

## EDUARDO JORGE ANZORENA, S.J.

It was about three hundred years ago that Eduardo Jorge Anzorena's first American ancestor journeyed from the Basque lands of Spain to Argentina. From Buenos Aires, he traveled inland, crossing the vast western plains of the country and exploring Chile and Peru before returning to Argentina. He settled in Mendoza, a Spanish outpost nestled in the eastern foothills of the Andes Mountains and the capital of a vast frontier province rich with grainfields, orchards, and vineyards. The Anzorena clan prospered there and became part of the local Spanish elite. Some members of the family joined General José de San Martín in the revolutionary upheavals that led to the liberation of Chile and Peru in the early nineteenth century. Later, an Anzorena patriarch, indeed Eduardo Jorge's grandfather, served twice as Mendoza's provincial governor. By this time, the family owned great tracts of land and monopolized the carriage trade between rural Mendoza and Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, some one thousand kilometers away.

Anzorena's father, Rafael, was only thirteen when his own father died. Upon completing high school just a few years later, Rafael left Argentina to study in Europe, where an interest in textile production led him to Italy and Belgium. While studying in Belgium, he met a young German woman named Maria Vecqueray. María was one of sixteen children of a hotel magnate whose establishments spanned Belgium, Holland, and Germany. She was just twenty years old when she married Rafael, the same age as he. French was their common language.

Soon after their marriage, María returned with Rafael to Argentina and to Mendoza, where their first child was born. For Rafael, Mendoza offered security and opportunity; his family had social position and political influence there. But María languished in the hinterland and felt like a foreigner amid the tightly knit Spanish society of the province—all the more so because Rafael's own family seems to have snubbed her. She longed for the more cosmopolitan life of Buenos Aires and begged her husband to move there. By the time their second child was born, just two years later, they had shifted to the capital. This, at least, is how Anzorena understands his parents' momentous decision to abandon Mendoza for Buenos Aires and, consequently, the family's presence there some seventeen years later when, he says, "by accident, I was born." His father, an Anglophile, named him Eduardo Jorge after the English princes who eventually reigned as Edward VIII and George VI. Jorge is the name that stuck.

Jorge's birth on 25 February 1930 coincided with a dramatic reversal of fortunes for the family. Over the years, Rafael Anzorena had found a niche for himself in the Argentinean customs service, rising to the number two position. The family was prosperous and lived in a beautiful house. But Rafael, who Anzorena remembers as being "a little like Don Quixote," ran afoul of the customs chief by refusing to go along with an illicit scheme, so he was fired. There was a court case. And suddenly, says Anzorena, "the family did not have any money."

The Depression was in full swing in Argentina and finding new work was desperately hard. The Anzorenas lost their fine home and moved from place to place. In time, Rafael was able to call upon his training in textile manufacturing to secure a job teaching at the Escuela Industrial (Industrial School) Otto Krause. When Jorge was six, Rafael settled the family in an apartment in the heart of old Buenos Aires, near the presidential palace, the famous Pink House. In this former upper-class enclave, once grand houses had been subdivided into one-room apartments with shared kitchens and toilets; they now housed the working poor and a motley community of struggling newcomers from Italy, Germany, and Spain. This cauldron of heterogeneity and ambition formed the social world of Anzorena's youth.

There are hints of sadness in Anzorena's recollections of his mother Maria. He remembers that she said very little and, having few friends, devoted herself quietly to their small family circle. (They remained estranged from the Mendoza Anzorenas until Jorge himself was sixteen.) She was kind and doted on her youngest son. Anzorena credits her for teaching him how to be still and listen. By contrast, his father was exuberant and spontaneous, a social man with many friends, whose temper could swing this way or that at a moment's notice. Rafael's sudden rages sent young Jorge scurrying to the safe embrace of his mother. But Jorge knew that such rages passed quickly and remembers the indulgent love of both his parents—all the more so because for most of his childhood, he was virtually an only child. By the time he was eight, both his older siblings had fled the nest, his sister to marry, his brother to join the Jesuits.

Anzorena's first school was the Juan José Paso Elementary School, a public school for boys and girls about half a kilometer from his home. After three years, he moved to another elementary school called José Alsina, also within easy walking distance from home. In these early days, he says, he was only an average student: "Laziness, I suppose." But he loved the camaraderie of the playground and his friends, most of whom were poor. Something of his father's gregarious nature must have rubbed off on him. In his final year at José Alsina, his classmates voted him "Best Friend."

At the age of twelve, Anzorena's father presented him with a choice. There were two public high schools in the area, one offering a liberal arts curriculum rooted in the humanities, the other specializing in industrial arts. The latter was Industrial School Otto Krause, where his

father was an instructor and where his older brother had studied mechanics and already graduated. A certain technical bent seemed to run in the family. (Anzorena's older sister claimed the distinction of being the first woman from Mendoza to become an architect.) Anzorena concluded that he, too, "liked this type of thing" and chose Otto Krause, an academically prestigious school favored by ambitious boys whose immigrant's spoken Spanish bore the telltale inflections of Greece, Lebanon, Austria, and other lands of origin. He struggled to pass its difficult entrance examination and, on the second try, succeeded.

At Industrial School Otto Krause, incoming students were plunged immediately into the world of machinery. The curriculum was overwhelmingly technical. Little attention was devoted to literature, philosophy, or music. Mathematics was emphasized—a good thing for Anzorena because this was a subject that came easily to him. The school day was long, with laboratories all morning, then formal classes in the afternoon, followed by workshops in practical skills such as metal working, carpentry, construction, and machine mechanics until six in the evening. Anzorena attended Industrial School Otto Krause for seven years, until he was nineteen. It was a rigorous education and, he says, it "occupied most of my time."

During those same years, however, Anzorena also threw himself into a busy whirl of Catholic youth activities. His older brother Mario had followed this path before him, but it was really his father Rafael who drew him in. Up to the age of twelve or so, Jorge had not known his father to be a particularly religious man. It was his mother who was conspicuously devout and who went to church "practically every day." But as a result of an argument he had with an impressive Irish Jesuit (just about the time Jorge entered high school), Rafael Anzorena became deeply engaged with the church. He began recruiting friends for religious retreats and led the family circle nightly in praying the rosary. He also became active in the church's lay social service organization called Catholic Action and encouraged his son to join the youth wing. The organization soon absorbed virtually all of Jorge's out-of-school life.

Anzorena was still a young teenager when he joined Catholic Action and it gave a practical focus to his youthful energy and idealism. He still remembers a national Catholic Action youth rally in 1943 and the thrill, at age thirteen, of standing together with thousands of other young people who were dedicating themselves to changing society for the better. The feeling of solidarity was especially meaningful because, he says, among his fellow students very few were practicing Catholics: "In fifty, we were only two or three." He joined his parish Catholic Action group in organizing soccer and basketball games for young people.

At age fifteen, when he rose to the club's senior section and was named parish vice-president, he also became head of the junior section. He planned and ran regular meetings, checking up on absent members by visiting them at home; he organized games, social gather-

ings, and fund-raising activities. With other members of the leadership council, he brooded about how to do better. "I remember," he says, "sometimes at night, we would walk along the river discussing problems and saying, 'What can we do?'"

A telling moment for Anzorena arrived when Catholic Action youths were enlisted to peddle the organization's newspaper. He was well aware of his family's upper-class origins and of its struggle to maintain middle-class respectability during the lean years. (Things had improved somewhat by this time.) In their social milieu, hawking newspapers was degrading, the work of the poor. At first, he admits, "I was ashamed to go to the street and sell one newspaper."

There were other awkward moments. Sometime after he assumed the vice-presidency, for example, he learned that one reason for his ascension was that several of the club's more senior leaders had been expelled for attending a dance party during Lent. Yet, he carried on with zeal, taking on more responsibility with each passing year. In the process, he absorbed painful revelations about life in the slums that would shape his future work. One such was the night he went to the home of a classmate from Otto Krause whom he was helping with his lessons; he arrived to find that the home consisted of nothing more than a single tiny room, which the boy shared with his mother.

By the time Anzorena graduated from Industrial School Otto Krause, he was head of the Youth Catholic Action in his parish and was being tapped for the national leadership. He declined, however, in order to embark upon the life vocation he had chosen. He would follow his brother as a Jesuit priest.

Anzorena remembers the first glimmer of this ambition. It occurred during a family holiday to visit his brother Mario. Mario had already entered the Jesuit order and was undergoing his novitiate in the Argentinean city of Córdoba. Anzorena was thirteen or so, and he was charmed. "My brother was young and all his companions were young, and it was the time of summer vacation," he says. Watching their games and camaraderie, he saw that they were happy and he thought, "This is something worth doing, something meaningful." Later he confided to his father, "I like this type of life."

A year or two later, one of Mario's friends invited Jorge to attend a summer camp for boys who were "thinking of the Jesuits." He longed to go. But Mario prevailed against the idea, fearing that his impressionable younger brother was being rushed in a direction that, on more mature reflection, he might not desire to go. Mario intervened in a similar fashion when a friendly priest encouraged Jorge at the age of sixteen to transfer to a pre-Jesuit preparatory academy in Santa Fe. Jorge himself was ambivalent. His father decided the matter by insisting that he finish his degree at Industrial School Otto Krause.

Meanwhile, Anzorena entertained other ambitions. He thought about engineering, his father's field, and about architecture, which he had

heard about from his sister. He remembers a Jewish school friend who encouraged him to take up chemistry. He considered this seriously until his mother imposed a moratorium on his kitchen-sink chemistry experiments, which, she complained, smelled up the house. An ambition that out-rivaled all of these, however, was that of becoming a naval officer; he even arranged to take the navy's pre-enlistment physical examination. Increasingly preoccupied with Catholic Action and the church, however, he eventually had second thoughts about such a career.

Anzorena crowned his career at Industrial School Otto Krause with an ambitious thesis in which he designed an entire earthquake-resistant housing project. Then, in another act that foreshadowed his work years later, he enrolled in a yearlong course on reinforced-concrete construction methods, again at Otto Krause. By the time he finished, he was twenty years old and the die was cast. Straightaway he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Córdoba.

At Córdoba's Facultad de Estudios Humanísticos (Faculty of Humanistic Studies), Anzorena was suddenly awash in the humanities. He studied Latin and Greek. He read poetry and novels. He learned to write essays and letters and how to express himself orally. After eight years in the laboratories and machine workshops of Otto Krause, this was a new world and he found it liberating. Training in the humanities, he now says, taught him how to unravel the knots of indecision that constantly plagued him. Through characters in novels and plays, he found a way vicariously to tap the experience and wisdom of people in a variety of life roles—playboys, married folk, and priests—and of people like Hamlet, who agonized over personal decisions. He learned that expressing his thoughts in writing helped him to “clarify my mind and heart” and began a lifelong habit of self-reflection through writing. (“Every one or two years,” he says now, “I have doubts about everything. Then I need to write.”)

At about the same time, Anzorena also developed a technique of self-analysis through drawing, using shapes and colors to expose and sort out his true thoughts and feelings. “I don't know if this is praying or not,” he says, “but I have my drawings every day.”

Certain exercises at the Facultad de Estudios Humanísticos were designed to help Anzorena and the other young seminarians think through the teachings of the church. They were assigned to write a new catechism and a new missal, for example. Other activities prepared them for their future vocations. They engaged in social work in hospitals, schools, and poor neighborhoods and performed exercises in self-reliance, such as going without money for a week and toiling in a factory.

Having completed his baccalaureate in Córdoba, Anzorena moved with his cohort to San Miguel University in Buenos Aires to study philosophy. He describes the next few years of rigorous intellectual probing as extremely important to “unifying myself” and to “finding out what

things are essential in man and what things are not.” A certain Father Fiorito, one of his philosophy teachers, led him, he says, to “a deeper relation with reality.”

Anzorena and his fellow seminarians confronted one truly shocking episode of reality during their first year at San Miguel. In Argentina, this was the age of Juan Domingo Perón. An army man, Perón had been elected president in 1946. Anzorena had come of age under his hypernationalistic dictatorship, which mimicked European Fascism. Perón forged his power base by mobilizing Argentina’s “shirtless” workers and trade unionists against the country’s traditional Establishment, including the senior clergy. For many years, the church provided one of the few safe havens for those who opposed the dictator, but in 1954 Perón suddenly struck against it. Anzorena well remembers the morning when he awoke to find that most of his teachers had been arrested during the night. Indeed, priests were taken into custody throughout Argentina and churches put to the torch. San Miguel’s young seminarians quickly changed from their cassocks to street clothes and dispersed to safe houses where, in small groups, they carried on their studies until the danger lifted a few months later. This assault on the church inflamed anti-Perón sentiments and contributed to his overthrow the following year. (During this crisis, Anzorena’s father Rafael suffered a stroke that left him half-paralyzed for the rest of his life.)

All through these years, Anzorena had been pondering his vocation as a Jesuit, including the prospect of becoming a missionary. He was especially alert to appeals by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit provincial in Japan, to join the order’s mission there. Arrupe believed that in this period of reawakening, following Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, lay a great opportunity for Christian conversion. Anzorena’s uncle (his mother’s older brother) was serving as a Jesuit missionary in Japan, so the family already harbored an interest in the country. As early as the first year of his novitiate in 1951, Anzorena had written his superiors to say, “If you want to send me to Japan, I am willing to go.”

Anzorena was advised to carry on with his training. But in subsequent years, as he studied in Córdoba and San Miguel, he kept the possibility of Japan alive in his mind and pondered it during annual religious retreats. He kept writing to his superiors and he kept being told, “This is a good idea, but you should wait.” (In fact, the Argentinean province itself was in great need of priests.)

When Anzorena finished his master’s degree in 1957, he was assigned to teach mathematics at El Salvador High School in Buenos Aires. For the next two years, he was busy teaching classes and tutoring and advising the Jesuit school’s many young men. He enjoyed it. At the same time, he studied German. Toward the end of his teaching assignment, Anzorena wrote one last time to his superiors on the subject of Japan. He was now twenty-nine and, this time, they said yes.

Anzorena was happy but his family was not. When given a choice between serving in China or Japan, he naturally chose Japan—not only

because Japan had been his hope all along, but also because his mother's brother was already there. This would make his absence easier for the family. The Argentinean Jesuits were familiar with stories about Jesuit missionaries who had returned to Argentina in frustration. When Anzorena told his companions of his decision to go to Japan, they joked, "Yes, Jorge, you go. But please don't come back."

His future direction now clear, Anzorena says, "I was scared to death." One immediate problem was English. Anzorena had studied the language in school, but "only enough to pass the examinations." His reading in theology and philosophy had led him instead to develop his French and German, since it was in these languages that he found the most innovative and interesting thinking. Now, however, English was essential. True, he would soon be learning Japanese, but he would have to learn it *through* English. He wrote Fr. Arrupe asking for advice. Arrupe answered, "You study all the English you want but be here in March." It was already December. Anzorena began practicing frantically with an English professor and borrowed one of his language-learning records for home study. He listened to it earnestly as he shaved, brushed his teeth, and before retiring, until one day he fell asleep with the phonograph still playing and ruined the record.

Anzorena's Jesuit province had only enough money to buy him a ticket to Los Angeles. From there, it was up to him to make his way to Japan. In Los Angeles, Anzorena was assisted by a certain Fr. Thomas Sullivan, who was busy raising funds to build a Jesuit house and school in Hiroshima, Japan. Sullivan introduced Anzorena to his circle of friends, for whom an Argentinean was something of a curiosity. Some of them openly wondered why he was fair-skinned and not dark. Anzorena put his primitive English to the test, sometimes provoking laughter because, he says, "I couldn't distinguish between *he* and *she*, *pea* and *pie*, *sheet* and *shit*." Moreover, he often could not understand what people were saying. But by listening intently to the radio and trying to write down the first letter of each word that he heard, he gradually taught himself to hear the language. Meanwhile, through Father Sullivan, Anzorena met the hotel magnate Conrad Hilton, and it was Hilton who paid for his ticket to Japan.

Because mastering the language was so critical to success for foreigners in Japan, the Jesuits provided two years of training for new recruits to the province. Anzorena now settled into the former submarine-base town of Yokosuka, south of Tokyo along Tokyo Bay, where the order's language school was appended to a local Jesuit high school. Under the direction of a strict German rector, he and several American and Spanish trainees embarked upon Japanese, "starting from zero." Anzorena found the whole situation strange. Aside from the new language and the novel surroundings, there were his classmates whose backgrounds and ideas also took some knowing. He spent his two years in Yokosuka, he says, "trying to understand my companions and trying to express myself as much as possible."

Since their textbook was in Japanese and the best dictionary was Japanese-to-English, and since he had barely begun to master English, Anzorena was compelled to resort to an English-to-Spanish dictionary to ferret out the meaning of new words. The time passed, he says, in a haze of “Japanese, English, and Spanish.” Eager to learn the language quickly, he threw himself precipitously into conversations with people he encountered in the street. In this way he made teachers of nearly everyone he met.

In his third year in Japan, Anzorena moved to Meiji University in Tokyo, where he joined a bachelor’s degree program in architecture. Because of his earlier degrees and some prior architectural training in Argentina, he was permitted to enter in the third year. Instruction was completely in Japanese. By his own admission, he was still “in kindergarten” where the language was concerned. He found the classes extremely difficult and occasionally embarrassing. One of his instructors would sometimes interrupt his lecture to ask, “Jorge, do you understand what I am saying?” Anzorena was reluctant to answer yes, since he feared the professor would then ask, “And what, exactly, do you understand?” So he usually answered by saying something like, “Would you mind repeating that?” The professor would oblige and, afterwards, when Anzorena said, “Yes, I understand,” the professor would say, “Then I am happy, because if you understand it everyone will understand it.”

The experience was humbling in another way. In Argentina and other overtly Catholic countries, priests and seminarians are habitually respected. In Japan, Jesuits are respected as teachers. For the time being, however, Anzorena had no status other than that of student, and not a very good student at that. Being stripped of his importance, he says, helped him to develop an appreciation for Japanese culture as someone “beginning from below.” In time, this perspective also colored his thinking about Christianity and his role as a missionary.

As for his choice of architecture, it is true that the local Jesuits needed someone to help design churches, schools, and the like. But for Anzorena, architecture was also a path “to understanding the people with whom I would be working for the rest of my life.” Like food and flower arranging, Japanese architecture provided what Anzorena calls shortcuts into the culture. By understanding how the Japanese built things and how they arranged themselves in towns and cities, and by knowing their sense of space and beauty, he gained insights into the more elusive aspects of Japanese culture and society.

Anzorena finished his bachelor’s degree in architecture in 1964 and devoted the next four years to the study of theology at Sophia University. He was ordained as a priest in 1968. Afterwards, he began teaching at Sophia and simultaneously embarked once again upon the study of architecture. He completed a master’s degree in architectural engineering in 1970 and his doctorate in 1973, both at Tokyo University, Japan’s premier seat of higher learning. During these many years,



Anzorena happily acclimatized himself to the culture of his adopted land. He also pondered what it meant to be a Christian missionary. For some missionaries, he noted, the key task was converting people. For others it was educating them. For someone like Mother Teresa, it was assisting the destitute and dying. "For myself," he had decided, "it was learning."

When it came to Christianity, Anzorena found that many thoughtful Japanese were "not convinced." This was troubling because he found many of these very same people to be "beautiful people, moral and generous people." "I am Christian," he said to himself, "yet they are much better than I am. How can these people be so good and not be Christian? What is wrong?"

What was wrong, he concluded, was his own narrow understanding of Christianity based on his spiritual formation in Argentina. There was obviously something deeper at work among the Japanese that defied expression in the conventional vocabulary of the church. For years now, Anzorena had been encoding and interpreting his own deep feelings using colors, with the color yellow signifying love, joy, and service. ("If I express the Gospel in color," he says, "it is the color yellow.") This method of expressing feelings nonverbally now yielded a breakthrough. The Japanese "didn't understand my words," he says. "But they understood my colors."

"If a person accepts the color of life and love more than others," Anzorena concluded finally, "he already believes in something." This was true irrespective of any person's formal religious identity. Accordingly, he came to understand his role as a missionary in terms of discovering the "yellow" in other people and "helping this yellow to grow."

Japan provided other lessons as well, some of which came from his students at Sophia University. As an instructor in the sociology department, Anzorena taught subjects such as "Space and Society" and "Human Problems." New-style courses like these had replaced traditional ones such as religion, ethics, and philosophy, following the student revolution of the late 1960s. Instruction at Japanese universities is extremely formal. As a general rule, teachers do not address questions to students. Nor do students address questions to teachers, especially in the classroom. Anzorena found this system frustrating. As a new teacher in Japan (teaching, he says, "what *I* felt was very important"), he concluded that his students had no interest whatsoever in what he was saying. After about half a year of this, one day he stopped teaching in mid-class and told the students, "I cannot teach you if you are not interested." From then on, he told them, *they* would decide what to study and with whom they would study it; class members would form small groups and meet wherever they wanted. "And then," he told them, "I will listen to *you*."

Soon mini-seminars were taking place in coffee shops, on the campus lawn, and in the house where Anzorena lived with other Jesuits. When students failed to prepare something ahead of time, he says, "We

would spend ten minutes, fifteen minutes in silence. I would not say anything. But the next class would be a very good one.” Despite awkward moments, the experiment succeeded. He repeated it year after year, improving it by taking his students’ suggestions to heart. Anzorena preferred teaching like this because it placed the responsibility for learning squarely upon the students. “It created a framework in which they could develop their own qualities,” he says. “The moment the students changed from passive to active, things began to change.” This was a lesson he would carry with him into new endeavors later on.

Anzorena developed an easy rapport with his students at Sophia University. When some of them began congregating regularly at his office, he entrusted them with a key. Soon they were making themselves at home at all hours, even tidying up for him in the mornings before he arrived. He found he had much to learn from them. “I didn’t know about the Beatles,” he says. “But they said, ‘If you don’t know about the Beatles, there is something wrong.’ They always tried to put me in contact with reality—their reality.” Since Anzorena was both an instructor at Sophia and a student at Tokyo University, he was often torn between the good company of his students and the demands of the architecture curriculum. When it came time to write his doctoral dissertation, he resolved this dilemma by making his students at Sophia the subject of his thesis.

Anzorena had long been fascinated by the concept of space and by the disposition of space in institutions, particularly universities. His master’s degree thesis in architecture had explored this problem in European universities between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries. He now proposed to study how his students perceived Sophia University in terms of space and, through this, how their development was being influenced by the physical layout of the institution.

Thirty young people became his willing collaborators and from them he learned a useful methodology. Invented by Japanese management guru Jiro Kawakita, it enables people with widely varying opinions to achieve consensus by sharing their feelings in highly structured group exercises. As an example, Anzorena cites the question: What do you feel about Professor Anzorena’s office? “The girls would say, ‘When I am in the office, I feel safe.’ Or the boys would say, ‘I can use the tissue or use the telephone or leave my boots.’ Or, ‘I can leave a message.’” Using Kawakita’s method, statements like these—many hundreds of them—became building blocks for an analysis of how the design of a university affects the way students learn there. Anzorena’s student collaborators became so engaged in the exercises that they often worked late into the night. Their contribution was amply documented in the finished product and up till now, Anzorena says, former students still approach him and say, “I was in your doctorate.” Reflecting on his successful thesis and its relation to his later work on low-cost housing, Anzorena comments, “My work is always the work of others.”

Shortly after finishing his doctorate, Anzorena departed for Germany to engage in a period of reflection before taking his final vows as a Jesuit. For some time now, his Jesuit companions in Japan had been discussing the new orientations of the Roman Catholic Church introduced under Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council of 1962, particularly the Option for the Poor. Anzorena was stirred by this new interpretation of the Gospel and by images of Christ among the destitute. In Berlin, he reflected on the Option for the Poor and on his own life in Japan, which, he readily admits, "was a little luxurious." Upon returning to Asia, he arranged to visit Calcutta where Mother Teresa, a Catholic nun, was working among India's poorest-of-the-poor. "I wanted to find out," he says, "where Christ is over there."

Anzorena spent one month working side by side with Mother Teresa's Missionary Brothers of Charity in the slums of Calcutta. Unable to speak a word of the local vernacular, he became a mute volunteer, bathing, feeding, and giving medicines to victims of the most degrading poverty. Yet, even as he experienced the sublimity of helping the helpless, something troubled him. For people who were *not* absolutely helpless, he decided, it is important to remain mindful of the human capacity for taking responsibility. And he concluded that, for him, it would be better to try and help people with the understanding that they can do things for themselves.

Nevertheless, Calcutta was a turning point. Here amid the squalor of one of Asia's poorest cities, and at the age of forty-four, he encountered, says Anzorena, "a Christ who is dirty, a Christ who lacks education, a Christ who is unpleasant but at the same time very attractive." Thinking of his recently acquired doctorate in architecture, he asked himself, "What is the meaning of all my education for these people? It doesn't mean anything." "From that moment," he says, "I tried to find out how to combine the priesthood, architecture, and working for the poor."

Solving this problem led Anzorena more or less directly to the issue of shelter. Soon after returning to his teaching post at Sophia University, he began to contact fellow Jesuits who were involved in housing for the poor. Through Denis Murphy and William Keyes in the Philippines, he learned about a dynamic group of activists who were building low-cost housing in Latin America. Faced with wrenching questions about "whether their efforts to improve the quality of housing might be just a palliative, distracting people from the need to radically change the unjust structures of society," says Anzorena, these individuals had begun meeting together to share their experiences and points of view. A key figure was Josse van der Rest, a Belgian Jesuit based in Chile who led Servicio Latino Americano y Asiático de Vivienda Popular (Latin American and Asian Low-Income Housing Service, or SELAVIP). In a key meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1975 attended by Keyes and Murphy, these activists concluded that building low-cost housing and building

effective community organizations could be mutually reinforcing activities. Reading a report of the meeting, Anzorena thought, "This is something that might work."

At about the same time, Anzorena accepted an invitation from Denis Murphy to visit the Philippines, where Murphy was organizing a study of housing-related people's organizations in Asia in affiliation with the Jesuit's Manila-based Office of Human Development (OHD). In nearby Dasmariñas, Cavite, Keyes was busy assisting four thousand evicted squatter families to build homes on a government-allocated resettlement site.

Anzorena joined Keyes in Cavite. Contrary to most housing projects for the poor—in which professional contractors did the building—Keyes's approach assumed that the settlers would build their own homes. And it encouraged them to do so in the way they knew best—as Keyes says, "in the way a poor man builds," i.e. in fits and starts as money becomes available (without long-term financing), using their own and borrowed labor and the cheapest materials available. Through his organization, Freedom to Build, Keyes ran a store selling low-cost building materials such as secondhand lumber and low-grade corrugated-iron roofing. He set up a fabricating shop where settlers could buy windows, doors, and wall panels cheaply. And, for the cost of gasoline and a driver, he lent out the organization's truck and delivery van to carry building materials and to serve in funerals. Freedom to Build also offered basic technical assistance and encouraged the Dasmariñas settlers to participate in savings schemes. (Anzorena later arranged for a group of Japanese architecture students to spend several weeks at the site.)

Anzorena relished the company of the Dasmariñas home builders and admired their pragmatism and hopefulness. In Keyes and Murphy, he found kindred spirits. They showed him how professionals like himself could assist the poor as catalysts, without assuming the domineering roles that members of the better-off classes usually adopt when "helping the underprivileged."

Toward the end of Anzorena's visit to the Philippines, he was invited by Murphy's OHD group to join a discussion with Keyes and others about the Asian Cities Program. A brainchild of Murphy's, this new Jesuit initiative was chaired by Fr. John Dykstra, a Dutch-born Jesuit serving in Indonesia. The project aimed to create links among poverty-oriented housing initiatives in cities throughout Asia. Someone was needed to visit the far-flung projects and to build bridges among the most effective and dedicated leaders. When this problem came up, says Keyes, "all eyes focused on Anzorena." Keyes remembers that Anzorena initially demurred. "I've worked for years attempting to master Japanese," he said. "It will be useless in these cities." But Dykstra insisted, saying, "Well, Jorge, we all make sacrifices." To take up the work, Anzorena required a leave of absence from Sophia University. When the Jesuit provincial in Japan gave his permission, Anzorena gladly

accepted. Thus began a pattern that persists until now. Half of each year, Anzorena teaches at Sophia University. The other half, he travels throughout Asia and immerses himself in working with the Asian poor.

In his new position, Anzorena maintained close ties with the Latin American housing advocacy group SELAVIP. Through a foundation endowed by Fr. Josse van der Rest, heir to an asbestos fortune, SELAVIP provided funds to assist low-cost, low-income housing projects throughout Latin America. It now asked Anzorena to identify projects worthy of support in Asia and to refer them to SELAVIP for possible funding. As Anzorena plunged in, he was curious to find out what worked and what did not. "So I began to move around," he says.

The shelter crisis he confronted was but one cruel aspect of Asia's systemic poverty. To begin with, a large percentage of the region's rural population lived below the poverty line. In India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines, legions of landless agricultural workers and village artisans shared overcrowded rooms with their relatives or occupied crude makeshift huts in fields or wastelands. They often lacked the barest of humane amenities, including privacy. For them, the economy of the countryside yielded a life of grim subsistence and often less. Hoping for a better life, millions shifted to the cities.

By the 1970s, floods of rural-to-urban migrants were everywhere overwhelming the ability of governments to provide adequate infrastructure and services. In the largest cities, millions of first-generation urbanites engulfed old city neighborhoods, turning them into "slums." They lived from hand to mouth in ubiquitous ad hoc squatter camps wherever vacant space could be occupied, almost always illegally. They seized pavements and walkways and camped out beside city dumps. They lived along the railroad tracks, in abandoned lots and idle construction sites, beneath bridges, and in precarious shacks overhanging filthy rivers and drainage canals. In these neighborhoods they made homes from discarded scraps of wood, metal, cardboard, and plastic and lived without electricity, sanitation, or regular water supply, and often without access to education or even the most rudimentary health care.

Throughout Asia, governments staggered to impose some order upon this unplanned explosion of destitute citizens and to provide minimal services. Virtually everywhere, they failed. Meanwhile, many once ad hoc urban shanty towns came to function as established communities. But when these same governments faced demands from landowners, real estate developers, and contractors to replace these neighborhoods of the unwelcome poor with upscale housing projects and shopping malls, they often responded by evicting the occupants—thus adding to the legions of already homeless people in town and country.

"It was housing for the really poor that interested me," says Anzorena. Working through the networks of Jesuit friends and others, he contacted people who were operating in the most impoverished areas of Asia. He was soon at home among the rural poor of Gujarat and Bali and in the slums of Karachi, Ahmedabad, and New Delhi, as well as those of

Bangkok, Jakarta, and Seoul. "I discovered that if you keep visiting the slums," he says, "little by little you will find the most relevant and committed people."

But Anzorena also sought out experts in large organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations and people in universities and government who were involved in low-income housing projects. Everywhere he went, he looked for effective innovations, especially for self-help and mutual-help projects that worked. Soon, he says, "I began to find out what happens when people build a house together."

Traveling from slum to slum and from project to project, Anzorena naturally shared what he learned from people working in one place with those working in another. This sort of networking proved useful to his ever-widening band of contacts, for whom Anzorena soon became a ready source of fresh ideas gleaned from this project or that. In his first year with SELAVIP, Anzorena launched the *SELAVIP Newsletter* through which he communicated the best of these ideas to subscribers throughout Asia and Latin America. He also began participating in conferences where like-minded housing activists shared ideas and concerns face-to-face. One early example was a "rolling seminar" he organized with Ahmedabad-based Kirtee Shah, which brought representatives from people's housing groups together for discussions with government officials in four Indian cities, one after the other. One of Anzorena's housing correspondents from Nepal, fellow architect Ramesh Manandhar, traveled several hundred miles by bus to attend the meeting in Hyderabad.

The people Anzorena was now meeting were engaged across a wide battlefield. Some concentrated on improving life in existing city slums by helping people acquire needed services and infrastructure and the rights of occupancy. Others worked to prevent evictions and the demolition of established squatter communities. Others helped evictees to resettle elsewhere. Still others focused on providing inexpensive housing for the rural homeless, for stigmatized groups like Japan's *burakumin*, for victims of modernization such as Hong Kong's boat people, or for people left suddenly homeless by typhoons, earthquakes, and floods.

Since the problem of housing was everywhere embedded in the larger problem of poverty, addressing the shelter crisis invariably involved finding new ways for poor people to afford putting a simple roof over their heads. And since it was very much a *public* problem in which the law, politics, and public resources all played a significant role, addressing the shelter crisis also involved constant interaction with government. (As his fellow Jesuit and housing activist John Daly remarked, "if all the requirements [of the Seoul building code] were followed to the letter, it would be impossible to build houses for slum evictees.") It was bewildering. Anzorena's approach to making sense of it all was, as always, to learn from others.

In Ahmedabad, he saw how Kirtee Shah was mobilizing a group of Indian designers, planners, economists, doctors, and social workers to

improve upon government schemes for the rural homeless. Through their nongovernmental organization (NGO) called the Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), they were assisting thousands of poor Gujarati villagers to build cheaper, better, and environmentally sound mud homes. Unlike earlier government-initiated programs that had failed, their approach involved the participation of villagers in every vital stage of the project, from selecting house sites to designing, building, and maintaining the new houses, as well as financing them. Sanitation and livelihood programs complemented house building, making ASAG's impact comprehensive.

In Bali, Anzorena saw how Robi Sularti and the Building Information Centre were guiding a self-help house-building project in the wake of an earthquake in 1976, which destroyed 85,000 houses and 350 temples and mosques. By providing technical and environmental advice, by initiating community-based credit schemes, and by drawing villagers into dialogues with officials and aid agencies, Sularti and his group helped the Balinese disaster victims build four thousand new housing units in just six months. In three years, 90 percent of the destroyed homes had been rebuilt.

In Sri Lanka, Anzorena met Fr. Theodore Pieris and Sr. Angela Pieris. In the country's rugged highlands, Anzorena saw how their Interdenominational Community Service Organization was helping the landless poor to make good on an inadequately funded government program that provided people house lots but not the resources to actually build a house. Father Pieris raised money from the local Rotary Club and organized the beneficiaries into mutual-aid teams. Mostly women and girls, they helped each other build the new homes using materials subsidized by Pieris. Sister Angela joined them daily, leveling building sites on the hillside with picks and shovels, manufacturing cement blocks, and assembling the houses. By working side by side toward a common goal, the women formed bonds with each other and with Sister Angela that led to other mutual-aid activities such as a child care center, a health clinic, and a sewing circle. In these ways, as Anzorena was learning, building houses was simply part of "building the community."

In Papua New Guinea, he met Hugh Norwood. From him, Anzorena learned how a self-help, house-building program for indigent migrants in Port Moresby succeeded, despite the fact that its participants were extremely poor and came from diverse tribes. And he learned how other government-led programs had foundered, even though the participants were homogeneous and better off.

In Seoul, South Korea, he saw how John Daly and his partner Paul Jei were leading a community of 170 families from the slum from which they had been evicted to a new housing site purchased with a grant from the German Catholic helping agency Misereor. In the new village, Bogum Jahri, the evictees labored together night and day for five months in order to finish the houses before the cold of winter. Until the inner

and outer walls and the roof of each one were finished, no one knew who would occupy which house. This was then determined by lot, so that, as John Daly remarked, “everyone felt *we built these houses, this village.*” Even so, it was Daly and Jei who planned the evacuation; found the money for the new village; selected the participants; acquired the necessary licenses, permits, and signatures; and managed the entire construction process—a fact as sobering for them as it was for Anzorena.

In Bangkok, Anzorena saw how Shlomo Angel and Paul Chamniern of the Asian Institute of Technology formed a not-for-profit company to engage Thailand’s urban poor in becoming producers of their own low-cost housing. Angel and Chamniern’s Building Together Company selected families on the basis not only of need but also of their willingness to commit labor and household earnings to the project. It then divided them into clusters of future neighbors who collaborated in all stages of construction and, moreover, pledged to meet their amortization payments as a group. The participants, together with the company, also built commercial shops, which they sold to pay for community infrastructure. In this way, they produced not only homes for themselves but also capital assets. In designing the row-house community, Angel and Chamniern received design assistance from Thailand’s Asian Institute of Technology and used prefabrication techniques developed for low-cost housing in the Philippines. As in Bogum Jahri, they also mobilized grants from foreign donors to complement local funds available through a government-housing bank.

And in Bombay, Anzorena saw how an NGO called PROUD was organizing four hundred thousand residents of Dharavi slum to remove garbage and filthy drain water from their neighborhoods and to add proper latrines and a clean water system and electricity.

Moving through Asia, Anzorena became like a bee that carries pollen from flower to flower. From Keyes in the Philippines to Sularti in Indonesia. From Sularti to Kirtee Shah in Gujarat. Then, to Ramesh Manandar in Nepal and Theodore Pieris in Sri Lanka and Shlomo Angel in Thailand and Paul Jei in Korea. And so on. Rather quickly, Anzorena’s chain of contacts became a chain of friends and grew to include hundreds of people. “What I did,” he says, “was give all the information I had to everybody I met.” But Anzorena also methodically recorded his observations and reported the success stories in his newsletter, so that the news traveled far beyond his own ever-widening circle.

By constantly learning about new projects and approaches and by staying in touch with “the most relevant and committed people,” Anzorena soon developed his own insights about how to improve housing for Asia’s poor. In an essay written four years after beginning his work for SELAVIP, he concluded that “participation is difficult but necessary.” His experience had confirmed that well-meaning programs executed by government and aid agencies invariably failed if the intended beneficiaries were not involved actively in the process. But, as he had also come to realize, involving beneficiaries was much easier said than done.



To begin with, most professionals like himself as well as the vast majority of the region's officials had little or no direct knowledge of poverty. Even officials engaged routinely in the relief of poverty, a great many of them shared certain negative stereotypes about the poor: they were ignorant; they were unruly; they were a nuisance. These attitudes easily became obstacles to collaboration, as did the byzantine workings of government itself: building codes, licensing procedures, documentation requirements, zoning regulations. Compounding such problems were the attitudes of the poor. Conditioned by a Hobbesian world of extreme dearth, they tended to be distrustful of outsiders and especially of government as well as of each other. Shame, too, disinclined them to join programs involving regular interaction with better-off outsiders. In addition, the struggle to subsist and the detrimental effects of malnutrition and exposure to the elements robbed the poor of leisure time and energy—yet building houses required both of these. For well-trained and self-confident professionals faced with such vexing complexities—all the more so, highly dedicated ones—it was well-nigh irresistible not to just take over and *get the job done*.

Yet Anzorena concluded that this was almost always a mistake. The shelter crisis, after all, was just one component of the larger crisis of poverty. Solving this crisis involved not only an economic transformation but also a sociopolitical one as well. This, Anzorena believed, required communities of poor people to organize and to act positively on their own behalf. People's participation in low-income housing projects helped them to do this.

So, what did happen “when people build a house together”? Many good things, said Anzorena. They gained self-esteem and learned to put aside intergroup hostility and prejudice. They learned to recognize and appreciate natural leaders within their midst, as well as gifted organizers, artisans, and peacemakers. Families became stronger. Women were freed from ingrained patterns of subordination and exploitation. Moreover, as old habits of mistrust died away, people learned new habits of cooperation and mutual support. And these new habits of cooperation and mutual support led, in turn, to new levels of community endeavor to achieve better livelihoods, better education, better health, a better environment, and even better government—indeed, Anzorena concluded, a “stronger, more democratic government.”

People's participation was definitely worth the effort. How then to make it work? Here, the projects of Anzorena's far-flung friends offered many lessons.

There were many participants in the effort to house the poor. These included government agencies, academic institutions, and the NGO community of service and voluntary organizations and religious groups, as well as a wide array of foreign donors. Donors ranged from United Nations agencies and other large, highly bureaucratized organizations

(including foreign government aid agencies) to private foundations and helping organizations such as Misereor and SELAVIP. Although each type of organization had a role to play, and often an essential one, it was important to coordinate their efforts carefully. "When there are too many agencies involved, with too many goals," Anzorena found, "the community itself is liable to become overburdened and confused."

In successful programs, he noticed, NGOs often played a critical role mediating between complex and potentially overwhelming outside forces and the target communities, as John Daly and Paul Jei's group was doing in Bogum Jahri. He also observed that programs designed for relatively small groups of people (or for subsections of a large one) were the ones that prospered. NGOs excelled at this, too, whereas government agencies and large aid organizations were often ill-equipped and disinclined to do so. Next, it was essential for outsiders to put aside preconceptions about poor people and to learn to know them as they truly were; only then could they work successfully as catalysts within the community. Most of Anzorena's friends around Asia had done just this. (William Keyes, for example, patiently observed how Manila slum dwellers actually built houses before he designed a program to assist them.) Finally, Anzorena concluded that some needs were more immediate than housing. "Adequate food and medical facilities have to be forthcoming," he wrote, "before worthwhile participation can be fostered."

As for guiding fellow professionals in their work with the poor, Anzorena formulated five Radical Rules. First, *Respect the poor*. This is cardinal. Second, *Change is possible*. Third, *The people's energy is the greatest resource*. Next, *People do things best together*. And last, *All willing people can participate*—and by this he meant everyone from militant organizers to government officials to architects like himself.

Anzorena has long since established an annual routine. From March to August, he attends to his classes at Sophia University and retires in the evenings to the local Jesuit house, where dinner table conversations are conducted entirely in Japanese. He then begins his annual travels, spending a few weeks in Bangkok, a few in Karachi, a few in Bombay, and so on, until he has accomplished a full swing through the region. During his trips, he sometimes lodges with local Jesuits but often shares accommodations with NGO leaders or, in city slums and relocation projects, with the participants themselves. Outside Japan, he communicates mainly through his never-fully-mastered English and an engaging repertoire of signs and smiles. ("His English must have been influenced by the Greek language he studied in the seminary," jests a Filipino friend.) Since 1978, he has been stopping in the Philippines every September and February to organize and publish his newsletter, with the assistance of a small Filipino staff.

This is a routine he barely alters, although he occasionally visits Latin America, South Africa, and Belgium (in connection with his work for the SELAVIP Foundation). Nothing he has learned in the past sev-

eral years has challenged his early, fundamental conclusions about people's participation and housing the poor. But as he gathered and analyzed greater and greater amounts of data and as his friends and correspondents completed one set of projects and embarked upon new ones—often making use of ideas gleaned from Anzorena himself or from his newsletter—he vastly amplified them. In a book published in 1993, for example, he addressed *inter alia* how to: reduce the cost of housing; raise financial opportunities for slum dwellers and resettled evictees; make use of professional inputs to improve housing for the poor; execute development plans incrementally; bring government programs to the people; and generate a “housing movement” from a community project. Each point is illustrated with concrete examples from, say, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, or the Philippines—or virtually anywhere Anzorena has been traveling these past many years. Indeed, he says, “this book is merely a collection of the lives, the work, and the words of my many friends.” Among these many friends are Akhter Hameed Khan in Pakistan, the eminent development guru who now guides Karachi's Orangi Project, and Mohammad Yunus of Bangladesh, whose Grameen Bank has become a model for micro-credit programs throughout the world.

Given Anzorena's nonstop networking over the years, it was probably inevitable that his many friends would also become friends with each other. Among the consequences of this networking was the creation of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) in 1988. Founded in Thailand by several of Anzorena's longtime associates in the world of housing, its goals reflect the interests and commitments he shares with them. In the words of its founding declaration, these are: “to articulate and promote the conception of *people's laws and rights to housing*; to put an end to evictions and displacements of people; and to define and achieve the housing rights of all.”

In the years since, the ACHR has coordinated an international campaign to protest mass evictions in South Korea (in connection with the 1988 Olympics) and has executed action programs in sites as diverse as Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. In the Philippines, for example, the coalition persuaded local housing activists and architects to meet and interview victims of nearly fifty recent evictions in Metropolitan Manila; to assist potential victims of eviction; to press for the housing needs of the poor in city sites earmarked for priority development; and to call attention to these issues by forming a fact-finding mission, publishing a book, and producing a television program. ACHR also fosters exchange programs to expose housing advocates in one country to the work of those in another and, looking ahead to the next generation, engages directly in a variety of training exercises.

The coalition now links nearly a thousand like-minded organizations and individuals throughout Asia. Anzorena's newsletter and annual pilgrimages constitute essential ties that bind the members together. Characteristically, however, Anzorena says the credit for ACHR

should not be accorded to him. "They are just friends of mine," he says. And it is true that the coalition has developed a life of its own, but Anzorena's philosophy guides its efforts. Among ACHR's fundamental principles, for example, indeed its operating credo, is that the contribution of the people themselves is essential both to identifying the true needs of the poor as well as to developing strategies to meet those needs. This is Anzorena to the core.

Anzorena—or Father Jorge, as he is known to many, or sometimes Father George—long ago concluded that the true goodness in people cannot be discerned through formal religious identification. There are some Catholics among his housing confederates, it is true, indeed a few Jesuits. But there are also many Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. Love for people is wholly ecumenical. It is one's "yellow" that matters. Nevertheless, for himself, Christianity is clearly at work in the movement for Asia's poor. When the poor build together, he says, "they are expressing Christ, not with words unacceptable to other religions, but with bricks and mutually helpful action that heal the community."

So Father Jorge carries on. Alas, the facts remain grim. Asian populations are still on the rise, and so is the number of people flocking to the region's cities. Millions still live without adequate shelter. And millions more live in fear that the slum neighborhoods they call home will someday be demolished to make way for new stadiums or office buildings or stores or apartment towers for the better-off. "Every year," says Father Jorge, "more than one hundred thousand evicted families are outside in the streets."

Still, Anzorena's profound faith and his years of experience working among the poor in Asia give him hope. He is hopeful because so many activists, so many religious people, and so many caring professionals and "decent people in government" are working to make things better. And he is hopeful because of the spirit of the poor themselves. He tells, for example, of wading with a Catholic sister through the flooded streets of San Andres, Manila, during his early years with SELAVIP. "Everything was flooded and spoiled. The people were on the rooftops." Clinging to each other amid the catastrophe around them, he says, "the people began to sing. *They were able to sing!*"

This is a spirit he sees everywhere he goes. After all these years, it still lifts him.

James R. Rush

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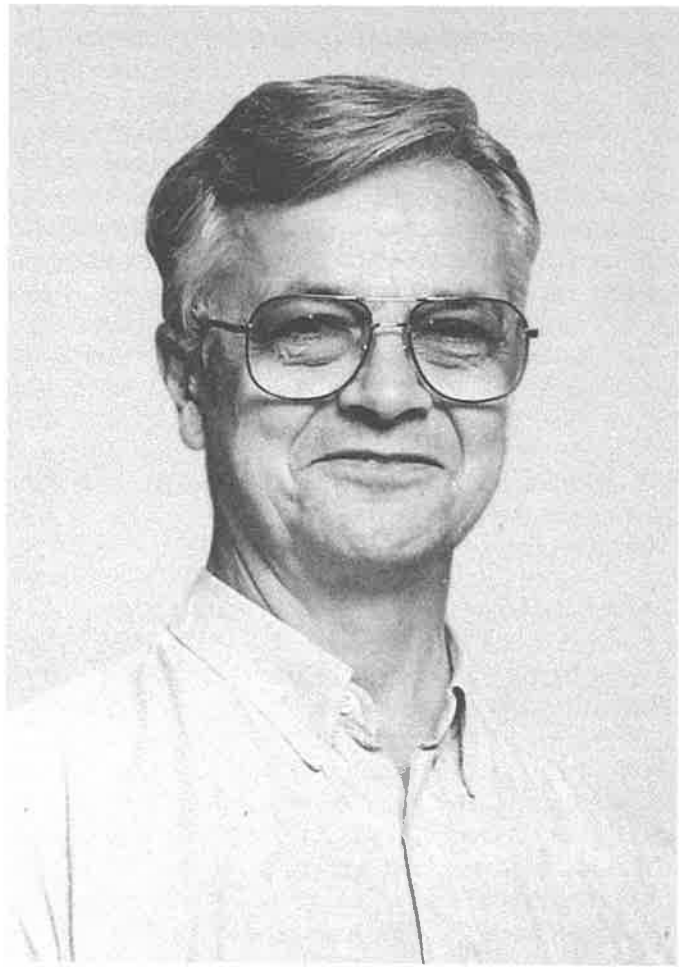
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