Jacques Maritain and His Two

"Authentic Revolutionaries"

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Fifty years ago Jacques Maritain published *Integral Humanism*, the most widely read and probably the most influential of all his books. In the troubled thirties, this book was a call to radical revolution, a rousing "Christian Manifesto" that earned for him from his Catholic critics the title of "le chrétien rouge", the Red Christian. What Maritain's critics refused to understand, in particular those Christians who, as Maritain put it, were "furiously attached to their privileges," whether ecclesiastical or economic privileges, was that the radical revolution to which Maritain was inciting Christians was not the violent overthrow of this or that political regime, nor the imposition of some "concrete historical ideal" or "utopia" realized through the forceful application of five, ten, or twenty year plans, and the ostracism or expulsion of all those who refuse, in whole or in part, a particular realization of this ideal. Rather, the revolution Maritain called for consisted of a gradual but radical "transformation of the temporal order," not imposed from above, but carried out from within, from the bottom up, by revolutionaries among whom "it would be vain to look for unanimous accord," but who would be in agreement on certain universal principles which are "capable of descending to concrete realizations" and on a "general plan which is truly precise and practical." But he added:
... it is impossible for a vitally Christian transformation of the temporal order to come about in the same manner and by the same means as other temporal transformations and revolutions. If it is to come about, it will be the result of Christian heroism (IH, 120).

Maritain believed that the new Christian revolutionary must be a kind of "lay saint." "Thus a vitally Christian social renewal," he wrote, "will be a work of sanctity or it will be nothing; a sanctity, that is, turned toward the temporal, the secular, the profane" (IH, 121).

In 1966, thirty years after the appearance of Integral Humanism, Jacques Maritain published what is generally considered his least successful book, The Peasant of the Garonne. Many, indeed, at the time of its appearance, considered the book unfortunate; some even called it a disaster. One famous religious in France went so far as to claim that the aging philosopher, who had never really converted from the ultraconservatism of his young years, was now, in his senility, "returning to his vomit." Nevertheless, the early chapters of the book are a public expression of thanksgiving for all that the Second Vatican Council had "decreed and accomplished." Maritain "exulted" (as he put it) in the Council's proclamation of a precise notion of liberty, in particular of religious liberty; he exulted in the proclamation of an exact idea of the human person, its dignity and its rights; he exulted in the impetus the Council gave to the ecumenical movement; he exulted in the Council's affirmation and blessing of the temporal mission of the Christian and of its recognition of the particular status of laymen in the Church; he exulted in the thought that the Pope "neither wishes nor ought henceforth to exercise any other power than that of the spiritual keys," that, all vestiges of the Holy Roman Empire having been liquidated, the Church has "definitively left the sacramal and baroque ages," "broken the ties which claimed to sustain it," and "freed itself of those burdens by which it was once considered better equipped for the work of salvation."
Every single one of the "accomplishments" of the Second Vatican Council listed by Maritain in the first part of *The Peasant of the Garonne* had been proposed thirty years before in *Integral Humanism* as among those "universal principles" and as part of the "general plan" which he had always claimed were prerequisite to a Christian transformation of the temporal order.

In part two of the second chapter of *The Peasant of the Garonne*, which is entitled "Notre drôle de temps" (This Crazy Time of Ours), when speaking of the role of lay Catholics in political activity that is in no way "dictated by the Church" and in no way "involves the responsibility of the Church," Maritain insisted that, among all his contemporaries who were still alive at the time he was writing the book, he recognized in the Western World only three revolutionaries worthy of the name. With tongue in cheek he identified himself as one of them, but immediately discounted himself as a revolutionary "qui compte pour du beurre" (a French expression which means that he was rather like a little kid whom the big boys let play along without strictly observing the rules of the game) for, as he remarked, "my vocation as a philosopher has completely overshadowed my possibilities as an agitator." The two other authentic revolutionaries were "Eduardo Frei in Chile and Saul Alinsky in America." It is interesting to speculate a bit on the reasons why Maritain chose these two friends of his as exclusive examples of "revolutionaries worthy of the name." Who were these two men?

Saul Alinsky was the gruff and rough-hewn son of impoverished Russian Orthodox Jewish immigrants, who grew up in one of the poorest slums of Chicago. After working for a time with prisoners and former prisoners of the Joliet State Prison, he was attracted by the labor organizers of the CIO and later wrote a biography of John L. Lewis. In the late 30's he turned to the work of organizing the impoverished and exploited immigrants who lived in the notorious slum behind the gigantic Chicago Stockyards, which was known as the Back of the Yards and which inspired the title of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*. In 1940 he founded the Industrial Areas Foundation through which he continued his work of training community organizers throughout
the country according to the rules he laid down in his international best seller *Reveille for Radicals* and later in *Rules for Radicals*. He died in 1972, a year before Maritain.

At first glance, a friendship between Jacques Maritain and Saul Alinsky seems totally anomalous. Maritain, known to many as "gentle Jacques," was the soul of discretion, politeness, and deference. He disliked noisy crowds, argumentative confrontations, and violent disputation. He lived a life of retirement and quiet contemplation, preferring peaceful reflective conversations with a few intimate, chosen friends to the pressing, admiring crowds that filled the halls for his lectures. He was a fervent convert to a Catholicism that provided a basis for all his thought: philosophical, political, aesthetic, or social.

Saul Alinsky, on the other hand, was an agnostic Jew for whom religion of any kind held very little importance and just as little relation to the focus of his life's work: the struggle for economic and social justice. He loved crowds, the more unruly the better. His gestures and language were muscular and he used the vernacular of a tough street fighter. Alinsky's principal tactic was to stir up nonviolent conflict, "to rub raw the resentment of the people of the community; fan the latent hostilities to the point of overt expression," to set cities and neighborhoods on edge, to incite municipal jitters. The soul of his tactic was a healthy, vocal, and aggressive irreverence. He loved to tweak the noses and pluck the beards of the establishment, of those who pretended to power. One commentator called him "part stuntman," whose "method depends to a great degree on the element of surprise, calculated to outrage." To organize a community, the first step for Alinsky was to disorganize it, to disrupt the actual organization of power. "Pick the target," said Alinsky, "freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." Those in power must be made to feel uneasy, even ridiculous in the exercise of their power; this he felt could be best done by holding them up to public ridicule. In a footnote in *The Peasant of the Garonne* Maritain identifies Alinsky as "one of my very close friends, . . . an irrepressible and much feared organizer of 'neighborhood communities' and an anti-racist leader whose methods are as efficacious as they are unorthodox."
This aggressive, imaginative, and humorous irreverence was so efficacious that sometimes the mere threat of it was enough to bring about capitulation. Father Charles Curran, who believes that Alinsky, and the Industrial Areas Foundation that he founded, have had more impact on grassroots Catholic work for social justice than any other person or group in the United States in the last few decades, gives us an interesting example of Alinsky's irreverent tactics. When Alinsky organized the black ghetto community of Rochester, New York, and polarized the target as Eastman Kodak Company and the local power establishment, one of his suggested tactics was to buy one hundred tickets to the opening performance of the Rochester Symphony Orchestra, a cultural jewel highly prized in the city. The tickets would be given to one hundred ghetto blacks, who would be first entertained at a dinner party lasting three hours, served in the ghetto and consisting solely of baked beans (DCSE, 155).

In the end Alinsky never carried through on the tactic; the threat alone was sufficient. Alinsky believed that revolutionaries should enjoy their revolutions. When the San Francisco Presbytery was debating whether or not to hire Alinsky to organize the black community of Oakland, California, to avoid another Watts, the very specter of his presence was enough to induce change, for when Alinsky was consulted about the situation he insisted that the "problem in Oakland is that the power structure doesn't know there are any Negroes. We'd show them some Negroes." He would stage a "Watermelon March," and a "Sunday Walk." Several hundred of the blackest Negroes would be dressed in coveralls, handed watermelons, and marched from City Hall to the Oakland Tribune. Equally dark-skinned Negroes, elegantly attired, would take a Sunday
stroll through the best white neighborhoods (*The New Republic*, May 12, 1966, p. 8).

One could hardly picture the delicate and dignified Maritain, whose "vocation as a philosopher completely overshadowed his possibilities as an agitator," even imagining, much less participating in, such tactics; but one could very easily picture him gleefully reading about or listening to accounts of such tactics and hearkening back to his youthful days as a student agitator.

It is difficult to tell whether either of these two friends had a significant influence on the thought of the other. Maritain quotes Alinsky several times in *Man and the State*. Father Curran wonders if Maritain would ever have written in that same book about "prophetic shock minorities" which he considered absolutely necessary for the true functioning of democracy if he had had no personal or intellectual relationship with Alinsky. By the time the two friends were introduced during Maritain’s wartime exile in America by George N. Schuster, each of the two friends had already elaborated his system of social and political thought, Maritain in books and Alinsky in organized activism.

In spite of the radical differences in their personalities and educational backgrounds, Maritain was immediately attracted to this truculent genius of social reform, and the two men recognized their very profound intellectual affinities. Whenever they met they spent long hours exploring the democratic dream of people working out their own destiny. Both accepted democracy as the best form of government. As Alinsky tried to share with Maritain his ideas about what it is to be a free citizen in a democratic society, about the right of free association of citizens to undertake action and organize institutions to determine their own destiny, about his grassroots community organizations, and as Maritain explained painstakingly to Alinsky his ideas about the distinction between the individual and the person, the primacy of the individual conscience in a religiously and politically pluralist democracy, about the primacy of the common good, about the source of authority residing in the people who accord that authority to the government which acts in their name, or about the
principle of subsidiarity, each recognized in the other a truly kindred soul.

From the very first days of their friendship, Maritain had been urging, indeed relentlessly prodding, Alinsky to publish an explanation of his methods of community organization, a kind of handbook for authentic revolution. According to P. David Finks (in his book *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky*), as the war wore down and Maritain prepared to return to France, he pressed Alinsky ever more assiduously to finish this book, for he hoped to interest Charles de Gaulle in Alinsky's methods of organizing democratically-run urban organizations as a means of offsetting Communist influence (RVSA, 30).

This book, entitled *Reveille for Radicals*, was reviewed so enthusiastically in America even before it appeared for sale that it was immediately predicted to be a non-fiction best seller and arrangements were made to have it translated into foreign languages. Alinsky insisted on putting the editing of the French translation exclusively into Maritain's hands and on signing over to him the complete rights of the French copyright. "I informed the University [of Chicago] Press in no uncertain terms," he wrote to Maritain, "that I began to write this book at your personal request."

What were the principles of revolution that Alinsky had already developed and applied before he met Maritain and which led Maritain to hail him as the embodiment, even though Alinsky was not a Christian, of that "Christian heroism" typical of a lay saint or an "authentic revolutionary"?

First and foremost, I believe, was their common Personalist belief in the fundamental worth and dignity of every human being, in particular of the common people, whom Maritain spoke of in Integral Humanism as the bearer of fresh moral reserves to carry out a mission in regard to the transformation of the temporal order (235). Maritain recognized as a "considerable historical gain" the raising of the level of consciousness in the common people of their identity as a class and of the dignity of this class, on
condition that it recognize for itself a common good with the opposite class (232-33). Maritain expressed himself at length on this subject in an article he published in *Esprit* (Feb. 12, 1937), shortly after the appearance of *Integral Humanism*. The article was entitled "To Exist with the People" and was exceptional in that the author seemed to have been able vicariously to identify himself completely with a class to which he did not belong. What was needed to win the working classes, he insisted, was not a "love of benevolence" but a "love of unity," a love born of co-naturality, a love of communion and compassion in the real sense of those two words.

Before "doing good" to them, and working for their benefit, before practicing the politics of one group or another . . . we must first choose to exist with them and to suffer with them, to make their pain and destiny our own.

By the "people" he meant

a community of the under-privileged . . . centered around manual work, characterized by a certain historical patrimony . . . of suffering, of effort, and of hope, . . . by a certain way of understanding and living out poverty, suffering, and pain, . . . by a certain way of being always the same ones who get themselves killed.

Maritain considered the recognition by society as a whole of the dignity of the human person in the worker, and of a consciousness in the worker himself "of a personality in a state of becoming," as "the condition necessary for the future flowering of a personalist democracy."

In an article entitled "Saul Alinsky and His critics," published in *Christianity and Crisis* (July 20, 1964), Stephen Rose wrote: "Saul Alinsky believes that the hope of democracy, and of the city, lies in the rejection of the "subnormal child" image of the poor and dispossessed. 'I do believe in the democratic faith,' says
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Alinsky, 'If not, I have nothing left to believe in.' In an interview in Harpers Magazine (June and July, 1965), Alinsky said: "The most important lesson is that people don't get opportunity or freedom or equality or dignity as a gift or an act of charity. They only get these things in the act of taking them through their own efforts."

In spite of the shortcomings of the common people (after all they too are human), Maritain considered them the best hope for the transformation of the temporal order, for the future of democracy, because they had the least to lose. "However great the error and evil within the people may be," he wrote, "the people remain the great granary of vital spontaneity and non-pharaesic living force." Though he had the same hopes as Maritain, Alinsky was perhaps more realistic; he had grown up in a slum. In the same interview for Harpers he said:

I do not do what a lot of liberals and a lot of civil-rights crusaders do. I do not in any way glorify the poor. I do not think that people are specially just or charitable or noble because they're unemployed and live in crummy housing and see their kids without any kind of future and feel the weight of every indignity that society can throw at them, sophisticatedly or nakedly. Too often I've seen the have-nots turn into havees and become just as crummy as the havees they used to envy. Some of the fruit ranchers in California steam around in Cadillacs and treat the Mexican-American field hands like vermin. Know who those bastards are? They're the characters who rode West in Steinbeck's trucks, in The Grapes of Wrath.

Alinsky always professed an instinctive siding with the underdog. He felt a deep and abiding anger against the exploiters of little people. He once wrote to Maritain:
I can never be anywhere near the person you are because you really love all people and understand with a great wisdom. There are some people I not only do not love but hate with a cold fury that would stop at nothing. I hate people who act unjustly and cause many to suffer. I become violently angry when I see misery and am filled with a bitter vindictiveness towards those responsible. That is not good and I know it. I know just as well that I shall continue to feel and act as I have.

As the years passed and as various groups of the underprivileged achieved the vindication of their rights, particularly economic rights, and moved comfortably into the lower middle classes, they felt less their obligation to participate in the reform of the temporal order. Alinsky recognized this as particularly the case with members of the labor unions during the 60's and the 70's, and he saw the necessity of including in the ranks of "the people", not only the "have-nots", but the "have-little-want-mores" as well. When in 1971 Alinsky sent Maritain a copy of his *Rules for Radicals*, the Little Brother of Jesus wrote to him:

A great book, admirably free, absolutely fearless, *radically revolutionary*. It brings to us the fruit of your experience as an incomparable creative organizer—an experience which is both indomitable generosity and magnanimous sadness with regard to human nature, and which proceeds from the life-long dedication of the greatest man of action in our modern age . . . . I regard the book as history-making; and, in my opinion, the quite new ways you are opening, in your final pages, about middle-class people and the possibilities they offer, have crucial importance; if middle-class people can be organized and develop a sense of and a will for the common good—and if Saul is there to inspire
them!—they are able to change the whole social scene, for the sake of freedom. Of that you have convinced me.

Another principle of authentic revolution that Maritain recognized in Alinsky was his firm belief in the priority of the common good. Alinsky defined the true radical as "that person for whom the common good is the greatest personal good." In the Harpers interview Alinsky said that one of the many great lessons John L. Lewis taught him was that "a man's right to a job transcends the right of private property." We all know how Maritain insisted, both in Integral Humanism and in The Person and the Common Good, that, though the appropriation of goods must be private, yet, "by reason of the primal destination of material goods to the human species, and of the need that each person has of these means in order to direct himself toward his final end, the use of goods individually appropriated must itself serve the common good of all" (IH, 184).

Maritain too had always recognized that the most agonizing problem of an authentic revolutionary is the problem of means. "The worst anguish for the Christian," he wrote in Integral Humanism, "is precisely to know that there can be justice in employing horrible means" (IH, 248). A Christian revolutionary exists in history, and, though he may resolve to use only good means to achieve an end, he knows that good means must inevitably be dragged into a context where evil means predominate; but he must envisage the context so that it may have the possibility of being evil in the least possible degree. "After that, let him be at peace," wrote Maritain. "The rest belongs to God."

The refusal to soil oneself by entering into the context of history Maritain considered a mark of pharisaical purism. An authentic revolutionary cannot refuse to put his hands to this real, this concrete, universe of human things and human relations where sin exists and circulates. He must cooperate in the common task of men even when impure means are mingled in it by accident, "as," he said, "always happens." Maritain insisted on the basic
moral principle that the order of means must correspond to the order of ends. In *Man and the State* he distinguished between individual ethics and political ethics. Since the end of politics is limited to the terrestrial common good, then such realities as power, force, coercion, distrust and suspicion, the acceptance of the lesser evil, etc., find an ethical foundation (62ff). It is precisely at this point in his book *Man and the State* that Maritain quotes Alinsky.

In training his organizers Alinsky met this problem of means and ends head-on. He trained them to be comfortable and rational in dealing with irrational circumstances, and always told them: "You never have the best course of action. You always have to pick the least bad." He liked to quote Mark Twain's quip that "an ethical man is a Christian holding four aces." During the Harpers interview he said: "The real question has never been: Does the end justify the means? The real question is and always has been: Does this particular end justify these particular means?"

Maritain once called Alinsky "a practical Thomist." In a letter to Robert M. Hutchins he described his friend as "a great soul, a man of profound moral purity... whose natural generosity is quickened, though he would not admit it, by genuine evangelical brotherly love." He would agree whole-heartedly with Msgr. John Egan who said: "In my ten years' association with Alinsky, I have never seen him violate the moral law or advocate the violation of it." Though Maritain seems never to have been dissatisfied with what Alinsky did, he did on occasion express his fear that what Alinsky said about means and ends might be subject to misinterpretation.

Alinsky recognized Maritain's uneasiness about the way he expressed himself on the problem of means. In 1971 he sent Maritain a copy of *Rules for Radicals* with the following inscription: To my spiritual father and the man I love, from his prodigal and wayward son, Saul Alinsky. From the monastery in Toulouse, Maritain wrote the letter quoted above in which he expressed his profound admiration for the book and his delight with Alinsky's plans to organize the middle class. In the
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remainder of this long letter, Maritain gently chides Alinsky for expressions that seem to be at variance with his practice and could give rise to misunderstandings:

Now, let me point out a few philosophical views with which your book had not to be explicitly concerned, and give rein to my own inveterate habits as an old grumbler.

I think you detest Hegel as much as I do. And I am aware that your praise of self-contradiction has nothing to do with Hegel. Seeking one's own intellectual liberation in an infinite proliferation of antinomies is madness on the level of philosophical thought. But on the level of pure action a kind of boldness in practical self-contradiction is probably, as you suggest it, the sign of a healthy and fecund mind. Yet it makes me jumpy.

An example: "In war the end justifies almost any means" (p. 29). Torture? Indiscriminate bombing? Annihilation of cities? OK for Hitler and his like?

Well, there are two basic and basically different truths involved in the matter:

1. A philosophical truth. [Here Maritain makes the distinction between the moral character or the moral essence of an action and the purely material character of that same action, for example the act of killing a man. Maritain painstakingly explains the difference between assassination and killing in self-defense.]

It seems to me that in your book the philosophical truth in question, essential as it may be, is hardly emphasized or taken into
consideration. (Cf. p. 34: "From the beginning of time killing has always been regarded as justifiable if committed in self-defense;" yes, but not because it is "employed at a time of imminent defeat." Truly speaking, because, given the circumstances, killing has become *an intrinsically good moral action*, preventing the committal of a blazing, imminent outrage to justice.)

2. A truth of human experience: as a matter of fact, moral justifications and moral pretexts are, in an immense number of cases, but a mask to hide merely egotistic motivations, most often the vilest motivations, lust for personal power, for success at any price, for exploiting and swindling poor people.

This second truth you see with such keenness, and you emphasize it so strongly, that it seems sometimes to be the only one compatible with a realistic approach.

You are right in despising rhetorical and vain exhortations to mutual love. The fact is that nothing has ever been accomplished for justice in the world if not by men burning with real love.

Dear Saul, forgive me those clumsy remarks of a pig-headed philosopher . . .

Finally, and above all else, what seems to have led Maritain to characterize Saul Alinsky as an "authentic revolutionary" was his system of community organizations and neighborhood councils, in which Maritain found near-perfect embodiments of those subsidiary, mediating structures he had called for in *Integral Humanism* to enable the people to work out their own destiny and help the government do what it is supposed to do.
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In chapter V of Man and the State, in the fifth section, entitled "Prophetic Shock-Minorities," Maritain tells us that it is not enough to define a democratic society by its legal structure. Another basic element is that dynamic leaven or energy which fosters political movement, and which cannot be inscribed in any constitution or embodied in any institution, since it is both personal and contingent in nature, and rooted in free initiative. He called this existential element the prophetic factor. "Democracy cannot do without it," he wrote. "The people need prophets." He certainly considered Saul Alinsky such a prophet.

"In a democracy which has come of age," he wrote, "in a society of free men, expert in the virtues of freedom and just in its fundamental structures," the work of such prophets would be integrated into the normal and regular life of the body politic and issue from the people themselves, or, as he wrote, from the free common activity of the people in their most elementary, most humble, local communities. By choosing their leaders, at this most elementary level, through a natural and experiential process, as fellow-men personally known to them and deserving of their trust in the minor affairs of the community, the people would grow more and more conscious of political realities and more ready to choose their leaders, at the level of the common good of the body politic, with true political awareness, as genuine deputies for them (MS, 146).

One would be hard put to find a more exact description of the very special work of this first of Maritain's "authentic" revolutionaries, Saul Alinsky.

The second revolutionary whom Maritain considered "worthy of the name" was Eduardo Frei Montalva, founder and principal leader of Chile's moderate left-of-center Christian Democratic movement and President of Chile from 1964 to 1970. Political life in Chile had always been atypical of Latin America because of
its long tradition of active democracy which extended from the early thirties with the overthrow of the dictator Carlos Ibanez until the military coup of General Pinochet in 1973. Eduardo Frei was an integral part of this long tradition which had its origins in 1935 when a group of young Chilean intellectuals formed the "Juventud Conservadora" which affiliated itself with the Conservative Party. He and his friend Manuel Garreton had studied in Europe and sat at the feet of Jacques Maritain. "Lo escuchamos enseñando en una Cátedra" (we listen to him teaching from his chair), he wrote, at the Institut Catholique in Paris. Frei was also exposed during this period to other political schools such as fascism and papal corporatism. After his return to Chile, the Juventud Conservadora, like the other political parties of the time, seems to have formed a kind of elite group which it called the "National Falange." This group soon dissolved but its name was adopted unofficially by the Juventud as a whole. From the very beginning, the Chilean National Falange differed from other Falangist movements throughout the world. They took their inspiration from Jacques Maritain and from two Chilean priests, who since 1931 had been trying to force the Chilean hierarchy to accept and promote Pope Pius XI’s social doctrines, which they had been resisting tooth and nail. The principle objective of the National Falangists was to reduce class friction and relieve the misery and wretched condition of the masses. The clearest expression of the Falangist thinking of that time is a book Chile Desconocido (Unknown Chile), published in 1937 by the twenty-six year old Eduardo Frei. In his book he described the intolerable situation of the masses, economically and politically oppressed by a Santiago-based oligarchy devoid of any concern for the social, economic, or moral welfare of other classes and regions. Frei proposed a new politics in the form of a corporate state. "The only way," he wrote, "to re-establish organic equilibrium is by strengthening the intermediate institutions which facilitate and make possible communication between the two extremes, the individual and the state." Frei’s corporatism was not to be imposed from above by the state or by an oligarchy in league with the state, but rather to be organized democratically from below, as the "result of a natural process" of wide-spread grassroots participation (CD, 162-3).
Such progressive thinking on the part of the Falangists led to increasing friction between them and the unbending traditionalist leadership of the Conservative Party, and an inevitable split came in 1938. During the 1940's the Christian Democratic movement went into a period of eclipse, resulting partly from the formation of another splinter group, the Conservative Social Christian Party, which competed with the Falange on a Christian Democratic type of platform.

In the late 1950's, however, the fortunes of the Chilean Christian Democratic movement began to change, due in part to the success of the Christian Democratic movement in Europe after the war and to the demise of the rival Conservative Social Christian Party, many of whose members joined the Falange, which soon after changed its name to the Christian Democratic Party. During the late 1950's the party grew in strength and Frei was elected to the Senate. In 1964 he was elected President of Chile by an absolute majority. This was the first time in the history of Chile that a progressive candidate with a detailed and orderly program of social, economic, and political reform had ever polled an absolute majority. Frei's rallying cry had been "Revolución en libertad," a peaceful, non-violent revolution by which democracy would be strengthened and rendered effective by broadening as much as possible the base of popular participation. This was to be done through the creation of functional neighborhood organizations of all kinds, which were strikingly similar to Saul Alinsky's Peoples' Organizations and Neighborhood Councils. Their objective was to educate the masses in democracy and give them, on a local level, first-hand experience of participatory democracy. During Frei's presidency the Chilean economy was strengthened, the copper industry was "Chileanized," inflation was curbed, and through agrarian reform, public housing, improved public education, and a more equitable tax system, the enormous disparity between the rich and the poor was considerably reduced.

Eduardo Frei's "Revolución en libertad" did not progress smoothly. Unexpected natural disasters such as drought occurred. It became more and more difficult to control inflation in the face
of workers' demands for more equitable wages. Key legislation concerning agrarian reform and the "Chileanization" of the copper industries faced agonizing delays in the Congress from both the Left and the Right: from the Left because they did not consider the reforms sufficiently radical, from the Right because the Conservatives and the moneyed classes, "furiously attached to their privileges," considered such reforms as the first steps in the establishment of a Marxist regime.

Tensions became more and more exacerbated within the Christian Democratic Party and the coalition which had been its strength began to break up. For the 1970 elections a part of the left wing of the Christian Democratic Party broke away and formed a rival Movement for United Popular Action. The moderate vote was divided and as a result the Leftist candidate Salvador Allende was elected by a plurality. In September 1973, with the collusion of the United States, Allende was "removed" from office, and from this life, in General Pinochet's bloody coup which brought an end to democracy and civil liberties in Chile. After the coup Frei continued to publish on political issues. He died in 1983.

Why did Maritain link the name of Eduardo Frei to that of Saul Alinsky as the only "revolutionaries worthy of the name"? Unlike Saul Alinsky, who, as an agnostic Jew, had already developed his political philosophy and his own particular revolutionary method of changing the temporal order long before he met Maritain, Eduardo Frei, a believing and practicing Catholic, seems to have based his political philosophy and his methods of reforming the temporal order directly on his contact with Maritain and the study of his political thought. Frei was first a disciple and then a friend of Maritain, with whom he carried on a considerable correspondence, which I'm sure would have shed a great amount of light on the subject at hand, but which difficulties in obtaining the necessary permission have kept me from consulting. However, even without these letters, there is abundant evidence of Maritain's direct influence on Frei.
Many authors concerned with the social and political problems of Latin America refer to this influence. For example, Xaime Castillo, in a speech he gave as President of the Chilean Commission on Human Rights in honor of Eduardo Frei, noted that Frei’s Christian vision of life, projected on the political, was based on the doctrinal contributions to political thought which came from Europe, especially from Jacques Maritain (DEDD, 43).

Thomas Walker, in his introduction to the English translation of Frei’s El Mandato de la Historia y las exigencias del porvenir confirms this same direct influence (MHCF, 2).

Frei himself spoke frequently of his debt to Maritain. In 1964, a little more than a year before Maritain began to work on The Peasant of the Garonne in which he identified his two "authentic" revolutionaries and during the same year that he became President of Chile, Frei published a book entitled Maritain entre nosotros (Maritain among us). This beautiful little book is divided into two parts. The first, called "The Meaning of Maritain," is a loving tribute to Maritain’s life and work and a general appreciation of the influence of his master’s thought in many directions. The second part is a study of Maritain’s political philosophy. After pointing out the central importance of Maritain’s distinction between the "sacral" and the "temporal," Frei gives a brief description of the "concrete historical ideal of a new Christianity" which Maritain outlined in Integral Humanism and identifies this conception of the temporal order as "at once communitarian, personalist, and "peregrinario" (i.e., on pilgrimage, on the road to development, in potentia). Frei then lists two conditions necessary for the realization of this ideal. The first, he says, is an "effective refraction of the Gospel in the cultural and temporal order, which points up the necessity of going beyond the contemporary political and economic organization of society." The second necessary condition, he says, is the liquidation of capitalism and its replacement by a political and economic regime that would completely reintegrate into this new
Christianity the working classes whose loss Pope Pius XI identified as the scandal of the nineteenth century.

Frei then lists what for him are the five salient and original characteristics of Maritain's concrete, historical ideal. The first is a Pluralism, purged at one and the same time of both liberalism and clericalism, a pluralism which has no need of any coercive, confessional conformism, and which permits the cooperation of all men of good will in a temporal order where religious unity is not a necessary precondition for unified action. The second characteristic is the autonomy of the temporal order with respect to the spiritual order, which entails the establishment of a secular body politic which would have its own distinct function and enjoy the dignity of being an end in itself, not a final or absolute end, to be sure, but an intermediate or infravalent end, which would exclude the temporal order from being used as a means in relation to the spiritual. The third characteristic for Frei is Maritain's Personalism, his insistence on the extraterritoriality of the human person with respect to temporal and political means. He identifies the central theme of all Maritain's writings about the new temporal order as being, not "force at the service of God," but the "conquest and realization of liberty," of "that liberty of autonomy," says Frei, "which is the first requirement of the vocation of the human person." The fourth characteristic Frei identifies as Maritain's insistence on the "homogenic" nature of temporal authority, on the essential parity between the ruler and the ruled, by which the ruler is no more than a companion who is invested with the power to rule, through an investiture which must be periodically renewed. The fifth and final characteristic for Frei is Maritain's identification of the concrete historical ideal of a new Christianity as a Fraternal Community. All men are called to the establishment of this fraternal community, believers and non-believers alike, since there is question of realizing a common practical work, profane in nature, and not of establishing a minimum of doctrinal unity, even when such doctrinal unity would be considered as the basis of common practical action.

Eduardo Frei also shared with Maritain and Alinsky a firm belief in the primacy of the common good with regard to the
ownership and use of property. We have seen how Frei agreed with Maritain that one of the essential conditions for the reform of the temporal order is the liquidation of capitalism, which inevitably leads to Socialism, and its replacement by a "third way," beyond both Capitalism and Socialism. In 1947 Frei spoke of the need to search for a new formula that would bring about "the death of an economic system which believes in the fecundity of money (DEDD, 58). In Maritain entre nosotros, Frei agreed with his master that the "economic privileges" and the "hegemony of big business" inevitable to Capitalism are contrary to both the spirit and the philosophy of Democracy (63f). In August of 1973, the same year in which Maritain wrote his very last essay "A Society without Money" to give some concrete expression to what he understood as the famous "third way," Eduardo Frei, in what he intended as a summary of the labor and inspiration of his own life, said:

It is necessary to open a way in Latin America to a distinct type of society which, moving gradually further and further away from either the capitalist or the communist models, will lay the foundations for a new civilization that is truly democratic, pluralist, personalist, and communitarian, capable of creating, according to flexible and pragmatic criteria, efficient models of economic and social development, taking into account the geographic and human realities of individual nations and the conditions of their international life (DEDD, 56).

It was specifically the overwhelming economic problems of Latin America that led Maritain in the last days before his death, at the cost of a vast and fearful effort, to write "A Society without Money." The immediate cause was a series of conversations he had with two Little Brothers who returned from a stay in Cuba and told him of Castro's botched-up totalitarian attempts to liquidate the capitalist system. Already in 1939 Maritain had written that to the fundamental disorder of Capitalism
there is added that disorder in turn which arises from the exploitation of the capitalists themselves by those who, manipulating as masters the signs of other people's wealth, enslave the fortunes of the world to their financial feudalism (RR, 252).

In 1973 Frei spoke of the crushing burden of debt imposed on Latin American countries by the "financial feudalism" of American bankers and business men as leading inevitably to violent revolution.

If the world is ruled by the concept of the unlimited development of some countries at the expense of others, or the unrestricted accumulation and use by a few of those basic resources which are the patrimony of all, then nothing will hold back the blind race to satisfy those exacerbated appetites which lead inevitably to conflict and violence (DEDD, 62).

If Maritain saw in the man who conceived the "Revolución en libertad" a disciple who was eminently faithful to the intellectual underpinnings of the radical reform he had laid out in Integral Humanism, Frei's application of the theories of his master in the world of concrete action must have qualified him even more in Maritain's mind as a "revolutionary worthy of the name." Xaime Castillo's description of Frei's "Revolución en libertad" shows how close it was to Maritain's conception of "authentic" revolution:

It was not a revolution in the sense of an immediate and violent change, brought about by and for the State; it was rather the beginning of a very profound process in which the entire community of the nation becomes conscious of itself and of its own role in transforming the State from within, without transgressing the norms of pluralist democracy (DEDD, 55).
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Frei shared Maritain's and Alinsky's "preferential option" (if I may coin a phrase) for the poor, for the little people of the national community. "To turn one's back on the people of the nation when one is trying to work out some conception of society," he wrote, "is to commit political suicide." It is the right of the people, organized as such, to enjoy equal opportunity to share in the decision-making process" (MHCF, 71). For Frei the people of the nation was its first and foremost constituency (MHCF, 68). According to Xaime Castillo the first order of business of the government under the "Revolución en libertad" was "the promotion of the social organization of the people to the end that, by themselves, within the established social channels, they might begin to participate in the working out of their own development" (DEDD, 54).

Such a concept met with stubborn and strong resistance from the moneyed classes and from conservative political groups, who felt that it was a "serious mistake," as Frei put it, "to teach [common] people to read and write because there was a danger that they might then become insubordinate" (MHCF, 21). Paternalism had nothing to do with the "Revolución en libertad." There was no place for an aristocratic "trickle down" theory in Frei's system, as if

one particular group in the nation, by virtue of its exceptional qualities and position, will be able to capitalize the results of all [the] sacrifice and efforts [of the people; as if the] growing well-being and affluence [of those in power] will somehow redound to the benefit of the majority (MHCF, 76).

Like Maritain, Frei felt that, in a transformation of the temporal order based on social justice, the affluent classes could be trusted least, for, as Maritain put it, they had the most to lose.

To implement the fundamental right of the people to organize themselves, Frei set up the National Office for the People's Development (Promoción Popular) under which a whole system
of grassroots organizations came into being. Such organizations were not limited to the common people, but extended, as in the case of Saul Alinsky, to the middle classes. The Promoción Popular fostered organizations of all kinds: neighborhood associations, mothers' centers, labor unions, peasant groups, merchant guilds, student groups, small or medium-sized business organizations, and professional associations. It would be very interesting to find out if Frei's system of popular organizations was in any way the result of his studying the organizational theory and techniques of Alinsky through the intermediary of Jacques Maritain. It was at Maritain's suggestion, for example, that Pope Paul VI, when he was Cardinal-Archbishop of Milan, invited Alinsky to Italy to help the Catholic labor unions there organize themselves to offset the growing influence of the Communists.

These, then, are some of the reasons why Maritain chose Saul Alinsky and Eduardo Frei as examples of "revolutionaries worthy of the name." The one had already worked out a system of political thought and action almost identical to that of Maritain long before he had met him. The other based his system on a close and faithful study of Maritain. But in each case the application of the principles they shared with Maritain was carried out, not slavishly, but in an original and creative way, adapted specifically to each of these revolutionaries' particular time and unique milieu.

In his book Maritain entre nosotros Eduardo Frei speaks of "una secreta afinidad" (a secret affinity) that exists among the disciples of Maritain spread throughout the world. Such a secret affinity is immediately evident between the two disciples we have been considering, however different they were in temperament and background. Frei speaks of the tremendous debt that Maritain's disciples owe to their master, for what he did for them, says Frei, was to "define and clarify ideas without which their action would have lacked content and become no more than restless activism, and he opened for them horizons that gave to their labors a universal and profoundly human significance" (MEN, 43). Then he speaks a few words of the utmost importance for us: he points out the distinguishing characteristic of a true disciple, a
characteristic he exemplified so well in his own life. For a true
disciple, Maritain is not a political leader, even less an exclusive
teacher whose doctrines are to be slavishly and interminably
regurgitated, because the ideas which Maritain represents, with or
without him, have a sufficient life of their own. Like Frei and
Alinsky, what we must do with the inestimable treasure of ideas
that Maritain has left us is add to their richness by displaying them
to the world and "by revitalizing them through the discovery of
new and creative forms of their interpretation" which we can then
apply to the solution of the agonizing problems of our own times.
It is up to us, like the Paterfamilias of the Gospels, to bring out of
this inestimable treasure nova et vetera, new things as well as old.
BOOKS CITED


