

The second anniversary of the murder by British paratroopers of thirteen defenceless people in Derry may not seem the most appropriate moment for a British journal to recall the similar, though much greater atrocities in Mozambique later in the same year, but at least to remember both at once may save us from self-righteousness. We are reminded of Wiriyaumu by the publication of Fr Adrian Hasting's excellent account¹ both of the massacre itself and of the world's reaction (as distinct, of course, from action) when it was revealed. The cool and careful treatment of the evidence in this book will, we may hope, finally convince even Mr Patrick Wall who with culpable silliness spoke recently of 'Fr Hasting's mythical massacre'. (It is surely time for the friends of Mr Wall and his partner Mr Biggs-Davison to prevail upon them to stop embarrassing their fellow Catholics by supporting every available tyranny except the Soviet Union.)

Following the publication of Fr Hasting's book there was a fairly predictable allegation from 'official Portuguese sources' that the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) had murdered seventeen villagers in the Tete area (*Times*, Jan. 7th). There is as yet no evidence as to whether or not this is one of the customary government fabrications—it will be remembered that there were several of these at the time of Wiriyaumu, though the Portuguese authorities, unlike Mr Wall, were finally constrained to admit that 'reprehensible acts' had occurred. No missionary has ever reported this kind of atrocity by the Liberation Front and the two I met recently simply laughed at the very idea of Frelimo massacring their own cousins and friends. There is plenty of evidence, frequently provided by Frelimo authorities, for the execution of individual collaborators, but so far no shred of evidence for the kind of mass murder that the forces of law and order go in for. It is important, however, to recognise that just for once this latest accusation might be true.

Those engaged in the struggle for justice, for the ending of oppression, do not share the reactionary's need to close his mind; they have no need to be defensive in the face of history. To admit that ETA or the Palestinian guerrillas or the Provisional IRA have committed murders in no way damages the case against the oppressive regimes they are trying to combat, on the contrary it strengthens it. It is these regimes that have created the climate of violence within which such inexcusable events can occur. Injustice breeds injustice; it is also sustained by it. If an oppressive regime can provoke its enemies to murder it has co-opted them to its own side. That is why those who genuinely seek to transform society will refuse to fight the regime on its own moral terms, just as, if they have any understanding of war, they will not be drawn into fighting it on its own military terms; to act otherwise is to be in collusion with the oppressor. All the available

¹Wiriyaumu, *Search Press*, London. £1.50.

evidence suggests that Frelimo have understood this point very well; they are engaged in a revolutionary transformation of the values as well as the power structures of Mozambique, a work of conversion as well as subversion, but this does not mean they are incapable of lapses into crime, we must wait and see whether the Portuguese have any evidence at all to back up their unlikely tale.

Apart from its greater horror there is another thing that distinguishes the Wiriyamu massacre from the one in Derry; this is the responsibility in the former case of the Roman Catholic Church. It is true that it was only through the courage and persistence and ingenuity of some Catholic priests, especially the Burgos fathers that the killings came to light at all; it is true that some church leaders, especially the late Bishop of Beira and the Bishop of Nampula, have taken a stand against repression, nevertheless, as Fr Hastings very clearly explains, the Church is structurally involved in the activities of the regime because of the Concordat. In virtue of this agreement Catholic missionaries ineluctably become the paid agents of the colonial power. As the Portuguese Missionary Statute puts it: they 'are considered to be institutions of imperial utility' (Art. 2). It is because of this rather than because of the reactionary attitudes of this or that bishop or priest that the Church must bear some responsibility for the Wiriyamu murders. As so many missionaries have realised, the answer to this heavy involvement of the Church in right-wing politics is not to seek some chimerical Church which would be somehow abstracted from political reality but to recognise her necessary involvement in the politics of liberation. If the Church is true to herself this recognition will come first of all from the regime itself. This is not because the Church is a political movement but because she is involved in the actual lives of men and women. As the Bishop of Nampula put it: 'We prefer a church that is persecuted but alive to a church that is generously subsidised but at the price of a damaging connivance at the behaviour of the temporal powers.'

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Oscar Garreton, a former leader of Catholic Action, was Secretary General of MAPU, the Christian group which broke away from the Chilean Christian Democrats to support the Popular Unity Programme of President Allende. He is on the junta's list of the ten most wanted men in Chile. At the time of writing he has taken refuge with others in the Colombian embassy and the junta have demanded 'Give us Oscar Garreton and we will give you safe-conduct for all the others'. An international campaign is being organised on his behalf. Please write indicating your support (name, profession, address) to: Secretariat de la Campagne 'Oscar Garreton', F. Charbonnier, 46 rue de Vaugirard, 75 006 Paris, France.

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