



TO: CatholicVote Members, Catholic Leaders

FROM: CatholicVote.org

RE: Tim Kaine's Radical Roots in Honduras

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## **SUMMARY**

In media appearances since he was named the Vice Presidential running mate of Secretary Clinton, Tim Kaine has continuously referenced his time in Honduras as the decisive period that helped shape both his political and religious views. The facts surrounding this "mission trip," however, raise grave and serious concerns, particularly given his continued relationships with the successors of a number of political and religious extremists.

Catholic voters and leaders are entitled to the truth about this decisive period in Kaine's life. This memo has been published based on extensive research and reporting in an effort to help all people of good will better understand the background, people, places, and ideology that Tim Kaine has personally cited as integral to his public life.

## **BACKGROUND**

Much has been made of Senator Tim Kaine's mission trip to Honduras in 1980. Kaine, who took a leave of absence as a Harvard Law student, spent nine months in Honduras on a purportedly faith-inspired mission to assist Jesuit missionaries serving peasant farmers. According to a 2010 CNN interview, Kaine described his time in Honduras as "the turning point in my life."<sup>1</sup>

Kaine's trip is touted in news reports, on stage, and on his social media channels, yet a deeper dive on what transpired there raises significant questions and concerns. During his stay in Honduras, Kaine openly embraced liberation theology, a controversial political ideology cloaked in Catholic teaching, but radically at odds with the Catholic Church and with the United States. At the time, this extremist ideology was adopted by activists and even some clergy who were openly hostile to the Church, the Pope, and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1012/26/sotu.01.html>

the United States. The Marxist elements of this ideology were condemned by the Vatican in the 1980's and 1990's.<sup>2</sup> During his time in Latin America, Kaine was surrounded by radicals and their influences took root in the version of Christianity he adopted. According to the New York Times, it was this theology that set him on a "left-veering career path" influencing his politics to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Marxist roots of liberation theology were condemned by the Church, the new theology did have the support of another superpower – the Soviet Union. Scholars of the period, and the top Cold War defector to the West, have shown the Soviets created liberation theology to undermine the Church and advance the Soviet cause against the United States. In Honduras, the phony Marxist-tinged theology was planted to manipulate poor Catholics, instigate terrorism, and stir up a violent revolution in Honduras -- then the key ally of the United States opposing Communism in the region.

The New York Times reports that while in Honduras, Kaine took a bus trip into northern Nicaragua before walking several miles on foot to meet with Fr. James Carney, one of liberation theology's most radical proponents.<sup>4</sup> Carney believed that violence was part of God's plan for social and political change. In his book, Carney wrote: "I invite all Christians who read this to get rid of any unfair and un-Christian prejudices you have against armed rebellion, socialism, Marxism and communism." (440) Carney's dedication was so complete that he renounced his American citizenship and eventually left the priesthood because they "did not permit a Jesuit to be a guerrilla fighter." (440) Fr. Carney later joined the Sandinista rebel army and supported action as a "chaplain" against the United States' efforts to oppose Communism in Latin America. Three years after meeting Kaine, Carney died during an invasion of Honduras with a group of approximately 100 fellow communist insurgents, trained by communists in Nicaragua and Cuba.<sup>5</sup>

Before his death, Carney helped found Radio Progreso, a socialist-inspired radio outlet that continues to broadcast today. Kaine remains in touch with Father Carney's successor, Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno Coto (known as 'Father Melo'). Father Melo, who has called for the redistribution of land in Latin America by 2021, told listeners in 2015 "to follow [Father Carney's] footsteps and memory of struggling to continue to build a more just and equitable society."<sup>6</sup>

Given Father Carney's identification with terrorists and his participation in an armed invasion of Honduras, Father Melo's call to action begs an important question: has Father Melo disavowed the radical agenda of his predecessor? And what is Tim Kaine's relationship today to the Melo/Carney ideology?

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19840806\\_theology-liberation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/03/us/politics/tim-kaine-honduras-jesuit.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/03/us/politics/tim-kaine-honduras-jesuit.html?_r=0)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/03/us/politics/tim-kaine-honduras-jesuit.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/11/22/honduran-army-defeats-cuban-trained-rebel-unit/9258e14f-0543-e3-ae3c-2f7ea4420a40/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://radioprogreso.net/index.php/comunicaciones/noticias/item/2394-conmemoran-32-a%C3%B1os-de-desaparici%C3%B3n-forzada-del-%E2%80%99Csacerdote-de-los-campesinos%E2%80%9D>

Kaine and Father Melo remain friends and allies. In 2014, Kaine announced in a press release that he had met again with Father Melo to discuss his work in Honduras. Kaine remarked, "I think of El Progreso every day. The people, aside from my family, are the most important in shaping who I am today."<sup>7</sup> Kaine met with Father Melo and called him a "friend" in Honduras in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

Father Melo also provided commentary on Tim Kaine for Univision during the recent Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

Important questions remain about the influence of certain persons and their ideology during Mr. Kaine's time in Honduras. The experience, according to Kaine, was hugely significant in shaping his religious and political life. But the Marxist-socialist ideology he embraced there complicates the narrative offered to the public of a good will humanitarian missionary trip to Honduras.

Catholic voters and all Americans deserve to know the truth about Kaine's political philosophy and the role that revolutionary Marxist theology played and may continue to play in the shaping of his political views today.

## **FATHER CARNEY**

As mentioned above, the New York Times cited Kaine's interest in Father Carney, including a bus trip to Nicaragua and walk of several miles to spend a 'memorable' evening with the exiled radical Marxist. That Kaine made the effort to seek out and spend time with Carney is troubling.

Some notable excerpts from Carney's biography:

- Fidel Castro was "inspired and led by the Holy Spirit."(307)
- He applauded Castro's statement that the axis between Marxists and revolutionary Christianity was "not a tactical but a strategic alliance." (307)
- He embraced the need for violent revolution: "One has to enter on the side of the poor in the struggle against the capitalist and imperialist exploiters, because the liberation of the poor will only come by way of the struggle to form a new society without social or economic classes. Efficacious love for the oppressors also demands this armed struggle to take the guns away from them by which they are sinning, repressing the poor, and thus, to liberate the oppressors also." (312)
- He renounced his U.S. citizenship and became a Honduran in 1973 because:

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kaine.senate.gov/press-releases/kaine-meets-with-honduran-jesuit-priest-father-melo-moreno-to-discuss-important-role-of-civil-society-and-non-governmental-organizations-in-honduras>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/94393826@N02/16551336716>

“I have freely chosen to belong to the oppressed class in order to be side by side with the peasants in their fight for liberation ... Christ is working in the revolution for the liberation of the oppressed; I want to help him and not be with the bourgeois middle class or with the selfish capitalists who are in favor of the unjust status quo.” (318)

- Declared violent revolution was part of God’s plan for the world: “My studies of Chardin and Juan Luis Segundo made it clear that God’s plan for the evolution of this world and of human society is obviously dialectical, involving conflict and at times even armed revolution.” (312)

- Believed Marxism and Christianity were synthesized in his mind by liberation theology:

“I no longer found a contradiction between Marxism and Christianity, but rather a great convergence and complementarity. The writings of certain liberation theologians helped me to understand how the gospel needs the mediation of the social sciences in order to be able to apply it to our lives, that is, to learn how to put the gospel, ‘the good news for the poor,’ into practice in Honduras and the third world.” (312)

- He had to leave the Jesuits because they “did not permit a Jesuit to be a guerrilla fighter.” (440)

Father Carney concluded his book by inviting all Christians to join the violent revolution, writing: “I invite all Christians who read this to get rid of any unfair and un-Christian prejudices you have against armed rebellion, socialism, Marxism and communism. ... There is no contradiction whatsoever between being a Christian and a priest, and being a Marxist revolutionary.” (440).

Though Carney had renounced his U.S. citizenship in 1973 to become a Honduran citizen, his radical ways resulted in his being deported from Honduras, and he ended up in Communist-sympathizing, Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Sandinistas ran the most repressive country in the hemisphere outside of Cuba. They were closely allied with the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba. Among other things, they were trained by East German agents in "terrorism" and were known as a haven for terrorists. They also allied with Islamic terrorists in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East. In addition, Sandinista Nicaragua was known as a haven for Communist militants (terrorists) from around the world and also exported terrorism around the world.<sup>9</sup>

This is where Kaine sought out Father Carney. His violent revolutionary views were already well known.

After their meeting, Carney left the Jesuits, and ended up serving with an armed Communist force of nearly 100 Cuban-trained men that invaded Honduras under the

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1986/03/nicaraguas-terrorist-connection> ; [https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/nicaragua\\_inherent\\_dangers\\_being\\_militant\\_mecca](https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/nicaragua_inherent_dangers_being_militant_mecca) ; <https://books.google.com/books?id=o6x-Ruo4IR4C&pg=PA171&lpg=PA171&dq=terrorism+sandinista+nicaragua+libya&source=bl&ots=jslJuYHt05&sig=DjivEeiz3Lu539LMn1b3UzFzhBg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiY28jDvl3PAhUC7iYKHRszBHSQ6AEIRDAI#v=onepage&q=terrorism%20sandinista%20nicaragua%20libya&f=false>

command of the Cuban-educated Jose Reyes Mata, one of Che Guevara's lieutenants from the Bolivian insurgency. This group of communist insurgents were funded and trained by the Cubans and Nicaraguans, who in turn were funded and trained by the Soviet Bloc, particularly the East Germans.

Their intent of the revolutionaries was to instigate terrorism and violent revolution within Honduras to topple its government.

## **LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND ITS SOVIET CONNECTION**

At a minimum, Cold War memos from the Soviet and East German archives indicate that liberation theology was supported by the Soviet bloc to such an extent that they sought to undermine the Vatican for opposing it through the use of "active measures" of destabilization, smear campaigns, etc. The evidence contained in these memos has been published in books by former AP Berlin bureau chief John Koehler ("Spies in the Vatican") and by Cambridge University Prof. Christopher Andrew ("More Instructions from the Centre").

In addition, several compelling stories from American and Soviet intelligence sources, as well as journalists and scholars, suggest that liberation theology was an invention of Soviet elites designed to undermine the Church and incite violent uprisings among the poor. It was used strategically in Latin America to incite uprisings that would overthrow the government.

- a. Former Latin America-based CIA agent Robert D. Chapman has made an extensive case for this in a December 2009 article "The Church in Revolution" in "The Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence."
- b. In his book "On Internal War," Former NSA head General William Odom referred to liberation theology in Latin America as part of the "tactical approaches" by the Soviets to "religion and churches."
- c. An October 1981 article in the British journal "Intelligence Digest," was the first to make the case that liberation theology was a Soviet invention.
- d. The top-ranking Eastern-bloc defector of the Cold War, General Ion Pacepa, has admitted to helping start liberation theology for the Kremlin in his 2013 book "Disinformation" (the book features a foreword by former CIA director James Woolsey). Pacepa has further detailed his recollections in recent articles.<sup>10</sup>
- e. Pacepa says that Khrushchev believed that Latin Americans could be made to embrace Communism "through the judicious manipulation of religion." Pacepa adds that liberation theology was achieved operationally via Soviet infiltration of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Soviet's creation of the Christian Peace Conference. The

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/417383/secret-roots-liberation-theology>

evidence of the Soviet-bloc infiltration of the WCC is supported by numerous sources, including the October 1981 article in "Intelligence Digest," as well as evidence in Czech defector Ladislav Bittman's book "The New Image Makers."

f. Alejandro Bermudez, a Latin American journalist, and founder of the largest Spanish Language Catholic News Agency (ACI Prensa), has detailed an enormous amount of available evidence.<sup>11</sup>

g. Bulgarian researcher Momchil Metodiev (in his book "Between Faith and Compromise") and Cambridge University Professor Christopher Andrew (in his book "The Sword and the Shield") also have presented evidence of the WCC's infiltration by the Soviets in their research based on Bulgarian and Soviet Archives.

h. Gustavo Gutierrez, often seen as the founder of liberation theology, is reported by both Wikipedia<sup>12</sup> and the Memim Encyclopedia<sup>13</sup> to have been involved in the Christian Peace Conference, which Pacepa says was at the center of the plot.

i. Cardinal Mueller at the Vatican has noted that the "ideology of Soviet Communism" put a great deal of "pressure" on liberation theology.<sup>14</sup>

What is absolutely certain about liberation theology is that it attracted many Marxists and that the Soviet bloc also went to great lengths to protect this theology, seeing it as useful to the spread of Communism in Latin America. It was also seen and discussed by many of its adherents as the synthesis of Christianity and Marxism, and some like Father Carney (and the Sandinistas) saw in it a justification for violent revolution.

## **CATHOLIC OPPOSITION TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have all opposed the radical Marxist nature of liberation theology. In 2005, Pope Francis (then Cardinal Bergoglio) noted that "liberation theology" and "Christian Socialism" (Carney's preferred category) had survived by "inertia" even if some "anachronistically" want to resurrect it.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps most succinctly, Pope Benedict called it the theology of "Barabbas" as opposed to that of Jesus Christ.

To the extent liberation theology today has been rehabilitated or gets any Vatican tolerance or support, it does so only by denying its Marxist elements. The head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Gerhart Mueller (who is

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/a-meeting-in-managua-liberation-theology-30-years-later-3207>

<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christian\\_Peace\\_Conference\\_members](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christian_Peace_Conference_members)

<sup>13</sup> <http://memim.com/gustavo-gutierrez.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/cardinal-liberation-theology-needed-separation-from-marxism>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.americalatina.va/content/americalatina/es/publicaciones/otras-publicaciones/una-apuesta-por-america-latina0.html>

known to have appreciation for liberation theology) has said that "true" liberation theology opposes Marxism and Capitalism.<sup>16</sup>

One of its key theologians, Gustavo Gutierrez, has stated at the Vatican that "the liberation theologians weren't Marxists." But despite the current efforts to distance liberation theology from Marxism, many who espoused liberation theology in the 1970s and 1980s were Marxists by their own admission. This includes Father Carney and other bishops, priests and theologians who made explicit their Marxist preferences within the context of this theology.

Although it espouses slightly altered ideas in the modern day, liberation theology in the 1980s didn't preach the separation of Church and State, but the union of the two under a communist system. This combination of government and religion is a source of criticism of Political Islam -- and it is exactly what liberation theology does as well.

## **ABOUT CATHOLICVOTE.ORG**

CatholicVote.org (CV) is a national, lay-led movement of committed Catholics organized to educate, organize, and mobilize Catholic voters to advance the social teachings of the Catholic Church in the public square. CV regularly communicates with over 500,000 email subscribers, over 170,000 Facebook followers, and 175,000 members via mail. CatholicVote.org is a D/B/A of Fidelis, a 501(c)4 organization founded in 2005.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-riches-are-good-if-used-for-peoples-sake>