

## What changed in the TFP?

### The TFP's New Board of Directors Takes Office

#### The triumph of Justice – the revolt of the ousted directors

The split in the TFP has been in the news, renewing interest in all those who know and have followed the trajectory of this entity.

After seven years of litigation in the courts between the old board of directors and more than 80 per cent of its membership, the Courts have repeatedly found in favor of the latter, granting the right to vote to every member of the entity.

The original incorporating members, instead of respecting the Court's decisions and being reconciled to the immense majority of the membership in order to foster the activities of the TFP, has preferred to act in contempt of the Courts and continue outside the law.

Rebuffed by the *Tribunal de Justiça* of the State of São Paulo, they created another association called the *Aliança de Fátima*, comprised of four members of the TFP who were of their utmost confidence, to which they gradually siphoned off all of the funds and assets of the entity.

Meanwhile, on Aug. 14, 2003, in accordance with the Court's

determinations, after publicly convoking all the membership – including the eight founders – a General Assembly was convened in which a new administrative board of directors of the TFP was elected. A minority linked to the eight founding members chose not to attend. Nevertheless, their absence in no casts doubt on the absolute legitimacy of the General Assembly. The election was later upheld by a decision of the Court.

Since the ousted directors refused to turn over their functions, the Court determined that the new directors should effectively assume control of the TFP and that the former directors should surrender all the documents and assets – both tangible and intangible – of the entity. Faced with this, the ex-directors informed the Courts that all the documents and assets of the TFP were to be found in two modest rooms in the suburb of Osasco, which had been rented for a period of 30 days.

In these rooms, in addition to some documents, there were only a few metal bookshelves, two old

computers, two tables, two chairs, an antiquated fax machine, and two fans. Even the TFP's web sites and the Internet domain names had been transferred to a commercial enterprise belonging to the former directors. The new board of

directors managed to undo this maneuver. Because of this, however, the sites were temporarily down.

This is all that was left of the TFP's assets... besides – of course – massive debts to pay! ...

### **New phase: reconstruction with courage and enthusiasm**

The TFP's new administrative board of directors assumed its functions eager to forget the divisions of the past and strives for a complete reconciliation and dialogue with its entire membership without exception. They will have the right to freely express themselves regarding the TFP's management, with the certainty of being respectfully and amicably heard.

In subsequent General Assemblies all the members will be convened to opine and vote on the TFP's

direction.

In the meantime, the new board of directors has thrown itself body and soul to rebuilding the organization, so that it may be restored to its former vitality.

Certain of the protection of Mary Most Holy and with our eyes fixed on her, the members of the TFP confidently look toward the future in this new phase, once again striding upon the luminous path begun by its founder, Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.

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### **To understand what happened – a bit of history**

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira (1908-1995) founded the TFP in 1960 to officially unite the group of Catholics that he had been leading for many years.

He always directed it with much friendship, benevolence and respect for all the members of the association, giving a voice to everyone and establishing a consensus in all of the important acts he undertook.

Throughout its history, he never imposed anything contrary to conscience or aspiration of his associates or took a decision without the consent of the same.

After the death of Dr. Plinio (Oct. 3, 1995) this situation unfortunately changed.

## **Dr. Plinio's preoccupation with the future of the TFP**

Several times, Dr. Plinio demonstrated concern about the future directors of the TFP. One of his most oft repeated recommendations during his later years was that his successors should do everything possible to maintain unity among the members of the TFP after his death. He also insisted that everyone's freedom of action and opinion be respected, as he had always done. He also expressed the fear that the ambition and the desire for power of some could provoke divisions even around his coffin. The truth of his prediction was established by the facts that occurred afterwards.

First, the eight remaining founding members of the TFP availed themselves of outdated sections of the bylaws, by which they retained the sole right to participate in the General Assemblies of the entity, to elect themselves directors of the TFP.

So, in an association of more than 1,000 members the new board of directors was elected with only nine votes.

This contradicted the express will of Dr. Plinio.

## **Dr. Plinio wanted his substitute to be elected through everyone's vote**

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira had said on several occasions that his substitute had to be chosen in a democratic election, through the participation of all the TFP's members. He repeated this thought in an interview with the Porto Alegre's newspaper *Zero Hora* in January of 1993. Responding to the question of how his successor was being prepared, Dr. Plinio affirmed:

**Dr. Plinio:** "This is perfectly organized in the TFP in the following way: the TFP has various sectors... these sectors have much freedom of action; I intervene very little since I am not an interventionist kind of individual. Either a society forms its members so that they, through their own initiative, act accord with the society or the society has failed. To collar someone to make him do something he does not want to do ends in failure. Every sectors of the TFP therefore enjoys great freedom. At the same time, I am in the habit of keeping those in position of responsibility for a long time: 10 years, 20 years, sometimes longer. Such that not only are they able to exercise their functions, but, above all, the entire TFP can see how they govern. And, so when I die, they only have to choose."

**Zero Hora:** "And would the choice within the TFP be democratic? Would it be by vote?"

**Dr. Plinio:** "By vote."

**Zero Hora:** "You wouldn't have appointees?"

**Dr. Plinio:** "No, no."

In February of 1993, when the *Folha de São Paulo* interviewed Dr. Plinio, the interviewer asked:

**Folha de São Paulo:** "I read in an article, I think it was in the afternoon edition of the *Folha*, that you said that the succession [within the TFP] would be democratic, etc. Is this succession already being worked out? Or hasn't it been

*worked out? Is it a topic that doesn't come up? Is there something under way or not?*

**Dr. Plinio:** I have the best way to have it go forward. You see Paulo Brito here, he directs media relations. He has directed it for many years. I give him very great liberty; we discuss the general lines of work and so on, but he enjoys such great freedom in his work that, if I go two or three times a year to the office of media relations, it's a lot. There are many other sectors whose leaders similarly enjoy great freedom. Well, we meet assiduously to coordinate the functions, to trace common and united paths. But as to what remains, everyone does as he sees best. Now everything that is done in the TFP is done in the plain view of all those in the TFP, in such a way that everyone in the TFP sees the dedication carried out fulfilling those tasks. When I die, each one has direct criteria to know where their preference lies, to be able to choose this, that or the other one. And for the society not to divide, it will have to arrive at a certain consensus."

## **Consensus necessary for all relevant decisions**

### **Intellectual respect in the TFP**

In one of his books dealing with the manner in which decisions were made within the TFP and the doctrinal formation given to its members, Dr. Plinio demonstrates that nothing was imposed and that there was great intellectual respect in the entity:

"The leadership of the TFP as a rule never launches a public campaign or an important initiative without gathering together all the members and associates – even the very young ones – to explain its rationale and goals, listen to everyone's questions, clarify doubts, and respond to eventual objections.

"In all of the regular meetings, the opportunity to speak is available to all those present – even the youngest – and everyone can freely reflect, ask or object at will.

"In these meetings, whoever the speaker may be, there is never a topic that is not well thought out, never a thesis expounded upon that is not well supported with arguments or documents, never is an affirmation made without all those present having the time, opportunity and environment to examine and argue at will. There is never an objection or a difficulty that is not resolved with every consideration and fraternal affection." (*A Réplica da Autenticidade*, Editora Vera Cruz, São Paulo, 1985, pp. 134-135)

## **A dictatorial government**

Since the death of Dr. Plinio, the TFP's management has continually diminished corresponding to the will of its founder and the aspirations of the immense majority of its members. In truth, the directors of the TFP sought to govern the association as if it were their own private property.

They began by exercising power in complete disregard for the internal customs and even that

established by the bylaws. Thus they demanded a complete and unrestricted obedience from the members of the TFP; they sought to impose their personal opinions on everyone else regarding the role the TFP should exercise within the Catholic Church and which position they should take regarding the new mass and the Second Vatican Council and attacked the natural leaders accepted by the immense majority of the members of the entity. This manner of proceeding caused confusion, discord and division.

As the number and gravity of the errant practices of the former board of directors continually increased, eighty per cent of the organization's membership had no other choice but to have recourse to the Courts. They, therefore, opened legal proceedings for the purpose of annulling the sections of the bylaws that deprived the members the right to vote and to be voted for in the Assemblies of the association. Such regulations contravene Article 1394 of the old Civil Code, which established that "all the members can vote in the General Assemblies, where, except when stipulated to the contrary, deliberation will always be taken according to the majority of the votes". This legal rule is nothing more than the elementary application of democratic principles to associations.

In reprisal for having had recourse to the Courts, the TFP's former board of directors carried out an implacable and meticulous persecution against the plaintiffs. From one day to the next, more than 1,000 people (who represented eighty per cent of the TFP's members) were expelled from the entity without food, shelter, medical assistance or any other means of subsistence. They even went so far as to refuse burial to deceased members. The majority of these persons had dedicated their whole lives to the TFP.

With the Court's determination granting the right to vote to all of the TFP's members, conditions have been created for the TFP to resume its normal activities with the effective participation of all of its members.

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