

A prophet, a teacher, a realistic dreamer

*Priest and thinker Ivan Illich dies at 76;
he founded influential Mexican center*

By HARVEY COX

"R-r-read me the last three sentences you have written." It was the summer of 1968, and the voice, slightly accented, with the trilled "r," issued from a tall figure in a brown and gray serape lying prone on the floor of my small study at the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Dutifully, I read for Ivan Illich, the founder and director of "CIDOC," the most recent scribbles on the book I was then writing. Then he responded. His comments, as usual, were apt and dazzling. He could conjure historical analogies out of the air, suggest alternative phrasings, pose probing questions.

Illich often sprang one of those unannounced descents on the various guests — maverick intellectuals, progressive priests — anyone whose ideas struck his fancy that he had invited to quaff the elixir of the cen-

dents boasted that it enjoyed 365 days a year of balmy summer weather.

When Illich, 76, died at his home in Bremen, Germany, Dec. 2, I remembered the frantic phone call I made to him in June 1968. He had already been at the center for a couple years, and had invited me twice to join his summer faculty. I had never gone, but now I was ready. I had been working in the Robert Kennedy campaign, and when Bobby was killed in Los Angeles, I had wanted to take my family and get away, at least for a while. I called Illich, and he said, "Come." We did.

Ivan Illich was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in Rome in 1952, and shortly thereafter came to New York. After falling out of favor with Cardinal Francis Spellman, who had originally admired his work as a priest among the Puerto Ricans in Washington Heights, he moved to Puerto Rico where he briefly served as vice rector of the Catholic University in Ponce until tensions with church authorities also arose there. Apparently his superiors all saw

him as a brilliant, energetic, but erratic priest who would do just fine if only the right niche could be found. But Illich was never a man who could be placed in a niche. At his next stop in Cuernavaca, however, it appeared that Brer Rabbit had finally reached the briar patch.

But not as the superiors hoped. His original mandate at the Center for Intercultural Documentation was to prepare North America Catholic church workers to serve in Latin America. But he quickly came to believe that what the church south of the Rio Grande needed was not more priests and nuns, especially from North

America, but more grassroots lay initiative. This made him one of the early champions of the base ecclesial communities. Fired by Illich's new vision, the center rapidly assumed a different profile.

With the support of Don Sergio Mendez Arceo, the progressive bishop of Cuernavaca, the center, indeed the whole town, became a magnet for independent thinkers — students and teachers (and at the center the distinction was never clear) from all over North and South America. Bishop Mendez Arceo always seemed to be able to find an assignment for priests and nuns who had been expelled or suspended from Chile or Brazil or Nicaragua by church or state. The outdoor cafes around the lovely old piazza with its central gazebo and

refreshment stands provided only one of the many venues reminiscent of the crackling atmosphere along the Boulevard St. Michel in Paris.

There was a decided buzz about Cuernavaca, especially among young countercultural types, during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They arrived in droves, with their backpacks, jeans and recently purchased serapes and sandals. They thronged the boarding houses and inexpensive hotels. Some wanted to learn Spanish, and the center had an excellent language school. Others just wanted to hang out. All wanted to warm themselves in the already legendary glow of Ivan Illich and the cluster of intellectual enclaves that surrounded him. But many soon became disillusioned.

Illich, whose ideas on education — spelled out in his 1971 book *De-Schooling Society* — were indeed revolutionary, had utterly no patience with academic slackness. He couldn't abide people who used language — any language — sloppily. He hated empty chatter. He was just as critical of hippy laxity as he was of the moralistic smugness and rigidity of his own church. The young people climbing off the rickety buses may have expected a merry prankster, but instead they found an old-world aristocrat with a hawk nose and piercing eyes who made stringent demands on them, and whose stinging critique of bureaucratic modernity arose from his love of tradition rather than from some Haight-Ashbury version of doing your own thing.

I think the beginning of the end for Illich at Cuernavaca came in that same summer of 1968 when he helped Mendez Arceo draft a respectful but critical

response to *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI's ill-fated encyclical on contraception. Characteristically, Illich's re-sponse was not a "liberal" one. It was not based on some claim to individual privacy. It was based on compassion. How could the church expect poor, often illiterate Latin American women to restrict the sexual activity of their husbands to the "safe" days allowed by the rhythm method? Under such a policy they would

still be condemned to unending and often unwanted pregnancies. Illich's views on this touchy subject were never central to his thinking, but they gave church authorities an opportunity to pounce. When, after a humiliating interrogation at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, Illich finally decided to request a dispensation from his priestly vows, he told a friend he wanted to keep the chastity and poverty parts, but not the obedience if obedience meant answering to faceless accusers who deprived him of even fundamental procedural justice.

Ivan Illich attracted a swirl of legends, most of them featuring his amazing erudition and derring-do. I think he enjoyed allowing them to flower. How many languages did he really speak? Was it nine or 11 or 13? Had he really hiked alone across Indonesia? Was it true that he had a hookah in his private room? There were many mysteries. A few things are clear however. Illich was born in Vienna in 1926. His mother was Jewish, and therefore — by strict *halakic* standards — so was he. Indeed he was expelled from a school in Vienna in 1941 because of his non-Aryan parentage. His father was an engineer, and Illich always maintained a strong, if skeptical, interest in technology. After he left Cuernavaca he taught at Penn State, where his old friend, Prof. Rustum Roy, found him a

position. He also taught in Berlin, Bologna and in Bremen, where he died.

I loved Cuernavaca and I often returned there after Illich left CIDOC. He continued to keep a house there, and we always saw each other. But by the 1980s and '90s, the city was changing, and not for the better. Where the center once flourished, a mere language school now stood. Mendez Arceo had retired, and I visited him in a nursing home before he died. We talked about the halcyon days of the countercultural center, and he offered me a Cuban cigar, which he said was sent to him by Fidel Castro. His successor was more cautious, and the town was no longer a haven for Catholic progressives.

Cuernavaca itself had become a suburb of Mexico City and was choking on the same green miasma and noisy traffic. I could not help thinking that Illich had seen it all coming. He had cautioned that if we did not judge new technologies in the light of human values we would eventually suffocate in our own detritus. He thought motorcars were a curse on genuine urban conviviality. As a student of traditional folk cures he was a prophet of "alternative medicine," and he foresaw the current crisis in health care. His highly original proposals for education were dismissed before they were ever tried. His warning — that the Catholic church would not for long escape a severe institutional crisis brought on not by its doctrines (which he always held to faithfully) but by the haughtiness and sclerosis of its governance — now appears to be coming painfully true.

Some people thought Illich was either a bothersome gadfly or a wailing Cassandra. He was neither. He was a prophet,

a teacher and a realistic dreamer. Although his choice of words was sometimes hyperbolic, his ideas — on a vast range of subjects — retain a freshness we need more than ever in our present jaded mood.

As it happened, when I heard of Illich's death I had just been rereading Leo Tolstoy's famous story about the death of another *Ivan Ilyich*. But there is a world of difference between these two Ivans. Tolstoy's Ivan had wasted his vacu-

ous life chasing after tawdry bourgeois values. He was so unprepared for death he could not believe it was really he, Ivan Ilyich, who was dying. On the other hand, Ivan, the priest and thinker and inspired critic who passed away in his sleep in Bremen last week, spent his fascinating life avoiding entrapment in the tawdry, the cheap, the shallow, and helping others to do so. And I am sure he was ready when death came. Once when I had coffee with him in Cuernavaca he told me that just the previous week he had passed the night in the basement catacomb of a Franciscan church in Mexico City among the bodies of the dead monks. I was surprised. It sounded a bit lugubrious to me, and he seemed so exuberantly alive, and I told him so. But he shook his long forefinger at me, and told me that was just the point. Embracing life and embracing death are not opposites. They are spiritual compadres, not *enemigos*. I am sure he was right.

You were one of a kind, Ivan, my friend. I wish the world had taken your advice to heart more than we did. *Requiescat in pace.*

Harvey Cox is a professor of divinity at Harvard University. His most recent book, Common Prayers: Faith, Family and a Christian's Journey Through the Jewish Year, is now available in paperback.



Ivan Illich: He attracted a swirl of legends, most of them featuring his amazing erudition and derring-do

ter. He would enter stealthily through the open door, lie on the rough woven carpet, listen attentively to the "last three sentences," then comment. After a few minutes, he would dash out to stage another surprise visitation on someone else. Or the bell marking the morning break from the Spanish classes might ring, and he would join everyone for coffee and pastries under a clear blue sky on a stone patio scented with red bougainvillea, always blooming in a city whose resi-



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Provocative religious radical targeted 'experts'

December 10 2002

Ivan Illich, the sociologist and former priest who has died aged 76, was a resolute opponent of institutionalisation; his controversial views on education, society, the law, medicine, and over-consumption brought him into conflict with the Catholic Church and "experts" in almost every discipline.

Experts were, in fact, precisely the target of Illich's wrath, especially in his two most influential books, *Deschooling Society* (1971) and *Medical Nemesis* (1975). The hideously titled *Celebration of Awareness* took a dim view of progress.

Gender (1982) pointed out that drains were not an unqualified benefit to the Third World woman. "Tap water put an end to her carrying the jugs to and fro, but also to her meeting friends at the well." Addressing the Royal Academy of Persia on the subject of ablutions, he questioned the wisdom of giving every citizen a flush lavatory.

Illich argued that schools undermined the genuine purpose of education, that the legal system heightened, rather than resolved, people's grievances, that doctors and scientists had set themselves up as a new, secular priesthood, and that the church had become enmeshed in bureaucracy.

Statements such as "All over the world the school has an anti-educational effect on society" and "The medical establishment has become a major threat to health" were typical examples of his provocative stance.

But while other figures who shared many of Illich's preoccupations, such as the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, gained support for their views by promulgating them through political avenues, Illich shunned the public eye; he resolutely refused to appear on television, and seldom spoke to journalists. Although he continued to publish, his work had less and less influence after the mid-1970s.

Nor did his approach always seem balanced - those who shared his suspicion of bureaucracy and of claims to expertise were often less impressed by his arguments for the basis of community, accusations of "Western political bias" and enthusiasm for "intercultural sensitivity". Others supported Illich's distrust of Western paternalism and authority, but ridiculed the warnings against modern education and medicine. Though he anticipated many of the concerns of the ecological movement, his religious radicalism made him an uncomfortable ally.

Illich was born in Vienna, the son of a Catholic Croatian landowner and civil engineer. His mother was from a Sephardic Jewish family.

Young Ivan was a promising student at the Piaristengymnasium in the city, and spent his summers on the Dalmatian coast or travelling around Europe until 1941, when his mother's background led to the family's expulsion from Austria. He completed his secondary education in Florence, at the Liceo Scientifico Leonardo da Vinci, before attending the University of Florence, where he studied histology and crystallography.

He also read widely in psychology, becoming particularly interested in the theories of Rudolf Steiner and Ludwig Klages, and developed a fascination with primitive art. These early mentors, he later wrote, "had a much deeper mark on my intellectual orientation than formal university study or degree work". But by this stage, Illich had also decided to study for the priesthood, and in 1943 travelled to Rome, where he enrolled in the Gregorian University. He began by studying philosophy, and was influenced by the writings of the neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, as well as falling under the spell of Dostoyevsky, whom he saw as a forerunner of existentialism.

After graduating in 1946, he embarked on a licentiate in theology, which concentrated on the basis of religious motivation in the work of Romano Guardini. Simultaneously, he took a doctorate from the University of Salzburg on Arnold Toynbee and the difficulty of historical knowledge.

After his ordination in 1951, Illich seemed set for a career as a nuncio or canon lawyer, but instead requested a move to the archdiocese of New York, where he worked at Washington Heights in a parish serving the large Puerto Rican population then arriving in Manhattan. His enthusiasm for the souls in his care led Illich to accept a job as vice-rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico in 1956. He spent four years at Ponce, travelling widely through Latin America and studying

immigration, and alienated many of the local clergy by complaining of their readiness to impose American values on their congregations.

After he fell out with the bishop of Ponce, Illich returned to New York. He became a research assistant to the president of Fordham University, and set up the Centre of Intercultural Formation, which soon became the Centro Intercultural de Documentacion (CIDOC), based in Mexico.

This mixture of language school, think tank, publishing house and informal seminary attracted many young priests, especially after a papal call for 10 per cent of North America's religious leaders to serve in the southern part of the continent. Many did not impress Illich - a cantankerous figure - who sent half home as unfit for missionary work.

After he criticised the church in the Jesuit-run journal, *America*, Illich's funding was withdrawn, and in 1968 he severed CIDOC's ties with the church. In January the next year, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith prohibited priests from visiting the centre, and in March Illich abandoned his titles and benefits (though not his vow of celibacy).

He became professor of humanities and sciences at Pennsylvania State University in 1986, and ran its doctoral programme in architecture from 1990 until 1995. From 1991, he lectured in sociology at Bremen University.

Illich, a man of 1.9 metres, could appear a stern, forbidding character, which he put down to "growing up in five languages, but without a mother tongue". He took notes in Latin and read several books each night, acquiring several more languages. He learned Greek in a week when attending a conference in Cyprus, but when asked why he used complicated expressions in English, replied: "Brain incompetence."

Illich's other publications included *Tools for Conviviality, Energy and Equity* (both 1973); *The Right to Useful Employment, Towards a History of Needs* (both 1979); *Shadow-Work* (1981); *ABC: The Alphabetisation of the Popular Mind* (1988); and *In the Vineyard of the Text* (1993).

Asked once in Paris: "Do you come here often?" he replied, "I find it difficult to make a general statement about the way I lead my life." Despite his many targets, he maintained until the end the same evasive position about the kind of society of which he would actively approve. "I am not concerned with prescriptions."

Telegraph, London

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/12/09/1039379783536.html>



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Ivan Illich, who warned about technology, dies at 76

By Mary Rourke
Los Angeles Times

The immediate cause of his death was not known.

Mr. Illich's numerous books and articles earned him a reputation as a crank and a visionary whose first allegiance was to the past. He saw modern technology as oppressive, claiming, for example, that automobiles enslaved society and that bicycles were a faster way to travel.

A teacher for more than 50 years, he was wary of his profession. In his 1971 book, "De-Schooling Society," he argued that children learn best at home or in casual situations rather than through formal education.

He became a familiar name in religious and educational circles after he founded a training center in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1961. Part language program, part think tank, the Intercultural Center of Documentation prepared missionaries to work in Mexico and Latin America and attracted priests, nuns and lay Catholics.

At the time he opened the center, Mr. Illich was a Catholic monsignor, but from the first he challenged his students' assumptions about Western superiority and religious patriarchy, which soon embroiled him in ecclesiastical controversy. His view that the Catholic Church should dissolve its bureaucracy did not help his standing with the Vatican.

Mr. Illich was called to Rome in 1968 to explain but refused to answer questions. Thousands of dollars in church funds were withdrawn from his center, and he severed ties between the center and religious institutions. He resigned from the priesthood a year later. By then he had chosen the social causes that occupied him for the rest of his life.

Born in Vienna, Austria, in 1926, Mr. Illich was the son of a Catholic Croatian civil engineer. His mother was a Sephardic Jew and, in 1941, his family was expelled from Croatia because of her Jewish heritage.

Mr. Illich completed his education in Salzburg, Austria; Florence, Italy; and Rome, where he entered a seminary.

As a new priest in 1952 he moved to New York to work in a parish made up primarily of Puerto Ricans. He was named vice rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico four years later.

In 1960, he disputed the local bishop, James McManus, who forbade local Catholics to vote for a gubernatorial candidate who was a proponent of state-funded birth control. Mr. Illich defended their right to exercise their freedom of conscience, a fundamental teaching of Catholic ethics.

Denounced by the bishop, he returned to New York to work as a research assistant at Fordham University and founded an early version of the center he later established in Mexico.

His books met with mixed reviews by critics who praised his keen intelligence but complained that his research was selective and one-sided and that he rarely offered alternatives to the social situations he decried.

From 1979 until the end of his life, Mr. Illich worked as a professor on university faculties in Europe and the United States teaching political science, Medieval history, architecture and sociology among other subjects.

Writing about him for America, the Jesuit magazine, in 1967, Fordham University colleague the Rev. Joseph Fitzpatrick noted that Mr. Illich believed in conflict if it helped bring about change.

"He is therefore and always will be a sign of contradiction and a focus of controversy," he wrote.

Mr. Illich never married and had no children.

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Sociologist Ivan Illich Dies at 76

Newsday.com 6.12.2002

By Associated Press

December 4, 2002, 11:12 AM EST

BERLIN — Ivan Illich, a renowned sociologist who protested against the institutionalization of learning and religion, has died, a former university colleague said Wednesday. He was 76.

Illich — best known for his 1971 publication "Deschooling Society" — died Monday in the northern German city of Bremen, where he had lectured in sociology for the past decade, said Johannes Beck, a professor at the university. He did not give the cause of death.

Illich was born in Vienna, Austria in 1926. He was forced to leave school in 1941 under Nazi race laws because of his mother's Jewish ancestry, and went to Italy. There, he studied in Florence and at Rome's Gregorian University before returning to Austria and obtaining a doctorate in history from the University of Salzburg.

He entered the Roman Catholic priesthood and, from 1951 to 1956, served in New York City as an assistant pastor, championing the cause of Puerto Rican immigrants. From 1956 until 1960, he was the deputy rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico.

Still, Illich increasingly rebelled against the church, which he viewed as too bureaucratic. He left the priesthood in 1969, during a period in which he produced his best-known works.

Reflecting his discomfort with organized religion, Illich argued that school made people dumb, and the legal system, rather than providing people with solutions, heightened their frustration.

"This was of course somewhat exaggerated," said Beck. "Illich was a provocateur, someone who sought controversy."

Illich argued that even science was being strangled by institutionalization.

"Science had for him simply usurped the church, and scientists represented nothing other than a secularized priesthood," Beck said.

Details of funeral arrangements and survivors were not immediately available.

NY Times, Dec. 4, 2002

Ivan Illich, 76, Philosopher Who Challenged Status Quo, Is Dead

By DOUGLAS MARTIN (<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/04/obituaries/04ILLI.html>)

Ivan Illich, a onetime Roman Catholic priest who, through a steady flow of books and articles preached counterintuitive sociology to a disquieted baby-boom generation, died on Monday at his home in Bremen, Germany. He was 76.

Celia Samerski, a student of his at the University of Bremen, said the specific cause of death was not known. She said he also had a home in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Mr. Illich was perhaps best known for his 1971 book, "De-Schooling Society," which protested mandatory public education and the institutionalization of learning. Along with works like Paul Goodman's, "Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized Society," published in 1960, it provided grist for a society's growing ambivalence about educational institutions and much else.

Mr. Illich was a priest who thought there were too many priests, a lifelong educator who argued for the end of schools and an intellectual sniper from a perch with a wide view. He argued that hospitals cause more sickness than health, that people would save time if transportation were limited to bicycles and that historians who rely on previously published material perpetuate falsehoods.

His intellectual ordnance of anarchist panache, hatred of bureaucracy, Jesuitic argumentation, deep reverence for the past and watered-down Marxism, was applied to many targets, including relations between the sexes. More often than not, his conclusions were startling: he thought life was better for women in pre-modern times.

Critics often picked holes in his complex, verbose arguments, but not a few hailed them as illuminating critiques of large problems. Anatole Broyard, writing in The New York Times in 1971, said that his nitpicks were "like criticizing the grammar of someone who has just delivered a speech that gave us goose pimples."

But after his 1970's heyday, interest in Mr. Illich's ideas appeared to wane. Speaking invitations declined, and even some that still came dripped with nostalgia: Mayor Jerry Brown of Oakland, who was called Governor Moonbeam when he

was governor of California and consorted with out-of-the-box thinkers like R. Buckminster Fuller and Mr. Illich, invited him to a conference in 2000.

By 1989, Mr. Broyard wrote in an article about winnowing books from his library that he would "especially" discard Mr. Illich's works.

Mr. Illich was born on Sept. 4, 1926, in Vienna. He is survived by two brothers, Micha, of Manhattan, and Sascha, of Nantucket, Mass.

His father, a civil engineer, descended from Dalmatian royalty. His mother was a Sephardic Jew, and Ivan was expelled from a school in Vienna in 1941 because of her background. He went on to study in Florence and Rome and in Salzburg, where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the historian Arnold Toynbee.

Mr. Illich came to the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan in 1952 after being ordained as a priest in Rome. He particularly attended to the needs of Puerto Ricans, helping establish an employment agency among other things. In an interview with The New Yorker magazine in 1970, the Rev. John Connolly, one of his colleagues, called him "their Babe Ruth."

The article said that early in his career as a priest, Father Illich began to criticize the church for "its smugness, its bureaucracy and its chauvinism." But his energy and intellect propelled him to the position of vice rector of the Catholic University of Ponce in Puerto Rico. He was forced out in 1960 for opposing the local bishop's forbidding of Catholics to vote for a governor who advocated state-sponsored birth control.

After being recalled briefly to New York, he was assigned to Cuernavaca, a small city 50 miles west of Mexico City where he established the Intercultural Center for documentation to teach priests and laymen who wanted to become Latin American volunteers.

Mr. Illich's criticisms of church doctrine ranged beyond his advocacy of birth control, and in 1969 he was branded "politically immoral" by the Vatican and left the priesthood.

Among other things, he disagreed with the church policy of increasing the number of priests in Latin America. He believed that the church could be

revived only by lay people, a populist view that he later applied first to education and then to other institutions.

"Illich is not against schools or hospitals as such, but once a certain threshold of institutionalization is reached, schools make people more stupid, while hospitals make them sick," wrote Matthias Finger and Jose Manuel Asu'n in "Adult Education at the Crossroads: Learning Our Way Out" (Zed Books, 2001).

"And more generally, beyond a certain threshold of institutionalized expertise, more experts are they produce the counter effect of what they set out to achieve," they continued.

Mr. Illich's sweeping conclusions struck some readers as too sweeping, and others as plain wrong. Peter Sparkman in The New York Times Book Review in 1971 criticized "De-Schooling Society" as not only "a mind-bending litany of abstraction" but as a distraction from schools' all too real problems. He called it "an exceedingly bad book written by an exceedingly good man."

But Mr. Illich relished surprise, and his ideas almost always did. "We must have a sarcastic readiness for all surprises," he said in The New Yorker interview, "including the ultimate surprise of death."

The Life of Ivan Illich

To the Editor:

Your Dec. 4 obituary of Ivan Illich, the priest, philosopher and historian, failed to capture the essence of this extraordinary man's life – his profound critique of modern assumptions of scarcity and the dehumanizing effects of technological dependency.

Mr. Illich was a deeply spiritual man who embodied in his way of life a radical Christian simplicity. His understanding of the past and his cheerful embrace of suffering set him apart. He called for asceticism and the art of friendship, not "watered-down Marxism" or "anarchist panache."

In a world obsessed with longevity and freedom from pain, Mr. Illich studied and practiced the art of suffering. He was a man of rare genius and classic erudition. He was also a wonderful friend.

JERRY BROWN

Mayor

Oakland, Calif., Dec. 4, 2002

To the Editor,

I read your Dec. 4 obituary of Ivan Illich with disgust. The suggestion that Ivan Illich's life amounted to 76 years of sustained hypocrisy and intellectual terrorism reflects far more about the intellectual and political climate in which we now sadly find ourselves in the U.S. than it does about Ivan's life and work. Any erstwhile rural worker now trapped in one of the world's many sprawling urban slums, any patient suffering from antibiotic-resistant strains of disease, and any student who mortgages his or her life for a B.A. that proves as useless economically as it was costly to procure is suffering from the very ills which Ivan predicted would become the legacy of modernity. How preposterous to suggest that his prescient critiques of so-called development, progress and modernity amount to little more than "intellectual ordnance of anarchist panache"!

Marina Illich, New York

NEWS BRIEFS Dec-10-2002

By Catholic News Service, U.S.

Former priest, social critic Ivan Illich dies at 76

BREMEN, Germany, (CNS) -- Ivan Illich, the former Catholic priest and social critic who spoke against institutionalized religion and formal education, died Dec. 2 in his home in Bremen. He was 76. Although frequently attacked by the right, Illich also frustrated the left by refusing to endorse its socio-political doctrines or announce support of Cuba or China. In Washington, Thomas Quigley, adviser on Latin American affairs for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said, "Ivan Illich was one of the most celebrated, denounced, praised and defamed figures of the mid-20th century American Catholicism -- a gadfly, a charmer, a ruthless critic, and a truly original, if highly unorthodox, figure." Quigley said Illich played a "pivotal role in the opening of the church in Latin America to the church in the United States."
