

We stand at the end of a century-long struggle to free man from the constraint of ideologies, persuasions and religions as guiding forces in his life. A non-thematic awareness of the significance of the incarnation emerges: an ability to say one great 'Yes' to the experience of life.

A new polarity emerges: a day-by-day insight into the tension between the manipulation of things and the relationship to persons.

We become capable of affirming the autonomy of the ludicrous in face of the useful, of the gratuitous as opposed to the purposeful, of the spontaneous as opposed to the rationalized and planned, of creative expression made possible by inventive solution.

We will need ideological rationalizations for a long time to achieve purposefully planned inventive solutions to social problems. Let consciously secular ideology assume this task.

I want to celebrate my faith for no purpose at all.

8 The Futility of Schooling

To provide every citizen in the United States with a level of schooling now enjoyed by the well-off one-third would require the addition of forty thousand million dollars per year to the present cost of elementary and secondary education in the United States, which is about thirty-seven thousand million. This sum exceeds the present expenditure for the war in Vietnam. Evidently the United States is too poor to provide compensatory education on this scale. And yet it is politically inexpedient and intellectually disreputable to question the elusive goal of providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens by giving them access to an equal number of years in school.

One man's illusions are often best recognized in the light of another man's delusions. My discussion of the futility of schooling in the Third World - published as a magazine article in 1968 - may help to demonstrate the general futility of world-wide educational institutions.

For the past two decades, demographic considerations have coloured all discussion about development in Latin America. In 1950 some 200 million people occupied the area extending from Mexico to Chile. Of these, 120 million lived directly or indirectly on primitive agriculture. Assuming both effective population controls and the most favourable possible results from programmes aimed at the increase of agriculture, by 1985 forty million people will produce most of the food for a total population of 360 million. The remaining 320 million will be either marginal to the economy or will have to be incorporated somehow into urban living and industrial production.

During these same past twenty years, both Latin American governments and foreign technical-assistance agencies have come to rely increasingly on the capacity of grammar, trade and high schools to lead the non-rural majority out of its marginality in shanty towns and subsistence farms into the type of factory, market and public forum which corresponds to modern technology. It was assumed that schooling would eventually produce a broad middle class with values resembling those of highly industrialized nations, despite the economy of continued scarcity.

Accumulating evidence now indicates that schooling does not and cannot produce the expected results. Some years ago the governments of the Americas joined in an Alliance for Progress, which has, in practice, served mainly the progress of the middle classes in the Latin nations. In most countries the Alliance has encouraged the replacement of a closed, feudal, hereditary elite by one which is supposedly 'meritocratic' and open to the few who manage to finish school. Concomitantly, the urban service proletariat has grown at several times the rate of the traditional landless rural mass and has replaced it in importance. The marginal majority and the schooled minority grow ever further apart. One old feudal society has brought forth two classes, separate and unequal.

This development has led to educational research focused on the improvement of the learning process in schools and on the adaptations of schools themselves to the special circumstances prevailing in underdeveloped societies. But logic would seem to require that we do not stop with an effort to improve schools; rather that we question the assumption on which the school sys-

tem itself is based. We must not exclude the possibility that the emerging nations cannot be schooled, that schooling is not a viable answer to their need for universal education. Perhaps this type of insight is needed to clear the way for a futuristic scenario in which schools as we know them today would disappear.

The social distance between the growing urban mass and the new elite is a new phenomenon, unlike the traditional forms of discrimination known in Latin America. This new discrimination is not a transitory thing which can be overcome by schooling. On the contrary: I submit that one of the reasons for the awakening frustration in the majorities is the progressive acceptance of the 'liberal myth', the assumption that schooling is an assurance of social integration.

The solidarity of all citizens based on their common graduation from school has been an inalienable part of the modern, Western self-image. Colonization has not succeeded in implanting this myth equally in all countries, but everywhere schooling has become the prerequisite for membership in a managerial middle class. The constitutional history of Latin America since its independence has made the masses of this continent particularly susceptible to the conviction that all citizens have a right to enter – and, therefore, have some possibility of entering – their society through the door of a school.

More than elsewhere, in Latin America the teacher as missionary for the school-gospel has found adherents at the grass-roots. Only a few years ago many of us were happy when finally the Latin American school system was singled out as the area of privileged investment for international assistance funds. In fact, during the past years, both national budgets and private investment have been stimulated to increase educational allocations. But as second look reveals that this school system has built a narrow bridge across a widening social gap. As the only legitimate passage to the middle class, the school restricts all unconventional crossings and leaves the underachiever to bear the blame for his marginality.

This statement is difficult for Americans to understand. In the United States, the nineteenth-century persuasion that free schooling ensures all citizens equality in the economy and effective participation in the society survives. It is by no means certain

that the result of schooling ever measured up to this expectation, but the schools certainly played a more prominent role in this process some hundred years ago.

In the United States of the mid-nineteenth century, six years of schooling frequently made a young man the educational superior of his book. In a society largely dominated by unschooled achievers, the little red schoolhouse was an effective road to social equality. A few years in school for all brought most extremes together. Those who achieved power and money without schooling had to accept a degree of equality with those who achieved literacy and did not strike it rich. Computers, television and aeroplanes have changed this. Today in Latin America, in the midst of modern technology, three times as many years of schooling and twenty times as much money as was then spent on grammar schools will not produce the same social result. The dropout from the sixth grade is unable to find a job even as a punch-card operator or a railroad hand.

Contemporary Latin America needs school systems no more than it needs railroad tracks. Both – spanning continents – served to speed the now-rich and established nations into the industrial age. Both, if now handled with care, are harmless heirlooms from the Victorian period. But neither is relevant to countries emerging from primitive agriculture directly into the jet age. Latin America cannot afford to maintain outmoded social institutions amid modern technological processes.

By 'school' of course, I do not mean all organized formal education. I use the term 'school' and 'schooling' here to designate a form of child care and a *rite de passage* which we take for granted. We forget that this institution and the corresponding creed appeared on the scene only with the growth of the industrial state. Comprehensive schooling today involves year-round, obligatory and universal classroom attendance in small groups for several hours each day. It is imposed on all citizens for a period of ten to eighteen years. School divides life into two segments, which are increasingly of comparable length. As much as anything else, schooling implies custodial care for persons who are declared undesirable elsewhere by the simple fact that a school has been built to serve them. The school is supposed to take the excess population from the street, the family or the

labour force. Teachers are given the power to invent new criteria according to which new segments of the population may be committed to a school. This restraint on healthy, productive and potentially independent human beings is performed by schools with an economy which only labour camps could rival.

Schooling also involves a process of accepted ritual certification for all members of a 'schooled' society. Schools select those who are bound to succeed and send them on their way with a badge marking them fit. Once universal schooling has been accepted as the hallmark for the in-members of a society, fitness is measured by the amount of time and money spent on formal education in youth rather than ability acquired independently from an 'accredited' curriculum.

A first important step toward radical educational reform in Latin America will be taken when the educational system of the United States is accepted for what it is: a recent, imaginative social invention perfected since the Second World War and historically rooted in the American frontier. The creation of the all-pervasive school establishment, tied into industry, government and the military, is an invention no less original than the guild-centred apprenticeship of the Middle Ages, or the *doctrina de los indios* and the *reducción* of Spanish missionaries in Mexico and Paraguay, respectively, or the *lycée* and *les grandes écoles* in France. Each one of these systems was produced by its society to give stability to an achievement; each has been heavily pervaded by ritual to which society bowed; and each has been rationalized into an all-embracing persuasion, religion or ideology. The United States is not the first nation that has been willing to pay a high price to have its educational system exported by missionaries to all corners of the world. The colonization of Latin America by the catechism is certainly a noteworthy precedent.

It is difficult now to challenge the school as a system because we are so used to it. Our industrial categories tend to define results as products of specialized institutions and instruments. Armies produce defence for countries. Churches procure salvation in an afterlife. Binet defined intelligence as that which his tests test. Why not, then, conceive of education as the product of schools? Once this tag has been accepted, unschooled educa-

tion gives the impression of something spurious, illegitimate and certainly unaccredited.

For some generations, education has been based on massive schooling, just as security was based on massive retaliation and, at least in the United States, transportation on the family car. The United States, because it industrialized earlier, is rich enough to afford schools, the Strategic Air Command, and the car – no matter what the toll. Most nations of the world are not that rich; they behave, however, as if they were. The example of nations which 'made it' leads Brazilians to pursue the ideal of the family car – just for a few. It compels Peruvians to squander on Mirage bombers – just for a show. And it drives every government in Latin America to spend up to two-fifths of its total budget on schools, and to do so unchallenged.

Let us insist, for a moment, on this analogy between the school system and the system of transportation based on the family car. Ownership of a car is now rapidly becoming the ideal in Latin America – at least among those who have a voice in formulating national goals. During the past twenty years, roads, parking facilities and services for private automobiles have been immensely improved. These improvements benefit overwhelmingly those who have their own cars – that is, a tiny percentage. The bias of the budget allocated for transportation thus discriminates against the best transportation for the greatest number – and the huge capital investments in this area ensure that this bias is here to stay. In some countries, articulate minorities now challenge the family car as the fundamental unit of transportation in emerging societies. But everywhere in Latin America it would be political suicide to advocate radical limitations on the multiplication of schools. Opposition parties may challenge at times the need for superhighways or the need for weapons which will see active duty only in a parade. But what man in his right mind would challenge the need to provide every child with a chance to go to high school?

Before poor nations could reach this point of universal schooling, however, their ability to educate would be exhausted. Even ten or twelve years of schooling are beyond 85 per cent of all men of our century if they happen to live outside the tiny islands where capital accumulates. Nowhere in Latin America do 27 per

cent of any age group get beyond the sixth grade, nor do more than 1 per cent graduate from a university. Yet no government spends less than 18 per cent of its budget on schools, and many spend more than 30 per cent. Universal schooling, as this concept has been defined recently in industrial societies, is obviously beyond their means. The annual cost of schooling a United States citizen between the ages of twelve and twenty-four equals as much as most Latin Americans earn in two or three years.

Schools will stay beyond the means of the developing nations: neither radical population control nor maximum reallocations of government budgets nor unprecedented foreign aid would end the present unfeasibility of school systems aimed at twelve years of schooling for all. Population control needs time to become effective when the total population is as young as that of tropical America. The percentage of the world's resources invested in schooling cannot be raised beyond certain levels, nor can this budget grow beyond foreseeable maximal rates. Finally, foreign aid would have to increase to 30 per cent of the receiving nation's national budget to provide effectively for schooling, a goal not to be anticipated.

Furthermore, the per capita cost of schooling itself is rising everywhere as schools accept those who are difficult to teach, as retention rates rise, and as the quality of schooling itself improves. This rise in cost neutralizes much of the new investments. Schools do not come cheaper by the dozen.

In view of all these factors, increases in school budgets must usually be defended by arguments which imply default. In fact, however, schools are untouchable because they are vital to the *status quo*. Schools have the effect of tempering the subversive potential of education in an alienated society because, if education is confined to schools, only those who have been schooled into compliance on a lower grade are admitted to its higher reaches. In capital-starved societies not rich enough to purchase unlimited schooling, the majority is schooled not only into compliance but also into subservience.

Since Latin American constitutions were written with an eye on the United States, the ideal of universal schooling was a creative utopia. It was a condition necessary to create the Latin American nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. Without the pretence

that every citizen has a right to go to school, the liberal bourgeoisie could never have developed; neither could the middle-class masses of present-day Europe, the United States and Russia, nor the managerial middle elite of their cultural colonies in South America. But the same school which worked in the last century to overcome feudalism has now become an oppressive idol which protects those who are already schooled. Schools grade and, therefore, they degrade. They make the degraded accept his own submission. Social seniority is bestowed according to the level of schooling achieved. Everywhere in Latin America more money for schools means more privilege for a few at the cost of most, and this patronage of an elite is explained as a political ideal. This ideal is written into laws which state the patently impossible: equal scholastic opportunities for all.

The number of satisfied clients who graduate from schools every year is much smaller than the number of frustrated drop-outs who are conveniently graded by their failure for use in a marginal labour pool. The resulting steep educational pyramid defines a rationale for the corresponding levels of social status. Citizens are 'schooled' into their places. This results in politically acceptable forms of discrimination which benefit the relatively few achievers.

The move from the farm to the city in Latin America still frequently means a move from a world where status is explained as a result of inheritance into a world where it is explained as a result of schooling. Schools allow a head start to be rationalized as an achievement. They give to privilege not only the appearance of equality but also of generosity: should somebody who missed out on early schooling be dissatisfied with the status he holds, he can always be referred to a night or trade school. If he does not take advantage of such recognized remedies, his exclusion from privilege can be explained as his own fault. Schools temper the frustrations they provoke.

The school system also inculcates its own universal acceptance. Some schooling is not necessarily more education than none, especially in a country where every year a few more people can get all the schooling they want while most people never complete the sixth grade. But much less than six years seems to be sufficient to inculcate in the child the acceptance of the

ideology which goes with the school grade. The child learns only about the superior status and unquestioned authority of those who have more schooling than he has.

Any discussion or radical alternatives to school-centred formal education upsets our notions of society. No matter how inefficient schools are in educating a majority, no matter how effective schools are in limiting the access to the elite, no matter how liberally schools shower their non-educational benefits on the members of this elite, schools do increase the national income. They qualify their graduates for more economic production. In an economy on the lower rungs of development toward United States-type industrialization, a school graduate is enormously more productive than a dropout. Schools are part and parcel of a society in which a minority is on the way to becoming so productive that the majority must be schooled into disciplined consumption. Schooling therefore – under the best of circumstances – helps to divide society into two groups: those so productive that their expectation of annual rise in personal income lies far beyond the national average, and the overwhelming majority whose income also rises, but at a rate clearly below the former's. These rates, of course, are compounded and lead the two groups further apart.

Radical innovation in formal education presupposes radical political changes, radical changes in the organization of production, and radical changes in man's image of himself as an animal which needs school. This is often forgotten when sweeping reforms of the schools are proposed and fail because of the societal framework we accept. For instance, the trade school is sometimes advocated as a cure-all for mass schooling. Yet it is doubtful that the products of trade schools would find employment in a continuously changing, ever more automated economy. Moreover the capital and operating costs of trade schools, as we know them today, are several times as high as those for a standard school of the same grade. Also, trade schools usually take in sixth graders, who, as we have seen, are already the exception. Trade schools pretend to educate by creating a spurious facsimile of the factory within a school building.

Instead of the trade school, we should think of a subsidized transformation of the industrial plant. It should be possible to

obligate factories to serve as training centres during off-hours, for managers to spend part of their time planning and supervising this training, and for the industrial process to be so redesigned that it has educational value. If the expenditures for present schools were partly allocated to sponsor this kind of educational exploitation of existing resources, then the final results – both economic and educational – might be incomparably greater. If, further, such subsidized apprenticeship were offered to all who ask for it, irrespective of age, and not only to those who are destined to be employees in the particular plant, industry would have begun to assume an important role now played by school. We would be on the way to disabuse ourselves of the idea that manpower qualification must precede employment, that schooling must precede productive work. There is no reason for us to continue the medieval tradition in which men are prepared for the 'secular world' by incarceration in a sacred precinct, be it monastery, synagogue or school.

A second, frequently discussed, remedy for the failure of schools is fundamental, or adult, education. It has been proved by Paulo Freire in Brazil that those adults who can be interested in political issues of their community can be made literate within six weeks of evening classes. The programme teaching such reading and writing skills, of course, must be built around the emotion-loaded key words of the adults' political vocabulary. Understandably this fact has got Freire's programme into trouble. It has also been suggested that the dollar-cost of ten separate months of adult education is equal that of one year of early schooling, and can be incomparably more effective than schooling at its best.

Unfortunately, 'adult education' now is conceived principally as a device to give the 'underprivileged' a palliative for the schooling he lacks. The situation would have to be reversed if we wanted to conceive of all education as an exercise in adulthood. We should consider a radical reduction of the length of the formal, obligatory school sessions to only two months each year – but spread this type of formal schooling over the first twenty or thirty years of a man's life.

While various forms of in-service apprenticeship in factories and programmed maths and language teaching could assume a

large proportion of what we have previously called 'instruction', two months a year of formal schooling should be considered ample time for what the Greeks meant by *scholè* – leisure for the pursuit of insight. No wonder we find it nearly impossible to conceive of comprehensive social changes in which the educational functions of schools would thus be redistributed in new patterns among institutions we do not now envisage. We find it equally difficult to indicate concrete ways in which the non-educational functions of a vanishing school system would be redistributed. We do not know what to do with those whom we now label 'children' or 'students' and commit to school.

It is difficult to foresee the political consequences of changes as fundamental as those proposed, not to mention the international consequences. How should a school-reared society coexist with one which has gone 'off the school standard', and whose industry, commerce, advertising and participation in politics is different as a matter of principle? Areas which develop outside the universal school standard would lack the common language and criteria for respectful coexistence with the schooled. Two such worlds, such as China and the United States, might almost have to seal themselves off from each other.

Rashly, the school-bred mind abhors the educational devices available to these worlds. It is difficult mentally to 'accredit' Mao's party as an educational institution which might prove more effective than the schools are at their best – at least when it comes to inculcating citizenship. Guerrilla warfare in Latin America is another education device much more frequently misused or misunderstood than applied. Che Guevara, for instance, clearly saw it as a last educational resort to teach a people about the illegitimacy of their political system. Especially in unschooled countries, where the transistor radio has come to every village, we must never underrate the educational functions of great charismatic dissidents like Dom Helder Camara in Brazil or Camilo Torres in Colombia. Castro described his early charismatic harangues as 'teaching sessions'.

The schooled mind perceives these processes exclusively as political indoctrination, and their educational purpose eludes its grasp. The legitimation of education by schools tends to render all non-school education an accident, if not an outright misde-

meanor. And yet it is surprising with what difficulty the school-bred mind perceives the rigour with which schools inculcate their own presumed necessity, and with it the supposed inevitability of the system they sponsor. Schools indoctrinate the child into the acceptance of the political system his teachers represent, despite the claim that teaching is non-political.

Ultimately the cult of schooling will lead to violence, as the establishment of *any* religion has led to it. If the gospel of universal schooling is permitted to spread in Latin America, the military's ability to repress insurgency must grow. Only force will ultimately control the insurgency inspired by the frustrated expectation that the propagation of the school-myth enkindles. The maintenance of the present school system may turn out to be an important step on the way to Latin American fascism. Only fanaticism inspired by idolatry of a system can ultimately rationalize the massive discrimination which will result from another twenty years of grading a capital-starved society by school marks.

The time has come to recognize the real burden of the schools in the emerging nations, so that we may become free to envisage change in the social structure which now makes schools a necessity. I do not advocate a sweeping utopia like the Chinese commune for Latin America. But I do suggest that we plunge our imagination into the construction of scenarios which would allow a bold reallocation of educational functions among industry, politics, short scholastic retreats and intensive preparation of parents for providing early childhood education. The cost of schools must be measured not only in economic, social and educational terms, but in political terms as well. Schools, in an economy of scarcity invaded by automation, accentuate and rationalize the coexistence of two societies, one a colony of the other.

Once it is understood that the cost of schooling is not inferior to the cost of chaos, we might be on the brink of courageously costly compromise. Today it is as dangerous in Latin America to question the myth of social salvation through schooling as it was three hundred years ago to question the divine rights of the Catholic kings.

9 School: The Sacred Cow

Only if we understand the school system as the central myth-making ritual of industrial societies can we explain the deep need for it, the complex myth surrounding it, and the inextricable way in which schooling is tied into the self-image of contemporary man. A graduation speech at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras provided me with an opportunity to probe this relationship.

This is a time of crisis in the institution of the school, a crisis which may mark the end of the 'age of schooling' in the Western world. I speak of the 'age of schooling' in the sense in which we are accustomed to speak of the 'feudal age' or of the 'Christian era'. The 'age of schooling' began about two hundred years ago. Gradually the idea grew that schooling was a necessary means of becoming a useful member of society. It is the task of this generation to bury that myth.

Your own situation is paradoxical. At the end and as a result of your studies, you are enabled to see that the education your children deserve, and will demand, requires a revolution in the school system of which you are a product.

The graduation rite that we solemnly celebrate today confirms the prerogatives which Puerto Rican society, by means of a costly system of subsidized public schools, confers upon the sons and daughters of its most privileged citizens. You are part of the most privileged 10 per cent of your generation, part of that minuscule group which has completed university studies. Public investment in each of you is fifteen times the educational investment in the average member of the poorest 10 per cent of the population, who drops out of school before completing the fifth grade.

The certificate you receive today attests to the legitimacy of your competence. It is not available to the self-educated, to those who have acquired competence by means not officially recognized in Puerto Rico. The programmes of the University of Puerto Rico are all duly accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

The degree which the university today confers upon you implies that over the last sixteen years or more your elders have obliged you to submit yourselves, voluntarily or involuntarily, to the discipline of this complex scholastic rite. You have in fact been daily attendants, five days a week, nine months a year, within the sacred precinct of the school and have continued such attendance year after year, usually without interruption. Governmental and industrial employees and the professional associations have good reasons to believe that you will not subvert the order to which you have faithfully submitted in the course of completing your 'rites of initiation'.

Much of your youth has been spent within the custody of the school. It is expected that you will now go forth to work, to guarantee to future generations the privileges conferred upon you.

Puerto Rico is the only society in the Western hemisphere to devote 30 per cent of its governmental budget to education. It is one of six places in the world which devote between 6 and 7 per cent of national income to education. The schools of Puerto Rico cost more and provide more employment than any other public sector. In no other social activity is so large a proportion of the total population of Puerto Rico involved.

A huge number of people are observing this occasion on television. Its solemnity will, on the one hand, confirm their sense of educational inferiority, and on the other, raise their hopes, largely doomed to disappointment, of one day themselves receiving a university degree.

Puerto Rico has been schooled. I don't say educated but, rather, schooled. Puerto Ricans can no longer conceive of life without reference to the school. The desire for education has actually given way to the compulsion of schooling. Puerto Rico has adopted a new religion. Its doctrine is that education is a product of the school, a product which can be defined by numbers. There are the numbers which indicate how many years a student has spent under the tutelage of teachers, and others which represent the proportion of his correct answers in an examination. Upon the receipt of a diploma the educational product acquires a market value. School attendance in itself thus guarantees inclusion in the membership of disciplined consumers of the technocracy – just as in past times church attendance guaranteed membership in the community of saints. From governor to *jibaro*, Puerto Rico now accepts the ideology of its teachers as it once accepted the theology of its priests. The school is now identified with education as the Church once was with religion.

Today's agencies of accreditation are reminiscent of the royal patronage formerly accorded the Church. Federal support of education now parallels yesterday's royal donations to the Church. The power of the diploma has grown so rapidly in Puerto Rico that the poor blame their misery on precisely the

lack of that which assures to you, today's graduates, participation in society's privileges and powers.

Research shows that twice as many high-school graduates in Puerto Rico as in the States want to pursue university studies; while the probability of graduating from college for the Puerto Rican high-school graduate is much lower than it would be in the States. This widening discrepancy between aspirations and resources can result only in a deepening frustration among the inhabitants of the Island.

The later a Puerto Rican child drops out of school the more keenly does he feel his failure. Contrary to popular opinion, increasing emphasis on schooling has actually increased class conflict in Puerto Rico, and has also increased the sense of inferiority which Puerto Ricans suffer in relation to the United States.

Upon your generation falls the obligation of developing for Puerto Rico an educational process radically different from that of the present and independent of the example of other societies. It is yours to question whether Puerto Rico really wants to transform itself irrevocably into a passive product of the teaching profession. It is yours to decide whether you will subject your children to a school that seeks respectability in North American accreditation, its justification in the qualification of the labour force, and its function in permitting the children of the middle class to keep up with the Joneses of Westchester County, New York.

The real sacred cow in Puerto Rico is the school. Proponents of commonwealth, statehood and independence all take it for granted. Actually, none of these political alternatives can liberate a Puerto Rico which continues to put its primary faith in schooling. Thus, if this generation wants the true liberation of Puerto Rico, it will have to invent educational alternatives which put an end to the 'age of schooling'. This will be a difficult task. Schooling has developed a formidable folklore. The begowned academic professors whom we have witnessed today evoke the ancient procession of clerics and little angels on the day of Corpus Christi. The Church, holy, catholic, apostolic, is rivalled by the school, accredited, compulsory, untouchable, universal. Alma Mater has replaced Mother Church. The power of the

younger generation: the intuition that schooling has vulgarized education, that the school has become anti-educational and anti-social, as in other epochs the Church has become anti-Christian or Israel idolatrous. This intuition can, I believe, be explicitly and briefly formulated.

The protest of some students today is analogous to the dissidence of those charismatic leaders without whom the Church would never have been reformed: their prophecies led to martyrdom, their theological insights to their persecutions as heretics, their saintly activity often led to the stake. The prophet is always accused of subversion, the theologian of irreverence and the saint is written off as crazy.

The Church has always depended for its vitality upon the sensitivity of its bishops to the appeals of the faithful, who see the rigidity of the ritual as an obstacle to their faith. The churches, incapable of dialogue between their ruling clerics and their dissidents, have become museum pieces, and this could easily happen with the school system of today. It is easier for the university to attribute dissidence to ephemeral causes than to attribute this dissidence to a profound alienation of the students from the school. It is also easier for student leaders to operate with political slogans than to launch basic attacks upon sacred cows. The university that accepts the challenge of its dissident students and helps them to formulate in a rational and coherent manner the anxiety they feel because they are rejecting schooling exposes itself to the danger of being ridiculed for its supposed credulity. The student leader who tries to promote in his companions the consciousness of a profound aversion to their school (not to education itself) finds that he creates a level of anxiety which few of his followers care to face.

The university has to learn to distinguish between sterile criticism of scholastic authority and a call for the conversion of the school to the educational purposes for which it was founded, between destructive fury and the demand for radically new forms of education – scarcely conceivable by minds formed in the scholastic tradition; between, on the one hand, cynicism which seeks new benefits for the already privileged and, on the other, Socratic sarcasm, which questions the educational efficacy of accepted forms of instruction in which the institution is invest-

ing its major resources. It is necessary, in other words, to distinguish between the alienated mob and profound protest based on rejection of the school as a symbol of the *status quo*.

In no other place in Latin America has investment in education, demand for education, and information about education, increased so rapidly as in Puerto Rico. There is no place, therefore, in which members of your generation could begin the search for a new style of public education so readily as in Puerto Rico. It is up to you to get us back, recognizing that the generations which preceded you were misled in their efforts to achieve social equality by means of universal compulsory schooling.

In Puerto Rico three of every ten students drop out of school before finishing the sixth grade. This means that only one of every two children, from families with less than the median income, completes the elementary school. Thus half of all Puerto Rican parents are under a sad illusion if they believe that their children have more than an outside chance of entering the university.

Public funds for education go directly to the schools, without students having any control of them. The political justification for this practice is that it gives everyone equal access to the classroom. However, the high cost of this type of education, dictated by educators trained largely outside Puerto Rico, makes a public lie of the concept of equal access. Public schools may benefit all of the teachers but benefit mainly the few students who reach the upper levels of the system. It is precisely our insistence on direct financing of the 'free school' that causes this concentration of scarce resources on benefits for the children of the few.

I believe that every Puerto Rican has the right to receive an equal part of the educational budget. This is something very different and much more concrete than the mere promise of a place in the school. I believe, for example, that a young thirteen year old who has had only four years of schooling has much more right to the remaining educational resources than students of the same age who have had eight years of schooling. The more 'disadvantaged' a citizen is, the more he needs a guarantee of his right.

If in Puerto Rico it were decided to honour this right, then the free school would immediately have to be abandoned. The

annual quota of each person of school age would obviously not support a year of schooling, at present costs. The insufficiency would, of course, be even more dramatic if the total educational budget for all levels were divided among the population from six to twenty-five years of age, the period between kindergarten and graduate studies, to which all Puerto Ricans supposedly have free access.

These facts leave us three options: leave the system as it is, at the cost of justice and conscience; use the available funds exclusively to assure free schooling to children whose parents earn less than the median income; or use the available public resources to offer to all the education that an equal share of these resources could assure to each. The better-off could, of course, supplement this amount and might continue to offer their children the doubtful privilege of participating in the process which you are completing today. The poor would certainly use their share to acquire an education more efficiently and at lower cost.

The same choices apply, *a fortiori*, to other parts of Latin America where frequently not more than twenty dollars a year in public funds would be available for each child if the 20 per cent of tax receipts now destined for education were distributed equally to all children who should be in school under existing laws. This amount could never pay for a year of conventional schooling. It would however be enough to provide a good many children and adults with one month of intensive education year after year. It would also be enough to finance the distribution of educational games leading to skills with numbers, letters and logical symbols. And to sponsor successive periods of intensive apprenticeship. In North-East Brazil, Paulo Freire (who was forced to leave the country) showed us that with a single investment of this amount he was able to educate 25 per cent of an illiterate population to the point where they could do functional reading. But this, as he made clear, was only possible when his literacy programme could focus on the key words that are politically controversial within a community.

My suggestions may mortify many. But it is from the great positivists and liberals that we inherited the principle of using public funds for the administration of schools directed by professional educators; just as, previously, tithes had been given to

the Church to be administered by priests. It remains for you to fight the free public school in the name of true equality of educational opportunity. I admire the courage of those of you willing to enter this fight.

Youth wants educational institutions that provide them with education. They neither want nor need to be mothered, to be certified or to be indoctrinated. It is difficult, obviously, to get an education from a school that refuses to educate without requiring that its students submit simultaneously to custodial care, sterile competition and indoctrination. It is difficult, obviously, to finance a teacher who is at the same time regarded as guardian, umpire, counsellor and curriculum manager. It is uneconomical to combine these functions in one institution. It is precisely the fusion of these four functions, frequently antithetical, which raises the cost of education acquired in school. This is also the source of our chronic shortage of educational resources. It is up to you to create institutions that offer education to all at a cost within the limits of public resources.

Only when Puerto Rico has psychologically outgrown the school will it be able to finance education for all, and only then will truly efficient, non-scholastic forms of education find acceptance. Meanwhile, these new forms of education will have to be designed as provisional means of compensating for the failures of the schools. In order to create new forms of education, we will have to demonstrate alternatives to the school that offer preferable options to students, teachers and taxpayers.

There is no intrinsic reason why the education that schools are now failing to provide could not be acquired more successfully in the setting of the family, of work and communal activity, in new kinds of libraries and other centres that would provide the means of learning. But the institutional forms that education will take in tomorrow's society cannot be clearly visualized. Neither could any of the great reformers anticipate concretely the institutional styles that would result from their reforms. The fear that new institutions will be imperfect, in their turn, does not justify our servile acceptance of present ones.

This plea to imagine a Puerto Rico without schools must, for many of you, come as a surprise. It is precisely for surprise that true education prepares us. The purpose of public education

should be no less fundamental than the purpose of the Church, although the purpose of the latter is more explicit. The basic purpose of public education should be to create a situation in which society obliges each individual to take stock of himself and his poverty. Education implies a growth of an independent sense of life and a relatedness which go hand in hand with increased access to, and use of, memories stored in the human community. The educational institution provides the focus for this process. This presupposes a place within the society in which each of us is awakened by surprise; a place of encounter in which others surprise me with their liberty and make me aware of my own. The university itself, if it is to be worthy of its traditions, must be an institution whose purposes are identified with the exercise of liberty, whose autonomy is based on public confidence in the use of that liberty.

My friends, it is your task to surprise yourselves, and us, with the education you succeed in inventing for your children. Our hope of salvation lies in our being surprised by the Other. Let us learn always to receive further surprises. I decided long ago to hope for surprises until the final act of my life – that is to say, in death itself.

10 Sexual Power and Political Potency

In urban areas of Latin America, at least one of four pregnancies terminates in abortion. In many inner city districts the rate is even higher. At the end of their childbearing age, at least two women in five have braved serious damage to their health, disrepute, and often gruesome guilt to avoid the birth of another child. All this happens in a culture in which common-law marriage and illegitimate births approach and even exceed Church marriages or legitimate births, and no stigma comparable to that known in the Anglo-Saxon world attaches to either. It also happens in a culture where other people's abandoned children are easily welcomed for upbringing in one's own family, without any formality. Evidently a lot of people do not want to have any more children.

Most of these abortions are performed by midwives, herb-doctors and witches, except in Uruguay and Argentina, where many doctors volunteer their illegal services even to the poor. Abortion is by far the most frequent cause of death among young women. These women need an alternative to the present situation.

The conditions of increased carnage are favourable. Enough girls have already been born to ensure a doubling of women of childbearing age in the very early 1980s. Neither development nor revolution can prevent growing misery for an exploding and hungry population, which drifts into abulia and passivity. It would be misleading to tell a woman seeking an abortion that a rosy future is on the horizon for her child.

But also, where can politicians afford to take a strong, positive stand for either birth control or legal abortion? Only a strong-man could afford simultaneously to date traditional Catholics who speak about sin, communists who want to