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THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS AND INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

by
*David Stoll**

To the plantation owners of El Salvador's western coffee districts, a January night in 1932 must have seemed like the end of the world. With volcanos in eruption, Pipil Indian peasants rose up against their masters. In the town of Juayua, the Reverend A. Roy MacNaught of the Central American Mission awoke to a great banging noise. Down the street a mob was battering down the door of the telegraph office. "In the morning when I looked out," wrote Reverend MacNaught (1932), "the red flag was flying from the town hall; we were under communistic rule for the first time."

Several years later another member of the Central American Mission wrote about the El Salvador uprising in an autobiographical novel. To dramatize his Mayan Bible translation, this Protestant scribe invented a parallel revolt across the border in Guatemala near his own mission stations. The novel's Mayan Evangelist makes the supreme sacrifice to stop a Bolshevik revolution. You will have land, schools, freedom if you follow God's word and obey the government, he tells angry plantation workers. The Russian instigator shoots the evangelist; the Mayan rebels fall to their knees before a dying Christ.

The author of this scene, William Cameron Townsend (1936), was organizing a new mission to overcome linguistic and political barriers to evangelical expansion. We know it today as "two organizations" whose membership is identical: the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT),¹ which raises funds and recruits in the United States, the British Commonwealth, and Europe; and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which operates under contract to governments in Latin America, Africa, and along the East Asian rim.

SIL/WBT strategy has become something of a classic in evangelical circles. To translate the New Testament into pre-literate languages, teach

*The author has been conducting a study of the Summer Institute of Linguistics with the assistance of the Louis M. Rabinowitz Foundation. This paper summarizes parts of a book to be published by Zed Press in mid-1982.

¹John Wycliffe, a 14th century figure, is considered the first translator of the Bible into English.

people to read, and plant evangelical churches, SIL/WBT has trained its members in descriptive linguistics. To confound those who might oppose their work, they go into the field as linguists rather than missionaries. As Townsend has asked his followers, did not Jesus come out of Nazareth "disguised very effectively" as a carpenter? (Townsend and Pittman, 1975: 61). With the help of academic credentials from public universities in the United States, the Summer Institute linguists (Wycliffe translators) have obtained long-term contracts with foreign governments. In exchange for technical assistance—linguistics, bilingual education, and so forth—they secure access to the native population under state and academic charter. Lest there be any misunderstanding, SIL/WBT also has gone to some length to identify its purposes with the state regime, an appeal strengthened by its political conformism. As stressed by Townsend: "Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there" (Townsend and Pittman, 1975: 103). By the time a supposedly nonsectarian, nonecclesiastical language institute begins to produce evangelical churches, SIL/WBT has proved its value to the government.

Designed to do battle in government corridors as well as native communities, SIL/WBT has become the most extensive linguistic operation in the world. Its 4,300 members (71 percent from the United States) have undertaken the study of nine hundred languages. More than three hundred are in Latin America—first in Mesoamerica, then the Amazon, and now the Andes as well. Presently SIL undertakes new languages at the rate of nearly one a week, and by the end of the century it hopes to complete the New Testament command to take the Gospel to all nations and peoples.

Yet the old methods are not working as they used to, especially in Latin America where SIL has lost government contracts in Brazil and Mexico. SIL has been accused of destroying indigenous cultures, turning Indians against the nation, and performing a variety of tasks for U.S. imperialism (see Hart, 1973, for an influential analysis). In the course of nationalist campaigns against it, however, SIL has been blamed for internal colonialism. And although SIL was conceived as an evangelical intrigue, conspiracy theory—especially in terms of the Central Intelligence Agency—has become a popular explanation for its influence.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to consider SIL as a broker between states and native peoples in situations of internal colonialism. SIL's value to governments is viewed in terms of its alliances with Indians (alliances which are being strained by the expropriation of Indian land and state violence), its close association with these states, the emergence of rival brokers who offer Indians better terms of exchange, and the proliferation of Indian civil rights and self-defense movements. Yet the contest between SIL and rival brokers, as well as its reflection in anti-imperialist campaigning against SIL, is inscribed within the bureaucratic expansion of dependent capitalist states. Scapegoating and conspiracy theory have justified nationalist vendettas, prompted fervent appeals for rescue by the same governments which enjoy SIL's services, and may well rationalize more repressive forms of state control over Indians.

As a broker, SIL must respond in some measure to indigenous as well as state demands. In light of these conflicting requirements, let us follow SIL's

trajectory through Cameron Townsend's early career in Guatemala, the anticlerical Mexico of the 1930s, the Peruvian Amazon, associations with the U.S. government and counterinsurgency, and its contemporary crisis in Latin America. First, however, let us consider the basis of missionary-Indian alliances.

DEPENDENCY AND MISSIONARY-INDIAN ALLIANCES

Like everyone else in an indigenous hinterland, missionaries operate within the context of "dependency," the system of unequal exchange endemic to world market expansion. Indigenous societies come to depend upon outsiders for trade goods and other items in exchange for their labor, their land, and conformity to the new order. In meeting indigenous demands for tools, schooling, and so forth, missionaries try to offer better terms of exchange than rival brokers, set up alliances with native people against mutual adversaries, and generate the patronage power which expedites evangelism. The manipulation is mutual, however; native people have their own purposes, from acquiring trading partners to recruiting advocates for their land claims. If they survive their first experiences with colonization, they may become adept in playing outsiders against each other to achieve their own ends.

It is important to recognize the constraints imposed by dependency. While there is some feeling in Latin America that native societies are to be protected, they probably ought not to be protected at the cost of forsaking natural resources which reduce the balance of payments deficit. Consequently, SIL has been whipsawed with both protectionist and integrationist criteria. It is accused of assaulting Indian culture, thereby undermining resistance to colonialism, and dividing native people from the nation, thereby hindering integration into the same, destructive colonizing society.

In Ecuador, for example, SIL pacified the Aucas or Huaorani by providing trade goods, sanctuary from raids by outsiders, and a neutral ground for spousal exchanges between warring Huao bands. By concentrating the Huaorani in a reserve, SIL also ended their warfare with the lowland Quichua and made it easier for U.S. oil companies to explore their government-awarded concessions. Since the entire political spectrum considers jungle oil indispensable to national development, only after SIL brought the Huaorani under control did the Indians find their champions. Once it became clear that the Huaorani were no longer impaling the frontier citizenry on chonta palm spears, SIL was accused of robbing the Huaorani of most of their land and hindering national integration. That is, SIL was accused of both promoting and obstructing capitalist development, sometimes in the same breath. Were the SIL-Huao team to be expelled at present, the immediate beneficiaries would be those businessmen who have undermined SIL's patronage system by offering the Huaorani more access to trade goods and who, despite opposition from SIL, have been turning the Huaorani into a tourist attraction.

Since control over trade goods, medicine, and schooling is so basic to missionary work, it is tempting to dismiss it as a coercive economic transaction, one which simply alienates native people from their culture and

induces them to accept exploitation in the image of the suffering Jesus. This does not explain the occasional reputation of Protestant converts among local exploiters as troublemakers, however, nor the enthusiasm of some Indians for evangelical religion, nor the clear persistence of traditional values in missionized communities. Let us turn, then, to the ideological contest necessary to explain missionary work at its most successful and contradictory.

MISSIONARY AND INDIGENOUS MILLENNIALISM

The ideological ambition driving Wycliffe, the ideologies of native movements, and the antagonism and communication between the two can be understood in terms of millennial struggle. Beyond the Christian and North American frames of reference, "millennialism" here refers to any project of liberation understood in terms of divine justice. In this broad sense, millennialism offers an end to this evil world and a better life in the ambiguous terrain of another world. Passing through phases of conformism and rebellion, millennialism may move from one to the other in the form of a new religion which inherits something from the old. As the opportunity presents itself, millennialism may challenge the social order in an attempt to make the better world here and now.

The Christian millennium refers to the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. To nineteenth century North American Protestants, this age of peace and glory could either precede or follow the second coming of Christ. Perhaps the millennial Kingdom was about to dawn in America without any need for an overwhelming divine intervention; or perhaps an increasingly sinful world was approaching the Great Tribulation, a global disaster from which only Christ riding on the clouds in glory could deliver the faithful. Among the sternest of the pessimists were the intellectual fathers of Wycliffe and other contemporary evangelical missions, the Millenarians. These genteel Biblical literalists saw in agrarian and workingmen's protest movements yet another sign of the approaching world cataclysm. Since the world was getting worse, not better, basic social reform would have to wait until Christ himself could supervise. Into the Bible institutes and foreign missions organized by Millenarians and their capitalist backers came the sons and daughters of poor, but upwardly mobile, Protestants. Two conflicting interpretations, both to be found within Wycliffe today, spurred interest in foreign evangelism. Perhaps the Lord's return was imminent, which called for a mighty effort to rescue the unreached from eternal perdition; or perhaps He would return only after the last nations and peoples had been offered salvation. But once U.S. evangelicals found their promised land without overturning the social order, social crisis could lead not only to eager expectation for the end of this evil world but to frantic attempts to defend it. In Latin America, then, evangelical missionaries have preached a Gospel of progress under capitalism and a Gospel of imminent doom when capitalism appears to be threatened.

The Townsend novel cited at the beginning of this essay suggests how rival millennial schemes may communicate with each other. While the historical Pipil rebels of 1932 were associated with the Communist Party of El Salvador, their *cofradias* (saint societies) played a leading role in the uprising. In Townsend's fiction the Maya, who also have conducted insurrection under the guidance of their saints, are offered an alternative, evangelical path to lib-

eration. When the novel's Mayan communist learns that his Pipil comrades in El Salvador have been massacred, he surrenders to Christ. Twenty years later some of the (historical) Mayan Protestant heirs of Townsend's (fictional) anticommunist martyr were jailed as communists for organizing to occupy estates. It would seem that Mayan Protestants had converted a North American millennial scheme to their own purposes.

SIL communicates with indigenous religious sentiments through the shared belief in spiritual power, or magic. SIL's magic is a combination of prayer, written word, and western medicine through which technological power is invested with spiritual authority and becomes a bridge to indigenous religiosity. The missionary, for instance, may convince parents that a sick child has a better chance for recovery if they pray to God and follow the nurse's instructions rather than consult a folk healer. As missionary luck will have it, the parents may well pray to God, follow the nurse's instructions, and consult the folk healer anyway. The spiritual warfare never ends because native people are always trying to understand the missionary message in their own terms. However, confidence in traditional premises may well be undermined as the mission and other forces foster new relations of authority and exchange. Through patronage and reformation, missions influence the accommodation and resistance of native people to other external pressures.

CAMERON TOWNSEND IN GUATEMALA

The SIL/WBT founder's 1936 novel is for the most part a thinly fictionalized account of his fifteen-year missionary apprenticeship with the Central American Mission of Dallas, Texas, among the Cakchiquel Maya of the western Guatemalan highlands. When Townsend arrived in 1917, peasant farmers were turning *protestante* even before North American missionaries reached their towns. The new religion was spread by Guatemalan salesmen of Spanish language Bibles. Converts rejected expensive community religious obligations and the ritually mandatory consumption of alcohol. Protestantism seems to have made it easier for the poor to stay out of debt-peonage and for the more fortunate to invest their savings in land.

Since Townsend himself was the son of a poor farmer saddled with debt, he had a good eye for what he called "oppression" and realized that it was at work within his mission's churches. By insisting upon their ethnic superiority, *ladino* (non-Indian) converts seemed to be driving Mayan neophytes away. As Townsend watched his Cakchiquel assistant evangelize plantation laborers, he realized that Mayan evangelists, using their own language, were the best way to breach a class and ethnic barrier. To manage the proceedings, he himself would have to learn the language. Since evangelicals consider Scripture essential to salvation and many Maya were monolingual, he also decided to translate the New Testament into Cakchiquel. Bilingual schooling—in Cakchiquel to read the Bible and in Spanish to promote integration—rounded out the paradigm for Townsend's linguistic approach to evangelism.

In effect, Townsend was siding with Indians against a ladino petty bourgeoisie which plied them with alcohol and shipped them off to the plantations. The Mayan churches were supposed to be a sanctuary from oppression, permitting converts to advance unimpeded by racism. Town-

send's logic of social improvement went something like this: the Gospel will rid the Maya of their fundamental problem, superstition and vice. Then the Maya will work willingly for their masters, who will replace debt-peonage with wages. The Maya will be "free," and Guatemala will enjoy the fruits of progress. Townsend advertised his converts as model workers and won a warm welcome from plantation owners, who were indeed switching to wage labor. Three Presidents of the republic lauded his work. For the Maya, as Wasserstrom (1975: 465) has suggested, Protestantism served as a social protest under a dictatorial regime.

Were we to take Townsend's 1936 novel at face value, he had inoculated the western Guatemalan highlands against communism. Yet after the historical Pipil revolt in El Salvador, Central American Mission converts were slaughtered as "communists" along with thousands of others. To resolve the contradiction between his plantation-owner sponsors and Mayan converts, in short, novelist Townsend inverted the likely loyalties of the latter in social revolution. During the democratic interlude of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Mayan Protestants played a leading role in agrarian movements. Then, with the 1954 counterrevolution, they were persecuted as "communists," advised to withdraw from politics by their North American missionaries, and became known as apolitical conformists. But as a Protestant elder who fondly recalls Townsend told me, people are hungry for land regardless of their religion and eager to take it back when they get the chance.

TOWNSEND IN MEXICO: SIL/WBT

While Townsend was still young, Mayan Protestantism was making him known as the man who had gospeled a heathen people with spectacular results. But while his ambition to pioneer new fields was outstripping the Central American Mission, the 1929 stock market crash and its effect on mission revenue frustrated his plan for an airborne advance into the Amazon. It was at this stage, in the early 1930s, that Townsend left the Central American Mission, joined the Mexican revolution and launched SIL/WBT.

One consideration drawing the founder to Mexico was an invitation from his fellow Presbyterian Moises Saenz, an influential educator and indigenist. Having inspected Townsend's work in Guatemala the year after the Catholic Cristero rebellion was put down, Saenz evidently hoped that linguistics, Bible translation, and bilingual education would not only teach monolingual Indian peasants Spanish but lighten their burden of folk Catholic superstition. Another consideration was undoubtedly the rising anticlerical tide then engulfing Protestant missionaries. Was Bolshevism next? Rebuffed on his first sally into Mexico in 1933, Townsend decided to present himself as a linguist rather than a missionary, explain that he was financed by "individuals," not the Pioneer Mission Agency of Philadelphia, and present himself as a supporter of the Mexican revolution (Hefley and Hefley, 1974: 82-83). In 1934 he held the first Camp Wycliffe in Arkansas to train Bible translators and began to compose his novel, whose counterrevolutionary finale apparently reflected his aspirations for Mexico rather more than his past practice in Guatemala.

With the help of Moises Saenz and his indigenist friends, Townsend soon

brought his work to the favorable attention of President Lazaro Cardenas. This nationalist reformer seems to have had two reasons for welcoming Townsend and his followers: they could have a progressive influence on the peasantry and restore the once useful, sadly decrepit Protestant anti-interventionist lobby in the United States (Rus and Wasserstrom, forthcoming). One of Townsend's first steps had been to win the ear of U.S. Ambassador Josephus Daniels, a connection of which Cardenas was aware; and after Cardenas nationalized the U.S. oil companies in 1938, he sent Townsend to New York and Washington to lobby for Mexico's case. Advocacy of the Good Neighbor Policy and descriptive linguistics endeared Townsend to a generation of nationalist politicians and indigenists, gave his missionaries a progressive reputation, eventually permitted them to take on more than one hundred Mexican languages, and provided valuable references for expansion in South America.

Townsend organized the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1936, as a Mexican explanation for Camp Wycliffe and its sponsor, the Pioneer Mission in the United States. In 1942, following conflict with Pioneer and his own followers over his Mexican policies, Townsend persuaded his associates to incorporate the Wycliffe Bible Translators as a more versatile support vehicle at home. That same year Camp Wycliffe moved to the University of Oklahoma. For decades some Roman brethren accused Townsend of duplicity, unholy alliances with communists and Roman Catholics, and violation of the U.S. principle of church-state separation. While Wycliffe's success eventually silenced many of these critics, fear of home backlash still contributes to its theological and political conservatism.

SIL IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

The Summer Institute came to Peru at the end of the Second World War at a time when Protestant missions resumed their pre-depression offensive against Catholic bastions and U.S. oil companies scouted the Amazon jungle. Once again Townsend used indigenists and the U.S. embassy to introduce his group to the government. In 1945 he signed SIL's first state contract; it was with the Ministry of Education. Since the Catholic hierarchy would not tolerate a large Protestant operation in the Amazon, SIL presented itself as an arm of the University of Oklahoma rather than the Wycliffe Bible Translators, which it never mentioned. SIL also muddled its "linguistic mission" with official U.S. technical assistance, the "missions" or "services" which were soon incorporated into the Point Four program.

SIL/WBT's Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) in Peru, along with the base/outpost system which SIL has reproduced elsewhere, dates to the late 1940s. Since flight and radio service was at a premium, JAARS not only streamlined SIL's own activities but won endless tributes from government officials and especially military officers. To subsidize flights for members, JAARS also flew commercial, particularly oil company, traffic. And as if to strengthen his hand against the Catholic church, Townsend became a notable advocate of Amazon colonization. In early 1953 he introduced a Christian millionaire from Texas, the self-styled "partner of God" Robert Le Tourneau, to President Manuel Odria. Talking as if he would knock down the

entire Amazon forest, Le Tourneau secured 400,000 hectares for experiments in mechanical jungle-clearing and road-building, cattle raising, and evangelism. As would be the case elsewhere, development plans for the jungle led to more state support for SIL. A month after the government opened the jungle to foreign oil companies in late 1952, the Minister of Education approved Townsend's plan for a state-financed, SIL-administered system of bilingual schools. When the Catholic hierarchy denounced the SIL-Le Tourneau conspiracy in August 1953, Townsend denied that SIL was related to Wycliffe and that his University of Oklahoma linguists had a religious mission (Donayre, 1953). Although proof to the contrary was quickly forthcoming, Odria increased SIL's subsidy and decorated Townsend.

Wherever SIL went in the Amazon, it faced a system of exploitation that had been imposed during the rubber boom around the turn of the century. In Peru perhaps 200,000 jungle Indians had survived, many in debt to *patrones* who exchanged trade goods for labor on usurious terms and were themselves in debt to usurers in the towns. If native people were not under patronal control, it was because they had fought it off or fled. Peruvian indigenists and military officers considered SIL an effective means of political socialization on this frontier, more so than the Catholic missions which still tried to Hispanicize Indian children in boarding schools. To the Marxist educator Efraim Morote Best (1961: 307) SIL's bilingual schools were "a revolutionary step from the social and educational point of view" because Indians could be taught basic subjects in their own language, in their own community, and by members of their own people. While many SIL members regarded Catholic missionaries as their principal enemy, to Morote the fundamental struggle was against the *patrones*. As SIL's ministry supervisor in the late 1950s, he helped SIL's Aguaruna teachers organize a cooperative in an attempt to break the debt-peonage system in the Marañon Valley.

With the bilingual schools, SIL ended the Catholic monopoly over Indian education in the jungle and built its own formidable system of patronage. By moving hired language informants (native speakers who teach their language to an outsider) to the SIL base, translators used the base milieu and the work of Bible translation—an intense form of Bible study—to convert these young men, put them through the bilingual teacher-training course at the base, and send them back to their people as government-salaried teachers. If SIL linguists were zealous, as they often were, the teachers imposed an evangelical order as a condition for the schooling and other material advantages they introduced. Where necessary, the teacher/pastors concentrated dispersed populations around the schools, which tended to produce ecological and social instability. To deal with such problems, SIL launched community development programs, further encouraging its teacher/pastors to become entrepreneurs. Through native intermediaries, SIL combined school, church, and trading post into one.

In Guatemala, Townsend (1924) had described a Cakchiquel preacher putting on his "Indian costume" to evangelize. But while Townsend (1955) told governments that his linguists would expedite the disappearance of Indian languages, SIL's priority remained using the languages to foster churches. Having discovered that social and cultural disintegration did not favor evangelism, and in conformity with a wider trend in indigenist thinking,

SIL began to claim that its program fortified cultural identity. The more liberal translators introduced a quasi-cultural relativism to their work; the more conservative translators did not; and SIL remained committed to the replacement of "Satanic" religious beliefs with its own. Despite a certain liberalization, then, SIL continued to rupture Amazonian societies into evangelical and traditionalist (often "Catholic") factions by encouraging the young to make a drastic break with tradition and discouraging converts from engaging in customary relations (such as marriage and drinking parties) with the unregenerate.

The impact of SIL's "better deal" of state salary, cheaper trade goods, bilingual schooling, and western medicine can be viewed under two broad sequences, depending upon whether or not a community was marginal to the debt-peonage system at SIL's arrival or in peonage. In the first (marginal) situation, to cite an instance among the native Campa, the teacher's salary has a "profound sweetening effect" upon people who have a "sour grapes" attitude toward trade goods. We may suppose that "sour grapes" is rejection of the exploitation which acquiring trade goods entails. But now kin and neighbors want the beautiful things which the teacher is importing with his salary. Traditionally the Campa Indians share everything they have, but the teacher finds this hard since he is now dependent on the new money economy, not hunting and gardening like everyone else. The solution is "extremely painful." The teacher pressures everyone but his immediate family to make their own money by producing and selling commodities (Long, 1970:32, 35).

In the "marginal" situation SIL therefore "enslaves" native people to the trade good. Considerable economic power is concentrated in the teacher, who becomes the agent of trade-good dependency and is placed under pressure to break with the tradition of reciprocity. The population is more likely to require concentration around the school, and the evangelical order becomes a condition attached to the trade good. These circumstances do not favor an evangelical movement, a stable community, or a congregation. If many of SIL-Peru's bilingual school congregations are chiefly a function of this transaction, as I suspect, they may well fall apart with sufficient ecological deterioration or upon SIL's departure.

In the second (debt-peonage) situation, SIL's promotion of a more accessible trade good and a cash economy tends, not to "enslave" the community to the trade good, but to "liberate" it from peonage. This would seem a more propitious atmosphere for an evangelical movement—it approximates the milieu of Mayan Protestantism—and two of SIL's most publicized evangelical movements in Peru fit this type. Both the Piro and Ticuna movements were based upon indigenous millennial traditions, associated with fits of enthusiasm for abstinence and thrift, and made headway against debt-peonage. But even here it is uncertain whether missionary-supervised evangelical movements have produced self-sustaining congregations.

For decades SIL told the Peruvian government that it would reconcile jungle Indians to colonization, that is, to the loss of most of their land. Here and elsewhere, the accelerating pace of colonization is putting SIL's claim to the test. According to Wistrand (1970: 4,8), SIL has helped the Aguaruna face

a new highway and colonization by (1) anchoring them around the bilingual schools so that they not abandon choice land and flee into the hills as the elders initially advised; (2) convincing the teachers of the highway's benefits through new trade opportunities; and (3) giving the Aguaruna a "feeling for progress . . . in the accumulation of material goods." Wistrand believes that the bilingual school "encloses and preserves the core of Aguaruna culture" while relating it to the dominant culture. But the balance requires government backing for the Aguaruna, Wistrand warns, lest "anxiety drives and hostile actions" arise and government support for the Aguaruna has not been forthcoming. In 1971 one of the first evangelical communities was protesting government plans (Siverts, 1972: 66-69). According to a more recent report, the Aguaruna regard SIL and the Jesuit mission (which on various occasions has confronted the government) as a measure of protection against the army. As in other places where Townsend's visions of progress are being fulfilled, his missionaries face a dilemma: they must help native people defend themselves against colonization and state violence to keep their loyalty but, unlike the Catholic missions, SIL is completely dependent upon the state, whose contract is SIL's sole legitimation and which SIL therefore cannot afford to challenge.

SIL, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

There has been speculation that SIL's outposts, aircraft, and radios function as a counterinsurgency "trip wire" for the CIA. While SIL has emphasized its arrangements with host governments, Cameron Townsend also sought the endorsement of the U.S. government. To that end he occasionally volunteered his organization's services for the battle against communism. SIL's advances into the Philippines (1953) and South Vietnam (1956) were personally expedited by Presidents Ramón Magsaysay and Ngo Dinh Diem, each under the tutelage of the CIA's Edward Lansdale. According to a document released by the U.S. State Department, in 1961 one of Lansdale's superiors ten years earlier at the CIA, Colonel William R. Kintner, was about to help SIL enlist the Kennedy White House in a scheme to eradicate illiteracy and fight communism all over Latin America. That same month Townsend suddenly prevailed over a decade of stiff Catholic resistance in Colombia and secured a contract from the Lleras Camargo government. As a public authority on the Cold War, Kintner (1962: 282-89) advocated total mobilization of private U.S. private organizations for the anticommunist cause.

In 1960 SIL-Guatemala pledged its prayers and literacy work to President Manuel Ydigoras for the struggle against "communist agitation and terrorist attacks" (Beckman and Hefley, 1968: 235-36). There and in Peru SIL promoted bilingual education among highland Indian peasants. In the zone east of Ayacucho, Quechua children who had been "terrified" to go to school the previous year were "out greeting and bringing food to soldiers, who came through to search out 'guerrilleros,' even showing off their ability to read with fluency the bilingual primers" (Orlandini, 1966). The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has occasionally subsidized SIL extension services in Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Bolivia, Sudan and, through the

education ministry, in Guatemala. Since 1967 USAID grants to SIL have totalled several million dollars, compared to SIL's 1980 income of \$26.5 million.

Yet despite many accusations, there is no firm evidence of active SIL participation in military operations. SIL-Colombia's alleged role in the suppression of a Guahibo uprising in 1970 is based on a single newspaper paragraph (cited in Hart, 1973: 26); it was not corroborated either by Guahibo testimony of investigators criticizing SIL on broader grounds. While members have warned converts of the danger of Satanic communism, SIL apparently has tried to keep its distance from official violence for its self-preservation if nothing else: religious missions tend to be an early casualty of warfare. And while SIL would have little choice when faced by an order from its host government, it apparently has tried to avoid becoming an intelligence channel for the same reason. Even in Vietnam, where SIL teams spent much of the war in U.S. bunkers until they left in 1975, the branch reportedly ordered two of its women to stop giving lodging to an "anthropologist" after it became apparent that he worked for the CIA (Hostetter, 1973: 8). In Colombia SIL has been reluctant to report illegal marijuana and cocoa plantations near its outposts. Some government officials are involved in the industry, and translators are defenseless against gunmen.

INDIAN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND SIL'S CRISIS

In the Guatemalan highlands and the Peruvian Amazon we have seen how, at the transition from "feudal" to capitalist relations of production, evangelical missionaries have harnessed native millennialism (or at least religious sentiment) to their own by arranging a "better deal" for Indians. Like other wealthy North American sectarians in Latin America, SIL has taken advantage of the conflict between indigenous peoples and colonizing societies by siding with native people against other colonizers and, by implication, the entire racist colonizing society. Through alliance and patronage, subsequently, SIL has tried to accommodate native people to state development plans.

Since purely nationalist demands (e.g., Peruvian sovereignty) do not coincide with indigenous demands (e.g., to be left alone by the Peruvian Army), until recently opposition to SIL at the national level bore little or no relation to indigenous demands. SIL's crises were battles over patronage in which Indians were the spoils. SIL gave more attention to indigenous demands than to its opponents at the national level, and only SIL attended to the antagonism it was generating in native communities. Two developments are starting to change this situation by raising indigenous demands at the national level, linking them to anti-imperialist movements, offering native people better terms of exchange, and challenging SIL's broker position. One is the emergence (in some cases, reemergence) of Indian civil rights movements based on tradition, the struggle for land, and self-determination. The other is support for these movements by social scientists, progressive missionaries and non-Indian organizations.

To the Indian federations and councils SIL tends to loom, already or potentially, as a divisive influence, turning converts against tradition and working for accommodation to government plans. In Colombia, Paez and

Guambiano evangelicals, whose missionaries include two SIL teams, recently posed this kind of problem to the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC), dozens of whose leaders have been assassinated by landlord-hired gun thugs. In 1975 evangelical teachers told me that they did not support CRIC because it denies (the Protestant) God and does not obey the government. Paez Protestants were becoming known for their cooperation with government development schemes predicated upon landlord interests. On the other hand, not all Indian councils have clashed with the evangelicals; the Shuar Federation in Ecuador, for example, apparently has not had serious problems with a SIL-supervised bilingual school system. The federation has had difficulties with the Gospel Missionary Union, a more conservative body with which SIL has both cooperated and quarreled.

Contrary to SIL's declarations of political neutrality, however, its members typically: feel that Indian militancy is communist-inspired and therefore under Satanic influence, try to propagate a higher loyalty which precludes participation by converts who might otherwise find some basis for unity, and teach that the government is divinely ordained. While some members are not antagonistic to civil rights and self-defense movements, their organization's position is more than ideological since a sweeping, long-term program is utterly dependent on the state contracts. SIL cannot afford to displease its host governments.

"Why don't they talk to us about our rights?" Amuesha evangelicals in Peru have asked in regard to SIL. Will civil rights and self-defense movements "recapture" the millennial aspirations of evangelical Indians? I believe Indian activists in Colombia were addressing this possibility when they stated in 1974:

The divisions which have been established within our communities, between Indians who adhere to the (Catholic) missions and to the evangelists, is used to keep us distracted, to keep our eyes covered so that we do not see how our real enemies are depriving us and destroying us . . .

Our experience has shown us that we should not attack one another because we profess one or another religion. On the contrary we must reinforce our unity and strengthen the organization . . . And in the struggle we shall rediscover the roots of our own beliefs and traditions (Corry, 1976: 41).

Rival outsiders are starting to offer native people what most SIL members cannot: respect for their religious traditions and support for the land struggle. The patronage battle over Indian followings remains, however. The rivalry between refurbished Catholic missions and SIL dates back for decades, even if it is now being expressed in significantly different terms. With some reason, a growing corp of linguists and anthropologists feel that SIL, which costs the government exchequer little and is utterly reliable politically, has marginalized them from the conduct of Indian affairs. SIL-Indian conflicts, then, tend to be "filtered" through patronage battles which are taken up by student committees, journalists, and politicians who alert the nation to its peril. Nourished by SIL's own sanctified, semi-unconscious system of misinformation about itself (see Stoll, forthcoming), conspiracy theory comes to postulate a Green Beret auxiliary with special brainwashing and sterilization facilities, not to mention a complete inventory of the country's mineral and

botanical resources, which is currently engaged in a pincer movement to cut off the oil fields and prepare a warm welcome for the 82nd Airborne Division. Much of this thinking is plausible, of course, even if it condenses U.S. imperialism in a single mysterious organization. But it also comes to appear that expelling a few hundred all-purpose imperialists will resolve most differences between Indians and their colonizers. And it comes as no surprise that some attempts to "liberate" communities from SIL have rebounded in its favor.

SIL garnered full CIA honors (without evidence) in 1975 in Colombia and Peru, following lengthy, unsuccessful attempts to reform and/or phase out the operation through official channels. Frustrated by SIL's "occult power" in government ministries and its seemingly entrenched position in native communities, opponents followed in the path of Catholic bishops and patrones two decades earlier in Peru by denouncing SIL as subversive to the national interest. They hoped to pressure governments into forsaking their tried and tested missionary servants. Beneath the issue of national versus foreign mediation lurked the value of SIL's alliances with Indians as a blockade against leftist alliances with Indians.

In Peru this issue was underlined by the opposition of the Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA) to both SIL and the rightward shift of the Francisco Morales Bermúdez government. In April 1976, soon after Prime Minister Jorge Fernández Maldonado confirmed SIL's termination and not long before President Morales reversed that decision, the U.S. Embassy cabled Washington:

A key SIL supporter has warned Morales Bermúdez of the political danger of terminating SIL activities only to allow leftist campesino organization to expand its operations among jungle Indians. A reversal of the [government] decision is not out of the question, but the issue may now become part of the continuing broader argument over the future course of the revolution (U.S. State Department, 1976a).

The dependence of the state bureaucracy itself on SIL also worked in its favor. According to a U.S. embassy cable a month later:

the extension was prompted by growing awareness of the complexity and expense of takeover of SIL program. Director Anderson recently informed [the Ministry of Education] that operational expenditures costing around 10 million soles per year are being curbed by the SIL as part of its phase out. This reduction has already affected services which SIL for years has rendered to military and civil officials . . . We understand there have been many complaints by Guardia Civil and Guardia Republicana officials and by Army personnel, as well as civilians. Pay checks, mail, and medical supplies are no longer arriving via SIL, and emergency transportation requests cannot always be met by SIL (U.S. State Department, 1976b).

Other State Department cables confirm that SIL consulted with U.S. embassies in Lima and Bogota; that Ambassadors Robert Dean (Peru) and Viron Vaky (Colombia) took an interest in SIL's fate; and that the Colombian and Peruvian governments sought to placate the opposition by giving the appearance of action while assuring SIL that it would continue. Despite perennial reports of SIL's demise in Colombia, there as in Peru it looks as solid as a ministry.

CONCLUSION

“SIL was accused of being ‘the introducer of capitalism to the native communities,’ ” noted the Peruvian weekly *Marka* (1978):

We ask simply, where does this leave the state and the functionaries, the rubber-hunters and other extractors and “conquistadores,” the traders and the Catholic missionaries, that is to say, the social and economic formation which has crystalized in Amazonia . . . and which evidently precedes the establishment of SIL?

No analysis of SIL can ignore—as occurred during (1975-76) with a definite will to avoid the principal problem—the position and attitude of the state . . . SIL is not the U.S. Marines who invaded Santo Domingo . . . it is a prolongation of the state.

Internal colonialism provides SIL with a permanent rationale, one reinforced as it creates new needs among native people which further justify its presence. Since governments have not only asked SIL to fill a brokerage vacuum but subsequently behave as if it eliminates the need for a national solution, SIL can argue from necessity (“who will bring the medicine?” ask the pro-SIL Indian delegations) into the indefinite future. Expelling SIL by government fiat may remove an obstacle to civil rights organizing in some cases, but it also will be highly unfavorable to dependent communities, foment “farewell” evangelical movements (as already seems to have occurred in Colombia and Peru) and, together with Indian militancy, encourage governments to devise new, perhaps more stringent measures to keep Indians under control. Thus in Colombia the agitation over SIL has been used to advance a proposed Indian Statute which would legalize state repression of Indian political movements and give the government dictatorial authority over Indian contacts with outsiders. In Peru, where conspiracy theory was championed by the government’s system for social mobilization, Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilación Social (SINAMOS), its plans would have strengthened bureaucratic control over native communities.

Events in Brazil and Mexico reiterate the association between SIL controversies and state initiatives which range from possibly beneficial to problematic to definitely unpleasant. In Brazil, where indigenists and Indian organizations had not protested against SIL, spy and plunder accusations from the Andean countries found a right-wing audience at high levels of the Ernesto Geisel regime. SIL was barred from native communities in 1977, apparently in retaliation for the U.S. government’s nuclear and human rights policies. At the same time, the Geisel government was pressing for the “emancipation” of Indians from their reserves. Some Brazilian indigenists asked that the ban against SIL be lifted, apparently because they considered it part of a coalition to defend Indian rights. In Mexico the López Portillo administration ended SIL’s contract in 1979, following a campaign in which government indigenists under pressure from Indian protest seemed to blame SIL for the failure of official policy. Here the demise of the contract is supposed to signify a new era of official respect for Indian culture.

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