The french revolution

The French Revolution has often been credited with fanning the revolutionary flames that swept through Latin America at the turn of the nineteenth century. It thus seems logical that the struggle against Spain was conditioned by the ideas and events that caused the upheaval in France, and that the great liberators of the continent, men like Simon Bolivar and Jose de San Martin, were inspired by political tremors from across the sea. Yet a careful study of the Latin American uprisings–placed against the nineteenth-century backdrop and amid the influences of the American Revolution, several English authors, and the writings of some " liberal" Jesuits–makes the French connection rather difficult to discern.

The scholar must also distinguish between the influence of the famous " critics" of the ancien regime–Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and the encyclopedists–and the impact of the guillotine. In Latin America, the first carried much more weight than the second. Placing the whole period in historical perspective, it is safe to say that French Jacobinism produced a negative reaction among most Latin revolutionary elites. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Creoles–a powerful white minority born in the colonies–were undergoing a cultural crisis. Taught that their mother countries were glorious and powerful empires, they realized Spain and Portugal had become second-rate powers, far beneath mighty England and enlightened France. Seeking cultural independence, the Creoles learned economic liberalism from England and political liberalism from France–along with near mystical faith in the power of a constitution, popular sovereignty, and the evils of absolutism. Ideologically armed, they aimed their criticisms against the " obsolete" policies of Spain and Portugal. Although increasingly

chaffing under colonial rule, and impressed by these new ideas, the Creoles were far from revolutionaries. They wanted to curtail their monarchs' authority and become equals to the Spaniards and Portuguese without violent upheaval. Surrounded by seemingly docile Indians, black slaves, and mestizos, most Creoles worried that any political turmoil would provoke a disastrous racial conflict. The Indian rebellions of 1791 in Peru (which had drawn the Creoles to the Spanish side), and the heroic, successful black revolt in Haiti in 1794 (the one Latin American uprising directly connected to the French Revolution) gave credence to this worry. The writings of the French critics of absolutism (particularly Rousseau and Montesquieu), which began reaching Latin America at the end of the eighteenth century, were thus cautiously embraced by the enlightened elite, despite cultural and traditional barriers to their acceptance. For example, even the most radical Creoles, unlike their French masters, were outspokenly Catholic. In 1810, the Argentinean " revolutionary" Mariano Moreno translated Rousseau's Social Contract, but suppressed those chapters criticizing religion. Concerning religion, Moreno explained, the great French philosopher " suffered a certain delirium." Consequently, the Creoles were willing to approve or applaud the events in France as long as they followed a pattern outlined by the ancien regime's critics. The proclaiming of a constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of man thus had a profound impact. But when the Revolution intensified, Creole attitudes changed. The royal executions, mob violence, religious persecutions, and Robespierre's guillotining provoked a general rejection. At the end of the eighteenth century, Colombian leader Antonio Narino and a group of Venezuelan conspirators translated and distributed the Declaration of the Rights of Man, defending most French revolutionary ideas.

A few years later, Venezuela's Francisco de Miranda, the great ingurator of Latin independence who had fought as a general in the French revolutionary army (his name is inscribed in the Arc de Triumph), stressed that the ideas of the French Jacobins and Girondins should not be allowed to " contaminate" the continent, " not even under the pretext of bringing us freedom… I fear anarchy more than dependence," he stated. That pervasive fear of anarchy (evident in the writings of Bolivar and San Martin) and the events leading to Napoleon's rise reinforced the creoles' cautious instincts. They associated in French Revolution with anarchy, bloodshed, and sacrilege. In 1800, the distinguished Peruvian politician Pablo de Olavide (who like Miranda had lived in France during the revolution) publicly recanted his former liberal ideas and exalted orthodox Catholicism as the only defense against the destructive tide of the French Revolution. " I was in Paris in 1789 and saw the birth of the horrible revolution, which in little time has devoured one of the most beautiful and rich kingdoms of Europe," de Olavide wrote. Almost at the same time Mexico City's Fray Servando de Teresa y Mier, who had endured prison and fought for Mexican independence, attacked the Revolution: " The French have deduced it is necessary to hang each other to attain equality in the cemetery, the one place we are all equals." To judge from the writings and declarations of the period, three concepts survived the creole's rejection of revolutionary excess: constitutionalism, republicanism, and popular sovereignty. Too hastily attributed to the French Revolution, all had penetrated Latin American years before, legitimized by the popular (at the time) example of the United States. In 1806 Napoleon deposed and imprisoned Spain's King Ferdinand VII, imposed his brother Joseph on the throne, and caused the Portuguese royal family to flee to Brazil. When the

Spanish people rebelled, the creoles' cultural crisis became decidedly political. Amid the collapse of royal authority and the threat of anarchy, they moved from condemning Napoleon's crime and asserting their loyalty to the deposed king to proclaiming their independence. After Napoleon was forced to free Ferdinand, most creoles, enjoying new political power, fought the king's attempt to regain authority over his colonies. The struggle intensified after the fall of Napoleon (denounced by the creoles as an ambitious tyrant and the product of the French Revolution) and the vague threat of the Holy Alliance formed in Europe to crush any revolutionary movement. Only then, when the campaigns against Spanish armies had become tough and bloody, did some creoles refer to the early stages of the Revolution in glowing terms, comparing their fight to the French people's. The allusion was as rhetorical as creole claims of fighting to " avenge the conquered and abused Indians." By the mid-nineteenth century, nearly all the newly created Latin American republics had inserted into their constitutions the basic tenets of liberal tradition: the division of power, individual rights, and equality before the law. All decreed Catholicism the official religion. But unlike the previous period, many Latin writers were by then crediting the political advances to the French Revolution. The change of attitude may have stemmed from two main factors. First, the creoles–the new upper elite of their respective countries, with firm control of the state forces–now had less fear of social turmoil. As the danger of anarchy declined, sympathy for the French Revolution increased. Conservatives acknowledged the justice of the people's uprising, and liberal factions in each country strove to realize constitutional freedoms.

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Another factor was the triumph of Romanticism, the most popular and lasting literary movement in Latin America. For many Latin writers, Romanticism was embodied by France, and primarily Victor Hugo. France became the spiritual fatherland for Latin intellectuals, with a pilgrimage to la Ville Lumiere, Paris, mandatory. Ironically, Europe’s romantic poets glorified the bandits, rebels, and outcasts. French writers from Michelet to Hugo hailed the glories of revolution, of barricades, and of violence against tyrants, and extolled Napoleon, now transformed into the Great Soldier of the Revolution. The Latin writers followed suit. Suffering postindependence disillusionment, watching the rise of caudillos who trampled their beloved constitutions, enduring what the Argentinean poet-politician Esteban Echeverria called “ the shipwreck of our dreams”; they declared themselves the heirs of the Girondins and the Jacobins, and the continuers of a revolution for independence frustrated by tyrants. Every leader, idealist, or bandit who challenged the status quo proclaimed himself “ revolutionary,” with every “ revolution” a child of the “ glorious French barricades.” This lasting devotion to nominal radicalism moved philosopher Hermann Keyserling to register a keen observation. “ Everywhere,” he wrote in 1905, “ the words tradition and revolution are opposite. Except in Latin America, where politicians appear to be traditionally revolutionary.” In 1849, a group of Chilean writers and mystic “ revolutionaries” adopted the names of Danton, Saint-Just, and Demoulins. They formed a “ Society of Equals” and attempted a popular uprising in Chile. Although the revolt was a total fiasco, leader Francisco Bilbao (a writer in the apocalyptic style) swore they had saved the dignity of the Chilean

people and vindicated the glory of the French Revolution. Bilbao may have used the wrong example. In 1848, France and other European countries witnessed a new revolution, one whose failure heralded a new concept of what revolution should be. For the first time, Paris saw a parade of workers displaying red flags and witnessed the bloody collapse of their barricades. The following year, Marx and Engels published their Communist Manifesto. The Romantic movement had died. Romanticism took the rest of the century to die in Latin America. At the end of the Latin American romantic era, Nicaraguan Ruben Dario became the acknowledged leader of Modernism. By then, the French Revolution had been sanctified. It was a political and philosophical ideal, a sign of the Latin identity before the menace of the " barbarians from the north" (the American Revolution was now viewed as the source of American imperialism) and a spiritual bond with the beloved France. The French Revolution's mythic influence has far exceeded its actual contributions to the political trends, constitutions, and laws of Latin America. But the myth has had an influence, helping to maintain the dream of real democracy and true equality for Latin Americans. Sadly, contemporary Latin " revolutionaries" raise banners closer to the red flags of 1848 than to the ideals of " Liberte, Egalite, and Franternite."

We have devoted a considerable portion of this month's issue to the two hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution. Americans, who are aware that France has been our ally since the time of our own revolution, empathize with the French celebration. The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France, shares with the flag and the bald eagle the distinction of symbolizing our own nation and civilization. The great motto of the French Revolution–

Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity–expresses values we Americans respect greatly. Yet, it would be dishonest if we did not note the distortions these values suffered during the Revolution. In one of his rare poetic moments, Hegel referred to the concept of absolute freedom, as it came to be expressed in the French Revolution, as “ absolute death, meaningless death, as meaningless as quaffing a glass of water or clefting a head of cabbage.” French intellectual life at the time of the Revolution was dominated by the philosophers. Some, like Holbach, were empiricists, who believed that knowledge started with sensation. These sensations produced a picture of an external world that was in principle completely knowable. Others, like Condorcet, following the model of inquiry initiated by Descartes, were rationalists. Conceiving of the world on the basis of mathetmatical logic, they believed it was governed by fundamental axioms the mind could grasp intuitively. If God–who had made the world but then left it to its own devices–knew the initial conditions of the atoms, he would be able to predict the entire future. Men were machines in a clocklike world that science, in principle, could understand thoroughly. Because ignorance had destroyed the initially happy state of nature, science would be required to restore such a state in modern society–even if humans had to be forced to be free. It is this aspect of the French Revolution that justified the Terror in the minds of its partisans. And it is this aspect of the French Revolution that inspired the Bolsheviks. It is the concept of limitless freedom–the kind of freedom that Hegel satirized–that today inspires a number of discontented groups in the United States. Although the German language, with its immense penumbra of connotations, permits the looseness of reasoning that one finds in a Mein Kampf, it is the lucidity and precision of the French language that inspires a

type of rationality that allows a few a priori axioms to constrain thought about life and politics. The absolute freedom that Hegel called absolute death is an abstract freedom that lacks concrete connectedness. All freedoms are dependent upon correlative constraints. For example, if an object is to be free to roll, it must have a rounded shape that makes it difficult for it to rest on the crest of a slope. The ability to think rationally is dependent, among other things, on not taking mind-altering substances. There is no absolute freedom and no absolute perfection, at least not in this life, where every choice and every freedom involves a trade-off. The ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity also require trade-offs. Any attempt to absolutize one of these values will impose intolerable costs on the others. Possibilities are limited by circumstances. Novelty–and this includes at least some aspects of the future–is not predictable. Moreover, even with respect to mechanics–and especially with respect to quantum theory–predictive power is limited. In fact, the paths of planets are not entirely predictable, for both measurement error and the accumulation of small effects eventually will produce radical, unforeseeable change. Any philosophy that fails to give due weight to uncertainties, complexities, and historically concrete idiosyncracies is likely to encourage tyranny. Any philosophy that is willing to jettison established institutions solely on the basis of a prior theory is likely to produce a reign of terror. This is not an argument against rationality per se, but against only a particular type of rationality, the type that manifested itself in France at the time of the Revolution and against which the most profound French thinkers now are reacting. The overreaction that France experienced twenty years ago in the deconstructionist movement–which risks turning into its opposite–now is being rejected by the best French

thinkers at the very time that deconstructionism has invaded prestigious American universities. The reexamination of the French Revolution, which is so vigorous in France today and which we recount in this issue, should help to inoculate against this intellectual virus. We can thrill to the ideals of the Revolution while sternly rejecting its excrescences and false ideals. Hail, Marianne, still beautiful, glorious, and lucent. This time your scholars and intellectuals are leading the way. From El Cid to El Che: The Hero and the Mystique of Liberation in Latin America Spain gave the world the hero incarnate in El Cid and the transcendent hero in Don Quixote. Much of Spanish destiny would unfold in their shadow, as affirmation and negation of their exemplary lives. The poem and the novel reflect and foreshadow the two great epics of Spanish history: the reconquest of Spain and the conquest of America. For almost eight hundred years Spaniards were obsessed, consumed by the passion of the reconquest of Spain from the infidels, the Arabs who invaded in 710. The notion of lucha, struggle, which permeates much of the revolutionary poetry of Spanish America today, probably goes back as far as 1099, when it is said that El Cid, already dead but strapped to his horse Babieca, won his last battle at Valencia. The capture of Granada and the final expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian peninsula in 1492 was the epic feat of another Spaniard not unlike El Cid, Gonzalo de CÃ³rdoba, El Gran CapitÃ¡n, whose tactics, training, and organization would make Spanish infantry invincible for almost two centuries. The centuries devoted to warring against the infidel, an enterprise involving much the male population, resulted in plebeians who regarded themselves as noblemen, “ fumo di fidalgo,” according to the Florentine ambassador to Spain in 1513. A Frenchman who visited Spain in the seventeenth century was amazed to

hear a poor squire boast that “ I am as much a noble as the king, aye, and nobler, for he is half Flemish.” And the nobleman’s, or hidalgo’s, chief occupations were to make war and attend mass; a knight’s tasks, like Don Quixote’s, were battle and prayer. The heroic life was, had to be, a quest, a gesta filled with adventure and longing, longing for honor, even death– anything but the ordinary. Otherwise one might as well be dead or worse, working with money, papers, or one’s hands, like Jews and other infidels or, God forbid, women. The regard for leisure and aversion to ordinary work that existed in medieval Spain were exacerbated by the conquest of America. Saint Teresa describes how one of her brothers, having returned from America, refused to work the land. Why should he toil like a dirt farmer after having been a seÃ±or in the Indies? The notion of a heroic life was propagated by the cantares de gesta, or chansons de geste, the heroic poetry of the Spanish Middle Ages, the popularity of which is exemplified by Don Quixote’s reciting such a ballad to an innkeeper perceived to be the governor of a fortress: Mis arreos son las armas mi descanso el pelear mi cama las duras peÃ±as mi dormir siempre velar (Arms are my ornaments combat, my rest vigilance, my sleep the hard rock, my bed). If Spain is “ the home of the idea of chivalry,” observes Miguel de Unamuno, then “ Quixotism is simply the most desperate phase of the battle of the Middle Ages against its offspring the Renaissance.” The books of chivalry, which popularized the medieval ethos of heroic poetry, were the favorite reading not only of the general public but of such “ austere spirits as Saint Ignatius, Saint Teresa and the Emperor Charles V.” indeed, Cervantes, who published the world’s first novel in 1605 to ridicule the genre, was in a sense unhorsed by his own creation, a caricature that took off with a life of its own, leaving

its creator behind, eclipsing all his “ serious” works, galloping onto posterity to become that most endearing and enduring of gallant knights. The conquest of America was the consecration of the Spanish hero as crusading knight. The conquistadors exemplify Joseph Campbell’s definition of the hero: individuals who venture forth from the world of common day into regions of supernatural wonders where fabulous forces must be encountered and decisive victories won so that the triumphant hero can return home with the power to bestow blessings and riches on his fellow men. And the feats of the conquest would be as heroic as anything in the books of chivalry. Few men have shown the daring of Cortes’ marching into Mexico with 400 men or of Pizarro taking over the Inca empire with 180. And what witnesses they had in their soldiers! One of Cortes’ men, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, writing as an old man, left us the most vivid, unforgettable account of that mythic European entry into the New World: “ With such wonderful sights to gaze on we did not know what to say or if this was real that we saw before our eyes… and, as I write, it all comes before me as if it had happened only yesterday.” But the first wizard to infuse the New World with all the magic and wonder of the Old World’s legends was the discoverer himself. Columbus painted the inhabitants of Hispaniola to the Spanish sovereigns as if they were blissful creatures from the Golden Age, unsullied before the fall; free of violence or greed, the natives showed “ as much love as if they were giving their hearts.” And from the seed of Columbus’s fancy would grow that most enduring American myth, one that combined the bliss of Ovid’s Golden Age with the innocence of the Bible’s paradise lost: the notion of the Noble Savage, a much stronger and lasting presence in the history, literature, and folklore of Latin America than in the United States. In a brilliant examination

of Latin American political mythology, the Venezuelan author Carlos Rangel points to the connection between the past notion of the Noble Savage and today's notion of the Noble Revolutionary. The present essay is an exploration of this connection, an attempt to establish whether the Latin America guerrilla of today is somehow the latest incarnation of the Spanish hero. The crusader, warrior, savior, is once again stalking the continent, charged with a sacred mission: to liberate us, to restore us to that free and happy state that Columbus found before the rot set in, to convert us to the true faith, to that very old belief in the New Man.

Is it possible, as has been pointed out, that the most significant achievement of that prototypical hero of the nineteenth century, Napoleon, was one that never entered his mind: the emancipation of Spanish America? That Napoleon was both the denial and the consummation of the French Revolution is exemplified by the coins that bore the inscription: REPUBLIQUE FRANÃ‡AISE, NAPOLEON EMPEREUR. But even more than France itself, the young Spanish American republic would be doomed to the paradox of that inscription, to the cyclic transmutation of revolutionary liberation into absolutism. After the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and the abdication of King Ferdinand VII in 1808, the Spanish American colonies proclaimed their freedom. Their independence, however, was achieved after sixteen years of savage war with the Spanish armies, a campaign led by the Venezuelan SimÃ³n Bolivar (1783-1830), thereafter known as the Liberator. At the time, " belief in the power of the heroic individual" was at its peak. And Bolivar, a dashing, brilliant, irresistible personality, exemplified the Napoleonic ideal (the Argentine José de San MartÃn, the liberator from the South, was more of

a George Washington and did not fit the heroic-romantic mold). Bolivar had not only the conceit of genius but, as noted by Unamuno, the heroic energy, indomitable will, and cult of glory characteristic of Don Quixote.” The Latin American war of independence was fought with unwilling, untrained, and poorly equipped recruits, over terrain of a savagery inconceivable to either Julius Caesar or Napoleon. In such circumstances, military science counted less than the heroic will and a gift for leadership, traits that were characteristic of Bolivar–a brilliant improviser who lived by Danton’s famous maxim: “ L’audace, l’audace, toujours de l’audace!” Audacity in everything. In addition to being a great warrior, Bolivar was also the region’s first romantic writer and the first great interpreter of Spanish American history. Unquestionably one of the most gifted revolutionary leaders in history and the first Latin American to attain universal renown, he was also the region’s greatest visionary. Not the least of his gifts was the clarity of insight with which he analyzed the Latin America conditions that would prevent the liberation he so brilliantly led from producing either a workable political system, as in the United States, or extensive social and economic reforms, as in post-Napoleonic Europe. He concluded that to serve the revolution was to plow the sea. Truthfulness, harsh honesty about the problems and faults of Latin America, as well as emphasis on the region’s responsibility for its own destiny, have been characteristic of the true Latin America hero. But in a political culture where mendacity, sentimentality, and the rationalization of responsibility are endemic (especially among the elites and the intelligentsia), Bolivar’s harsh truths have never been popular. The great irony of Spanish American emancipation was that el pueblo–all who are not among the elite (e. g., Indians, blacks, mestizos, mulattoes, poor whites)–

were consigned to either harsher bondage or greater servitude after liberation than they had been in colonial times when the humanitarian laws of the Spanish Crown did, to an extent, shelter the weak from total exploitation by the powerful. Partly as a result of such abuses and injustices, there arose in the nineteenth century a veritable tide of populist leaders, the rural caudillos who would wreak almost as much havoc and destruction across the young republics as had the savage wars of independence. With " clairvoyant desperation," Bolivar anticipated the vengeful rise and bloody wake of these Latin American Cossacks. Another true and truthful hero, the Cuban José MartÃ (1853-1895), a great admirer of Bolivar, also expressed doubts about the relevance of North American or other democratic systems of government for Latin America. Alluding to the continent's violent heritage, the tradition of meeting force with force, he warned, to paraphrase him, that you don't stop the charge of a caudillo's stallion with a Hamiltonian decree. The magnitude of Bolivar's achievement, the continental scope of his mission, as well as his unrealized dream of an independent and unified Latin America would haunt future generations and inspire in MartÃ and others a peculiarly Spanish American mystique of continental liberation. The millenarian and totalitarian tendencies of this cult would become more evident in the twentieth century when more than one liberation movement resulted in the oppression and repression of the people it liberated. The great Russian writer Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), who had known or befriended many European revolutionaries of the nineteenth century, including Marx, Bakunin, Garibaldi, and Mazzini, was as prescient as Bolivar about the dark forces unleashed by liberation. He foresaw them engulfing his own country with dire consequences for the Russian people. His statement

about Catholic Europe also applies to Latin America: “ The Latin World does not like freedom, it likes to sue for it; it sometimes finds the force for liberation, never for freedom.” He concluded that “ if only people wanted, instead of liberating humanity to liberate themselves, they would do a great deal for human freedom.”

It is no accident that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 took place in one of those Caribbean islands mythified by Columbus: “ The earliest utopias of the imagination and the starting places for many key nineteenth century revolutionaries were often islands.” The old utopia was thus reborn in the romantic dream of a socialist island inhabited by noble revolutionaries, led by a new Prospero who, like the discoverer himself, could transmute American reality into the stuff European dreams are made of. At long last, through magic incantation, through the language of fantasy and sorcery, a much beloved figure would be summoned: the Noble Savage as New Socialist Man. Like the medieval Spanish knight who consecrated his words, his life, and his death to the nobility of his cause, one of the island’s warriors would set forth into the wicked world to proclaim the good news, to spread the gospel of the incarnation of the revolutionary word: In Latin America a New Man had risen to die for our sins, and the New Man was he–Ernesto “ Che” Guevara. Almost twenty years ago, I published a memoir about him, reminiscences of the young man I knew in Cordoba, Argentina, in the 1940s-1950s, Ernestito Guevara as we knew him then: a handsome, mesmerizing young man who was wildly eccentric and shockingly opinionated but unusually idealistic and generous. But now, I write not about that boy, but about El Che, the Revolutionary, the Guerrilla, an implacable zealot of total

war, whose ultimate end is as much a mystery to me as to anyone else. The attempt to unravel it here, to explore from the distance of years, books, articles, this second, abstract persona against the memory of the first real and immediate human being that I knew well, is a disconcerting endeavor, somehow like refocusing a multiple exposure in which the first impression will always overshadow the others. He was different from other children–wiser, tougher, more independent–probably because of having been from infancy on the verge of death because of asthma attacks. From the beginning, we wondered at his amazing nonconformity, his passion for the out-of-the-ordinary–what in hindsight now appear to have been the first stirrings of that very Spanish yearning for the heroic. Unamuno described this yearning as the need to “ live a life of restless longing,” an existence driven, in Huizinga’s words, by the “ vision of a sublime life”–or perhaps a sublime death? In a journal he kept as a young man, he carefully transcribed the words of an unidentified victim of the French Revolution: “ I go to the scaffold with my head high. I am not a victim, I am the blood that fertilizes the soil of France. I die because I must, so that the people can live on.” And so are revolutionary myths spun and revolutionary heroes born. In our case, the mythmaking begins with the history of the Cuban Revolution, which would not be portrayed not as the outcome of an extraordinarily favorable constellation of forces and circumstances (e. g., approval rather than intervention on the part of the United States; enthusiastic reports in the American press; massive support on the part of the Cuban middle class; active encouragement and even some assistance from democratic governments in Latin America; and last but by no means least, a powerful and deadly urban terrorist network of middle-class students). “ The

peasants,” as Leo Sauvage has observed, “ played a more important role in Che’s imagination than they did in the Cuban Revolution.” But the myth of a rural-based revolution would grow and persist, all credit being accorded Cuba’s peasants as well as that indispensable factor: a “ miraculously… small band of men… the armed vanguard,” the twelve apostles that would lead the poor peasants to victory. The number twelve is no coincidence–even if the original survivors of Batista’s first attack were in fact fifteen. The incorporation of biblical or eschatological imagery into political ideology is characteristic of what one historian has called “ the revolutionary faith.” In the nineteenth century, revolutionary ideologies became secularized versions of “ the old Judeo-Christian belief in deliverance-through-history. At a deep and often subconscious level, the revolutionary faith was shaped by the Christian faith it attempted to replace.” In the Paris of the French Revolution there was, as in Galilee, a “ revolutionary apostolate of twelve,” presided over by an ascetic visionary aptly called Saint-Just. The apostles would return with the Russian Revolution in Alexander Blok’s 1918 poem “ The Twelve,” the final image being “ that of Christ-as-revolutionary leading armed apostles into windswept St. Petersburg.” As in Paris and St. Petersburg, the apostles’ third apparition in Havana in 1959 would be as ominous, as fraught with danger for the flock as for the apostles themselves. The Cuban gospel was so electrifying that Che’s words would reach as far as his original arch enemy: the Catholic Church. Latin American priests would adopt the Cuban revolutionary faith and incorporate it into a new church doctrine that is yet to be recognized by the Vatican: Theology of Liberation. The first to formulate the new theology in 1971, the Peruvian Gustavo Gutierrez, was also the first to invoke Che: The liberation of our continent

means more than overcoming economic, social, and political dependence. It means, in a deeper sense, to see the becoming of mankind as a process of the emancipation of man in history. It is to see man in search of a qualitatively different society in which he will be free from all servitude, in which he will be the artisan of his own destiny. It is to seek the building of a new man. Ernesto “ Che” Guevara wrote, “ We revolutionaries often lack the knowledge and the intellectual audacity to face the task of the development of a new human being.” Another example of such infatuation with Cuba is the case of the well-known Nicaraguan poet and priest Ernesto Cardenal, presently Nicaragua’s minister of culture, who has stated that Cuba is “ the gospel put into practice,” “ that Christ led me to Marx,” and that “ there is no difference between the Kingdom of God and communist society.” The attitude of Father Cardenal is by no means uncommon or unusual among Latin American priests and even some bishops and archbishops. The vast and complex issue of liberation theology in Latin America, well beyond the scope of this article, has been analyzed with rigor, eloquence, and much insight by Michael Novak in his recent book Will It Liberate? Che’s own background and the religious imagery in his writings are worth examining, given his far-reaching impact on Latin American Catholics in general and the Catholic Church in particular. In those years after the Spanish Civil War when I was growing up, our parents were mostly anticlerical or agnostic. Celia de la Serna, Che’s mother, however, was a militant atheist, an unusual stance in those days for a woman of her patrician background. Prior to her atheism, she had been such a militant Catholic that as a young woman she had almost joined a strict order of nuns. Instead, she passed on her militancy to her favorite son. If militant atheists are that rare incarnation of the true

believers, it is also true that their adopted creeds are often rife with old beliefs. Che’s catechism for crusaders against the capitalist infidel defines the guerrilla warrior as “ the Jesuit of warfare,” and the guerrilla doctor as “ the true priest.” “ The fault of many of our intellectuals and artists is to be found in their ‘ original sin’: They are not authentically revolutionary.” The inherent “ justice and truth of each revolutionary act” must be propagated through “ intensive indoctrination” in order to strengthen “ faith in the final victory.” But the guerrilla must above all “ spread the incontrovertible truth that victory of the enemy against the people is finally impossible. Whoever does not feel this undoubted truth cannot be a guerrilla fighter.” An “ undoubted truth” that has to be felt is not unlike that old: revealed truth” that had to be believed, or else. Or else, Woe to you Sinners, Monopolists, and Agents: be forewarned about the omnipotent people and their fury. But the Cuban people turned out to be far less omnipotent than the island’s one-man revolutionary vanguard, El LÃder MÃ¡ximo: Fidel Castro. Since Che’s departure in 1965, only one individual of real intelligence has been part of Castro’s inner circle, Carlos Rafael RodrÃguez, a foxy survivor also know as Cuba’s Mikoyan. It is also clear that Castro has less in common with the gray apparatchik leaders of communist Europe than with those eccentric and implacable Latin American despots of the nineteenth century: the awesome caudillos such as Argentina’s Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877) and Paraguay’s Jose Gasper RodrÃguez de Francia (1766-1840) who called himself “ El Supremo.” When and how did the deification of Castrio begin? And why do El Supremos tend to emerge from such revolutions? There seems to be in Latin America, more than any other region of the world, a craving for political supermen, a need to hero-worship statesmen as well as

historical figures. The worship of Castro the Hero began early on, and Che was one of the first to succumb. In Mexico, in 1956, the revolutionary apostle composed a paean dedicated to the new Messiah and to the liberation of the Promised Land. The first lines of " Song to Fidel" are: Let us go, Fiery prophet of the dawn on silent spatial roads to liberate the green island you love. The totalitarian socialisms–whether in Germany and Italy as national socialism or in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba as communist socialism–are shaped by powerful messianic leaders in their emerging phases (say, the first thirty or fifty years) is an obvious fact by now. In his famous essay " Socialism and Man in Cuba," Che stresses such a role. It is not merely the Leninist vanguard that leads but very specifically Fidel, the man himself, or in Che's words: The personality, the man as the individual leads the masses that make history. Fidel gave impulse to the Revolution… he has always given it leadership and set the tone… [and the mass of the people] follows its leaders because it has faith in them. It has faith in them because these leaders have known how to interpret the longings of masses. How will the people learn to follow such a leader? Not unlike how good Catholics are taught to follow the lives of the saints: by example. And the ideal example of such a follower, according to Che, was one of the revolutionary martyrs, the dead apostle Camilo Cienfuegos, who " practiced loyalty like a religion; he was its votary, both in his personal loyalty to Fidel who embodied as no one else the will of the people, and in his loyalty to the people themselves." The revolutionary comandante is the latest incarnation of the old archetype of the Spanish warrior–the comandante of the crusade against the infidel–whose love of lucha (struggle), trappings (uniforms), or rhetoric would continue through the ages in an endless progeny of " liberators," conquistadores, emancipators,

rural caudillos, city caudillos, military juntas, military dictators, rural guerrillas, urban guerrillas, and, most recently, senderistas of the Shining Path. Che's exemplary warrior, the true revolutionary, is the most ascetic and zealous manifestation of the archetype and, as Sauvage has observed, Che's definition of such a type " comes appallingly close to a self-portrait": He must combine an impassioned spirit with a cold mind and make painful decisions without flinching. Our vanguard revolutionaries… cannot descend with small doses of daily affection to the terrain where ordinary men put their love into practice… The leaders of the Revolution have children who do not learn to call their father with their first faltering words; they have wives who must be part of the general sacrifice… to carry the Revolution to its destination; their friends are strictly limited to their comrades in revolution. There is no life outside the Revolution. But aware that such a puritanical visionary might become dangerously dogmatic and intolerant, he warns that under " these conditions" it is necessary to have " a large dose of humanity, a large dose of a sense of justice and truth, to avoid falling into dogmatic extremes, into cold scholasticism, into isolation from the masses." But, as Sauvage points out, Che is unaware of " the fact that the ' revolutionary' he has just described has already fallen, and could not help but fall into all these extremes."

Why did this revolutionary born in Argentina fight in Cuba to die in Bolivia? After Che vanished from public view in 1965, his dying mother wrote him a poignant letter in which she told him: " Yes, you'll always be a foreigner. That seems to be your permanent fate." Shortly after the success of the Cuban Revolution, Che's father asked him about his future plans: Was he

planning to practice medicine? No, replied the son, he was now working for the new government but, he added, “ Yo mismo no sé en que tierra dejaré los huesos” (I myself have no idea in what land I’ll leave my bones). The father, who refers more than once to the enigma of his son’s life throughout his memoirs, believes that in this phrase is the key to the mystery. The loneliness of exile, a “ physical homelessness that often deepened into spiritual alienation,” was also characteristic of European revolutionaries of the 1840s, the rootless revolutionaries who found in Marx’s theories not another makeshift shelter of radical ideas but the solid temple of revolutionary ideology. But in our time, the temple’s principal form of worship in Latin America would be the cult of liberation with Che as its first apostle and Bolivia as its first mission. There, the initial revolutionary foco would be lit by Che to illuminate the unenlightened, and to spark one, two, three, many Vietnams, spreading the fire of liberation throughout the continent. But reality, recalcitrant, refused to reflect the dream. And the nightmare began. Forty desperate guerrillas–without food, water, or communication equipment, resented by the peasantry, abandoned by the Bolivian communists, ignored by Castro, wracked by colic, edema, fainting spells, and, in Che’s case, by violent asthma attacks, lost in savage, unfamiliar terrain, without proper maps, inexplicably separated by Che into two groups that, exhausted from seeking one another, went around in circles for months never realizing how close they were,–finally died by being killed off one by one. Che’s notion of the revolutionary hero, whom he defines as the “ highest rung in the human species,” is like that of his spiritual predecessor, the “ dark genius” of the Russian revolutionary tradition, Serge Nechaev–immortalized by Dostoyevski in his great anti-terrorist novel, The

Possessed. For Nechaev as for Che, the revolutionary was not only a superior being but also “ a doomed man,” one who “ has severed every tie with the civil order, the educated world,” a world which he inhabits but “ only to destroy it more effectively.” In his careful analysis of the Bolivian campaign, Sauvage emphasizes Che’s peculiar carelessness, the way in which, from the very beginning, he left an unmistakable trail of telltale clues (e. g., photos, letters, documents). Inexplicably, in the letters and documents as well as in his dairy, he would often use real names rather than pseudonyms, a practice that led to the early arrest of key members of his underground urban network. But most regrettable of all is the fact that although he writes with affection and feeling about some of his men in Bolivia, he never express any remorse or regret about their unspeakable suffering or pointless deaths. A paradoxical and contradictory document, the dairy combines admirable honesty and courage with an implacable zeal about the cause, an unswerving conviction that deliverance from the mission would be attained only through martyrdom. And to Che, salvation does not mean rescue, much less retreat or escape. On the contrary, there is in the diary a sinister undertow of anticipation of ruin and death. A confidant of Egypt’s President Nasser, Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, describes in his memoirs a meeting that took place between Nasser and Che on February 11, 1965. He reports that “ Guevara was saddened by some deep personal distress,” and that he told Nasser: The turning point in each man’s life is the moment when he decides to face death. If he faces death, then he is a hero whether he becomes a success or not. He can be a good or bad politician, but if he cannot face death, he will never be anything more than a politician. Heikal concluded that Che “ knew his own destiny. He was so disillusioned with his

life, with what he saw as the failure of the application of the revolution, that he had developed a death wish. He did not want to run factories and cope with technocrats and bureaucrats. He wanted to fight. He wanted to look death in the face.” The hidden connection between the cult of liberation and the cult of death–a connection whose sinister implication would come to full bloom in Argentina in the 1970s–begins in Che’s Bolivian diary, in his words, their meaning incarnate in the icon: the macabre, mesmerizing photograph of his corpse, the eyes open in a beatific state, the visionary martyr purified by the mortification of the flesh, the prophet of liberation finally liberated by death.

Con la barba di Cicotti noi faremo spazzolini per pulire gli stivali di Benito Mussolini (With the beard of Cicotti we'll make brushes to polish the boots of Mussolini). It should be emphasized that the Montoneros were not just another band of terrorists but " the mightiest urban guerrilla force ever seen in the whole of Latin America," and Europe as well. Next to them, the Italian Red Brigades, the German Baader-Meinhoff, the Basque ETA, the Irish IRA, and even the Sandinistas at the most successful stage of their insurrection against Somoza, are dwarfed by comparison. A few examples of the scale on which the Montoneros operated include: Guerrillas who became affiliated with them held a " liberated" zone in TucumÃ¡n for more than a year; full-scale attacks on military garrisons and other well-defended government bastions were conducted often and with remarkable success; a ransom they collected for the kidnapping of the Born brothers from the Bunge y Born grain consortium set the world record for guerrilla ransoms, $60 million; they had their own brokers investing the ransom millions on Wall Street with interest payments averaging $130, 00 per month; and last but not least, they even ventured into the arms business developing the potential to manufacture machine guns. PerÃ³n and Che Guevara had in common a " military conception of politics." In the case of Guevara, it is virtually unknown that he believed, as he wrote, that the revolutionary " triumph will always be the product of a regular army, even though its origins are in a guerrilla army." In Cuba these irregular army leaders, the former guerrillas, became the ruling party–one of the reasons for the pervasive militarization and regimentation of Cuban society today. As Sauvage has noted, " Che was a warrior. A warrior, and not only a guerrilla. He loved the battle. He loved the the sight of weapons. He loved the life of the soldier." Like Trotsky in the 1920s, Che wanted " the workers to think of themselves as soldiers," and for those who did not, the reluctant ones, he set up militarized " labor brigades." The Montoneros would also regard workers as troops, their " labour-oriented initiatives" being " incorrigibly militaristic," and having about as much success with Argentine workers as Che had had with their Cuban counterparts. In Bolivia, Che made very clear his belief that the revolutionary vanguard would be the guerrilla army, not the party. This theory of Guevara's was carefully spelled out by his French disciple Regis Debray in his book about the foco theory of revolution. Che's insistence on the military serving as the political vanguard, on the need for guerrillas to direct the revolutionary struggle, was precisely why the Bolivian communists refused to support his campaign. The founding fathers of the Montoneros were originally members of the " violently right-wing Tacuara," a sinister organization in the European fascist model that made a cult of violence and death. The tacuaristas wore " the Maltese Cross on their lapels, put on

uniforms for secret initiation rites in the darkest recesses of the Chacarita cementary in Buenos Aires… possessed small arms from the start, and… when not engaged in attacks on Jewish schoolchildren, carried coshes and knuckle-dusters with them." The fascist cult of the Leader, the need to glorify such a figure and invest it with supernatural powers and, above all, the eroticisation of the leader's interaction with his followers is present in Che's writings. Speaking of Castro, he compares his public performances with " the dialogues of two tuning forks whose vibrations summon forth new vibrations each in the other. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate in a dialogue of growing intensity which reaches its culminating point in an abrupt ending crowned by our victorious battlecry." Patria o Muerte! Fatherland or Death! Or maybe Sieg Heil? Reading the names of the Montoneros from my native town of CÃ³rdoba, I cannot but wonder at the fact that most of them came from families that in my childhood had been ardent supporters of Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini. As the daughter of an American Protestant mother, I was well aware of the attitudes of CÃ³rdoba's ultra-Catholic Right, in particular of their hostility to Protestant-capitalist values and their aversion to parliamentary democracy as exemplified by the United States–the unheroic society par excellence in their eyes, a crude, corrupt, and materialistic nation run by Jews, nouveau-riche merchants, and greedy capitalists. That the ultra-Right and Ultra-Left should have a comparable perception of the United States is a telling feature of Argentine political culture. Again, as in nineteenth-century Russia, the Left and the Right have deeply influenced one another in twentieth-century Argentina. This symbiosis of extremes became " a fateful and enduring feature of the Russian revolutionary tradition." In both Russia and Argentina, the development of secret political forces on the Right would be inextricably intertwined with the rise of revolutionary organizations on the Left. The Czarist secret police and the Russian revolutionaries who " opposed one another in principle," actually shared " a subculture of intrigue, anonymity and excitement." It is clear from history that extremists have been more averse to moderation than to each other. Moderate positions, usually complicated and arduous to implement, were scorned as modérantisme by that founding father of extremism, Robespierre. The result of such scorn is what happened in Argentina: the worse ease of political polarization, one in which an extreme revolutionary Left, on the one hand, and an even more extreme reactionary Right, on the other, recognized and understood one another's position better than any modérantiste stance in between. Like mythic antagonists in some ominous legend who under a spell must face the enemy's image in a magic mirror that has the power to switch their reflections, so they began the danse macabre, the ritual role reversal between the Montoneros and the military. The terrorists gradually surfaced as an

army with uniforms, military ranks, and even (foreign) parades; the army went underground, descending into the Montonero Hades to outdo them, making an invincible terrorist out of the State. The militarizaiton of the Montoneros, partly attributable to their fascist origins, intensified in the late 1970s, military ranks were introduced: comandantes in addition to aspirants, officials, and three different officer grades. In true fascist fashion, their " growing addiction to hierarchy and elaborate structures meant that the real physical division became one between ' officers' and ' troops.' Their affinity for military paraphernalia intensified and the uniforms " worn by Montoneros during the Cuban Youth Festival" caused much " amusement" among " Red Army delegates wearing civilian dress." Indeed, when the Montoneros' Supreme Command in Exile ruled that only members in uniform could attend meetings, guerrillas had to travel to their conspiratorial destinations in Rome and Madrid on city buses with a parcel perched on their knees: a carefully folded, secretly wrapped uniform. The Montonero leadership became a perfect cÃºpula, an untranslatable but apt term meaning both " top rulers" and " dome of a church"; its double meaning infuses the Spanish notion of " top ruler" with an awe-inspiring and sacrosanct ring. When Che wrote in his diary, " The legend of the guerrilla is growing like foam; we are already invincible supermen," he was speaking with characteristic irony. Nevertheless, his definition of the true revolutionary is practically that of a superman. The opposite of these supermen were the Bolivian peasants of whom he wrote with no irony and much condescension that " they are like little animals." The " invincible supermen" who eventually arose in Che's native Argentina did regard themselves as such. According to Giussani, the Montoneros viewed " the revolution as a Homeric feat carried out by heroic beings, a task beyond ordinary men," the omnipotent guerrilla " conjuring revolutions like a saint's miracles." That such elitist perceptions of the self are inseparable from contempt for others is characteristic of the ideology of liberation espoused by most guerrilla movements in Latin America. " Reasumamos la calidad de conquistadores… seamos dioses" (Let us recapture the nature of the conquistadors… let us be gods) wrote the Salvadoran guerrilla-poet Roque Dalton. But poor Roque Dalton never did become a god. Another set of godly candidates, a rival guerrilla faction with a different gospel of liberation, executed him (in classic guerrilla doublespeak, Dalton was ajusticiado, a Spanish legal term that fuses the concepts of justice and death, thus allowing the hangman to see his victim not as someone killed but as someone " justiced."). The reduction of human beings to abstract intellectual categories has, according to British historian Paul Johnson, been one of the most pernicious notions of our age. First and foremost are the individuals who establish such categories and decide who belongs where: these

all-knowing individuals make up the party or party elites, and are exemplified by the Nazis' Schutzstaffel, the Soviets' Leninist Vanguard, or Cuba's guerrilla elite. The second category consists of those whom the first category has marked or will mark for elimination. Usually referred to as " enemies of the people," these individuals are broken into subcategories such as bourgeois, capitalists, monopolists, Jews, kulaks, and gypsies among others. Finally, the third category is usually composed of presumed followers of the first category of leaders, groups in whose name and on whose behalf the second categories, will be, or has been eliminated (e. g., the Aryan race, the proletariat, the poor, the peasants). Thus, the second category's elimination, leads to the third category's liberation, all according to the grand design of the supermen planners in the first category, the " gods" of Dalton. Johnson sees a direct connection between the spread of such pernicious ideologies and the unprecedented influence of intellectuals in our century. One recent example is the starvation and murder of one-fifth to one-third of Cambodia's population in the 1970s, an achievement that was " entirely the work of a group of intellectuals who were for the most part pupils and admirers of Jean-Paul Sartre." Johnson aptly calls Pol Pot and his followers: Sartre's Children.

The ansia, longing, for heroism and liberation that began with El Cid and continued through the conquest and emancipation has reemerged in our century as the old crusade, imbued now with the fervor of a new faith: Revolution Liberation. Since the French Revolution liberation has meant that the low, the poor, the powerless, all those living in darkness and subjugation will rise to destroy the sovereign in power and become sovereign in turn; liberation is attained through the destruction of all traditions, institutions, and social arrangements. Thus, the original French Jacobin concept of a Manichaean conflict between the forces of virtue (the powerless) and the forces of evil (those in power) was easily translated into the Marxist idea of class warfare. Indeed, there are remarkable similarities between the Jacobin and Marxist conceptions of the Utopia toward which, inexorably, history marches on. Stubborn history, however, keeps slinking backward, away from unknown freedom and back to familiar bondage: REPUBLIQUE FRANÃ‡AISE, NAPOLEON EMPEREUR. As Hannah Arendt observed, the nature of a revolution will be predetermined by the nature of the government it overthrows. Indeed, there is nothing more futile than revolutionary liberation unless it is “ followed by the constitution of the newly won freedom.” And what are the freedoms to which most human beings aspire? First, freedom from tyranny and torture; second, freedom from poverty and want; and third, freedom of movement, of information, and of ideas. But instead of the patient and complex constitution and implementation of such newly won freedoms–an arduous process involving years of careful study and debate among the people’s representatives to avoid the imposition of a single metaphysic upon all–what ends up being constituted and implemented in Cuba and other Marxist-Leninist states is precisely a single metaphysical vision: that all-embracing and all-solving revolutionary faith, a salvationist creed that can be challenged only at the risk of heresy and is thus fundamentally incompatible with human freedom. And yet despite the historical evidence from the French Revolution onward that “ revolutionary liberation” has almost invariably led to the oppression–even enslavement–of those it liberated, the mystique continues to enthrall intellectuals who not only have never been liberated but who, on the contrary, choose to live under those carefully, arduously constituted, most definitely unheroic bourgeois freedoms. It is such intellectuals, Sartre above all, who have glorified some of the most ruthless dictators of our century: Stalin, Mao, and Castro. Che Guevara, on the other hand, much more than a liberator in the Castro mold, is perceived in Latin America as the region’s Supreme Samurai. It is as such, much more than as Marxist liberator, that he has achieved mythic status throughout the hemisphere. He underwent a test that predates the mystique of liberation, the ultimate test of heroism–one that Castro never took, much less passed. Che

committed that very Spanish version of seppuku: self-immolation for the lost cause. Reverence for the fact of a pointless and gallant death is as old as the medieval chansons de geste that comprise the epic poem of El Cid. That the tradition continues in Spanish America today is the thesis of a study about Chile in which the author concludes that an obscure naval officer who died in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) has been made into a hero by Chileans precisely because of his self-immolation during a battle that was lost. Interestingly, the one region of the United States that shares this passion for hopeless warfare and the cult of the hero of the lost cause is the American South. A recent study of Southern military strategy during the American Civil War convincingly demonstrates that the idea of self-immolation was widespread among Southern soldiers. It is no wonder that William Faulkner's books, so steeped in defeat, loss, and regret, have had such a profound impact on the Latin American writers of the last forty years–perhaps more impact than Faulkner has had in his own country. It would seem that mythic status can be achieved only by committing ritual suicide like Che, the Chilean Arturo Prat, or the Cuban José MartÃ or by rejecting such self-immolation and electing assassination like Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Madero, and other leaders of he Mexican Revolution. But if neither of these methods is possible, then one has to die in exile and in poverty as with Argentina's José de San MartÃn and Bolivar himself. The possibility of such a hero being honored in his old age, dying at home in bed, surrounded by family and friends as in the case of say, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, is most unusual. I often wonder at the equivalent of an Alexander Hamilton in Latin America: how many ballads, corridos, and novels would have been written, not about the Federalist papers, but about his heroic end! So too, the immense popularity of John F. Kennedy throughout the region is probably due more to his assassination than to his policies. Is success unheroic to Latin Americans? Statesmen who, after accomplishing a great deal for their countries, withdrew willingly from public life, their own lives coming to a quiet end, such as Bernardino Rivadavia in nineteenth-century Argentina or RÃ³mulo Betancourt in twentieth-century Venezuela, do not elicit the same interest or admiration. In Spain, however, there has been an unprecedented change that may affect the future of Latin America. The Civil War (1936-39) was probably Spain's final gesta, its last joust of heroic liberation, a crusade won by Franco and the Falange that resulted in decades of dictatorship for the Spanish people. Still, the triumph of the beleaguered Republic, by then almost entirely in the hands of Stalinist " liberators," would have probably resulted in an even harsher dictatorship. A great irony is that Franco's hand-picked successor, King Juan Carlos of Spain, with no rhetoric of liberation, is the individual most responsible for the ordinary freedoms that Spaniards enjoy

today. One of the most underrated statesmen of this century, the king achieved this remarkable feat by quietly and forcefully checkmating not only the " liberators" on the Left but especially those on the Right who presumed on the king's allegiance. Given the example of Spain today, will the false heroes of Latin America and their deceptive and dangerous liberation gospel continue to appeal to the young as irresistibly as they have over the last traumatic decades? Or will a new brand of unromantic honest, and pragmatic statesmen such as the Spaniards Adolfo SuÃ¡rez, Felipe GonzÃ¡lez, and the king himself, finally emerge in the region? It took a brutal civil war for Spaniards to finally dismount Don Quixote's Rocinante in favor of Sancho Panza's donkey, it took much suffering for them to give up the exhilarating gallop of liberation for the tedious, arduous climb towards ordinary freedoms. Will the Latin Americans also heed Sancho? Will they listen to that eminently sensible squire's words to his long-suffering master?: Oh, please wait, Your Grace, because the New Man you see in the horizon is not new at all but old Policarpo, the blacksmith, up to his old tricks, running from us as he still owes me payment for some pigs! Forgive me, Sire, but Policarpo hails not from some magic island as Your Lordship insists but from a dusty piece of La Mancha that I know well. Sinner that I am, Your Grace, but it seems to me that ever since we began as knight errants intent on liberating captives all we have had are mishaps, poundings, punches, and more poundings, as if this were the only way to set the people free!"