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Union Theological Seminary, New York

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 9

Finding Aid for

**Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo
(PELCS) Records, Santiago, Chile,
[First Latin American Conference of Christian Socialists]
1971 – 1973**



Documento final, edición popular. Credit to: MRL 9: Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo (PELCS) Records, 1971-1973, box 1, folder 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by Miguel Escobar, July 2006

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Summary Information

Creator: William Wipfler, Division of Overseas Churches, NCC
Title: Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo (PELCS) Records
Inclusive dates: 1971-1973
Abstract: PELCS aimed to unite Christian socialists throughout Latin America against economic dependency and underdevelopment. Papers include articles, reports on socialist movements, correspondence, and essays relating to the ten themes.
Size: 2 boxes, 1.00 linear foot
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** MRL archives were originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, under the direction of Charles H. Fahs, who was research assistant to John R. Mott and curator of the Missionary Research Library from its foundation in 1914 until 1948. These records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL. The collection was updated in 2014 as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. [Burke Library staff](#) is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 9: Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo (PELCS) Records, 1971-1973, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

History

The Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cristianos por el Socialismo (PELCS) represents the concerted efforts of eighty Chilean priests whose socialist commitments drew followers from throughout Latin America. Originally dubbed *Las Ochenta* (the eighty), this group issued a 1971 manifesto supporting the socialist movements in Chile. One year later, the group had changed its name to *Cristianos por el Socialismo* and had expanded their group's vision to include laity, women religious, and Protestants. They called for the first "encounter" of Christian socialists to take place in Santiago, Chile in April of that year.

PELCS had two primary goals. First, this conference aimed to unite Christian groups across the church's hierarchical and denominational divides. Thus, attendees included Roman Catholic priests, Protestant ministers, laity, and women religious. In doing so, the PELCS sought to create a broad commitment to the liberation of Latin American people from economic dependence on capitalist countries. They argued that such dependence had resulted in Latin America's state of underdevelopment. The second goal of the PELCS concerned the integration of Christian and socialist ideologies. In doing so, conference leaders sought to provide a rationale by which Christians could understand their faith as a basis for participation in the liberation struggles taking place.

The PELCS conference was deliberately held at the same time (and across the street from) the United Nation's Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

An article from *The Christian Century* noted that those attending the PELCS were "constantly aware of the nearby UNCTAD sessions, whose call for developed nations to assist underdeveloped nations sharply contrasted with the socialist Christians' conviction that

prolonging dependency and underdevelopment in the Third World is necessary to developed nations, and that development programs serve only to maintain such relations and conditions.”

The conference drew more than 450 attendees including various organizations such as Third World Priests of Argentina, the Golconda Movement of Columbia, and Church and Society in Latin America (ISAL). Many of the attending laypersons were fieldworkers living in base communities.

Sources:

Barndt, Joseph R “Revolutionary Christians Confer in Santiago,” in *The Christian Century*, 89, Je 14-21, 1972, p 691-695.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The PELCS papers consist of reports, correspondences, publications, and other materials relating to this congress. The majority of documents are in Spanish. English translations of the conference’s final report are included.

The bulk of the materials were created in preparation for PELCS. This includes reports on socialist movements in various Latin American countries; dispatches from the executive secretary of the PELCS, William Redington; and in-depth essays on the ten *áreas* (themes) of the conference as follows:

- I. Underdevelopment, dependence, and the transition to socialism in Latin America.
- II. Mobilization of the masses.
- III. Conditions for a strategic alliance between Christians and Marxists.
- IV. Ideology and religion: Cultural Revolution and the Christian faith.
- V. Class struggle: ethical positions and obstacles for Christians.
- VI. Christian institutions and ideology: a critical evaluation.
- VII. Political action and faith: liberation theology.
- VIII. Popular parties, unions, and pragmatic Christianity.
- IX. Field-labor movements and church initiatives.
- X. The middle class, women in the revolution, and the Christian factor.

Processing

When the Burke Library acquired the PELCS papers, an attempt was made to maintain the original order imposed on the contents. Folded materials were flattened. Staples, rubber bands, and metal clips were removed and replaced with plastic clips. All materials were placed in acid-free folders and boxes. The collection was updated in 2014 as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant. Over time the folders had become acidic, and were thus replaced.

Further Sources

The Burke Library offers other collections related to the topics and geographic locations covered in this collection. For more information, please see the [Burke Library Archives website](#).

Contents list

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Documento final, edición popular; Índice de documentos; Áreas I-V: I. Sub-desarrollo, dependencia y transición al socialismo II. Movilización Popular III. Condiciones de una alianza estratégica entre cristianos y marxistas IV. Ideología y religión, revolución cultural y fe cristiana V. Lucha de clases--posiciones y bloqueos éticos de los cristianos
1	2	Áreas VI-X: VI. Instituciones e ideología cristiana: evaluación crítica VII. Acción política y fe: teología de la liberación VIII. Partidos y sindicalismos del pueblo y práctica cristiana IX. Movimientos campesinos y acción de las iglesias X. Capas medias y la mujer en la revolución y el factor cristiano
1	3	Final report in English; Articles on PELCS, 1972
1	4	Conclusiones Finales; Carta al Sr. Cardenal Raúl Silva Henríquez, Marzo 20, 1972.; Copia fiel de la reunión sostenida por el cardenal Silva Henríquez con los participantes en el congreso "Cristianos por el socialismo" el día 25 de Abril en el arzobispado de Santiago.
1	5	Notas para las comisiones; Conclusiones de comisiones; Primeras redacciones de los documentos finales, 1ª y 2ª ediciones; Documento final, 1ª edición
1	6	Informes Nacionales: Bolivia, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, República Dominicana
1	7	Informes Nacionales: Ecuador, Honduras, México, Canadá, Panamá, Perú, Puerto Rico, Uruguay.
2	1	Despachos del Secretario Ejecutivo, pre y pos encuentro, Julio de 1971-Septiembre 1972
2	2	Despachos del Secretario Ejecutivo, pre y pos encuentro, Noviembre 1972-Febrero 1973
2	3	Despachos del Secretario Ejecutivo, pre y pos encuentro, Noviembre 1972-Abril 1973
2	4	Final document translated into English; Articles on PELCS, 1972.
2	5	Documento final, 1ª edición Áreas V-VIII, duplicate copies
2	6	Áreas IX-X, duplicate copies
2	7	Áreas I, duplicate copies
2	8	Área II-IV, duplicate copies