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The Church and National Liberation

The relation of Christianity and the Philippine Liberation Movement — both in 1986 and today — is a vexed question. Allowing for qualitative differences especially with regard the patent social content of the current Christian involvement as opposed to the mainly political tone of priestly participation in 1986, the broad configuration of the problem in both conjunctures are nevertheless so strikingly similar that it can be said — to borrow a line from the *18th Brumaire* — that the tradition of that dead generation still weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living.

That religion can motivate participation in the struggle is indisputable; whether or not a social movement flounders on theology as Marx asserted in 1843 is not what is at issue here. The thorny question revolves around the alliances Christians enter into. Then it was with Masons, now Marxists. Yet for a time the course of events seemed to have resolved the problem. Indicating both an ideological bankruptcy and organizationally a shattering of the cohering focus of "acceptable" Christian activism, the failure of church-backed moderates, especially the exhaustion of FFF (Federation of Free Farmers), left many Christians no alternative but alliance with Marxists. Thus attempts of certain articulate church sectors to evaporate the linkage of Marxists and Christians by creating an atmosphere of fear, by posing quasi-doctrinal obstacles, tended to look like a hopeless rearguard action. Though certainly not motivated by a desire to link with the Left, the emergence of the church hierarchy into a critical stance vis-a-vis Marcos engendered a closer coupling.

Recent developments, however, signal a new configuration and radically alter certain readings of the situation. The present conjuncture as regards the participation of Christians in the liberation movement is heavily conditioned by the emergence of international actors — the US and Vatican — on center stage. Not only does this development summon up the ghosts of

1896, it also puts the imperialist question at the center of church participation.

A secret document called National Security Study Directive (NSSD) leaked in early 1984 reveals an imperialist plan to ride on the back of the local opposition to Marcos in order to stave off a communist takeover. John Monjo, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia is reported to have identified the Roman Catholic Church together with businessmen and NAM-FREL as key elements of the democratic opposition (*Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Oct. 6, 1984). Visits by US Embassy personnel with bishops show that this plan is already in motion.

Similarly, the nuncio's clarification on the famous instructions on liberation theology (*Bulletin Today*, July 27-August 1, 1985), the Pope's cautionary message to Filipino bishops (*Bulletin Today*, Oct. 25, 1985) and the trend of appointing conservative bishops are indicative of Rome's now direct concern with the Philippine question.

The emergence of international actors on center stage is accompanied by another development. Bishop Querexeta's observation during the government crackdown on the church in 1976 that the regime was moving to isolate the church by leaving bishops, priests, and sisters relatively unmolested while lay leaders bore the brunt of repression, is outdated. Today state terror has erased the distinction it previously drew between priest and layman. We have entered what Chomsky and Herman in 1979 called the repacification of the Philippines.¹

The Vatican Factor

As the role of the US and what has been called a persecution of the church are rather widely discussed, I will focus on the role of the Vatican.

*This paper was originally presented at a forum "Christianity and the Philippine Liberation Movement" sponsored by the Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines Faculty Center, Dec. 5, 1985. The piece preceded the "February Revolution", but its major ideas continue to be of relevance in the post-Marcos scenario.

¹*The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Vol. 1 (Southend Press 1979). Whole paragraphs of the preceding are taken verbatim from my lecture during the First National Congress of the Promotion of Church People's Rights (Oct. 27-30, OMI Retreat House) cf. "Church State Relations in the Pacification and Repacification of the Philippines".

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Vatican policy and church social teaching are distinct.² Papal moves to pry Christians loose from alliances with leftist revolutionaries are expressions of Vatican policy and geopolitics. Church teaching on the other hand seems to be moving in the other direction. Medellin (affirmed by the Synod of Bishops' *Justice in the World*, 1971 and *Puebla*, 1979) revolutionized church teaching on social matters. Gregory Baum spells out the four elements of the "preferential option for the poor", viz.: (a) a conflictual understanding of society; (b) the need for institutional change; (c) the struggle for justice as an essential element of the faithful Christian life; and, (d) the poor and the oppressed as agents of social change and prime architects of their own liberation.³ All this seems – and it has been so interpreted by some – to bring Christians very close to Marxists.

The gap between teaching and policy allows Christians allied with revolutionaries some rationale and shield for their involvement even as Vatican policy enjoins their desistance as a matter of loyalty to the church. The Aglipayan dilemma thus rears its head once more in the Philippines.

Mention must be made of the Pope's rejection of Marxism. According to Baum, the Pope has accomplished an "imaginative rethinking of class conflict" through the concept of solidarity in *Laborem Exercens*. Class struggle is rejected according to Baum for four reasons: (1) it seeks the victory of one class over another instead of a new mode of cooperation, (2) it is nourished by resentment against the powerful instead of Christian love of neighbor, (3) it easily leads to violence and new forms of domination; and, (4) it is often associated with an ideology that makes class struggle the dynamic principle of history, moving society toward the overcoming of its contradictions.⁴

It is beyond our scope here to discuss these reservations although parenthetically it seems to me that the first three reasons betray a serious misunderstanding of Marxism. The fourth, however, insofar as it pertains to the materialist conception of history underlines the fundamental epistemological and theoretical divergence between Marxism and

Christianity.⁵ The reason for mentioning them here is that they serve to my mind as the bridge in John Paul's thought between teaching and policy translated into a model of church and church action especially within a revolutionary context.

The model also known as the Polish thesis articulated with the conservative views of Ratzinger, Lopez-Trujillo and Baggio, has, it seems, become the dominant aspect of papal policy.⁶ The key elements of this model are succinctly formulated in the IEPALA (Instituto de Estudio Politico de America Latina y Africa) theses on the pope's visit to Nicaragua in 1983. Selecting those which have more than just local Nicaraguan significance we have the following:

1) The papal stance, deriving both from personal circumstances and the situation of the Church in Poland, must be seen within the framework of the East-West conflict;

2) The pope views the church as vanguard of history or at least a third way between the two great materialisms (liberal capitalism and totalitarian Marxism);

3) The church struggles to delegitimize religiously Marxist and incipient or weak Marxist-leaning regimes. If these regimes are consolidated the church fights by converting itself into a resisting fortress turned in on itself (*convirtiendo a la Iglesia en una ciudadela resistente y repligada*). In both cases the principal weapons are a monolithic hierarchy and a lay movement following the pope's vision;

4) Christians allied with the Marxists divide and weaken the church and prevent the formation of the monolith that will confront Marxist or left-leaning regimes;

5) The "church of the Poor" is condemned not only because of its contribution to the revolution but also for the threat that its novelty and prophetism pose for the traditional church, and

6) The project of the pope is better appreciated if it is viewed as a religious project with very powerful political implications rather than purely politically.⁷

² Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor* (Orbis, New York: 1983) p. 274. Also Jose Combin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Orbis: 1979) p. 166 passim, especially 172-178. For the political maneuvers of the US to align the Vatican on its side, see Marvin A. Lee, "Their Will be Done," *ICHTHYS*, August 1983.

³ "Class Struggle", *Human Society*, 36 (March 1985) pp. 1-3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8. The nuncio expressed similar ideas in a serialized interview printed by *Bulletin Today*, July 27-August 1, 1985.

⁵ The literature on the interaction of Marxism and Christianity as thought systems is immense. I mention here only the most recent I have come across. Samuel Silva Gotay, *El Pensamiento Cristiano Revolucionario en America Latina y el Caribe* (Salamanca, 1980); Kenneth Aman "Marxism(s) in Liberation Theology", pp. 427-438; Anselm K. Min, "The Vatican, Marxism and Liberation Theology", pp. 439-455, both in *Cross Currents* (Winter 1984-1985); Arthur F. McGovern, "Marxism, Liberation Theology and John Paul II", *Theology Digest* Vol. 32, 2, 1985, pp. 103-107; Brendan Lovett, "Marxism and Christianity: The Compatibility Issue", (unpublished manuscript) September 1985.

⁶ Ratzinger's views are summarized by Iglich and English Dominican Kerr, Mills and Ombres in *New Blackfriars* (June 1985) pp. 262-270.

⁷ IEPALA, Editorial, *El Papa En Nicaragua* (Mardird: 1983) pp. 214-224. My translations.

Local Church Dynamics

At this point it is tempting to say: there you are, as in Nicaragua and Poland, so in the Philippines. The matter, however, is not that straightforward. First, there is no Marxist regime here, but a rightist dictatorship. Second, unlike the Nicaraguan case where the hierarchy turned critical of Somoza just shortly before the collapse, the Philippine hierarchy has a rather significant mileage in its criticism of Marcos. There is simply no way of downplaying the important role the institutional church has played in staving the mailed fist policy of the regime, in bravely sticking out its neck to tell the truth of the Aquino assassination, and in lending its huge facilities to and at times serving as focal point for the protest swell in the '80s. But there's the rub. In firmly standing up to the regime in defense of human life, it has been at the same time providing oblique legitimation to a leftist-led revolution. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

The dilemma, especially as regards the leftward movement of church people was clearly expressed by Bishop Claver writing in 1977:

... we do have an approach to the very same problems that are the raison d'être of the NDF, of the whole Marxist movement in the fact. But what is it? And why does it not "grab" people enough to elicit the same kind of commitment and dedication that confirmed Marxists have to the Party or Revolution or whatever it is that ignites them into a total giving up of themselves.

We lack a "mystique"? For the fact is there is a growing number of priests and religious, other Christians who even in the context of "Progressive Christianity" are going more and more for a strictly Marxist option.⁸

Lately the dilemma has been taken by the horns. Not in the direction of a "mystique", though the current claim for the "irrationality" of active non-violence does seem to play this role, to which the critique of structural analysis provides the rational counterpoint.⁹ Within the church context all these ideological onslaughts on leftist thought must, I submit, be seen as functionally related to the resolution of the dilemma of the institutional church in the Philippines in the direction of the Polish thesis.

⁸Loyola Papers, 10 (1983), p. 13.

⁹Bishop Francisco Claver, "Non-Violence: The Imperative of Faith?", *Pulso*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 149-161

The components of this resolution, called by its main strategists Fr. John Carroll and Bishop Francisco Claver as "the road ahead for the institutional church", are:

1. A strategy that is neither red nor yellow. According to Fr. Carroll, the "church has a vision of man and society which is contradicted by the present reality, goes beyond the 'yellow' (i.e. holding that 'the only real problem is to get the economic and political system back onto the same old tracks') and is different from the 'red' (i.e. violent revolution and a regime where there will be no 'free competition in the market place of ideas' and where the prospect of 'increased control of individuals and communities over the forces which affect their lives' is dim)".¹⁰

2. An activist religion in which "speaking out and taking action on social issues" are "all carried out by lay men and women but with the support and encouragement of the clergy" and in which "the lay person's faith is the source and motivation for his political involvement and gives a certain color and orientation to the latter".¹¹

At first blush this seems nothing new. A third way is, after all, an all-too-familiar proposal and the distinction of planes model an old thesis. But Fr. Carroll insists that the concept of an activist religion — enunciated in John Paul's concept of solidarity — is a creative synthesis of the integration and coercion theories in social science. Criticizing the "approach embodied in the bishops' statements" as "not fully adequate either as an analysis of the situation and guide to action or as representative of Catholic social thought",¹² Carroll traces the inadequacy to the hierarchy's adherence to the integration theory whose solution to social ills is "good will on all sides". The bishops thus fail to appreciate some valid insights of the coercion theory: "the reality of social classes and of opposed class interests; the manner in which these interests influence individual perceptions of the common good, the fundamental problem of the concentration of wealth and power in society".¹³

And yet Carroll says that the strategy of an activist religion which is neither red nor yellow "does not imply a radical departure from the direction followed up until now".¹⁴ So what then is new? This seems to be critical collaboration all over again, true, but it is critical collaboration becoming self-

¹⁰J.J. Carroll, S.J., "The Church: A Political Force?", *Human Society*, 25 (February 1984) p. 22.

¹¹Carroll, "The Philippine Bishops: Pastors or Politicos", *Human Society*, 37 (March 1985) p. 14.

¹²Art. Cit., p. 14.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 24.



conscious. That is new. This denotes a reassertion of the institution, a turning-in-on-itself. Previously the church legitimized movements like FFF but it also found its social relevance in them. This is a situation not dissimilar to Hegel's unhappy consciousness. The church had its center outside itself; when this exterior center collapsed the leftward dispersion of church people began. The strategy of activist religion is a recentering on the institution. The church will continue to endorse movements consonant with its basic values but its own legitimation is not derived from them. The institution legitimates itself by itself. The absolute has come to self-realization. Thus the oft-repeated insistence that when bishops denounce injustice they do so as "pastors and religious leaders and not as politicians" acquires sociological grounding.

According to the findings of a survey conducted by Carroll and Claver in 1984, traditional religious concerns ranked highest among the pastoral priorities of the bishops. However the survey also showed, on the basis of responses to questions on projected allocation of resources that the bishops are moving towards a "modified activist stance".¹⁵ What this means is that the survey seems to give empirical confirmation to what was merely an observation in 1982 that the divisions between conservatives and progressives in the church are no longer tenable. The progressives of *Ut Omnes Unum Sint* have, as it were, renewed their vows to the institutional church while conservatives have moderated their reaction and adopted the progressive vocabulary.

In one masterstroke, Jesuit strategy intends to soften the ultraconservatism of some prelates and to exclude religious radicals. At the same time it affords a platform for moderating the fascist dictatorship even as it prepares the ground for the subversion of an eventual leftist regime.

The serious political repercussions of this religious project on the liberation movement become clear in the proposal of an "honest broker" role for the Church, on the one hand, and in a version of the Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), on the other.

According to the "honest broker" role the Church, in a situation of polarizing options, plays the role of intermediary "among the contending groups at the local and national levels". Fr. Carroll continues: "the members of these groups are for the most part also members of the church, Christian laymen and laywomen, who in attempting to live out their vocation as lay persons in an imperfect world, have made different political choices among the available options. Precisely because the Church does not have a detailed political program and cannot support a particular candidate or party but remains on the level of principles and objectives, it may be in position to provide a forum for dialog and promote reconciliation across a broad band of the political spectrum, excluding only the most intransigent hard-liners on either side."¹⁶ Considering the admission that "many church people see no way out of the present impasse than the ideology and strategy of the left" what this amounts to is a bid to diffuse tensions and, it seems, to veer towards the State Department's plan to prevent a radicalized Philippines. In fact the desideratum for church leadership suggests a toning down of the prophetic in favor of a more priestly role. Thus, Carroll says Church leadership required for the present circumstances "will be a different style from the leadership of those churchmen who once refused the sacraments to Spanish officials who had plundered the people's goods and refused to make restitution".¹⁷

It seems that in this strategy the bishops are being geared for a historic compromise. It could, in the long haul, sacrifice the nationalist and democratic aspirations of the people. It now becomes hard to conceive how the bishops' concern for fundamental social change – what distinguished them from the "yellow" stream – can be translated into practice. This scenario calls to mind the role played by an activist Church in Poland during the struggles of Solidarity. Jean-Yves Potel who, in *The Summer Before the Frost*, gives a sympathetic account

¹⁵Carroll and Claver, *The Pastoral Priorities of the Philippine Bishops*, (31 May 1984), p. 14. Xeroxed copy

¹⁶Carroll, 1984 art. cit. p. 24.

¹⁷Carroll, 1985 art. cit. p. 15.

of the role of the church in the Polish August, nevertheless comments that "every time the working class has an opportunity to free itself from its oppression, the Catholic hierarchy preaches 'historic compromise'. But in 'normal' periods, it carries on a daily guerilla warfare with the regime supporting democratic demands".¹⁸

The version of the BCCs developed by Bishop Claver brings out another aspect of this ecclesiastical involution. In an article entitled "Change in Church and State/Basic Christian Communities: Strategy for Social Change", Claver writes: "During the last meeting of the Catholic Bishops in Tagaytay questions came up: What if we fall under a communist regime? What do we do? — it is most interesting to note that it was only in those regions where the BCCs were strong that they could come up with an answer as this: we are going to do nothing different from what we are doing today — we continue to develop a critical, responsible, participatory Church."¹⁹ In the light of Bishop Claver's rigidly non-violent stance, it can be surmised that these communities — which it seems to me is the reason why they are cited approvingly — have not endorsed the Communist takeover nor participated in the presumably violent birthing of the new regime. It follows that these communities are conceived as resisting church enclaves to religiously delegitimize the new regime. The point this underlines is that the church need not rely on big business or a social democratic movement but solely on its religious resources for survival. It is, however, unlikely that the situation in the near future will be polarized into Communists and Christians. Meanwhile an alliance critical of Marcos is struck between the hierarchy and businessmen as in the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference and some church resources and moral authority are marshalled to back a social democratic movement.

The Draft Pastoral Letter of the CBCP on social transformation, entitled *Man, Our Way* is, it seems, the first official document of this strategy. The fora which have been organized in response to the bishops' invitation for feedback have competently pointed out the inadequacies in social analysis and the logical flaws in the bishops' reasoning. What to my knowledge has not been discussed is the direction the bishops are headed and the model of the church envisioned in the pastoral letter. If this is appreciated then it will be realized that the flaws of the letter are not mere logical contradictions but reflections of real contradictions in the model of Church assumed by the letter. *Man, Our Way* is a recoil from a church open to the world, from the "Spirit of the Council" which according to Ratzinger is an incubus. It is indicative of a

restoration "after all the indiscriminate turning to the 'world'".²⁰ It is the Polish thesis in the Philippines.

The Left and the Christian Question

The response of Filipino Marxists as well as radical Christians to the question of alliance has had so far a distinctly political and practical rather than a theoretical hue. The compatibility issue has been raised but as far as I know nobody among Filipino Marxists or Christians allied with them has pursued the matter on a level Girardi or Silva had.

What obtains is an unabashed ideological incompatibility within a political alliance. This is clear from the PNF interview with Jose Maria Sison (May 13, 1985). "Although it has a dialectical materialist philosophy, the CPP", Sison says, "is of the firm stand that all patriotic and progressive classes, sectors, parties, organizations and individuals — irrespective of religious and philosophical outlook — can unite and act together to uphold, defend and promote the national democratic interests of the entire people."

The question of religion in Marxism as Sison's "despite" indicates is more than just a recognition of freedom of religion. These further questions were pressed on Fr. Edicio de la Torre by PNF (ICHTHYS, January 25, 1985). Notable is the way de la Torre rephrases the question about the reconcilability of the Christian utopia and scientific socialism and the impact of radical Christian participation on the Marxist critique of religion. Preferring to approach the matter through "praxis" de la Torre asks: given that there are activists, even revolutionary activists who "draw their inspiration and even some theoretical guidance from their religious faith, . . . is there a tendency for their religious consciousness to 'wither away' or do they simply undergo a purification of still the same basic religious worldview". In 1981 de la Torre set out to verify these questions empirically, discovering two sets of involved Christians: a bigger group whose religious consciousness and praxis "just got purified" in their involvement in overt and/or covert resistance and another group who "outgrew" both religious consciousness and institution and assumed an increasing secular worldview. It would be interesting to know the architecture of ideas in both kinds of consciousness but de la Torre claims a full write-up cannot be done in a prison camp. The full-blown elaboration of the theoretical undergirding of religious radicalism will probably be worked out in the emerging theology of struggle. As of now, it seems only the name has been formulated!

For the moment we have to be uneasily content with CNL's programmatic definition of its relation to Marxists:

¹⁸Pluto Press, London: 1982, p. 96. See also Oliver MacDonald "The Polish Vortex: Solidarity and Socialism", in *The Stalinist Legacy* ed. Tariqjali (Penguin 1984) p. 96.

¹⁹F. Claver in *Ministry Today*, (July-September 1985) p. 57.

²⁰Joseph Ratzinger, "The Cardinal, in summary", *New Blackfriars*, June 1985, p. 265.



"Christians unite with Marxists within the NDF on the basis of the national democratic program. Within this political unity we engage in ideological discussion, in a Christian-Marxist dialogue. But this is not a sterile, academic debate, it must be focused on practice. Our dialogue must help us understand better the specific characteristics of Philippine society and of our people's war.

"In this sense, it is not just the incarnation of Christianity

that concerns us. We have a stake in the incarnation of Marxism in the efforts of Filipino communists to give it a national form" (CNL, 2nd National Congress Documents, 1982).

CNL believes that only within a genuinely independent and democratic Philippines can there be hope of having genuinely Filipino and democratic churches. Perhaps this agendum will usher in a revolution within a revolution.

Reaction

Joel Tabora, S.J.

I wonder whether the invitation was misaddressed. As a philosopher who has specialized in Marxism invited to comment on the paper of another philosopher with similar interests, I had looked forward to an opportunity for dialogue. But Professor Bolasco's paper does not focus on Marxism nor on philosophical issues at all. Instead, his paper is in large part a critique of the writings of two of my colleagues at the ICSI (Institute of Church and Social Issues), who were *not* invited to comment. And, since listening to the paper as read is like hearing one end of a telephone conversa-

tion, or one debater's account of "what he said and what I said", it might be odd for those of the audience who are anxious to make a balanced judgment, to read some of the articles of Bishop Claver and Father Carroll.

The author may betray his philosophical mind-set, however, in the freedom with which he organizes events and ideas into a coherent picture, without the need to verify his facts or to ask whether other pictures are equally plausible. It reminds me of the old joke about the empirical social scientist and the more philosophically-inclined theorist: the empirical

researcher is sure that his conclusions are true but doesn't know whether they are important; the theoretician has no doubt that his ideas are important but does not know whether they are true. Thus I would say that there is no doubt that Professor Bolasco's interpretations are important. The question is, are they true?

Professor Bolasco's main thesis seems to be that the Church, meaning here the institutional Church, is pulling back under pressure from the US Embassy and the Vatican, from the advanced position of opposition to the regime which it took in the past, in favor of a more middle-of-the-road position which "could in the long haul sacrifice the nationalist and democratic aspirations of the people". An alternative interpretation might be the following. In the early years of martial law there seemed to be total agreement among three major actors on one key point. Marcos said, "I am the only alternative to the Communists". The Communists said, "We are the only alternative to Marcos". And the majority of the Bishops could only say "Amen, Amen"! In the succeeding years, however, and through the efforts of men like Bishop Claver in particular, the bishops began to take an independent stance: critical of the abuses of the regime, clearly on the side of the people, not supporting a particular political position, but attempting to spell out the key elements of a Christian approach while recognizing that, within certain limits, a plurality of political options was possible for Christians. For the official Church cannot identify itself with a particular political option and oblige all Catholics to accept it, *a la* Khomeini. Now, however, in the mind of some political activists, this is not enough: they would have the Church become the ideological apparatus of a particular political and strategic option. Thus they would return to the "Marcos or the Communists dilemma". Their conspiratorial minds see imperialist strategies behind the effort of the bishops to maintain an independent position, and the very people who in the past were the heroes and were absorbing much of the brunt of government repression, are now the villains.

If one wished to play the same game of conspiratorial interpretation, one could well imagine that the leadership of the CPP sees in the progressive articulation of an independent position by the bishops a threat to its plan to bring the whole Church behind "its" revolution. Hence the need to repel this threat or else to split off the more "progressive" elements from the "reactionaries" in the Church. And so, in this interpretation, the word has gone out for an all-out-attack on the legitimacy of an independent position, by the Party propaganda apparatus and its allies in the NDF. Consistent with this interpretation is the fact that some targets, including Father Carroll whom Professor Bolasco has studied so carefully, were singled out for attack in the September 11, 1985 issue of *Liberation*, published by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Other targets would seem to be the draft pastoral of the Bishops, which has been given considerable and very critical attention by critics in a symposium published in

ICHTHYS for November 1, and the movement for active non-violence, both of which have been discussed today by Professor Bolasco. It all adds up, doesn't it, depending on who is doing the arithmetic.

Again, with regard to the "Polish thesis" which I find both interesting and, in some ways, informative: there is reason to think that the present Pope and the Roman authorities generally, put great emphasis on the *unity* of the Bishops and of the institutional Church, even for the defense of human rights in time of crisis. And that the distinction which is made between Vatican teaching and Vatican policy has some validity: but not in the opportunistic sense in which this is often understood. The Christian message and Catholic social doctrine have many facets, and one cannot emphasize all of them at once. Both justice and peace are important social values for example, but in a moment of difficulty it can make a considerable difference whether the Church speaks of one or the other. Thus policy at its best is an attempt to implement doctrine in a concrete situation, and is necessarily selective. In the Polish case I find it difficult to believe that the Church deliberately withdrew its support from *Solidarnac* at the moment when victory was in sight in favor of a compromise with the Communist State, as Professor Bolasco seems to imply. A more reasonable interpretation is that the Church saw the very real danger of the Russian troops coming in, and felt this was a worse evil than dealing with local Polish Communists. Hence the Church saw a certain community of interests among the three major actors: the State, the *Solidarnac* trade union movement, and itself. The Church leadership felt that, despite the issues that divide these three, it was better for all concerned and for the Polish people that they continue their intramural, i.e., Polish battles, even under martial law, than that they face another Russian occupation. I think some comparisons can be made to the Philippine case also, in which the official Church is attempting to focus on the common good of the *whole* society within a framework of justice, and is genuinely concerned about the consequences to all — and particularly to the poor and weak — if we arrive at an El Salvador-type situation.

With regard to the question of a *political* alliance with the Left, I do not see that this is excluded *doctrinally* for Catholics. The goals and content of the alliance must be subjected continually to the criticism of the Faith. In this light, an important question in my mind is "what *kind* of a Left are we dealing with here in the Philippines?" It is clear, for example, from an article in the most recent *Mr. and Ms. Magazine*, that the Party is calling the shots in the NDF. If the Party leaders are Marxists of the Allende type, or men like Fr. Edicio de la Torre (this is not to say that he is in fact a Party member), I would not be too concerned. But the evidence which we have, ranging from the performance of the Left in the aborted attempt to unite the opposition in the formative period of Bayan, to the heavy-handed behavior of the NPA in areas where it has some control such as in Davao, plus the fact that

the Party has probably learned the obvious lesson from Allende's fate, gives reason to suspect — until further evidence is forthcoming — the we are dealing now with a hard-line CPP leadership, not a group of Errol Flynn's playing Robin Hood. And this should give one pause, it seems to me.

Finally, certain comments on the doctrinal compatibility of Marxism with Christianity. Professor Bolasco sees in the "materialist conception of history" the "fundamental epistemological and theoretical divergence between Marxism and Christianity". I agree. Indeed, it is precisely in an appreciation of the intended *humanistic* dimension of this "materialistic conception of history" (as can be attained through a careful study of the works of Marx in their European context) that the incompatibility of Marxism and Christianity is disclosed. Marx's fundamental rejection of a reality higher than man as well as of a motive force for man's moral activity outside of humanity is incompatible with an understanding of humanity in graced relatedness with God and of a morality that realizes the consequences of this relation in society and in the world. "The criticism of religion", Marx says, "ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man and with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is an enslaved, abandoned and despicable being. . . ." (*Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction.*)

This key statement of Marxian materialism expresses the loftiness of this humanism that knows no reality beyond itself. Christians, however, experience fundamental relatedness with Jesus Christ. From this experience, they acquire their basic understanding of humanity — both in its personal and social dimensions. From here, too, they form their understanding of human duties and rights. And the imperative to act to liberate fellow human beings from conditions of oppression, i.e., to remove conditions in which rights of human beings have been trampled upon. Authority in the Church (as in the Ratzinger and Torpigliani documents) seeks fundamentally to preserve this relation, even as Christians seek seriously to grapple with the problems of injustice, i.e., to accept the challenges of liberation in the Philippines.

The vast majority of Filipinos share this fundamental

experience of Jesus Christ. Christianity has thus generally become a constitutive dimension of Philippine consciousness. In their faith, then, Filipinos are not dealing merely with an illusion — a projection of one's mind. Nor are they concerned merely with a manner of escape from the demands of this world. They are facing and accepting reality, which includes the reality of themselves.

Certainly our historical realization of Christianity in the Philippines has been far from perfect. Many Christians, admittedly, have failed to live the real human demands of their Christian calling. But because individuals have failed in this regard, the Christian message itself along with its potential to move Christians to action has not been invalidated. This is the reason why the call to Christian liberating action continues to be sounded. And accepted. This is also the reason why any form of "christianity" that has been "purified" of its constitutive relation to Jesus Christ cannot be valid (*Matanglawin*, Agosto, 1984). A "christianity" that is exclusively at the service of a political or revolutionary movement is no longer Christian.

Undoubtedly there is a burning urgency that the causes of injustice and suffering in our country today be eliminated. Indeed, the justice issue — and not immediately the program of the NDF — explains the alliance of many change-hungry Christians with the Left. The theoretical and practical substance of such an alliance, however, must be subject to the critique of Faith as Filipinos live that Faith and must therefore eventually give way to doctrinal differentiation if the Marxism we are dealing with in the Philippines is in any way related to Marx. It is my opinion that in the Philippines the CPP's long-range program of scientific atheism must wither away as Filipino Christians continue to discover especially in their Basic Christian Communities the critical and fully-liberating force of their Christianity. It is not the materialist rejection but the acceptance of God that makes history, the humanization of humanity, imperative. This, I contend, especially for the search in our country for a realization of nationalism and democracy that expresses the values of the people.

Reaction

Francisco Nemenzo

With only one year in the seminary, I cannot pretend to be a theologian. I do not want to participate in the quarrel between our two theologians. I am a political scientist and a non-believer. Therefore,

you have to forgive me if I treat the sacred as secular, and if I look at the church as I would any political movement. There is always a danger in inviting me to be a reactor because if I do not like the paper, instead of critiquing it I just deliver my

the Party has probably learned the obvious lesson from Allende's fate, gives reason to suspect — until further evidence is forthcoming — the we are dealing now with a hard-line CPP leadership, not a group of Errol Flynn's playing Robin Hood. And this should give one pause, it seems to me.

Finally, certain comments on the doctrinal compatibility of Marxism with Christianity. Professor Bolasco sees in the "materialist conception of history" the "fundamental epistemological and theoretical divergence between Marxism and Christianity". I agree. Indeed, it is precisely in an appreciation of the intended *humanistic* dimension of this "materialistic conception of history" (as can be attained through a careful study of the works of Marx in their European context) that the incompatibility of Marxism and Christianity is disclosed. Marx's fundamental rejection of a reality higher than man as well as of a motive force for man's moral activity outside of humanity is incompatible with an understanding of humanity in graced relatedness with God and of a morality that realizes the consequences of this relation in society and in the world. "The criticism of religion", Marx says, "ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man and with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is an enslaved, abandoned and despicable being. . . ." (*Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction.*)

This key statement of Marxian materialism expresses the loftiness of this humanism that knows no reality beyond itself. Christians, however, experience fundamental relatedness with Jesus Christ. From this experience, they acquire their basic understanding of humanity — both in its personal and social dimensions. From here, too, they form their understanding of human duties and rights. And the imperative to act to liberate fellow human beings from conditions of oppression, i.e., to remove conditions in which rights of human beings have been trampled upon. Authority in the Church (as in the Ratzinger and Torpigliani documents) seeks fundamentally to preserve this relation, even as Christians seek seriously to grapple with the problems of injustice, i.e., to accept the challenges of liberation in the Philippines.

The vast majority of Filipinos share this fundamental

experience of Jesus Christ. Christianity has thus generally become a constitutive dimension of Philippine consciousness. In their faith, then, Filipinos are not dealing merely with an illusion — a projection of one's mind. Nor are they concerned merely with a manner of escape from the demands of this world. They are facing and accepting reality, which includes the reality of themselves.

Certainly our historical realization of Christianity in the Philippines has been far from perfect. Many Christians, admittedly, have failed to live the real human demands of their Christian calling. But because individuals have failed in this regard, the Christian message itself along with its potential to move Christians to action has not been invalidated. This is the reason why the call to Christian liberating action continues to be sounded. And accepted. This is also the reason why any form of "christianity" that has been "purified" of its constitutive relation to Jesus Christ cannot be valid (*Matanglawin*, Agosto, 1984). A "christianity" that is exclusively at the service of a political or revolutionary movement is no longer Christian.

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own mini-lecture. I am going to use this same approach but not because I basically disagree with Mario Bolasco. As a matter of fact, I am in full agreement with his main thesis for the simple reason that the little I know about liberation theology in the Philippines comes mainly from him. However, I believe that his central thesis can be sharpened and made more convincing by bringing in the international historical dimension.

If indeed, as his paper asserts, state terror has erased the distinction between priest and layman, it is inadequate to focus one's analysis to the statements of priests like Father Carroll and Bishop Claver in trying to comprehend the contemporary dilemmas of the church. I would even go further to say that the upsurge of the liberation movement, of which state terror is the response, has drawn a demarcation line between the church hierarchy and official theologians on the one hand and, on the other, the laity and the rank-and-file priests and nuns who are immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people. This dichotomy might be useful to explain the gap, which Bolasco's paper noted, between policy and teaching, i.e., between the policy of the Vatican and the local church, on the one hand, and the interpretations of the church's social teachings which form the basis of liberation theology on the other. This gap, one might even say contradiction, between social teaching and ecclesiastical policy, is the most remarkable feature of the church today — and perhaps also its main dynamic. It underlies the dilemma noted in Mario Bolasco's paper that, in firmly standing up to the regime in defense of human rights, the church has been at the same time providing oblique legitimation to a leftist-led revolution.

The phenomenon of liberation theology — the encounter between institutionalized Christianity, (specifically the Roman Catholic church), and the revolutionary movement — is not specific to the Philippines. It is going on in Latin America and in Europe, especially in Ireland and Italy. This is not at all surprising, as both the church and the revolutionary process are international phenomena. It is therefore important to set the specific experience (as the expression of this phenomenon in the Philippines) in a global context. In other words, the Vatican factor should not be treated as peripheral to the integration process but as an integral component of the emergence of liberation theology as a global, not a uniquely Filipino process. What is happening here is a concrete manifestation of a global trend. It is made possible by developments of the church in other countries and it is also bound to have an impact on the church in other countries.

Priests and other religious people over the last two decades have become increasingly involved in the struggle for social change. But is liberation theology merely a Machiavelian project to win the masses back to the fold? Or is it an authentic revolutionary tendency? I am inclined to believe in the latter.

The Church has survived two thousand years not because it was built on rock but because its backbone is sufficiently plastic: to bend when the winds of change become irresistible. From the 16th century to the present the Church resisted the rise of capitalism such that the nascent bourgeoisie had to seek

legitimacy in the Protestant ethic. Protestantism in the form of bourgeois liberal philosophy provided the ideological superstructure of the more advanced capitalist societies. In the late 19th century, in the *Syllabus of Errors*, the church was bent on condemning profit and interest.

Now *Rerum Novarum* is often cited as the beginning of a progressive trend in the Church, although at first reading, you would think that it is a reactionary document. Its ideas were couched in medieval verbiage. And yet, on closer examination, *Rerum Novarum* was indeed a progressive document and a major step forward in the development of the Church's social teachings. While condemning liberalism and ascribing the excesses of capitalist societies to liberal philosophy, it also sanctified the practices of capitalism. The church accepted, as a matter of force, the existence of capitalism which previously it has consistently and quite vehemently been condemning. Now, *Quadragesimo Anno*, another encyclical of Pius XI in the 1930s, toned down the tirade against liberalism but this time focused on socialism. This anti-socialist posture was taken to the extreme and went on the verge of a McCarthyist position as represented by his successor, Pius XII. But again, after Pius XII died, the winds of change began to affect the church. So you have Pope John XXIII and later Paul VI who bent the church in another direction, i.e., to make the church come to grips, even if reluctantly, with the secular world which is now marked by the growing might of the socialist camp. The Church cannot help but confront the spread of socialism and the growth of the working-class movement in capitalist countries with the upsurge of national liberation movements.

It is not surprising that the man to accomplish this (because sometimes this is not mentioned), Angelo Cardinal Roncali or John XXIII, was the papal nuncio in France in the immediate post-war period. That was the time when the church in France formed the so-called Mission to Paris, a missionary society where priests from different religious orders tried to reconvert the people of Paris, who were mostly communists, by trying to enter the world of the working-class, and understand it. This is known as the worker-priest experiment in the immediate post-war period. It was based on the recognition that a good part of the French people had already rejected the church. Here existed a new generation who had no acquaintance at all with the church so that the only way to win them back was to send priests there. They were not to distinguish themselves from ordinary mortals with their *sotanas* but go as ordinary men and try to become workers themselves. The intention was to bring the Christian message to these people who have not heard of Christianity. But the result was the opposite. It was the priests who learned from the workers. When they set aside their theological books and their liturgy, they experienced what the workers were experiencing and they began to understand the worldview of the workers in Paris. They started getting involved in demonstrations and started doing what the priests today are doing. They created a lot of controversy such that Pius XII (who was a reactionary pope) ordered the dissolution of the Mission to

Paris.

One of the strongest defenders of this project was Angelo Cardinal Roncali who later became Pope John XXIII. I have a strong suspicion, although I haven't studied the subject well enough, that *Mater et Magistra* was written in the light of that experience. *Pacem in Terris* removed the barriers between Christianity and Marxism and promoted Christian-Marxist dialogue.

This had a tremendous impact on the Philippines and in the book of Mario Bolasco and Rolly Yu, they discussed certain writings of Filipino priests about the crisis in the Church written in the early 1960s before Vatican Council II and the publication of *Populorum Progressio*. Thus, I would think that it was a very honest assessment rather than something that was ordered from the Vatican. They talked about the loss of vocations and how many Filipinos, although baptized as Catholics, never really practice their religion. I think it is the ultimate recognition by priests and nuns of these realities that made the church in the Philippines welcome these developments.

Father Lim can attest to this because it was also about 1966-67 when there were so many Christian-Marxist dialogues. At that time, I was often asked to present the Marxist point of view. But, looking back, those dialogues at that time seemed to be a futile exercise because we were more interested in scoring debating points against each other than trying to discover things that we can learn from one another. I agree with Mario Bolasco that it was really state terrorism that brought this process of re-examination further. Their involvement with the struggle of the people was not just a matter of trying to save their souls. It also meant risking their own lives with them and becoming one with them; being in communion with them in the sense that Father Balweg used the term "communion".

Martial law, in fact, shifted the discussion from the philosophical level (between dialectical materialism and Christian theology) to the level of praxis. And I think it was at this level where the dialogue between Christians and Marxists became truly fruitful. This is the material root of liberation theology and this is what ought to be investigated further. This is much more important than studying the official writings of Church theologians.

But now things seem to be getting out of control from the standpoint of the institutional church. It is understandable that the church leaders should try to apply the brakes. I don't think that the hierarchy would require orders from the Vatican to see that this is, in the long run, eroding the authority of the institutional church. I suppose this is more a matter of self-interest.

Constantinian Christianity, not Christianity in general but Christianity as the old established church, which survived for several centuries since the Middle Ages, was like a mummy that dissolved the moment it was exposed to fresh air. And the moment the process of dissolution starts, it's very difficult to stop. It is not the church or religion or Christianity that will be dissolved, but the Constantinian tradition. And I think it will leave behind a renewed, revitalized and much more vigorous and vibrant Christianity. Its contact with Marxism can be a factor for renewal.

But let me also express the hope that its contact with a revitalized and reinvigorated Christianity will in turn have an impact on the Marxist movement in this country, so that it too will overcome the dogmatism, doctrinarism and sectarianism that plagued it in the past. Being a dialectical materialist, I believe that such an intercourse, contradiction or struggle of opposites, can only lead to something better than the two.

The Church in Nicaragua

