

Ivan Illich and the Conflict with Vatican (1966-1969)¹

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Antecedents (1960-1966)

By the end of 1960 Ivan Illich founded two centres with a close group of colleagues: CIC (*Centro de Investigaciones Culturales*) in Cuernavaca, México, and CENFI (*Centro de Formação Intercultural*) in Anápolis², Brazil. Both centres were economically coordinated by the CIF (Center of Intercultural Formation), located in Fordham University, New York.³ The activity in these two centres which opened at the same time were focused on training religious and secular missionary groups, mainly from United States and Canada, who were responding to John XXIII Pope's call for Latin America modernization. Officially at the beginning the aim of the centres was to train groups of volunteers in the culture and language of their next assignment.⁴ However something very different was being offered. Instead of teaching words of a new language they learned to be quiet⁵; and instead of basic notions about Latin American culture they dissuaded missionaries from achieving their goal.⁶

In April 1963, at the same facility where CIC was located, a new project began under the direction of Valentina Borremans and academic leadership of Ivan Illich: CIDOC (*Centro Intercultural de Documentación*)⁷. It was founded as a civil association independent of the Catholic Church and since its beginning, CIDOC eclipsed the activity of the previous

¹ In the development of this article we have mostly used documents published by the CIDOC between 1963 and 1976 but we also worked with our own reports of the Cuernavaca centre. Some of these documents were not published but today they can be consulted in Daniel Cosío Villegas Library at Colegio de México (Mexico City). When we refer to these documents we will point out the corresponding label of the mentioned library.

² In 1962, CENFI moved to Petrópolis, Brazil.

³ *Historia del CIF 1960-1965*. Corresponding label: 370.196 C397d Daniel Cosío Villegas Library at Colegio de México.

⁴ Esperanza Godot, in *Centre of Intercultural Formation: First Five Years* («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 1. Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1966: 5) mentions among the aims of the project: "Latin America counts on an increasing number of person who are animated by a common spirit: a commitment to humanist values. These persons are found both inside and out of public life. They are in all of the professions, churches, labour unions and international agencies. They are hard to identify, except, by their thought processes. They fit into no one ideological patterns. However, they all share one difficulty: the impossibility of communicating, on the basis of their common concern, with members of their own professional or work group. These men are deeply orientated toward a humanist interpretation of development programs, are better able to communicate with each other than with colleagues of their respective profession.

CIDOC fosters meetings among such men. Within the context of their unified commitment and interest, the Center stimulates the exchange of ideas which their different points of view bring to bear on a concrete problem, and assist the coordination and strengthening of the humanist current in Latin America. In our estimation, the latter is one of the most important factors in socio-economic change. To accomplish this work, certain conditions had to be met: the kind of the flexibility which is most possible for a university and continual contact with friends, collaborators and alumni throughout Latin America. However we are aware of the necessity of increasing our personnel and perfecting the methodology of our various research programs, while at the same time giving greater purposeful leisure to our staff".

⁵ Ivan Illich, "La elocuencia del silencio", in *Alternativas, Iván Illich Obras Reunidas Vol. I* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 180-185.

⁶ Javier Sicilia "Prefacio" in *Ivan Illich Obras Reunidas Vol. II*. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 14.

⁷ *Requets for Founds CIDOC* Corresponding label: 370.196 C397d Daniel Cosío Villegas Library at Colegio de México.

centres.⁸ When the center moved from Chulavista Hotel to Rancho Tetela in 1966, CIDOC housed one of the most complete libraries of America in pastoral studies and about 57 magazines and 230 comments were received. Also held at the library were a significant number of conferences and seminars related to ideological, political, social and educational challenges taking place in Latin America. The center had the necessary infrastructure to edit by hand six publications: «CIDOC Informa», «CIDOC Dossier», «CIDOC Cuaderno», «CIDOC Fuentes», «CIDOC Documenta» y «CIDOC Sondeos».⁹

Nevertheless, from 1966 to 1969, Illich became involved in conflict with the Vatican authorities which risked not only his work in Mexico, but also the feasibility of CIDOC project. This early tension with the Catholic Church was a defining moment in Illich's biography and marked the turn in his work to a critique of modern institutions. During these three years, the center and some people who participated in its activities, especially Ivan Illich, suffered from constant harassment planned and organized by the most conservative sectors of the Catholic Church. The academic activities organized in Cuernavaca combined with the controversial publications that were being produced at that time, caught the attention of the upper echelons of the Church, especially in Mexico, that precipitated the closure of the center. Ultimately this conflict, also tested many of the principles discussed in the Second Vatican Council that had just been closed a year ago, in 1965.

In late 1969, under the direction of Tarsticio Ocampo, CIDOC published number 37 in «CIDOC Dossier» *México "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-69*. In this work were presented a remarkable number of documents--letters, tickers, articles, press reports, and internal reports of the CIDOC, ... - which had been stored in the basement of the center that documented the accusations against the center of Cuernavaca and Ivan Illich himself by the authorities of Catholic Church in Latin America and the Vatican. The agency Burrell's Press Clipping participated along with staff from the center of Cuernavaca in preparing this excellent work which was divided into three sections. The first dealt with the history between August and June 1968, the second regarding the questionnaire given to Illich in 1968 by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the third focused on what happened between June and July 1969. This issue of «CIDOC Dossier» also offered an extensive documentary index of periodicals used in the preparation of this report.

The beginning of the conflict (July 1966- September 1967)

Two events that occurred in the summer of 1966 and early months of 1967 marked the

⁸ The independence and economic feasibility of CIDOC respect to CIC, CENFI and CIF, became evident with the rental agreement of the Rancho Tetela signed by Ivan Illich in 1967 until 1971 in Mexico. Illich made reference to the signed agreement in the letters that he sent to the archbishop of New York, Joseph Spellman in 1967 (*México "Entredicho" del Vaticano a CIDOC*. «CIDOC Dossier» n° 37, Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación. 1969: 4/38).

⁹ In the summary of *Catálogo de Publicaciones 1973* («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 1018, Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1973: 0/6) a good synthesis of CIDOC activities appears: "CIDOC is an independent Mexican educational membership corporation registered according to the laws of the State of Morelos in 1963. The main offices are located in the Casa Blanca in Rancho Tetela, overlooking Cuernavaca, one hour South of Mexico City.

CIDOC is not a university, but a meeting place for humanists whose common concern is the effect of social and ideological change on the minds and hearts of men. It is a setting for understanding the implications of social revolution, not an instrument for promoting particular theories of social action. It is an environment for learning, not a headquarters for activities planning. The main context of CIDOC is contemporary Latin America.

CIDOC Library and Archives comprise a documentation center for a unique set of materials on Latin America, including manuscripts and documents not readily available in North America. Through the Institute for Contemporary Latin American Studies CIDOC offers its associates a framework for independent, creative learning and the opportunity for leisurely research and non-structured colloquy."

beginning of hostilities between Mexican Vatican authorities and Ivan Illich and the CIDOC. First a course for catechists was held in Mexico with participation from members of CIDOC in July 1966. This particular course led to a series of angry complaints from a group of participants who were directed to the Delegate of the Holy See in Mexico, Guido Del Mestri.¹⁰ The reaction was that the delegate of the Holy See in Mexico commissioned a report to the director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office, Monsignor Francisco Aguilera. The purpose of this report was to confirm the assumption that the activities of the CIDOC was promoting a religious community whose intellectual performance was endangering the unity of the Church.¹¹ And this was happening precisely at the time when the Catholic institution had just closed one of the toughest reform processes in recent centuries.¹²

Second, in January and June 1967 two documents were published by the CIDOC that were also signed by Illich that caused problems among the most conservative groups of the Church. In the January issue of *America* magazine, edited by the Jesuits from New York, appeared an article signed by Illich that was particularly controversial: *The Seamy Side of Charity*.¹³ In the text, Illich presented an assessment of the impact of Vatican's Plan to modernize the Church in Latin America. According to figures Illich realised himself that the failure was clear: by 1966, instead of 10% which was requested in 1960, only 0.7% of American and Canadian clergy had shifted southward. It had been estimated also that by 1970 about 225,000 American priests, including brothers and sisters, have been sent south of the border. In the last five years, the American clergy had contributed just 1,622 people throughout Latin America. Illich stated in the text that perhaps it was necessary to think whether it was time to end this modernization effort. Illich put three issues on the table: Why we do not stop, even once, to consider the down side of charity? Why don't we think about the inevitable charges that foreign assistance imposes on the Latin American Church? Why don't we test the bitterness of the damage caused by our sacrifices?

The second of the controversial texts was published in *The Critic* of Chicago in June 1967 and assumed the title of *The Vanishing Clergyman*. In this article, Illich not only addressed very controversial issues for the Church, as well the privileges of the clergy, ordination of deacons, the secularization of the priesthood or the question of celibacy, but also came to describe the Church as an institution that worked like General Motors and that had converted into the largest non-governmental administration in the world.¹⁴

Accordingly, in September 1967, upper echelons of the Catholic Church launched a campaign to oust Illich in Mexico. The first action was organized by the CELAM (*Conferencia Episcopal Lationamericana*) in response to protests that some Mexican bishops had expressed in relation to the activities organized from Cuernavaca. The decision was to send an oversight committee to CIDOC. The testimony of this action was documented and prepared by Lucio Gera,¹⁵ who along with Bishop Candido Padin visited the center of

¹⁰ The document dated August 20, 1966 can be found in *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC Dossier» n° 37, Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969: 4/2-4/27).

¹¹ Among the most controversial expressions that arose in the course, according to the report submitted by Francisco Aguilera (Ibid, 4/2-4/28), mentioned the derivatives of the shares Ceslaus Hoinaki, Victor Nazario, Clyde Bayeux and Ivan Illich.

¹² In the last pages of reports on Archbishop Aguilera (Ibid: p. 4 / 27), it is expressed as follows: "I am sure that you keep in mind that (the shares of IPC members of Cuernavaca in the course of catechists) [...] threaten Unity of the Church at this time".

¹³ Ivan Illich "The Seamy Side of Charity", *CIDOC Informa enero-junio de 1968*. («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 20. Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación.1968) 68/60a.

¹⁴ Ivan Illich "The Vanishing Clergyman" *CIDOC Informa junio-diciembre 1967*. («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 10 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación. 1968) 67/2.

¹⁵ Lucio Gera, in *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC Dossier» n° 33. Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación 1969) 4/29-4/35.

Cuernavaca from 21 to 24 September 1967.

At this meeting, members of CIDOC, made special mention of the fact that the documentation center since its foundation was separated from the CIC in Cuernavaca, CIF of New York and CENFI of Brazil. It was stressed that the CIDOC was not an ecclesiastical institution, not dependent on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, since it was established as an Mexican civil association. Valentina Borremans, as director, gave a detailed report that left all these aspects clear and which also detailed the activities that took place in the center.¹⁶

Another issue of concern to the commission of CELAM, apparently, was connected to the liturgical practices that were taking place at the CIDOC. In this regard, members of the executive committee of the center explained that from March 1966 CIDOC had moved to Rancho Tetela, so no liturgical functions were organized with students. It was recognized that Chulavista Hotel facilities were implemented some liturgical renewal experiences irregular, but it was stated that the new site had just a small chapel where only private liturgical functions were organized with the permission of the Bishop of Cuernavaca, Méndez Arceo. It was clarified also that for some time Illich did not want any responsibility in the organization of these functions.

Finally, Lucio Gera and Candido Padin worked to assuage the critical issues Ivan Illich had risen concerning the Catholic institution in his articles. As part of CELAM, Gera and Padin stated that many of the published texts were offensive, as for those interested in such matters. Hence, a more scientific and serene tone as well as advertising that was less sensational was requested for future publications. While Illich defended the tone of his work arguing the need to inform public opinion on some issues that were considered urgent, however, he also explained to CELAM delegates his willingness to be faithful to the Church.

In any case, although the visit was pleasing to both sides, it was in the aspects referred to in Illich's articles where CELAM informants and members of the CIDOC found some discrepancies. Yet in the final report written by Lucio Gera it specifically mentioned the recommendation to the Roman Church hierarchy to take no action against the CIDOC or the person of Ivan Illich. In his opinion, such measures would be rushed, so it was recommended time to open further dialogue and contact between the CIDOC and the Catholic Church.¹⁷

While ignoring the report of the CELAM commission, a new offensive was organized by a Mexican bishop which intended to withdraw Illich from Mexico and return of the awkward priest to the New York Diocese, where he was formally registered. The strategy devised was clear: get Illich outside Mexico to close the center of Cuernavaca.

The conflict strained (October 1967 - June 1968)

Mindful of these movements, Illich himself got in touch with the Cardinal of the Archdiocese of New York, his friend Francis Joseph Spellman.¹⁸ In a letter to him and dated 12 October 1967, Illich warned his superior that in the near future he was likely to receive a flood of applications to execute the immediate withdrawal of his performance in Cuernavaca. Illich believed that such an action would break the contract he had signed for the next five years, following the relocation of the CIDOC to the new facilities. Abandoning the project at that time meant leaving unprotected a large number of people. In this letter, Illich expressed to Spellman that his conscience was preventing him from considering the breach of such a contract he had entered into with the center of Cuernavaca.

¹⁶ Valentina Borremans, in *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC Dossier» n° 33. Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación 1969) 4/35-4/37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4/34

¹⁸ In «CIDOC dossier» n° 37 titled *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* (*Ibid.*) are reflected the letters that exchanged Ivan Illich, Joseph Spellman and the Mexican Episcopal Conference in October 1966.

On October 31, events precipitated that brought tensions to a head. The Mexican Bishops Conference of the Archdiocese of New York sent a letter requesting the immediate return of Illich to United States. However, it appeared that Illich, thanks to the deep friendship that bound him to Cuernavaca's Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo and New Yorker Archbishop Francis Joseph Spellman were able to circumvent this new action orchestrated by a sector of the Mexican episcopate, which threatened to end the activities of CIDOC. Both Arceo and Spellman, had come together in defense of Illich hindering the application driven by more conservative bishops in Mexico to get out of Cuernavaca. Although this first act of defense was weakened by an event that marked the evolution of later events: on December 2nd of that year, just a few weeks had elapsed from the attempted protection of Illich against the request of the Conference Mexican Bishops, Joseph Spellman died at the age of 78 years in New York.

A key form of support disappeared that day, not just in the defense that Illich had launched against the allegations from the Church that scrutinized his work, but also a friend who was instrumental in his reunion with the Church that had taken place during his stay in New York in the 50's. In fact, ten days after the death of Spellman, Illich sent a strongly worded letter to Pope Paul VI.¹⁹

In the letter to the Holy Father on 12 December 1967, Illich asked that the honour he had enjoyed in recent years within the Catholic institution be removed. Ten years previously, in August 1957, Cardinal Spellman had awarded him the honor and distinction of being named Bartender Secret of His Holiness for his service in the Archdiocese of New York. In his view, that honor and privilege to be granted within the Church had become an obstacle in the development of their academic functions.²⁰

In this context of tension, the campaign orchestrated against Illich and the center of Cuernavaca was taken a step further. Although the Mexican Bishops Conference relented in its efforts to pressure the Archdiocese of New York to carry out the withdrawal of Illich in Mexico and to close CIDOC, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith took up the matter. Thus, on December 19, 1967, the newly appointed administrator of the Archdiocese of New York, John J. McGuire, wrote a letter to Illich informing him of the receipt of a directive from the Vatican collegial body to return as soon as possible to his American archdiocese.²¹ The Vatican warned in their decree that their removal from Mexico needed to be abided by January 12, 1968 and that disobedience to such an order would lead to canonical sanctions.²²

While this letter did not come to Cuernavaca until January 16th, the ultimatum imposed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for Illich's return to New York had passed by four days. On receiving the news Illich called for an urgent meeting with the Apostolic Delegate to Mexico, which was held on the 17th of that month. During his encounter with Guido del Mestri, Illich reaffirmed his stance of not abandoning the project of the CIDOC and drew upon the same arguments he had already expressed in writing to Spellman some weeks ago. The decision made by Illich to defy the church however meant accepting any suggestion by the Holy See regarding his status in the church. In addition, Illich added his willingness to declare his total submission to the Church's teaching on those

¹⁹ As David Cayley points out in *The Rivers North of The Future. The Testament of Ivan Illich* (Canada: Anansi, 2004: 2), in the 50's: "Illich was apt in every way for a career as a prince of the Church. He came from an aristocratic family with old connection to the Roman Church, and he was charismatic, intellectually brilliant, and devout. Amongst those who pressed him to remain in Rome were Giovanni Montini, who later became Pope Paul VI."

²⁰ *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC dossier» n° 37 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969) 4/40.

²¹ *Ibid.* 4/43.

²² *Ibid.* 4/43.

subjects that had appeared in articles in which the Catholic institution could find some assertions considered erroneous related to faith.²³

Five days after that meeting with Guido del Mestri, Illich again contacted the Apostolic Delegate to deliver a letter addressed to Pope Paul VI. In this new letter appeared, first, a brief account of what happened. Later Illich showed his indignation toward receiving the order to return to New York without the constancy of any previous warning or canonic reprimand. It was then that he made two requests. On the one hand he requested to be notified about what his errors were, in order to make the necessary clarifications or even to withdraw. On the other hand he accepted that if need be, he may be relieved of his duties and clerical privileges, but not the obligation of celibacy, or the recitation of the Holy Divine Office.²⁴ That same day also from Cuernavaca, Illich sent a telegram to John McGuire setting a new reason why his trip to New York had to be postponed: "Relapse Asiatic flue must postpone trip".²⁵

The questioning in Rome (June 1968)

In February 1968 a new report was prepared in the Vatican concerning Illich that was to be studied by the Cardinals of the Holy Office. The unanimous decision to call Illich for a submission process was adopted on February 28th in Rome. This decision was approved by the Pope on the first day of March. Monsignor Casoria, consultor of the Congregation, was named Trial Judge of the Pope, and Monsignor Magistris and Celso Alcaina were proposed as helpers in the process.

A month later, Illich, aware that his and the CIDOC's future was being decided thousands of miles away, once again made contact with the Apostolic Delegate to Mexico to inform him that from March 25th he suspended the holding of public Mass, the publication of articles on theological conferences in the same subject, and sermons in retirement;²⁶ although he did not stop his academic work. In April 1968 he published some pamphlets on topics relating to new research: "The futility of schooling in Latin America" appeared on 20 April 1968 in *Saturday Review*²⁷ and "Latin America in Revolution violence" on April 27th in *America* magazine.²⁸

But the process went on and on June 10th Guido del Mestri wrote Illich to inform him that the order of the prefect by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Seper, should be submitted promptly to the Holy Ministry. The deadline to make an appearance in Rome and to be questioned was set for June 25th. The letter was also accompanied by a paragraph in which the Apostolic Delegate left on record the last complaint that had been filed in his office in Mexico against Illich and on which he would also have to give the necessary explanations to the Supreme Court. In his words, he was puzzled about what the Bishop of Zacatecas related about Illich, accusing him being initiated into the practices of Candomble and Brazilian witchcraft.²⁹ However, this accusation was until now the only charge that was explicitly communicated to Illich as a matter of possible discussion before the Holy Office. It was evidence of the way in which the process was being carried out more

²³ *Ibid.* 4/61-62.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 4/63-64.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 4/65.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 4/103.

²⁷ Ivan Illich "The Futility of Schooling in Latin America" *CIDOC Informa enero-junio 1967*. («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 20, Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación. 1968) 68/66.

²⁸ Ivan Illich "Latin America in Revolution violence" *CIDOC Informa enero-junio 1968*. («CIDOC Cuaderno» n° 20 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación. 1968) 68/67.

²⁹ *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC dossier» n° 37 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969) 4/93.

than anything.

On June 17, 1968, Illich went to Rome. He went to be subjected to an interrogation at the building of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican, located just to the left of the Cathedral of St. Peter.³⁰ He was sent to an underground room protected by a pair of double doors, one was made of leather and lined with soundproofing. The room was decorated with red plush chairs and two sets of curtains that remained subject to the shutter of a window. In front of a long couch there was a pink marble table, and on the table a green pen.

After five minutes of waiting, Cardinal Seper appeared in the room and greeted Illich first kissing his ring and then shaking his hand. They exchanged a few words in Italian and Seper began suddenly to speak in Croatian language, which Illich had learned in his childhood. The conversation was lengthened about 25 minutes and when finished, Illich was invited by Archbishop De Magistris to leave the hall. Illich followed him. They went downstairs and continued through three lavishly decorated rooms. Then they came into a new room. In the center of this chamber there was a sturdy wooden table with a black crucifix and a superimposed white Christ. Sitting at the table wearing a black cassock was Monsignor Casoria, and in front of him there was a stack of folders, many of which contained newspaper clippings. Illich came to greet him and the first words were:

- I am Illich-
- Yes, I know-. Casoria answered.
- Monsignor, ¿who are you?-. Illich asked.
- Your Judge-
- I know. I want to know your name-
- That is not important. My name is Casoria-

Then Illich, Casoria and De Magistris, crossed themselves as a sign that the process had begun. Illich put his hand on his chest and swore to tell the truth. Then, when he was asked to keep secret, he expressed his unwillingness to disclose or to respond without having in his hand a copy of the charges that had been formulated against him. The discussion on this issue lasted about 45 minutes, during which De Magistris left the room to talk with Seper. Finally, with the permission of Seper, Illich was given the written examination, with the promise that the defendant should give an immediate response. Then Casoria informed Illich that the conversation would be taken up within two hours after he had read the document.

Illich went to study the interrogation documents at Caprona College in Rome, where he had located his residence. The text that Illich received from Monsignor Casoria was not the same that was used at the hearing when the interrogation began. Apparently Casoria had deleted some pages at the last minute.³¹ However, the version that finally reached the hands of Illich was all a sample of the tone in which it was intended to judge his performance since arriving at Cuernavaca in 1960.

The questioning began by requesting information in relation to activities that Illich had been developing at the centres which had successively opened in Cuernavaca. Then he was demanded to clarify and give details about the relationship he had with different people. Among the names that appeared were persons who were or had been linked to the Catholic institution, for example, Cardinal Spellman, Cardinal Garibi, Cardinal Cushing, Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo, Gregorio Lemercier, Martin Amaya, Sebastian Bolo Hidalgo and Cameron Torres. In addition, information was requested on the special relationship he had

³⁰ Illich would tell his version of the interview months later to the journalist Edward Fiske. On February 4th 1969 it was published in the New York Times (Ibid. 4/173-4/175).

³¹ This is what Ivan Illich said to Cardinal Seper in the letter he wrote on June 18th, 1968 (Ibid. 4/102).

with Mexican academic celebrities such as Alfredo Cepeda, Horacio Flores de la Pena, Víctor Flores Olea, Carlos Fuentes, Pablo González Casanova, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mario Menéndez Rodríguez, Octavio Paz and Luis Suárez. Included were also questions which sought to clarify the links between Illich and social activists such as Francisco Juliao or guerrillas such as "Che" Guevara.³² Consequently, after examining in detail the document of the interrogation, Illich sent a message to Bishop Casoria pointing out that he needed more time to respond.

That night Illich dined with Celso Alcaina in the Carlotta restaurant, perhaps looking for some last minute support that could help him with the cascade of accusations that hours earlier he had received from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In Alcaina's version³³, Illich said that if they continue pursuing him, he would publish the text of the interview that Cardinal Seper had provided him. The publication of the document would be Illich's ultimate weapon for his defence.

The next day, June 18th, Illich came again at the Palace of the Inquisition at the Vatican.³⁴ He refused to be with Bishop Casoria and requested an interview with Cardinal Seper. He handed him a letter which explained point by point what would be his own way forward for the future. To begin, in the letter sent to Cardinal Seper, Illich stated his systematic opposition to the whole process. His intention was to focus his defence in those parts which were separated from the principles of the Church, the Gospel, to the provisions of the Councils or even renewed assertions of the supreme bodies of the Catholic institution. Accordingly, he took the decision to abandon his defense without exposing even more reasonable or legitimate reservation. Illich also reaffirmed what he had explained to the pope in a letter dated January 22nd 1968. He was willing to do all the necessary clarifications and retractions, but only when tested with authentic writings and hard evidence, not third-hand information, which was separated from faith and morality, or that his conduct could have caused scandal to others.³⁵

Also in the letter handed to the prefect Seper, Illich made a set of clarifications grouped into six points. First, he made mention of having been subjected to a process without knowing the system upon which he was being accused, tried and eventually examined. He felt, based on this point, that his basic right to defend himself was not satisfied before being tried. Second, he rejected the oath that he was required to keep secret. Illich believed that such an oath would be against the natural right to defend himself, against the divine law of truth in the Church and against the same positive law of the Catholic institution. In the third point, he justified the fact that he had requested a written copy of the questioning, and particularly of the charges alleged against him. Illich would take this copy with him to Cuernavaca.

In the fourth point, Illich described the questionnaire as excessive. It was formed by 86 questions that Illich considered as "embracing the universe". Fifthly, it was mentioned that the text ultimately delivered to him did not correspond to the one that had been used in the hearing that began the questioning, because some pages had been clearly removed and torn.

³² The interrogation was published in Mexican newspaper Excelsior on 3 February (Ibíd. 4/84-4/90).

³³ Celso Alcaina, "El affaire Monseñor Illich". Retrieved January 2009 from <http://2006.atrío.org/?p=984>.

³⁴ David Cayley in *The Rivers North of The Future. The Testament of Ivan Illich* (Canada: Anansi, 2004: 9) relates what happened that June 18, 1968: "The questions, as Illich said later, were of the 'When did you stop beating your wife? variety; to have answered at all would have required him to accept numerous unacceptable premises. 'What would you answer,' he was asked, 'to those who say that you are petulant, adventurous, imprudent, fanatical... hypnotizing, [and] a rebel to authority...?' [...] That evening Illich wrote to Cardinal Seper that he would not answer the question. He preferred, he said, to remain silent, taking as his motto 'If a man asks you to lend him your coat, then give him your shirt as well'".

³⁵ México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969 («CIDOC dossier» n° 37 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969) 4/100.

Finally, Illich showed his indignation over the fact that many of the questions were referred to others: priests, laities, and even bishops. He remarked also that it did not belong to him, as researcher, to provide or to make news judgments about others, because he considered the inquisitorial body's work to obtain the necessary information in other ways more orthodox.³⁶

Then Illich, in the same document given to Seper, announced four decisions. First, he declared that he could not accept the inquisitorial principles that were being proposed to him, because those did not correspond to the principles of order of the Church. Secondly, in relation to many of the questions that were in the questionnaire, Illich referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith the dossier prepared by the CELAM commission in September 1967 for the CIDOC. He believed that on that occasion he had been subjected to an examination of his doctrinal positions and his behaviours. Third, Illich reminded Seper that on 25 March, in a letter to Guido de Mestri, the Apostolic Delegate to Mexico, he had decided to suspend the public celebration of Holy Mass, the publication of articles in theological matters, participation in conferences in the same subject and preaching of retreats. And fourthly, he stated his intention to remain in this state during the time that there is still any doubt or reservation of the Superiors to his person, even if there were doubts or unfounded reservations.

The letter was read by Seper when the defendant was still in his presence. At that time, according to Illich's recollection long after the event, the prefect of Yugoslav origin said: "Go away and never come back". And then, Illich immediately left the room with a copy of the questioning in his hand. Happening just when descending the stairs that led him to the output, Illich realized that Seper had repeated the last words of the Dostoyeski story about the Grand Inquisitor in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*.³⁷

The publication of the interrogation (February 1969)

Illich returned from the Vatican on June 20th, 1968. On reaching Mexico, he informed the apostolic delegate, Guido del Mestri, and the bishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Méndez Arceo, of what had happened in Rome. He told them the set of decisions he had been forced to take and how he had given to Cardinal Seper's a letter with his reasons. A few days later, in July 1968, Illich wrote to the newly appointed archbishop of New York, Terence J. Cook, and to CELAM representatives who visited CIDOC in 1967.

In September, Illich received permission from the archbishop of New York to live as a lay for a year. Immediately this information was communicated to Sergio Méndez Arceo.³⁸ Meanwhile Illich continued his academic dedication, although the theme of his work did not explicitly address issues concerning the Catholic institution. It happened that following the conflict with the Vatican, he began his most famous studies in relation to modern institutions such as schools, *Deschooling Society* (1971), transport, *Energy and Equity* (1973), and hospitals, *Medical Nemesis* (1973).

By January 1969 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sent a letter to the bishop of Cuernavaca where they announced the ban on clergy and the religious³⁹ to attend and participate in the activities of CIDOC. The reasons for objecting were the complaints made to the Holy See on the effects caused by the center and its participants. It made reference to the civil status, which made the Catholic hierarchy have no control over their

³⁶ Ibid. 4/101-4/102.

³⁷ This story is picked up by Javier Sicilia in the "Preface" of the *Ivan Illich Obras Reunidas Vol. II* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008: 20).

³⁸ *México, "entredicho" del Vaticano al CIDOC 1966-1969* («CIDOC dossier» n° 37 Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969) 4/120.

³⁹ Ibid. 4/136-137.

performance. It also spread a rumor in the international media that the CIDOC had made the decision to not admit persons of Catholic religion into its activities. In response to these two circumstances, Carmen Pérez Bello, who had just been named chair of CIDOC and for years was Illich's personal secretary, wrote a new report to partners and participants from the center. The report contradicted the rumors and again emphasized the character of CIDOC and its position in relation to the recent aggression from the Vatican.⁴⁰

By knowing the recent aggression of the Roman Curia against CIDOC, Illich made public the text of the Interrogation of the Holy Office and his letters to the Pope and Cardinal Seper. The texts were published in two articles in the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* and *The New York Times* on February 2nd, 1969. The publication of documents disarmed the Roman Curia and got the desired effect: to stop bothering indefinitely Illich and the center of Cuernavaca.

At that time, other media also echoed the documents published by Illich and charged against the Church and the remnants of the medieval Inquisition who remained in the institution. In 1969 a book entitled *La Reforma del Sant'Uffizio e il caso Illich*⁴¹ written by journalists Giancarlo Zizona and Alberto Barbero was published. Faced with this scandal, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith not only ceased to disturb Illich, but also it began to develop the first regulation for the examination of doctrines in the ancient history of the Church. The text was titled: *Nova agendi Ratio in Doctrinarum consideratione*.

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⁴⁰ Ibid. 136-4/141.

⁴¹ Giancarlo Zizola and Alberto Barbero, *La Reforma del Sant'Uffizio e il caso Illich* (Torino: P. Gribaudi, 1969).