

This is a translation of the article on the Paraguayan reductions.

## LAS REDUCCIONES GUARANIES

### The Guarani Reductions

The Jesuit missions, located in territories of the present-day republics of Uruguay and Paraguay, carried out one of the most notable experiments in [recorded Western history].

[The missions revealed] the innovation that Ignatius of Loyola introduced in the concept of Wealth – when western men of the Renaissance claimed their right to organize purely earthly things.

The Jesuits rejected then the asceticism of the Middle Ages with the same firmness with which they opposed the utilitarian ethic of Calvin and in Spanish America they put forth the fundamentals of a social system in which Wealth was freed from the traditional theological censures of the canonists. But in some way [Wealth] became the main prize for those who would show themselves to have more aggressive, predatory, economic instincts.

[Wealth] and the desirable increase of wealth came to be the indispensable elements of a new way of doing things, established to permit men that lived in areas of the word called “backwards” and “colored” rapid incorporation into the advantages and benefits of civilized life.

The radical change that the Ignatian ethic introduced to the traditional concept of Wealth was [what] separated the Jesuits from medieval theology and gave motive to serious discrepancies between the missionary enterprises in America and the general spirit of the laws of the Indies.

To understand these discrepancies it is necessary to take into account that in legislation [pertaining to Indians] only half of the problem of social justice was considered because [the law] tended to defend the oppressed against the abuses of the powerful without pointing towards the problems of the causes of poverty.

[When promulgating its laws], the Spanish state, [influenced as it was by] medieval ideology, did not note with sufficient clarity that the sufferings of the humble not only originated in the abuses of the colonial magnates but also in the scarce economic development of American societies.

The revolutionary character of the Jesuit missions is derived from the premise of serving [the Indians] as a starting point, a premise that involves a specific recognition of the links that usually tie social injustices with the general backwardness of societies.

For that reason, the Jesuit missionary system from the start sets out to obtain the economic development of the aboriginal peoples, to organize a productive social order that permits the American Indians to break through the barriers of misery and have a distinct alternative to that of being

subjected to the deleterious economy of the encomienda system, forced labor, and the colonial estate system.

The Jesuits did not consider the problem of justice at the legal level but rather they set out to achieve it in the sphere of an economic and social system in whose framework Wealth fit comfortably into the guidelines of a philosophy inspired by the Christian notion of equality of all men, a notion that forms the natural counterpart to the Ethic of the Elect, formulated by the Protestants.

When the resident Jesuit missionaries in the Rio Plata region resolved to penetrate into the wild lands that today form part of the republics of Paraguay and Uruguay, they did so animated by a revolutionary proposal that they stated in a specific form and that Sir Francisco Bauza, one of the greatest classical historians of Uruguay, sums up as follows: The first difficulty which the Jesuits ran up against upon taking charge of indigenous relations in the Rio Plata region and in Paraguay was the resulting difference in views between their organizational plan and the plan that the Spanish administration maintained.