

action of Christians cannot renounce its own title and character just because someone views today's society as a so-called "pluralistic" one'. General Catholic Action had a tendency to run into trouble because it seemed to mistake normative prescriptions for operative solutions, leaving the layman as it were outside the world which he was trying to influence. This same accusation could not be levelled against the specialized movements, the apostolate of the milieu, and this Dr Poggi grants. But they still remain 'sponsored organizations' and so are subject to the main potential dangers that threaten such organizations. The point that Dr Poggi does not make—although he refers to other national C.A. organizations—is that most of the trouble has come, both in France and Spain, when the movements have wished

to take up political positions with which the bishops were not in agreement.

Even in the post-conciliar Church this problem will remain. It is possible that, following the line of the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, pluralism will be accepted, the 'world' will be looked on as a subject for dialogue and not an object to be acted on, and the layman's apostolate will be seen as wider than the confines of any sponsored organization. Nevertheless, the statement of para. 76 still operates: 'The faithful will be able to make a clear distinction between what a Christian conscience leads them to do in their own name as citizens, whether as individuals or in association, and what they do in the name of the Church and in union with her shepherds.'

JOHN FITZSIMONS

WAR, CONSCIENCE AND DISSENT, by Gordon C. Zahn. *Geoffrey Chapman, London. 1967. 317 pp. 30s.*

Dr Zahn's views on war are already well-known and this collection of sixteen articles, published over the last twenty years, covers some familiar ground as well as giving us an unusual glimpse of a wartime conscientious objector's camp and his strictures on American Catholics for their tardiness in embracing even as 'prudent' an organization as Pax Christi. The central core of Dr Zahn's pacifism is that conscientious objection is the authentic response to modern warfare. The widespread absence of any such response is to be explained on the sociological ground that nationalist values are more potent than moral ones and hence distort the objectivity of moral judgments. The policy of the Catholic hierarchy and its press under Hitler is a case in point, as he has shown in *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars* (1961). But, on the other hand, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter* (1965) shows that the individual can withstand the intense pressure of wartime propaganda and social controls. Dr Zahn's question to us is: 'Do we also withstand the distortions of our own nationalisms?'. Moreover, it is not only the individual who is called to dissent. The Church itself, being an institution committed to non-nationalist values, should be a vocal critic of society and an instigator of dissent. A dissident Church would be a Church of Martyrs.

Pacifism, however, is, for Dr Zahn, only one aspect of a moral commitment which involves a wider critique of society (p. 176). Its

broader outlines and the actions by which such a critique might be made effective remain vague. His primary concern is to make us at least see that something is wrong. However in his paper to the English Pax Society in 1966 (reprinted from *Slant*) he describes multilateral disarmament as the ideal to be aimed at but says that unilateralism is 'perhaps the best we can hope for at this point in time' (p. 117). In the aftermath of the C.N.I.D. movement this was and remains a very thin hope. The moral case for unilateralism both here and in the U.S.A. (cf. *Nuclear Weapons and Christian Conscience* [American title: *Nuclear Weapons—a Catholic response*], ed. Walter Stein, 1961), is well established but politically it is a non-starter or possibly a tragic has-been. But even the more thorough-going political analyses which reveal the massive and systematic mystification and exploitation at work in our societies seem to leave us just as powerless. The failure of non-violence as an effective instrument has led to the adoption by Black Power and some radicals of the violence/counter-violence syndrome, which is precisely the strike/second-strike mentality of nuclear deterrence. Pacifists reject this, believing that peace can be achieved only by the conscious acceptance of vulnerability and not by re-affirming dominative violence by means of 'creative' aggression. The pure moral commitment is at a loss for political action.

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