

As we passed rather quickly over Wyoming, the young American marine in the next seat told me rather gloomily that he would be going on far beyond San Francisco for a fifteen-month tour of duty in the Philippines. 'Well, at least it's not Vietnam', I said. He agreed but said that the Filipinos also disliked the Americans. 'Perhaps', I said, consolingly, 'they will get to like you personally'. 'Maybe', he said, 'but I don't aim to find out. I won't leave the base all the time I'm there'.

All this provided fuel for some not very profound musings on the ironies of empire and the fact that the dominative relationship enslaves both parties. This boy, ostensibly the agent of the mighty power of the conqueror, was to be almost as much a prisoner in the Philippines as are the direct victims of President Marcos. Of course the reason why the American troops are unpopular in that country is that they are rightly seen to be associated with his military regime. Not that the Americans are there merely to support this unpleasant General, but he is their man, as reliably 'anti-communist' as any Latin American dictator.

In England we hear rather less about the Philippines than we do about countries of a politically similar kind in Latin America, and this is a pity. It is especially a pity that we hear so little about the significant involvement of Christians as such in the struggle for justice. The conflict has followed the classical pattern: subversive activities by very small groups (such as the Christians for National Liberation) followed by savage government reaction including raids by the troops on churches and convents and the arrest and interrogation of priests and nuns, followed in its turn by more widespread support for the subversives and by protests from Bishops and others not immediately involved in the struggle. According to a recent report in the *New York Times*, when police arrested an insurgent leader and a woman posing as his wife, the two guerrillas revealed themselves as Fr Luis Jalandoni, former chairman of the Social Action Committee of the diocese, and a former nun of the Good Shepherd order. The police claimed to have found a revolver in their possession. Experience in Northern Ireland makes one a little sceptical of such claims by the security forces as well as of the message Fr Jalandoni is alleged to have sent from prison to his fellow-priests: 'I have accepted the national democratic struggle as the Christian answer to the Philippine situation. I am freely and voluntarily a member of the Communist Party. I have taken a leading role in the movement'. Nevertheless, his fellow-priests did not question its authenticity. Instead, in a joint statement, they stressed that he had only been driven to drastic action after trying every other possible means of getting justice for the plantation workers and subsistence farmers: 'No one can deny that Fr Luis tried all the means that were then on hand: the law, the courts, the bureaucracies, the pulpit, persuasion and diplomacy, personal con-

tacts and influence and even pressure methods like strikes and demonstrations'.

We should not, of course, think of the Church in the Philippines as having converted itself into a revolutionary movement. There are only a handful of priests in Fr Jalandoni's position and the majority of the hierarchy still maintain good, though increasingly uneasy, relations with the government. What we find in fact is a Church which, because it cannot stand aloof from the political struggle finds itself experiencing in itself the tensions and conflicts of human history. In the Philippines or Brazil Christians do not have the luxury of neglecting politics, for the politicians do not neglect the Church. Christians are forced to realise that they inevitably stand for or against the established powers. In a complex situation it is to be expected that Christians will make opposing choices (but at least they will be conscious choices) and that the Church will be strained and perhaps even broken by the tension created within it. We should remember that the familiar divisions in the Church date back to the previous capitalist revolution and we can also recognise that these divisions and the current ecumenical healing of them have led to a Church richer and more humane and therefore more incarnational than that which preceded them.

We can pray that the historical convulsions that mark the end of the capitalist era will not split the Church in the same way, but it would be foolish to believe that a consensus can be maintained and that there will not be at least strongly opposing tendencies within the People of God. It may even be that we shall not avoid schism unless this opposition is institutionalised, so that we have opposing parties within the Church corresponding to those who interpret the gospel for the new socialist world and those who emphasise continuity with the past. It is doubtful whether without some such organised institutions of conflict there can be genuine democracy in the Church.

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