are not incompatible." He then insisted that he found in the Soviet Union "signs of the City of God," and that the Soviets were promoting "a cause in which we are joined."

In truth, the sympathies of Boff and company with the Russian Orthodox Church—which maintains that Holy Mother Russia will be the "Third and Final Rome"—are not new, but go at least as far back as Boff's second-to-last book, *The Trinity, Society and Liberation*, currently being examined by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

With respect to his concept of the Trinity, Boff used an interview published by the Mexican daily *La Jornada*, in December of last year, to violently attack the concept of the *Filioque*. It was precisely the Christian concept of the *Filioque* with which the Russian Orthodox Church disagreed, and around which issue the latter split with the Western Church following the Council of Florence in the 15th century.

Boff's gnostic interpretation of "God as mother" is, no doubt, warmly embraced by the modern-day zealots of Holy Mother Russia. An equally gnostic interpretation has been offered by the Sandinistas, who present Christ in the guise of a guerrilla fighter.