

wisdom rather than the debased contemporary usage which limits it to mere self-centred caution), pre-eminent among the cardinal virtues and the mother and moulder of the other three virtues of justice, temperance and fortitude, all more obvious characteristics of the revolutionary. These insights can not only provide a bridge between Christians and the revolutionary movement but mean that Christians should make their own contribution in the struggle and, provided they recognize the tension and ambiguity often inherent in the relationship between revolutionary means and ends, can help to keep alive the crucial 'utopian' perspectives of the cause.

None of these reflections should be taken to imply that Christians should organize in a separated revolutionary movement or party; indeed, such a development would be clean contrary to all that Torres stood and fought for. Camilo's main concern was to develop a United Front of all revolutionary and progressive sectors. He stomped the country trying to persuade people to adhere to the Front and its programme (which Torres drafted) and to support the printing press and weekly paper he helped to create. It is interesting that the Camilista Movement in Dominica, which is far from being exclusively Christian, believes that the principle of the united front is Torres' most significant inspiration although, like Torres, they do not see any way forward through the rigged and fraudulent electoral process and consider violent conflict unavoidable. Most of the earlier chapters in the book

are made up of rather dull sociological treatises which would probably never have been published outside Columbia if it had not been for Torres' subsequent political development, although the topics he chooses and the way he treats them indicate the direction of Torres' concerns and are directly relevant to this development. But it is in his later addresses to trade unions, workers, the unemployed, peasants, students, political prisoners, women as well as Christians and many other groups that Torres' writing really comes alive and demonstrates that he was an essentially pastoral priest in a uniquely contemporary way, as he seeks to persuade them, with passionate conviction and skilful analysis, of the need for revolution and of their own indispensable role in the process.

Torres frequently manifests concern that his own name is identified too intimately with the movement as a whole and calls for more and more to participate so that his own contribution will be less prominent and be the more effective for being shared and carried forward by others. Eventually, of course, Camilo chose to sink himself into the National Liberation Army but his subsequent martyrdom has ensured that his name can never be forgotten; but as well—and of supreme importance for himself and all of us—the cause of the dispossessed which he espoused so clear-sightedly and courageously has received immeasurable strength and inspiration from his witness.

KEN FLEET

POLICE POWER AND BLACK PEOPLE, by Derek Humphry; with a commentary by Gus John. *Panther*. 239 pp. 40p.

I hope you will read this book. It is well-written and honest, which makes it unusual; it is compellingly readable, so you will risk staying up late at night to finish it, and it says illuminating and important things about justice in England. The only trouble is that some readers are going to find it extremely difficult to accept what it says as true, although the documentation in it is clear, matter-of-fact and verifiable. If one believes what this book says, one has to face the fact that a great many generally accepted assumptions about the country we live in are false.

The authors have collaborated before, to produce a Penguin Special called *Because they're Black*, in which detailed accounts of particular experiences of individuals show more vividly than do most of the books on 'race

relations' what it is like to be a black person in modern English society. *Police Power and Black People*, in spite of the impression some may gain from its title, is not concerned only with one specialized and limited part of black people's experiences, when some of them happen to be involved in crime. It brings out how important to the daily life and expectations of all black people is the function of the police as officialdom's front line. It is far from being an all-out attack on policemen; on the contrary, it describes with great vividness the problems they have to struggle with:

'The real dirty work is at the scene of fatal accidents, suicides and sudden deaths. A constable recalled in horror how he had to lift a dead man into the police car who then messed all over the seat. On Saturday nights

he had often picked up drunks who urinated or vomited on his uniform, or over the mattress in the police cells' (p. 132).

'Police Constable X feels he "married" the Police Force five years ago and that his wife did too. They live in a police house and three other policemen live in the same street. None of the other neighbours knows the wife's name. They call her "the policeman's wife".' (p. 135.)

There are interviews with policemen's wives that bring out the strains of shift work and unpredictable overtime, with policemen who admit they take kips in police cars because they can't sleep in the day, with policemen who resent being criticized in the Press for their activities in drug raids, and so on. This chapter in fact makes other parts of the book, concerning the manufacture of evidence by police, the framing of the innocent and the brutal treatment of the black, much more credible. Accounts of police or legal proceedings in various cases ring horribly true to anyone who has sat through hearings in magistrates' courts where black people are accused, and where crass magistrates and incompetent lawyers combine with colluding policemen to punish people who are ignorant, afraid and innocent.

That there is one law for the rich and another for the poor is not a new or radical observation, and we do not have equality before the law for white people. The important point brought out in this book, however, is not just that the inequalities are more glaring when black people are concerned. It is that relationships between black people and the police illustrate more sharply and vividly than anything else the true nature of the confrontation between white institutions and attitudes on the one hand and black expectations and attitudes on the other. In Gus John's commentary, which forms a long chapter at the end of the book, he says:

'While police approach Black people expecting excitability and arrogance, the Black man expects aggression and arrogance from the police.' (p. 223.)

Similar expectations in other situations, between white employers and black applicants for example, are in a lower key and more easily disguised. But situations involving the police are of their nature tense and sometimes explosive. Derek Humphry remarks:

'There are policemen who invite youngsters to challenge their authority in order to get them on assault or obstruction charges.

Some try the same tactics with Black adults or a White whom they have sized up as not too bright or a person of no importance. Some policemen are racist, as are some politicians, journalists, engineers, etc. But a policeman is such a key figure in society—and, as experience in America and Britain shows, an action of his can be the flashpoint for a race riot—that a racist cop is not permissible.' (p. 189.)

Understandably, the police do not like it to be suggested that some of their members are racist, though in my own experience, as in the authors', many of them including senior officers readily admit the fact in private conversation. But they face recruitment difficulties; they are undermanned, and they are reluctant to screen out the racist cops. How mistaken this hesitancy may prove is illustrated in one of Gus John's anecdotes:

'A White child-care officer in Nottingham reports how he attended at a remand centre with the mother of a skinhead who had been remanded for "Paki-bashing". A policeman came in to interview the boy, and on hearing the mother reprimanding the boy suggested: "Don't be too hard on your boy, Mrs X. He hates wogs, I hate wogs, you hate wogs. The only sad thing is that John was not clever enough not to get caught."' (p. 223.)

One can, of course, match stories like this with equally true accounts of the efforts of individual policemen to work co-operatively and constructively with black citizens, but when society as a whole so often emphasizes the undesirability of black people in our midst, it is not surprising if black citizens give more weight to evidence of dangerous hostility in some policemen than to evidence of goodwill in others, especially when the hostility is going to have much more definite and important consequences for them than the goodwill that gets a cricket match going.

Apart from detailed accounts of particular cases, the book discusses such general questions as bail-granting, rules of evidence and the giving of statements, the role of police doctors, the beat system and the use of panda cars, the quality of legal help and the prejudices of magistrates and judges. There are suggestions for reforms, but, as often happens when an analysis reveals deeply-entrenched problems, the proposals do not seem to go nearly far enough to meet the case. However, to attempt fundamental proposals would be to write a very different kind of book. Derek Humphry has

done a first-rate journalist's job in writing this one—the kind of journalism that we do not get often enough in our newspapers these days, though the *Sunday Times*, for which he reports, has a more honourable record than most papers in this respect. Gus John's commentary describes the situation from the point of view

of young black people: wary, disillusioned and vulnerable. The book pleads for an awakening of public opinion, both black and white, before it is too late. It is for the reader to take the analysis further, to think, to find out more and to act.

ANN DUMMETT

THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF JESUS, by Haim Cohn. *Weidenfeld and Nicolson*, London, 1972. 419 pp. £3.50.

The accounts of the trial of Jesus in the Gospels are notoriously inconsistent. What really happened? A Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel has now undertaken 'an independent and unbiased legal inquiry' (p. 331). He is not the first lawyer to attempt this, but all who went before him have produced only 'pseudoscientific legal scholarship' (p. 330). Now at last, it seems, the veil of prejudice is to be stripped away to disclose the truth.

There never was any dispute between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. Everybody loved him. He never said anything that the rabbis would not have endorsed. The cleansing of the temple had official approval. In any case, no Jew would ever have betrayed a brother Jew to the hated Romans. The episodes of Judas and Barabbas are pure fiction. The meeting of the Sanhedrin was not a trial but a despairing attempt to rescue Jesus from the consequences of his own indiscretion. The Romans had arrested him on suspicion of treason, and the high priest had persuaded Pilate to grant him custody of the prisoner for one night. Even Pilate did not really want to pronounce a death sentence, but his hand was forced by Jesus' persistence in pleading guilty to a capital charge, even though he knew he was actually innocent of it. All the actors upon that memorable scene were honourable men doing their sincere best to avert unnecessary tragedy. If the world has become accustomed to a more sinister story, this is entirely due to the malice of the evangelists, with Matthew as the arch conspirator.

If this rewriting of history were to gain credence, it would have the great advantage of cutting the root of much antisemitism. Jews who suffered persecution at Christian hands could be regarded as martyrs for righteousness' sake. Unfortunately for this admirable aim, the verdict is not without difficulties. It entails a Jesus who is an obstinate and eccentric nonentity, and leaves us asking how he came to be universally beloved, why the authorities thought he was worth saving, and how so trivial

a cause could give rise to such large effects.

The methods of the investigation are as disquieting as its results. It was to the interest of Christians to exculpate Rome at the expense of the Jews, therefore they may be presumed to have done so. Since the only available witnesses are Christian ones, conjecture is preferable to unacceptable evidence. There is even one piece of testimony which is described as 'an assumption against us' (p. 95). The impartial court is 'unbiased' in favour of the appellant.

Mr Justice Cohn believes that the weightiest objection to his thesis is the silence of Jewish authorities on the highly creditable part played by the Sanhedrin on that fateful night; but such references were no doubt excised from the records for fear of Christian reprisals. In fact, however, there is one Jewish authority, much earlier than any cited by Cohn, who is not silent, and on his evidence Cohn's whole enterprise founders. Paul, in one of his rare outbursts of indignation against his compatriots, says unequivocally that they 'killed the Lord Jesus' (1 Thess. 2, 15); and, as a former persecutor of the Church, he might be expected to know. Cohn dismisses this on the ground that it is exaggerated (which is true, since Roman soldiers carried out the execution) and that the verb is 'used somewhat allegorically' (which is nonsense).

The book has its usefulness as a mine of legal lore. The tragedy of it is that anyone should still feel that Jewish-Gentile understanding could be furthered by such overstatement of the Jewish case. I say 'Jewish-Gentile' rather than 'Jewish-Christian', for, whatever past crimes may lie on the Christian conscience, modern anti-Jewish feeling and action, from Hitler to El Fatah, has been non-Christian and has owed nothing to the New Testament. If this learned judge really knows more than the rest of us about a member of his race who knew how to make everybody love him, would he not serve his fellow countrymen better in their present crisis by helping them to discover their Jew's secret?

GEORGE CAIRD