In Exchange no. 25, 1980, a survey on theological meetings in Africa (1960-1980) was presented in an attempt to highlight the search for an authentic African theology, culminating in the first conference initiated, organized and attended by Third World Theologians in 1976. This conference was held in Dar es Salaam and led to several regional meetings, viz. in Africa: Accra (Ghana) 1977, in Asia: Wennappuwa (Sri Lanka) 1979, and in Latin America: Sao Paulo (Brazil) 1980.

In this issue the first part of a similar survey will be given on theological meetings in Latin America. It has been compiled by the staff of CEDOLASI (Ecumenical centre for systematic documentation on Latin America)\(^1\) in Mexico — and more particularly by Ma. Eugenia Mata, who took great pains in collecting the often scattered information (literature, interviews, correspondence, consultations) and also added a bibliography for further reading.

This survey does not yet include Colombia, Brazil and Peru, since, according to Cedolasi, no information had been received so far. Within due time, however, Cedolasi expects to be able to cover these countries in a follow-up which may be published in the next issue of Exchange. (LL)

\(^1\) CEDOLASI = Centro ecuménico de documentación latinoamericana sistematizada, Yosemite No. 45, Col. Nápoles, México 18, D.F.
INTRODUCTION

The present contribution intends to show the direction Latin American theological reflection has taken since the 1960s.

This reflection, which has not only manifested itself in books, but also in theological meetings in Latin America, has been accompanied or rather been founded by a practice aiming at creating ways of liberation within and with the oppressed people of Latin America. It could be said therefore that these encounters, in which the reflection has been shared, have been the outcome of a liberating practice, because they were closely related to the events and social conflicts.

From the 60s - mainly from '68 onwards - an intense activity has been developing within the popular movement, while at the same time these reclaiming actions are being suppressed by reactionary forces in each country. Remember the violent death of Tlatelolco in Mexico in 1968, and the military coups of Brazil (August '71 and '80), Bolivia (August '71 and '80), Uruguay (June '73) and Chile (September '73), Peru (August 1975), Ecuador (January 1976) and Argentina (March 1976).

The repression in countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua - triumphing afterwards in its revolution of 1979 - Bolivia, and more generally the Latin American continent, has been the key-note from the 1960s till now, and it looks as if this situation will continue for a long time.

However, not everything seems to be so negative. The popular movement and its struggle underwent a strong change during these last years. The masses started organizing themselves and have become conscientious of their historical project, which gradually assumes big proportions. Cuba, for instance, started realizing its liberation radically since 1959, Nicaragua, as has been mentioned above, in 1979, El Salvador is still struggling for liberation, closely followed by Guatemala.

The church has also played a role in these events. Some of its members took side with the powerful, others with the poor. In this way a church of the people comes into being, which - in accordance to the Gospel - is born out of the people and sides with the oppressed.