

The task after Ross Fitzgerald's *The Pope's Battalions**

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Despite his public prominence, B. A. Santamaria remains an elusive and enigmatic figure in Australian history. He attracted both intense loyalty and fierce opposition, yet much of his activity still remains obscure or veiled in secrecy. A number of writers have researched the years leading up to the Split, giving us a fairly accurate view of the issues and events of those years. However, Santamaria's later extensive activities in many fields remain largely unresearched. Val Noone critiqued Santamaria during the Vietnam War period,¹ but we clearly need a full-scale biography, particularly to explore Santamaria's ideas and involvements from the 1960s.

The Pope's Battalions is the first major effort to cover the whole of Santamaria's career. This is a very daunting project, because of the sheer length and extent of his political and social involvements, the difficulty of relating the various worlds he inhabited – especially the links between the Catholic Church and political movements and ideas, internationally and within Australia – and the fact that the Movement was a secret organisation involved in a national campaign against the equally secret Communist Party. Since much of this involved sensitive matters in foreign affairs and intelligence security, it will also be difficult to gain access to records. Yet the task needs to be done while colleagues and critics of Santamaria are still alive.

Given Ross Fitzgerald's background as a well-published historian, his analysis of Santamaria and his anti-communist organisations has been keenly awaited. His book reflects increasing interest in the religious undercurrents in Australian politics and culture that have often been overlooked in the past. It is with great regret that this reviewer found the book extremely disappointing, with an astonishing ignorance about aspects of Santamaria's activities and the Church. He displays little 'feel' for the intricacies of intra-Church debates, and has relied heavily on secondary sources. In addition, the title is somewhat misleading; perhaps it was chosen for marketing purposes, but it does not accurately reflect the content of the book.

Nevertheless, *The Pope's Battalions* not only offers the chance to evaluate an important and difficult work, but invites one to consider what further work

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needs to be done in the formidable task of understanding the Santamaria phenomenon.

As the author in 2001 of *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*,² I was particularly interested to see how Fitzgerald would take the historical analysis forward. Though he referred many times to my thesis on Sydney's Catholic social and political movements in the 1930s, 'From Ghetto to Crusade',³ and to my 1991 work, *The Church's Social Teaching: from Rerum Novarum to 1931*,⁴ imagine my surprise to find not a single mention of *Crusade or Conspiracy?* which overlapped so substantially with *The Pope's Battalions*. This is not because my book escaped Fitzgerald's attention. He reviewed it in the *Australian Book Review* in May 2001 (pp. 50-51).

Fitzgerald's book suffers from a major problem which in part stems from the title, *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*; this suggests a focus on the Catholic mobilisation against communism and the problems that arose within the Catholic community, especially over the Church's role in politics. Instead we find the narrative is predominantly about Santamaria, the Movement/DLP/NCC and the Labor movement, with the Church gradually dropping into the background to the factional and political struggles of Labor. Hence the title sets up expectations that are not met, though in the early chapters the author plunges into his narrative with the impression that he intends to explore the inner workings of this political Catholicism. Whatever the success of this work as a history of Labor politics of the period – others are better qualified to judge that aspect – as an exploration of this Church engagement in politics, it is truly disappointing.

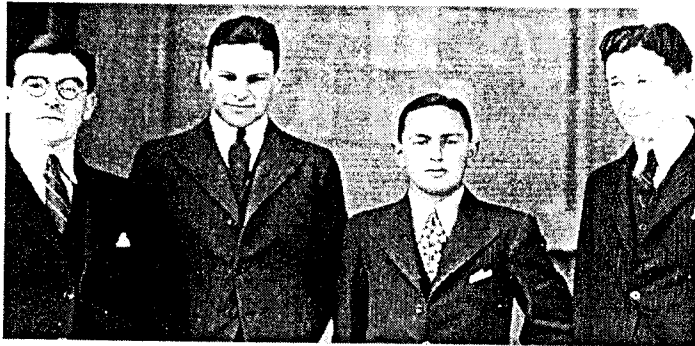
Fitzgerald has adopted a clear chronological approach, beginning with the historical context of the Catholic Church and culture in Australia, the development of the Labor Movement and the political currents of the early twentieth century. The opening chapter, 'Catholics, Communists and Capitalists 1915-36', introduces central themes, outlining interaction between Catholic ideas and movements within Australia and overseas, various currents in the Labor Movement and the dominant Protestant-capitalist culture. Of particular importance, of course, is the emerging conflict between the Catholic Church and communism.

Attitudes to socialism, the Labor Movement and capitalism

But in his survey of Catholic history, the author has difficulty grasping important nuances in Catholic thought and movements, and tends to depict Catholic social thought as simply anti-socialist, without exploring the degree of overlap with versions of socialist thought. For instance, Fitzgerald writes that the European Catholic

social reformers like Ketteler and Ozanam reflected an essentially defensive reaction to stem 'the rising attraction of socialism among the working classes' (p. 3). Well, yes and no. Ketteler and Ozanam saw many positive features in the socialist movements and incorporated them in their visions of Christian Democracy.⁵ The Catholic social reformers were trying to break out of the dominant reactionary and conservative political positions of the Church in their time by reconciling Catholic political movements and thinking with democracy. But they were also confronted by contemporary ideological forces, especially 'Manchester Liberalism' and various Continental forms of Liberalism.⁶ Bismarck in Germany also shared the 'liberal' opposition to the Catholic Church.⁷ It had to fight for its existence against his attempts to crush it during the *Kulturkampf*, which put thousands of clergy in gaol.

Even in Australia the social activist, Kevin Kelly, attested that before the Spanish Civil War many Catholics saw the chief enemy of the Church to be this vehemently anti-Catholic Liberalism, not socialism or communism. Indeed many prominent Catholic leaders, like James Scullin, adopted a benign interpretation of socialism. Arthur Calwell took pride in the label of 'Catholic socialist' till his dying day. They were all of course opposed to the militant atheism of communism, and thorough-going materialism and secularism, but wanted to draw from Catholic social philosophy principles for social and economic reform.



Here in happier days, B. A. Santamaria (second from right and Kevin T. Kelly (left), were members of the successful Melbourne University Debating team in Adelaide in August 1935, with R. W. Wilmot (second from left) and A. Benjamin (right). Kelly was regarded as the chief theorist of Catholic Action, and became a leading critic of Santamaria's Movement. Photo courtesy Mrs Margaret Kelly.

In exploring Santamaria's ideological development, Fitzgerald argues that he 'derived much of his inspiration from conservative English and European Catholic intellectuals such as' Belloc and Chesterton, and the papal encyclicals (p. 1). Yet Santamaria denied being influenced by Belloc and Chesterton, and there is precious little evidence of their influence in his writings. His appeals to Distributism were

rather to the Protestant Southern Agrarians of the United States.

Fitzgerald's claim that 'Chesterton, like Belloc, represented a reactionary stream in Catholic thought which saw the restoration of the medieval economic and social order being achieved under the aegis of the Church' (p. 21) is too sweeping. Certainly they took a romantic view of medieval Christendom in their polemical writings, but Chesterton in particular was a philosopher of considerable sophistication, and while they saw ideals and principles that could be drawn from medieval periods, neither was naïve enough to think that they could simply restore the medieval social and economic order.

I would also query Fitzgerald's view that 'Santamaria's economic thought was based squarely on the teachings of the Catholic Church, and specifically' on *Rerum Novarum*. I would also question the degree of influence of Colin Clark (p. 263). You won't find rural utopianism in papal social thought or the standard Catholic commentators. To what extent was Santamaria 'very consciously' part of 'the Catholic intellectual tradition', as Fitzgerald asserts? In some ways, as others have argued, Santamaria was an anti-modern and out of step with contemporary Catholic social thought.

Fitzgerald is at times too uncritical of his sources, notably in the instance of Fr Ugo Modotti, the Italian chaplain in Melbourne from 1938. Fitzgerald writes that Modotti was arrested by the Commonwealth Investigation branch 'as a known Fascist' but was released after Mannix's intervention. It is true that Modotti actively opposed communist influence in the Italian community but he strongly denied being a Fascist. Moreover, the Church had been in a long conflict with the Fascist regime, verging on a complete breakdown in relationships when Pius XI issued his 1931 encyclical, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*. Mussolini backed down, but the Church grew more alarmed as he aligned Italy with the unpopular Hitler in the later 1930s. It is hardly satisfactory to rely on accusations by his anti-clerical enemies to conclude Modotti favoured Fascism. And for Fitzgerald to simply repeat the allegation that Mannix in late 1943 declared 'Mussolini [to be] the greatest man living today' (p. 64), without any critical evaluation by our author, greatly strains scholarly credibility.

The communist threat: how real?

A serious lacuna in Fitzgerald's book is its failure to plumb why Catholics were so strongly anti-communist in the first place. In his treatment of the Spanish Civil War, he writes that 'The Spanish Catholic Church hierarchy's public support for the Nationalists made the Church an especially vulnerable target of militants and those workers and peasants who feared the restoration of the old order' (p. 35). But was not the Church panicked by the rising tide of Anarchist violence against

the Church, resulting in the widespread burning of convents and churches, and the killing of religious personnel, with the apparent collusion of the Republican Government?⁸ Fitzgerald makes no mention of this. Yet in the eyes of many Catholics, there seemed no choice but to oppose such violent attacks on the Church.

The anti-Catholic violence in Spain was often perceived by Catholic writers, somewhat mistakenly as we now know, to be part of a world-wide communist conspiracy against the Church. Even in Australia Catholic leaders like then-Archbishop Gilroy of Sydney were warning of an imminent communist onslaught on the Church, as had happened in Spain.⁹ This seems absurdly exaggerated today, but it indicates the depth of feeling and fear at the time that such views were taken seriously.

Catholics had good reason to fear communism. By 1930, the savage persecution of believers of all faiths was in full swing in the Soviet Union, and the Catholic Church was being virtually eliminated. This was not an aberration in the regime, but seemed to flow from central tenets of communist ideology, and hence Catholics elsewhere not surprisingly were fearful of it spreading, as it appeared to be doing violently in Mexico as well as in Spain.

Inexplicably, Fitzgerald has made no mention of the significance for Catholic views of the extermination of their coreligionists and millions of others in the USSR during the 1930s. His silence on this contrasts with his generous view about the Soviet Union entering a non-aggression pact with Germany in August 1939: 'Although the pact was later portrayed as a cynical exercise in Soviet perfidy, there was considerable understanding at the time that it was the logical consequence of Chamberlain's disastrous policy' (p. 45). However, Fitzgerald does mention the repression of Christianity in Eastern Europe and the USSR in the later 1940s (p. 77). Such renewed persecution merely confirmed the long-established fears of Catholics in Australia.

Santamaria's intellectual development

The second chapter, 'The Church, Movement and the Labor Party 1936-45', describes the development of Catholic Action and the anti-communist organisations. However, our author has misunderstood the nature of Catholic Action, and writes that the National Secretariat of Catholic Action 'advocated lay autonomy'. Not so. Catholic Action was always understood to be formally under the control of the bishops.

Fitzgerald concludes his summary of the 1940 *Bishops' Statement on Social Justice* by endorsing Gerard Henderson's view that the statements were basically 'utopian'. Fitzgerald continues: 'The Catholic vision of utopia was, in the full sense

of the word, reactionary: it was informed by an idealistic view of what had existed in Europe 400 years earlier, not of what could be created in Australia in the twentieth century' (p. 64-65). Fitzgerald writes that the Church presented 'the Catholic image of an earthly utopia' to oppose that of the communists. But he does not realise that Church teaching explicitly rejects the possibility of an earthly utopia, while nevertheless arguing that Christians must still strive to improve social conditions.

This sweeping judgment that the statements were 'utopian' is not substantiated by a careful review of the statements. Certainly Santamaria's proposals for small-scale farming and a rural-based civilisation were unrealistic, but the core of Catholic social thinking cohered closely with Labor views at the time, and was widely supported across the community: higher and fairer wages, a more equitable distribution of wealth, closer land settlement, support for family farms and firms, increased population, state control of banks and financial policy, economic development, expanded irrigation and diversification in agriculture, home ownership, income support for families and those in special need, more equitable ownership of productive resources, especially through cooperatives, and a strong role for the state in promoting full employment, economic development and decentralisation. It is inaccurate to dismiss this simply as 'utopian' or 'reactionary'. Many informed Catholics would have seen medieval Christendom *as a metaphor* that modern civilisation could be refashioned to embody more fully Christian and human values, not as a blueprint for Australia, though a few enthusiasts leant in that direction, including Santamaria at times in the National Catholic Rural Movement.

Santamaria and the Church

Chapter 3, 'Towards the Labor Split 1945-54', recounts briefly the formation of the national Movement and the authorisation of the Catholic bishops. It notes the ambiguity about whether it was Catholic Action or not, but makes practically no mention of debates within the Catholic Action movements, among the bishops and with other Catholic laity about the propriety of this arrangement. This is indeed surprising, since it remained the core issue in the dispute, as it was a radical departure from the usual implicit Christian Democratic assumptions on which Catholics had operated in Australia, and which were being more formally endorsed even in Italy itself, and also by leading Catholic writers elsewhere, notably Jacques Maritain.

The next chapter, 'Splitting the Labor Party 1954-55', substantially recounts the political and industrial events leading up to the Split, with a sketch of the conflict between the Sydney hierarchy and Mannix over the Movement. Fitzgerald argues that the Easter Pastoral Letter of 1955 expressing united episcopal support for the Industrial Groups after the Hobart conference may have influenced

Santamaria to urge his Labor allies to defy the Hobart decisions even if it split the ALP (p. 138-39. See also 149). Hardly. Santamaria by then was in not the slightest doubt that the Sydney bishops were resolutely opposed to his direction of the national Movement, and were determined to end a situation in which he could invoke Church authority to give political directions to Sydney laity and politicians.

Chapter 5, 'The NCC and the DLP 1955-63', mainly concerns the unfolding Labor politics, adding some significant detail on the Queensland saga and split of 1957, and concluding with the reforming of the Movement into the National Civic Council (NCC) and Mannix's death in 1963. Unhappily it reveals the extent of Fitzgerald's misunderstanding of the central issue in the Movement controversy. He sees the conflict between the Sydney hierarchy and Santamaria as stemming simply from Bishop (from 1965 Archbishop) James Carroll's determination 'to wrest control of the Movement from the laity' (p. 149). 'Santamaria's claim that the Movement, as a Catholic organisation, should be controlled by its members was never likely to be ultimately accepted by the Church' (p. 150).

Fitzgerald has uncritically accepted Santamaria's charge that the conflict was one between clerical authority and lay independence in political matters. This was not Santamaria's original view or the view he favoured at the peak of the Movement's power, when he sought to extend Movement influence beyond the struggle against the communists to win a determining influence in the ALP itself, and hence over its political sphere. This ambition raised concerns about the relationship between Church and State, and broached the accustomed Catholic understanding that the Church was neutral in partisan politics, even though it contributed to public debates, particularly on moral issues. Catholics were free to engage in party politics strictly on their own initiative, informed by the Church's social and moral teaching of course, but not as representing the Church. Lay people in politics spoke only for themselves. Maritain had clearly articulated this view in the late 1930s, and his views were championed by members of the Champion Society in Melbourne to challenge what they considered Santamaria's manipulation of the Church.



Archbishop Mannix, followed by Archbishop Justin Simonds, Bishop Jas. P. O'Collins (Ballarat, left) and Bishop Lyons (Sale, right) enter St Patrick's Cathedral. Photo courtesy Melbourne Archdiocesan Archives.

With Mannix's backing, Santamaria tried to make the Movement the official instrument of the Church in party politics. Santamaria had frequently claimed that it acted as an agency of the bishops and spoke with their authority. Hence loyal Catholics were by implication obliged to support it or, later, at least not oppose it. Being a secret organisation, the status of the Movement was uncertain to many Catholics, however vaguely they knew of its existence. Santamaria was able to maintain the ambiguity of its status utilising the code language and cover of Catholic Action which certainly was supposed to be under the control of the bishops. He juggled the ambiguity of the Movement to suit his purpose, but in his own mind considered that he had developed a new model of direct Church intervention in politics. It was not just that Carroll and Gilroy were worried, as Fitzgerald claims, that the Movement 'was seen by non-Catholics' as acting on behalf of the Church (see p. 150); they were worried it was usurping the bishops' authority and dictating partisan political activity in the name of the Church.

As for Fitzgerald's view that Santamaria was 'surprisingly ignorant of the internal politics of the Australian Catholic episcopate', I doubt that very much, though he clearly did not know how to deal with Carroll. It is certainly a remarkable misunderstanding for Fitzgerald to write that 'the Australian Catholic hierarchy – apart, of course, from Mannix – had turned against Santamaria' after the fall of the Cain government in Victoria (p. 170). For there is abundant evidence that even during 1956 the bishops were still split almost 50-50 over the Movement. It was, after all, this inability of the bishops to resolve the issue that determined Gilroy to appeal to Rome. Astonishingly, Fitzgerald makes no mention of the decisive Roman intervention in 1957.

Fitzgerald wrote: 'While Mannix lived, the Catholic Church and its institutions [in Melbourne, presumably] would be at the service of Santamaria and the DLP, and this, for a small and narrowly-based party, counted a great deal' (p. 182). Fitzgerald seems unaware of how strong support for Santamaria remained in some other dioceses, though it gradually declined as it became more widely known among priests and many lay people that such direct Church involvement was defying the Vatican and the clear directives from Pope Pius XII. Even then, some bishops and many clergy continued to involve the Church in direct support.

Chapter 6, 'Holding the line against the Left 1963-74', recounts the slow decline of the DLP and Santamaria's continuing political involvements, with some attention to developments in the Church after the Second Vatican Council. Fitzgerald outlines the politics of the Vietnam War, but gives no considered attention to Santamaria's role in trying to mobilise Catholic opinion in support of the war, and the debate within the Church and the ALP over the morality of the war. A reader might have hoped for some explanation for Santamaria's many trips to Vietnam, along with

some details about his contacts with the Australian government and armed forces in this campaign, as well as his links with US and other intelligence organisations in South East Asia. To what extent was Santamaria able to set up his own intelligence network in Asia, or link up with other anti-communist networks? Why did Santamaria take such a different view of the Vietnam War from that of the Vatican? Fitzgerald does not address these issues.

By 1980 Santamaria had grown increasingly concerned about the changes in the Church and the decline of religious practice and vocations. Fitzgerald gives a thumbnail sketch of this process, identifying Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, as 'the defining moment when large numbers of Catholics began to reject the authority of the Church'. This destroyed the ability of the DLP or NCC to recruit dedicated young Catholic men 'to fight the good fight against the hostile secular-Protestant world outside the Catholic ghetto' (p. 218).

Fitzgerald sees Gilroy's stand against the Movement in predominantly political terms, without considering the standard Catholic teaching on the proper relationship between Church and politics in a democracy. Hence Fitzgerald wrote that even by 1983, 'Four years into the new papacy [of John Paul II], Santamaria had to accept that there was no sign that Rome would intervene to overturn the political prelates in Sydney who had conspired against him for so many years' (p. 250).

Our author depicts the Sydney bishops as devious politicians acting out of self-interested partisan political motives, but without advancing any evidence for this. In my view, Gilroy would strenuously have avoided any involvement in partisan politics. He authorised Carroll to curtail the influence of the Santamaria Movement in Sydney, lest it commit the Church to a risky political adventure against the wishes of the bishops. Carroll certainly knew well many key Labor figures, but Fitzgerald has not established the nature of his influence within Labor circles, and whether it constituted illegitimate interference in partisan politics in trying to curtail Santamaria.

Fitzgerald interprets the dispute as a contest for factional political power whereas the Vatican and others believed that a key Catholic principle was at stake concerning the limits of Church-directed political action. It was not just the standard Church policies on the relationship between Church and politics that Santamaria had challenged; it was Pius XII himself who had finally determined the outcome of the Roman intervention against the Movement.

Not until the last chapter does Fitzgerald turn back to Santamaria's role in the debate within the Church, taking heart from his view of the policies of John Paul II. Fitzgerald develops a commentary on Santamaria's view that the Church was being Protestantised by Catholic questioning of Church authority.



James Carroll (centre) was consecrated Bishop in Sydney in 1954, and became the key episcopal opponent of Santamaria's Movement. Archbishop Eris O'Brien of Canberra-Goulburn (left) also firmly opposed Santamaria's use of Catholic Action, but Bishop Patrick Lyons (right), then an auxiliary in Sydney but from 1957 Bishop of Sale, became a close ally of Santamaria. Cardinal Gilroy quickly replaced Lyons as head of the Sydney Movement with Carroll. Photo courtesy of the Catholic Weekly.

Santamaria's exaggerated insistence on the authority of the Church revealed the limitations of his theological understanding. He was not literate in theology or Scripture. He founded the magazine *AD2000* in 1988 to advance his views, claiming the banner of religious orthodoxy (presumably others were unorthodox). The irony of this became apparent when Melbourne's Archbishop Frank Little later forbade *AD2000* being sold in Catholic churches because of its attacks on other Catholics, and particularly on the education guidelines of the Melbourne Archdiocese.

Fitzgerald's treatment of the debate about Church authority – a challenging task even for specialists – is weakened by his misunderstanding of Church teaching on conscience (p. 280-81). In a footnote, he quotes from the Vatican Council's *The Church Today* (#24) that Catholics must accept the teaching of the bishops 'with religious assent' and 'religious submission of mind and will', without realising that these are highly technical terms, and that there has been on-going debate about their meaning and significance.

Church authority is meant to help inform conscience, but it does not replace it. As the Vatican Council also said in *The Church in the Modern World* (#16), 'Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged.' In the final analysis, it must be said that the traditional teaching is that conscience has primacy in an individual's honest attempt to discern the moral truth of his or her situation. As Aquinas wrote in *The Sentences*,

it is better even to be excommunicated than violate one's conscience.¹⁰

Santamaria had seized the mantle of religious orthodoxy to criticise severely even Popes John XXIII and Pope VI, and many of the policies of Vatican II. He thought the Vatican had done a deal with the communist governments, and this explained, in his mind at least, why the Vatican Council did not endorse renewed militancy against communism. More poignantly, the decision by Pope Pius XII in 1957 against his Movement had tested Santamaria's own allegiance to Church authority.

The Pope's Battalions has a page on Cardinal George Pell's relationship with Santamaria, and contrasts the Cardinal's more measured understanding of the effects of Vatican II with Santamaria's somewhat apocalyptic scenarios (p. 282). Cardinal Pell was very close to Santamaria and it would have been valuable had the author explored this relationship further.

Fitzgerald notes some of the criticism of Santamaria in *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear* edited by Paul Ormonde in 2000,¹¹ but makes no mention at all of a central contention of the book, that Santamaria distorted Church teaching on the relationship between the Church and politics, and attempted to achieve dominance in the Labor Party. He greets Max Charlesworth's view that Santamaria exaggerated the communist threat in the unions with the curious question: 'was there no such thing as Stalinism in the 1950s?' He also challenges Charlesworth's view that Santamaria's support for the Vietnam War was wrong morally and politically, by asking if the people of Vietnam are 'better off today after 28 years of Communism than they would have been had the United States and its allies won the Vietnam War?' (p. 286). This is the wrong question. Charlesworth's view is undoubtedly that Vietnam would have been much better off had the United States not invented a pretext to involve itself in Vietnam in the first place. Does Fitzgerald seriously wish to defend the US intervention in Vietnam?

Fitzgerald concludes by crediting Santamaria for his clear-sighted fight against communism in the unions, but invokes the historian Robert Conquest to contend that 'the worst aspects of Stalin's regime, the purges of the 1930s... were carefully concealed and did not become widely known in the West until Khrushchev's "thaw" of the 1950s' (p. 289). It would seem that Conquest was not reading the Catholic papers, which contained stories about communism and communist atrocities almost week by week in many periods. The *details* of the purges may not have been known, but the fact of the purges was in large part hidden only from those who did not want to see.

The most critical problem with *The Pope's Battalions* is that the heart of the Catholic story is missing: the dispute over the social and political role of formal Catholic organisations. The book does not explore the decades-long Catholic opposition to Santamaria's views, especially from the *Catholic Worker* group, but also by the Young Christian Workers' (YCW) wing of Catholic Action led by

Archbishop Simonds, and the deepening opposition to Santamaria in sections of the Sydney Movement, notably by the bishops there. It overlooks Maritain's ideas and their confirmation at the Second Vatican Council.

Unexplored aspects of Santamaria's activities

As for Santamaria leading the 'Pope's Battalions', is the debate in Italy between the Christian Democrats and Professor Gedda's attempts to politicise Catholic Action not relevant? Fitzgerald gives only cursory attention to official Vatican statements, and shows no curiosity about how that master of 'spin', Santamaria, was interpreting Vatican policies to support his activities. Likewise, Fitzgerald pays almost no attention to the split among the Australian bishops over the Movement and ignores the appeal to Rome. How can the 'Pope's Battalions' be disowned by the Pope?

The Pope's Battalions acknowledges Santamaria's support for Indonesia in East Timor and for the Smith regime in Rhodesia (p. 242), but omits a serious examination of the prolonged conflict between Santamaria and the national Catholic agencies for aid and justice and peace that were based in Sydney as the hub for their Asian and Pacific networks. For Santamaria, opposing communism was his supreme consideration, providing a lens through which he viewed the world. Hence he consistently supported right-wing dictatorships around the world and denounced even their Catholic opponents as influenced by Marxism. He strongly defended the Marcos and Suharto regimes, and opposed the liberation struggles in Rhodesia, South Africa and elsewhere, even defending the arrest of the members of the Catholic youth organisation, the Young Christian Workers, in Singapore in 1987.

The Church justice agencies, often working in close contact with their colleagues in the respective countries, analysed situations rather in terms of human rights and social justice. Santamaria launched a damaging and highly adversarial campaign against these agencies, particularly the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Australian Catholic Relief (now Caritas Australia), even to the extent of organising a boycott of the Catholic bishops' annual appeal for overseas aid, 'Project Compassion', for allegedly channelling funds to communist groups in the Philippines. Santamaria's long campaign against the justice agencies seriously affected their work, handicapped the integration of the social justice dimension in Catholic schools and parishes, and often prevented the bishops speaking effectively with a united voice.

Therese Woolfe's monumental thesis, 'Witness and Teacher – the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1968-1987', provides a wealth of material, but is not mentioned at all. Fitzgerald overlooks completely the at times vehement debates within the Catholic community over much of the contemporary political agenda, from Aboriginal issues to aid policies in the Philippines, defence and deterrence policy, the US alliance and the US bases in Australia, liberation theology

and US policies in Central and South America. Santamaria constantly attacked the Catholic agencies, provoking ructions within the bishops' conference and in the secular and Catholic media. It is not clear whether Fitzgerald realised how long and intense was this struggle in the Church.

There is much work ahead for scholars here. How was Santamaria able to cultivate friendly bishops and continue to exert significant influence in the bishops' conference long after the death of Mannix? Was he able to develop assets or alliances in Rome that were more sympathetic to his views? Who were his advisers among the clergy and what effect did they have on him? What were his links with intelligence sources, especially in South East Asia? What were his links with the conservative parties? How did Santamaria influence the public policy positions of the Church and the bishops during the later years of the century, and has he left a lasting legacy?

The Pope's Battalions is well footnoted and has a comprehensive index, though it lacks a bibliography. Unfortunately, there is a surprising number of errors in details. For instance, George Pell was never bishop of Ballarat (p. 281); he was a priest of the Ballarat diocese but in 1987 became an auxiliary bishop in Melbourne. And Brian Doyle was never editor of the *Catholic Weekly* (p. 65, 180). Fitzgerald has also generously promoted me to being a Jesuit (p. 41), but alas! I remain a Redemptorist.

Fitzgerald's book indicates just how demanding a comprehensive biography of Santamaria would be. Future historians and biographers will need to pay much closer attention to Santamaria's role in Catholic thought and activities from the 1960s if we are more adequately to appraise his life and work.

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- 1 Val Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam*, Spectrum, Melbourne 1993.
 - 2 *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2001.
 - 3 From Ghetto to Crusade: a Study of the Social and Political Thought of Catholic Opinion-Makers in Sydney during the 1930s, PhD thesis, Department of Government, University of Sydney, 1987.
 - 4 *The Church's Social Teaching: From Rerum Novarum to 1931*, CollinsDove, Melbourne, 1991.
 - 5 *ibid.*, 22-27, 30-40.
 - 6 See J.H. Hallowell, 'Liberalism' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, Jud to Lyt (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 701-706.
 - 7 V. Conzemius, 'Bismarck, Otto Von', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol II, Baa to Cam, 594-95.
 - 8 *Crusade or Conspiracy*, 25ff.
 - 9 From Ghetto to Crusade, 209ff.
 - 10 Aquinas, *On the Sentences*, VI, 38. 2.4 q.a3. See also Brian Lewis, 'The Primacy of Conscience in the Roman Catholic Tradition', *Pacifica*, 13 (October 2000), 299-309.
 - 11 Paul Ormonde (ed.), *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear*, Spectrum, Melbourne 2000.