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The Church in China, A Church Being Strangled

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN MOTIVATION

Let me conclude, by emphasizing once again the importance of Christian attitudes and motivation for the success of any positive Catholic program of responsible parenthood. This is not to minimize the necessity of structured social changes required to change the attitudes and motivations of individuals. One cannot solve the human problem of reckless driving simply by wider roads and more traffic signs and lights; responsible driving is the result of a fundamental respect for human life, other's as well as one's own.

The future of responsible parenthood in the Philippines depends on how well our society and culture has succeeded in developing in our young men and women the total Christian approach to sex, marriage, and the family. The practice of rhythm demands unselfishness and requires a discipline and order in married life which is much more difficult to acquire when one must first unlearn long habits of selfish self-indulgence. If one has come to regard sex from a purely biological point of view instead of a truthful communication of love or total-self-giving; in short, unless one has learned "to know how to love another as a person", then rhythm will be considered an "ineffective, exasperating, and sophisticated" method of family planning.

The national discipline and sacrifice required to solve our population problem through socio-economic development and fertility control must ultimately come from the moral reservoir and spiritual resources of our people. The problem of family planning is one which no single individual or any one group of individuals can solve alone; we must all work together to find the *human and Christian* solution to one of our more serious and urgent national problems. It is our grave individual and social responsibility, that is, if we take our Christianity seriously.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S.J.

The Church in China, a Church Being Strangled

This expression, recently used by Pope Paul VI to describe the situation of the Churches of Silence, is perfectly applicable to the Church of China.

Some, perhaps, will shrink from using the word which pontifical authority did not hesitate to employ. Why? We do not want to paint the picture darkly. Or we fear, as one excellent religious told me, to

"trouble the broad lines of policy of Pope John XXIII." and so to impede the return of Communists to the guidance of the Church. Or, we fear to place the Church in opposition to Communist leaders with whom, perhaps, a hope of some minimal agreement is possible.

Such sentiments, if they do not originate in some naive progressivism, are deserving of respect. But they should not block out an objective view of things. What, then, actually is the situation of our Chinese Catholics?

They are not the object of a persecution officially announced, in this sense that constitutional texts and government proclamations affirm freedom of conscience. Surely, it would be most ingenuous and naive to wait for declarations of purpose-to-persecute before concluding that a persecution exists.

But Communist society has means to use other than legislative texts. There is daily, stubborn, tireless action upon the individual by all the means of pressure within the command of an arbitrary authority. Submit a man to ostracism from his craft or profession; cancel his ration card; bring him up for degrading judgments in his political study-group; send him out to do back-breaking work in the fields; or sentence anyone you wish, any time you wish, to camps of forced labor.

Furthermore, since the Catholics are stigmatized as "idealists", since they are blamed for obeying a Pope who is "the lackey of American imperialism", since persistent efforts are spent to lead them into the materialism and aggressive nationalism which are at the core of Chinese Communist thought, it is easy at any moment to bring to bear against them threats and the execution of threats: deportation to the northern and western borderlands, separation from the family, loss of employment, or slave labor. It is in this drama, daily and multiform, that the individual Chinese Catholic is caught and struggling.

In the vast fermenting mass of the population, where no one can reserve anything for himself, neither property, nor occupation, nor any human right, Catholics are swept along with the others. And their being Catholics makes of them favorite victims of the universal whirlpool. Of what use is it to direct special laws against them? Arbitrary action is general, and any committee at all, of the village or the city lane, of school or factory, any party functionary, can strike at them at will.

One Catholic doctor of Shanghai, for his fidelity to the Holy See, toils at forced labor in Turkestan (and China suffers from lack of doctors.) Another, for the same reason, has been left on the spot in the hospital where he practised, but he is a menial worker now, emptying pots and cuspidors. Their plight is that of hundreds and thousands of others. If a day comes when they can speak, as the victims of Ausch-

witz spoke, the world will be astounded at such a piling up of physical and moral suffering.

Recently in Hongkong was reported the case of a refugee (a non-Christian) who, after "being sent down to the countryside" (he was a professor), became successively and perforce a school-teacher, then a factory worker, then a professor again, and once more a peasant. He no longer knew where his family was. He had been married several times in the regions to which he was deported. He had children, but was completely ignorant of what had become of them. After 15 years under the Communist regime this man, reaching Hongkong as a refugee, said: "I do not know who I am any more, nor what I am."

The plight of many of our Catholic laymen is almost identical. But, and this is the miracle of grace, they always know what they are: members of Christ and of His Church, faithful in spite of all with a heroic fidelity. They can write only rare letters. To make any mention of their sufferings is to risk redoubling them. Only a few pleasantries about the excellence of fasting and the spiritual benefits of manual labor let light shine from the darkness, or else a quiet pun, in the fictitious name that a priest used signing his letter. It could mean, "Wang Faithful-as-a-rock", or "Wang Faithful-to-the-Rock (Peter)".

The priests? A large number of them are in prison: at least half of the Chinese Jesuit priests, for instance. Their prison terms have lasted ten or twelve years, and for many will end only with death. Other priests, tolerated to some degree, still help the Catholics whom they can reach. A few churches remain open, to which tourists are conducted by the official cicerones. There is at least one in Peking, one in Canton, a few perhaps in Shanghai. But in the countryside, it seems, most of them are closed.

And something still sadder. The Communist government has been adroit enough to introduce division into the Church. It has had named "by the People", that is to say, it has itself named, 46 new bishops who were consecrated validly to be sure, but not licitly. Ought we to call this schism? The name applied to it will be relatively unimportant. But this pretended election was equivalent to a denial of the rights of the Holy See. What is more serious, these new bishops have expressly stated that they cut themselves off from the Pope. Evidently these statements were imposed on them,—and even extorted from them, perhaps. God alone knows the inner responsibility, and about this we need not judge. But we cannot ignore the objective gravity of what is a sin against unity.

Here we must put ourselves on guard against a false irenicism which rests on untrue reports or information. Some organs of the press, even Catholic publications, have affirmed that these intruder bishops

were named only to vacant Sees. Such is not the fact. Cardinal T'ien, archbishop of Peking, and Paul Yu Pin, archbishop of Nanking, are exiled from China, but continue to be the only legitimate pastors of these great cities. Bishop Ignatius Kung, of Shanghai, and Bishop Dominic Tang, S.J., of Canton, have through long years been held in prison in the same cities where false shepherds claim to rule in their place. Bishop James E. Walsh, of Maryknoll, has now served 8 years of a 20-year prison term, to which he was sentenced when he was 70 years old.

The present year, 1966, has been a turbulent one on high levels inside Red China. Responsible fact-finders, self-respecting journalists, true friends of the people (of their own people and of China's) would have startling and significant stories to report, if they had any free access to the story sources, any background to assess their significance, and (within China) any freedom to write publicly about the facts.

The ouster of P'eng Chen, high in the politbureau and mayor of Peking, was one signal among many of a sharp turn towards more narrow political intransigence, the painful domestic and international consequences of which will be felt in the human history of the next decade.

The abusive dismissal of Lu P'ing, president of the national Peita university in Peking, and of K'uang Ya-ming, president of Nanking university, were two cases among many which reveal a backward step, tightening the control of uneducated Party extremists over the whole educational system, and accentuating the prostitution of universities, colleges, and secondary schools to short-term Party interests. Goals of the nation's educational system are not pursuit of truth and attainment of professional ability, but "consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship and prevention of any resurgence of bourgeois thinking." To implement this policy, the Party Central and the Cabinet on June 13 abruptly postponed for six months any new admissions to schools of higher learning.

The violent upheaval in the staff of the national newspaper, *The People's Daily*, and the curious rise to ascendancy of the *Liberation Army Daily* as number one press spokesman for the country's *de facto* rulers were warnings that no nonsense will be tolerated in favor of any freedom of the press. All journalists in Communist China are government employees; they may publish only such news and views as the Party group in power deems useful to its purpose. The army general, Lin Piao, seems to be the man behind this summer's declaration by the Party that it will keep the press tame, on a short, tight leash.

Some Filipino legislators, educators, and newsmen were visiting China, and being entertained there, during the eventful weeks when policies in politics, education, and journalism took a notable new totalitarian turn. The reports they brought back offered no evidence that they

were at all aware of very important events happening in their special fields of competence. Some of these junketeers published reports that substantial religious freedom exists on the China mainland, and that the situation of the Catholic church there is normal. We have reason to think that they write from gross ignorance of things about which they ought to learn.

"A Church being strangled...", Pope Paul has said, His sad figure of speech seems terribly true! Yet confidence persists in a Christ who is victorious, even over death.

ANDRE BONNICHON, S.J.