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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."