

THE JESUITS: THE SOCIETY OF JESUS AND THE BETRAYAL OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Malachi Martin/Simon and Schuster/\$19.95

John R. Dunlap

Malachi Martin's fourteenth book since he left the Jesuit Order in 1964 is just about as gamy as hinted by the subtitle, a condition that makes it much less careful than its readers have the right to expect. It is the work of a rogue scholar, broadly sympathetic in its portraits of major figures but wildly expressive in its treatment of big events.

In that mode, Martin joins, for example, an engaging sketch of warmth and energetic devotion in Pedro Arrupe, the man, to an impressionistic image of duplicity and cocksureness in Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit Superior General. Arrupe, Martin tells us, steered the 31st (1965/66) and the 32nd (1974/75) General Congregations of the Society of Jesus onto paths of New Age sociopolitical enthusiasm, with an attendant "tide of fatuities and stupidities": of disenchantment, defection, dissension, trendy experimentation, and, worst of all, a treacherous "war against the papacy."

When Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus in 1540, he had in mind something different from the mission of any other religious order in the Catholic Church up to that time. Shaped by a conversion from worldly ambitions and by several years of fiercely ascetic spiritual molding, Ignatius was nonetheless a man of action, a Basque nobleman and former soldier who had little taste for monastic formalism. One of the followers he had attracted during a stint at the Sorbonne remarked that the "Company" saw themselves as "contemplatives in action." Their new religious order—approved by Pope Paul III amid the turmoil of sixteenth-century Europe and a Church rife with corruption—would be mobile and adaptable, bound by a military-like rule more absolute than that of other religious orders but unencumbered by medieval practices and monkish habits. Given such character there was certain to be trouble between the Church and the Company.

Perhaps to anticipate the objections that, from its beginnings, the Society's relationship with Rome has been intermittently rough-edged, Martin draws a few sketches of early Jesuit squabbles

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with the Holy See. We are treated, for example, to a run-in between Pope Sixtus V and Claudio Acquaviva. Elected in 1581, Acquaviva was the Society's fifth Superior General and by all accounts among the three or four (of twenty-eight) strongest leaders in the Order's history.

He was not a biddable man. When Sixtus demanded, in 1590, that Jesuit theologians retract their views "on certain points of doctrine," Acquaviva responded in the manner to which he was temperamentally suited: he threatened the Pope with a deluge of Jesuit protest against the proposed decree. Sixtus, whom Martin calls "one of the most arrogant Popes ever to succeed St. Peter in Rome," backed down. But Martin tells us nothing about the "certain points of doctrine"—which involved complex clerical in-fighting and bitter accusations by Dominican theologians of Jesuit "laxism" on matters of sexual morality. What Martin does say is that Acquaviva's blatant opposition to the Pope somehow differed in substance from more recent Jesuit wrangling with the Holy See regarding, among other things, "basic Roman Catholic rules of morality," which Martin doesn't define.

Indeed, Martin seems all too eager to contrast an unambiguous Jesuit greatness in the glory days of their "first 150 years" with the sad state of the Order over the past generation. In his sketch of early Jesuit history, you will find no shadows in the brilliant glare—nothing, for example, about the Galileo affair, which had Jesuits on both sides of the dispute, nor even a nod to the Jesuit adventure in Paraguay, which, according to historical analysts less romantic than the British playwright Robert Bolt or the Jesuit liturgist C. J. McNaspy, began as a noble experiment and gradually degenerated into a paternalistic exercise in social engineering.

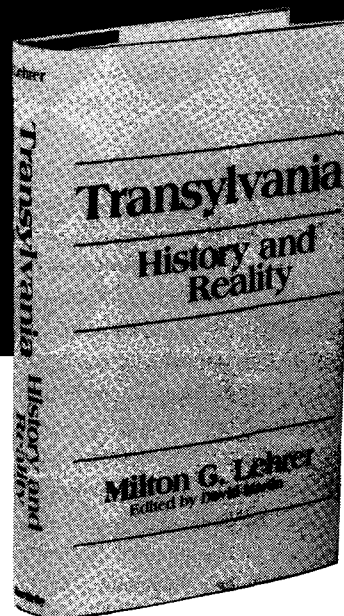
But the convenient omissions are nothing compared to the weird untruths that crop up in this book, beginning with the dustcover, which refers to Martin as an "eminent theologian." Prominent chatterbox, yes—but Martin's Jesuit training was in Semitic lin-

guistics and Biblical archaeology, a background that served him well in his *King of Kings*, a lush novelization of the story of David. The appellation "eminent theologian" acquires some plausibility only in Martin's nasty sniping, by which he does Hans Küng one better in referring to the late and truly eminent Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner as "subtly vicious." Martin's hostility towards Rahner—whose thought had great influence on John Paul II and who tried in 1970 to inject some sense into his less thoughtful colleagues—is mystifying.

Another odd remark: "Properly speaking, Liberation Theology was a Jesuit creation." Granted, a few liberation theorists are Jesuits (notably Juan Segundo, whose five-volume *Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity* may find good use someday as therapy for insomniacs); but, properly speaking or otherwise, the acknowledged father of liberation theology is the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez, whom Mar-

tin astonishingly misidentifies (four times in four different parts of the book) as a Jesuit. Nor is there any hint in *The Jesuits* that liberation theology is already a passing fad, if not quite as moribund as yesteryear's claques of Teilhardian groupies with whom Martin shadowboxes in one chapter.

The goofiest sections of this book, though, are Martin's purely fictive entries. In a note at the back (among precious few notes, citing even fewer exact sources for the hundreds of quotes rippling through the text), Martin tells us: "Certain confidential sources of materials within the Society and the Roman Curia provided both information and commentary throughout." Plausible enough; gossip is a staple of the religious life, and ex-Jesuit Martin doubtless has contacts. But when Martin records every word, gesture, blink, cheek-tic, elevated eyebrow, and raised voice in a closed meeting between John Paul II and his leading cardinals or in a private show-down between Paul VI



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and Pedro Arrupe . . . well, there goes the plausibility. And he can't seem to restrain himself even in the presumptively documentary sections: "There was an uncomfortable feeling among all five Jesuits as they left the papal presence." Just the sort of fluff which should give Martin's readers an uncomfortable feeling about his book.

Part of that feeling wells up with the

impression that Martin doesn't really make a case for the "duplicity" and "cocksureness" of Pedro Arrupe. Martin says in passing that Arrupe was a "compromise candidate" when he was elected Superior General on the third ballot at the Jesuits' 31st General Congregation in 1965: he was neither a radical "renewalist" nor a hidebound "traditionalist." But afterwards Arrupe is said by Martin to have acquired a "wide-angle social optic" that reduced specifically Catholic doctrines and pieties to "the status of symbols or memorials." By hook or crook, Arrupe led his Jesuits down the gilded path of secularization, in effect reducing the Society to a social service club in total accommodation to the "winsome doctrine" of Modernism.

But the contentions are unsupported even by the material Martin does adduce in 150 tedious pages. Fairly or not, Martin's truncated evidence, disentangled from his brash declamations, calls up an image of Arrupe as more of a diplomat than a leader—conspicuously lacking both the cunning and the iron will of a Claudio Acquaviva, and rather more permissive than scheming, as he zigzagged between the disgruntled left and right wings of the Jesuits, trying to inspire in his divided ranks the "primitive charism" of the Order. Perhaps Martin finds diplomacy in a Jesuit Superior General distasteful—but that hardly accounts for his outlandish juxtaposition of contention and contrary evidence. The distortions are so compulsive that he makes it difficult to concede that the Jesuits have had any trouble at all.

But they have, of course. There is no doubt that the Jesuits suffered something of an identity crisis for about ten years following Vatican II. And it's true that some Jesuits today talk about themselves and their Order in a manner warranted neither by prudence nor by modesty—drifting now and then into a *patois* redolent of the sixties: "The issues are war, poverty, racial hatred, excessive nationalism, a technology of production and consumption which tramples on basic human needs." Nope. The issue raised by that kind of claptrap is the old Jesuit inclination to lapse into those "worldly standards" which Ignatius told his men to transform by the Gospel . . .

Enough! The simple fact is that the Society of Jesus, like any other human organization, has its inevitable contingent of exhibitionists—of illuminist cranks apparently motivated less by the intent of the organization than by their own vanity or contempt for human frailty. But the great majority of Jesuits still go about their work with quiet endurance, stumbling along as teachers,

thinkers, pastors, writers, missionaries, scientists, administrators, chaplains, social workers, counselors, laborers—disciplined by that peculiar Ignatian detachment from the world, with all its grubby particularity and strange enticements, and mildly indifferent to the enthusiasms of their few brother Jesuits who really are political louts of the sort Martin rails against.

Although he allows the possibility of Jesuit "reform" (presumably of the kind which is already occurring, as the Order has lately been shaking a number of recalcitrant feathers off its left wing), Martin anticipates the eventual dissolution of the Society, either by

papal interdict (which he grants is unlikely) or by "gradual decay and ossification." But if Martin had made better use of his material, of his pliant metaphors, and of his shrewd eye for gesture and human character—if he had written a disciplined novel instead of a dazzling congeries of factoids—perhaps he would have found himself drawn to more hopeful conclusions about the Society of Jesus.

Instead, *The Jesuits* succeeds only in demonstrating the familiar perils of kneejerk activism—not least by the febrile example of the man behind the book's copyright notice: Malachi Martin Enterprises, Ltd. □

THE SONGLINES

Bruce Chatwin/Viking/\$18.95

Jennifer Howard

As long as there has been an England there have been Englishmen who felt compelled to leave it, abandoning the busy streets and turning wheels of home for the greener pastures of the unknown. Shakespeare, not a traveler himself, put his finger on it when he spoke of England as "this little world . . . bound in with the triumphant sea." That feeling of being *bound in*—spiritually, intellectually, and physically—united Plantagenet crusaders, Tudor privateers, and Victorian imperialists; all left England thinking that they could do better elsewhere, that they would be richer, holier, or freer people if they explored the world's reaches.

But what role is left to twentieth-century adventurers now that the motives of past wanderlust have lost their respectability? With *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin, the latest in the long line of Britons abroad, comes up with an answer: philosopher.

Had he been born in the last century, Chatwin might have hired himself out to the Royal Geographic Society to explore the vastnesses of Africa, hoping, as Alan Moorehead wrote of the Victorians, to see what "benefits civilization could confer on the benighted blacks." Born in 1940, however, Chatwin travels instead as a reverse sort of missionary, hoping to gather the benefits that the "benighted blacks" can confer on civilization. He is not new to travel writing. His best-known work, *In Patagonia* (1977), has been called "that

most perfect and most famous of recent travel books"; in it Chatwin displayed the intrepidity and sensitivity of observation that earned him his reputation as Britain's pre-eminent travel writer.

Chatwin's enthusiasm for the exotic goes back to his childhood. In the early pages of *The Songlines*, he recounts days spent with his Aunt Ruth in Stratford, reading poems from "an anthology of verse especially chosen for travellers, called *The Open Road*." From Aunt Ruth he learned that their surname had been corrupted from "Chetewynde," which in Anglo-Saxon means "the winding path." In Chatwin's mind "the suggestion took root . . . that poetry, my own name, and the road were, all three, mysteriously connected." Later, having quit his job as an expert on modern painting, he journeyed to the Sudan where his guide, a nomad named Mahmoud, triggered a fascination for nomads. "The Pharaohs had vanished," Chatwin writes. "Mahmoud and his people had lasted. I felt I had to know the secret of their timeless and irreverent vitality. . . . The more I read, the more convinced I became that nomads had been the crankhandle of history, if for no other reason than that the great monotheisms had, all of them, surfaced from the pastoral milieu. . . ." And with that statement Chatwin trades in a traveler's pack for the intellectual baggage of a theorist.

Jennifer Howard is a writer and editor living in Washington, D.C.

The book begins encouragingly enough as an autobiographical ac-



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