

Anger can be an honest emotion; moral indignation never is. Anger makes no pretence to be other than selective, related to our own interests and, in particular, our own fears. Moral indignation is anger tricked out in the more pompous clothes of moral judgment and as such it looks absurd and is, if taken seriously, dishonest. For moral judgment must of its nature be non-selective; we must make the same judgment on the same situation whether it be our friends or our enemies who are involved. Our friends have a special claim on our anger but not on our moral perceptions.

Thus those who judged it morally wrong for the Israelis to retaliate against military bases after the killing of eleven innocent people in Munich, must also think it wrong for the IRA to retaliate against Aldershot after the killing of thirteen innocent people in Derry. True, the Israelis killed with bombs very many more civilians than did the IRA, but the moral quality of retaliatory killing remains the same in each case. It is dishonest to find one episode intolerably wicked while thinking the other deplorable but understandable. Indeed the whole project of calculating and balancing our feelings so that we assign exactly the right amount to each case is a ridiculous one. 'If you are so indignant about this, why weren't you angry about that?' is a foolish (though understandable) question. The important thing is not to apportion our adrenalin correctly but to get our perceptions right.

Take, for example, the words of the British Attorney General at the Aldershot trial (as reported in *The Times*): 'It is a technique of murder with two characteristics. The first is that it kills and maims indiscriminately, including children and, as in this case, women. The second is that it permits the murderers to plant a bomb and leave it timed so that it explodes only after they have departed from the scene, which ensures their own personal safety. It is a cowardly form of warfare, since it kills indiscriminately anyone within range. Anyone who took part in such an operation was guilty of murder.' Whether we agree or not with this eminent lawyer's moral judgment, what we cannot doubt is that his description applies exactly to what the British Bomber Command did throughout the second World War and to what the U.S. Air Force is doing on a vastly greater scale at this moment in Vietnam. We are entitled to get angrier about what happens at home than at what happens a long way off; we are not entitled to twist our moral judgment to suit the geography.

All this may serve as an Englishman's cautious preamble to making any comment at all about the police-state in Brazil. England is, after all (though you would hardly guess it from the British press), currently on trial before an international court at Strasbourg on charges of using torture as 'an administrative practice'; Brazil is not. A Dominican, remembering the Inquisition, should be even more

hesitant to take a high moral tone, so I shall try to be simply factual in reminding our readers of the fate of our Dominican brethren imprisoned in the remote President Venceslao gaol on the borders of the Matto Grosso.

Carlo Alberto Christo, Ivo de Amaral Lesbaupin and Fr Fernando de Brito are only three amongst a great many more political prisoners in Brazil, and, of course, they are by no means the worst treated. According to *Informazione Domenicane Internazionali* (Convento Santa Sabina, Rome), 'all the political prisoners suffer humiliations and inhuman tortures on the most sensitive parts of their bodies'. A great many socialists and Trades Union leaders have died under torture in prison—Oswaldo Pfuitzenreuter, Olavo Hansen, Salvador Telesano. . . . As Cardinal Rossi remarked, 'Just to say that political detainees, who are treated as convicts, have no mutilations on their hands and feet, is not sufficient'.

The three Dominicans were sentenced by a military court to four years imprisonment, after a 'trial' in which they were not allowed to present defence witnesses—the sentence was confirmed later by a Higher Military Court which sat without having bothered to notify their defence counsel. Since then they have been in several gaols, including the notorious Tiradentes prison in Sao Paulo (whose Director is widely believed to be a leader of the Death Squads) and have been on hunger strike in protest against their conditions and to demand the treatment they are entitled to as political detainees. The Archbishop of Sao Paulo tried to contact them during the hunger strike, he approached the Sao Paulo Secretary for National Security and the Secretary for Justice as well as the Minister of Justice himself but he was not given permission to see them. Eventually the Papal Nuncio was able to get through and on July 11th, after 33 days, the strike was ended with a few pathetic concessions to the prisoners. They are not allowed to receive food parcels (according to IDI, none of the 400 prisoners is allowed milk although the prison runs a flourishing farm with a large herd of cows) and in their isolation there is no sure means of knowing what happens to them day by day. There has been no news for several weeks.

The last word should be left with Carlo Alberto Christo, writing from his underground cell in Tiradentes: 'Fantasies crumble when torture gives us a presentiment of death. . . . For us prison is truly a theological experience; among our comrades, political prisoners and petty criminals, we have found the living image of Jesus Christ. . . . But they asked us: "Why is it that only now does the Church show us things in this light?"'

H. McC.