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The Making of a Church Historian and a Filipino: A Conversation with Fr. John N. Schumacher, S.J.

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The Making of a Church Historian and a Filipino

A Conversation with Fr. John N. Schumacher, S.J.

This interview took place at the Jesuit Residence on the Loyola Heights campus of the Ateneo de Manila University on Easter Monday, 5 April 2010. The editorial staff thanks Karl Fredrick M. Castro for the photo on this page and Father Schumacher who, upon request, provided some photos published here. Permission for the use of the other photos granted by the Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (APPSJ) is also gratefully acknowledged.



Filomeno V. Aguilar: When and where were you born? Could you tell us something about your childhood?

John N. Schumacher: I was born in Buffalo, New York, on June 17, 1927. I was the oldest of seven children and I went to the local parish school for my grammar school education. Of course, in the States the parish schools at that time did not charge anything, so even though my father had a modest job there was no problem when I went to the parish school. At the end of my eighth grade my father did not have very much money to support a big family, so I had very little chance of going to a school which had tuition. But I was fortunate to win a scholarship for four years in the American Jesuit high school in Buffalo, Canisius High School. That was my first acquaintance with the Jesuits. I studied Latin, Greek, and English and some history, mathematics, and science there.

Already when I went to high school, I had some idea of the priesthood but my father discouraged me from going to the seminary because he thought I was too young, 12 years old, so he wanted me to attend a regular high school first before making up my mind. I continued to have the idea of the priesthood, but with the acquaintance of the Jesuits I changed my idea from diocesan priesthood to becoming a Jesuit priest. During my high school I'd been working weekends and summers. My father had a hard time supporting seven kids and, therefore, we all worked in different grocery stores, until in the summer after my graduation I was acting manager in several stores—all the managers were on vacation. With the help of my father on Sundays, I got my accounts into form.

I made up my mind during fourth year to enter the Jesuits and I was accepted, together with several of my companions. We went to the Jesuit novitiate called St. Andrew-on-Hudson, near Poughkeepsie, New York, and there I would spend the next four years. The first two years were the novitiate proper, spiritual training, reading about the Society of Jesus and about Jesuit saints and studying the Jesuit constitutions, and so on, and a lot of manual work both inside the house and outside.

FVA: Manual work? What sort of work did you do?

JNS: In the house, we washed dishes and peeled potatoes, washed the stairs, and cleaned the toilets . . . everything. We had no workers. We did all the work to keep the house going.

FVA: It's no longer the way things are?

JNS: Well, I know they do manual work even now. They take care of their part of the house. But we used to work in the woods. We had a 700-acre property there. They had that much land to safeguard the water rights. At Poughkeepsie there were lots of woods. We used to work cutting the trees and cutting them up and splitting the logs. We were rarely allowed to play handball or softball, or ice-skating in the winter. More often it was work rather than games, but we did both, of course.

After the first two years, we took our vows as Jesuits and then we went to what we called the juniorate, where as juniors we studied Latin, Greek, and English classics, and modern languages. We had done some studying in the novitiate but only enough so that we wouldn't forget everything we had learned in high school. But we were studying full time during the juniorate two years.

At the end of two years, there was a request from the Philippines to New York Province, to which we belonged. At that time, the Philippines was a mission of New York Province. They requested volunteers from New York to come to the Philippines. After the war, there was a great shortage of Jesuits here, and though there were many young Filipinos in preparation they also needed Americans to prepare with them for the future. They were opening several new schools at that time and needed more people. So we came here and went to study at Sacred Heart Novitiate in Novaliches.

FVA: So you were supposed to continue your studies.

JNS: Yes. We had credit for two years college from Fordham University because St. Andrew was affiliated with Fordham. So we continued our studies for three years at Sacred Heart Novitiate to get our A.B. after the first two years and our Master's at the end of the third year, and to prepare ourselves for teaching. We studied philosophy and also

some science and education. That's when I made my first foray into Philippine history. Fr. Francis Clark, who was one of our philosophy professors, organized a seminar on Rizal and his philosophical ideas. It was the time when there was controversy over Rizal's retraction of Masonry, over Rafael Palma's biography of Rizal, which denied it. Instead of getting into the controversy, which was very hot, Father Clark wanted us to study Rizal's ideas by ourselves. So he organized a seminar. We had the six volumes of the *Epistolario Rizalino* and the Rizal biographies, and the different members of the seminar took different subjects: Rizal and education, Rizal and political theory, and so on. For my own topic, Father Clark suggested that, since I had studied German in high school and college, I take Rizal's correspondence with Blumentritt, which was there in German in the *Epistolario* with Spanish translation, but I knew more German than Spanish.

FVA: How did you feel about it when, for the first time, you started browsing through the letters? Because you were just getting acquainted with Rizal, how did you feel?

JNS: Well, we read a couple of biographies to begin with. Getting into the letters, I was fascinated with Rizal . . . the way his mind worked . . . the way he argued his positions and his effort to bring his Philippine experience into contact with the German culture as well as the Spanish he was in contact with. I think that was the beginning of my fascination with Rizal, which in the end culminated in my *Propaganda Movement* book.

FVA: What were your initial impressions of Rizal based on those letters?

JNS: Well, as I said, I saw his mind . . . I'm not sure how much I saw at that time, though. I was fascinated with him, the way his mind worked, the way he was in contact with the whole culture of Europe as well as his own. I don't want to read back my later understanding of Rizal into that period, since I don't think it was that deep at that time, but it did remain a fascination for me and led me to my M.A. entitled "The Philosophical Principles of Rizal as Found in his Correspondence

with Ferdinand Blumentritt," which in turn led to other academic achievements.

FVA: What did Father Clark think of your work?

JNS: He was very interested in it and encouraged me to go on to do my thesis on the subject. I think, you know, hardly any of the biographers of Rizal had examined his German letters much because of the language. We submitted our theses to the Bureau of Private Schools, which existed then, and went down and defended them before the director of the bureau. As it happened, he had written a book on Rizal and probably was very interested in hearing something of our theses.

FVA: Who was that director?

JNS: Dr. Manuel Carreon. At that time, the Bureau was just one great big room with all kinds of desks all over and him in the middle. We were lined up, the six of us, before his desk. And while we were talking to him, he would have to get up because some congressman came in who wanted a project for his district. So he'd get up and talk to him and then he'd come back. And after we all defended, he got up and said to the whole common hall, "This is the best graduate institution in the whole Philippines." He was not referring to the Ateneo, for at that time there was hardly any graduate program at the Ateneo, and indeed at any private school in the Philippines.

After defending our theses, we went on to regency to teach for three years. I was assigned to San Jose Seminary to teach college seminarians Latin and English, and I was also prefect of discipline. I spent three years there at the seminary and I became very interested in the work of San Jose. I asked the provincial if I could return when I was a priest to teach there. He was glad to find somebody who wanted to stay in the seminary. Most people wanted to go out to the Ateneos.

FVA: You said, Father, there were seven of you who arrived here from New York?

JNS: Well, there were seven, yes, seven scholastics and one priest.

FVA: When was this again?

JNS: This was 1948, July 1948. We arrived just the day after what was then Independence Day. We celebrated Independence Day on the ship with the Filipinos there even though none of us had ever been in the Philippines yet. The next day, we were here. At that time, Independence Day was July 4.

FVA: What were your initial impressions about the Philippines?

JNS: We were somewhat bewildered, moving right there without any preparation. Today, if people are sent to another country, they will be given more historical and cultural preparation, but we came without any preparation. We found the welcome overwhelming. They had new white *sotanas* [soutanes] ready for us. The Filipino scholastics put on a skit of welcome and so on. The next day, one of them came to me and said, "You start studying Tagalog today."



Sacred Heart Novitiate, Novaliches, 1948
Photo courtesy of APPSJ

FVA: This was in Novaliches?

JNS: In Novaliches, which, at that time, was the outskirts of Quezon City. The next day, we were right into studying Philosophy. So we only gradually got to experience the Philippines. We did go out to the barrios with Filipino scholastics who were teaching catechism and we came to know barrios that are now part of Quezon City, or of San Jose, Bulacan. There's where I had my first experience. We were coming home in a U.S. Army surplus weapons carrier, which was our only vehicle at that time. We stopped in a place called Malaria Control because there was a malaria control station there put up by the U.S. Army. As I stepped out of the weapons carrier the children looked up at me, I was 6 ft. 4 inches. They said, "Ay, matangos ang ilong." "May buhok ng manika." I was the only blond person they had ever seen.

FVA: Were they touching you?

JNS: They came near me and really looked up in awe.

FVA: And how did you feel about it?

JNS: I was surprised and I found it very funny. Everywhere we were welcomed. We were so much welcomed. It was not very long after the war. People looked on the Americans as liberators. And wherever we went in the street, "Hello Joe! Hello Joe!" It was always, "Hello Joe!" That was my big impression, how much we were welcomed and loved by people.

At the end of my teaching at San Jose, the assistant provincial, Fr. Arthur Weiss, came around to discuss with us what we would do when we were in the United States. At that time, all Jesuits, Filipinos and Americans, had to go to the United States to study theology, since Loyola School of Theology did not exist yet. Since I had asked for future work in the seminary, he said, "What would you like to study?" and I said, "Scripture." "We already have somebody from last year, so how about Church history?" Having the experience of doing my M.A. thesis with some historical background, I said, "Okay."



With mother and a classmate, Woodstock 1956

I went ahead with that in mind during my next four years in the States. We went to Woodstock College, a short distance outside of Baltimore. It's no longer a seminary now. It's been sold to the state. There we were again quite isolated, like we had been at the Sacred Heart Novitiate, out in the country. But we studied Theology for the next four years. Ah, but I also kept in mind that I was going to do church history so that I, on the side, I tried to get books on Philippine history from Baltimore. We also had Blair and Robertson there right at the college. So there was plenty to read on Philippine history. Of course, I also had to prepare myself on general church history, for which we had courses there, since I was going to have to teach

church history, but my main work was theology. We were ordained at the end of third year in Theology.

FVA: What year was that?

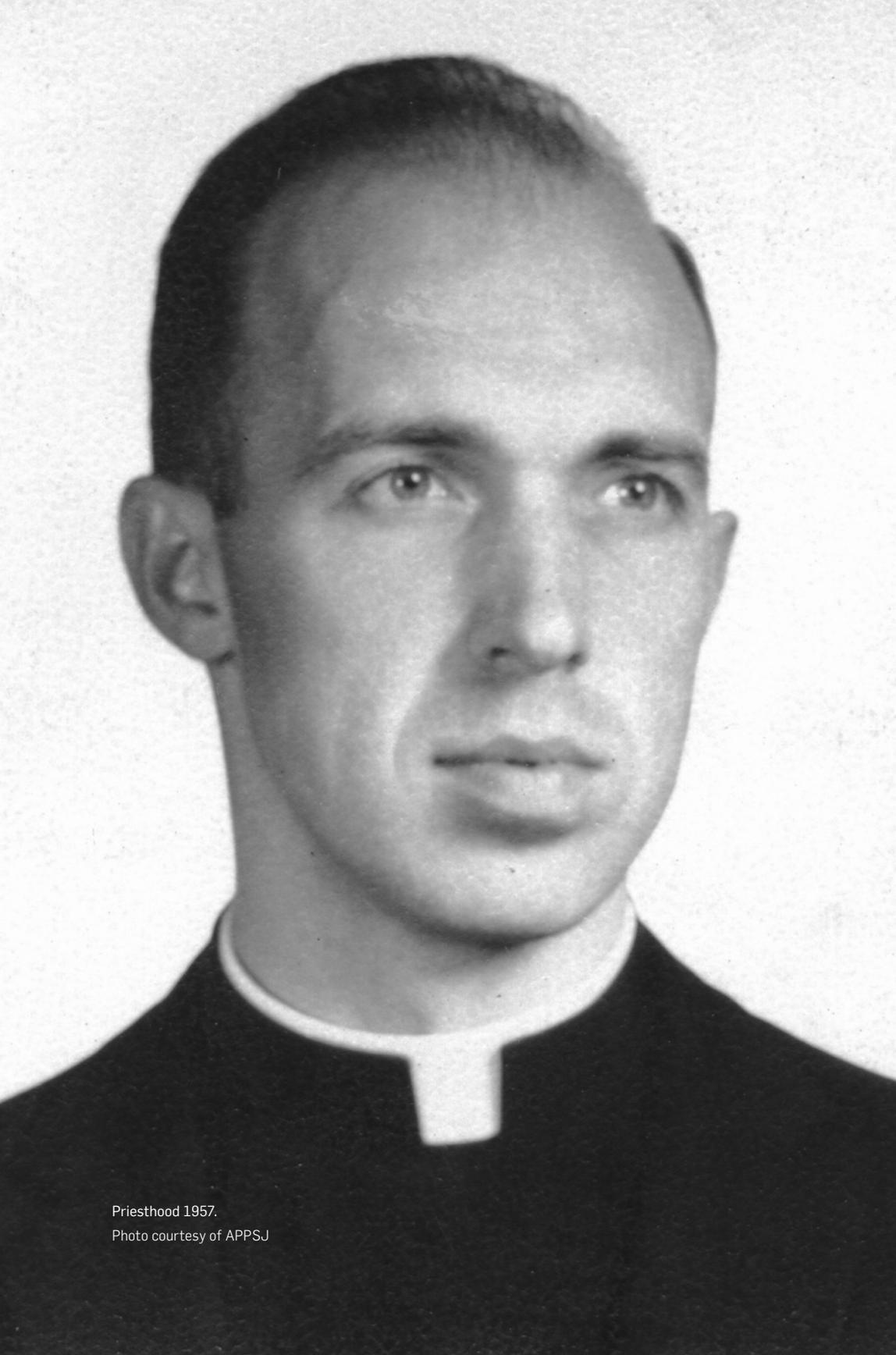
JNS: That will be 1957. And in fourth year we prepared for our comprehensives and exercised ministry in Baltimore and Washington on weekends. At that time, I was also looking forward to the next step in our course, tertianship, as we called it, a kind of repetition in some ways of the novitiate, but adjusted for priests, since we were already mature men, whereas when we entered the novitiate we were very young. They would never accept us at the age of seventeen today as they did in those days. Tertianship was more or less the same in every country and had the same format, more or less some ministry, some deeper study of the Constitutions, preparation for giving retreats, and so on. I asked to be sent to Spain so that I would be able to improve my Spanish. I'd been studying Spanish by tapes in the library of Woodstock College.

FVA: You were studying Spanish on your own?

JNS: Yes. Well, I had a Spanish scholastic who used to help me, but just mostly on my own.

FVA: So you were really gearing up to look at the archives in Spain.

JNS: Yes, because even during Theology I had taken some steps. At the end of the fourth year we received the S.T.L. degree, the Licentiate in Sacred Theology. For that I had to write a thesis, which I did on the Jesuits in *La Solidaridad*. I had accidentally found out that there was a complete set of *La Solidaridad* in the University of Michigan and I got permission to have it, buy a microfilm of it. I had also come to know of an old, somewhat primitive, microfilm reader in an army surplus depot near Baltimore available for a few dollars. I would read microfilm in my room at night and take notes so that I annotated all the articles of *La Solidaridad* in order to be able to take up the articles on Jesuits for my thesis. It was of course this, in addition to what I



Priesthood 1957.

Photo courtesy of APPSJ

knew of Rizal, which was a move toward what would eventually be my thesis on the Propaganda Movement for my Ph.D. It prepared me to know the writings of Del Pilar and Lopez Jaena as well as José Rizal, and all of that helped to move on further. Of course, making tertianship in Spain would enable me to get further acquaintance with the Spanish language so as to be able to work in the archives.

Our activities in tertianship were in large part within the house, but then we also spent a month working up in the mountains, to isolated people in hamlets in the mountains, bringing them basic catechetics and the sacraments, since most of them never saw a priest from one year to another.

FVA: What province of Spain was this?

JNS: This was Almería, then one of the poorest provinces of Spain.

FVA: Where is that, Father—in the south?

JNS: It's in the south, not quite over to the Straits of Gibraltar but down toward that direction of Gibraltar. It's very mountainous, there's just a narrow lowland, and then it rises up to the mountains right there. People were really very neglected. It was good for us who didn't know Spanish well. Those of us who were assigned there were mostly the foreigners who didn't know Spanish well enough to be able to give retreats in the cities, but were at least able to give talks to ordinary people. They welcomed anything and even managed to go along with our mispronunciations and bad grammar. It was a good experience. But it made me reflect that I don't think anywhere in the Philippines were people so isolated from the priests as they were in that part of Almería. By the end of tertianship, my Spanish was passable, though not perfect.

I went back to the States to Georgetown University. I chose Georgetown, partly at the suggestion of Father De la Costa, because of its proximity to the Library of Congress, which had the greatest collection of Filipiniana in the U.S. at that time. At Georgetown, though there was no Southeast Asian program, much less a Philippine program of any kind, I figured I could do that on my own, but I will be

able to do more of church history at Georgetown than in a place like, later, Cornell or Yale would be with their Southeast Asia Programs.

FVA: Didn't Father De la Costa encourage you to go to Harvard?

JNS: Well, he mentioned it to me but then, you know, when I brought up the question of church history, he said, "Maybe it would be better if you go to Georgetown." He himself, of course, had enjoyed Harvard, and had affection for it; of course they published his book. At Georgetown, as I said, I took courses. There was nothing on Philippine history there. There was a course on Southeast Asia, which was only three units. There was one lecture on the Philippines and it was all things which I knew better. It was a Chinese professor who gave it. Since classes were in the evening, every morning I would get on the bus right outside the gate of the university and go down to the Library of Congress and spend my day there, exploring their collections. I already had a notion at that time of what I wanted to do for my doctoral dissertation.

FVA: What were the books that you encountered for the first time at the Library of Congress?

JNS: I find it hard to say anymore. There were dozens, I mean there were hundreds of them. And, particularly, one of the things I concentrated on more at that time . . . the Library of Congress gave you access to what was being written on the Philippines in all the other universities in the United States and in fact in Europe as well. So that's how I published my early articles. Well, my first article in *Philippine Studies* was "Rizal and Blumentritt," which came out of my M.A. thesis. But my next couple of articles were: "Recent Writing on the Philippines Abroad." And this was what I was doing, a lot of it just going through foreign periodicals and reading the nineteenth-century Spanish books. There were other books, but you know I was trying to get whatever I thought would be useful for my dissertation. After my third year of graduate studies, the Fulbright Commission offered grants to Spain and various other countries. As I was interested in Spain, I applied and was able to get a grant to support me in Spain for a year.

Right after my comprehensives, I left for Spain and spent thirteen months there, working in the Archivo Historico Nacional in Madrid, just a few blocks away from the Jesuit house where I was living, and the Biblioteca Nacional where they have the famous collection of the Ministerio de Ultramar. All the books on the Philippines published in the late nineteenth century were right there. I was also able to go to Barcelona and get in contact with the other liberal and republican newspapers in which Filipinos often wrote and with which they were in controversy at times. There was nothing very eventful. Just going to the archives everyday and going to the library everyday occupied my time. The only frustration was that the archives, especially the archives, closed at 1 PM and did not open again till 4, and then only with what you had requested in the morning. Despite those limits, I was able to do my research and come back to Georgetown to write my dissertation.

I worked for a year on the dissertation but was beginning to run into the block that many of us find when we're trying to do our doctorate or even a Master's degree. I was getting quite discouraged and I thought that perhaps I should just give up the degree and come back to the Philippines and teach. Well, Fr. Frank Clark, who had started me off in Philippine history back when I was studying Philosophy, was then provincial and he came by, on his way back from Rome to the Philippines. He stopped to see us briefly. When I told him that I wanted to go back, he said, "Oh, you must get your degree." He spent a whole hour with me going through my thesis, making suggestions, and encouraged me to stay on till I finished, which was another seven or eight months later. I defended my dissertation in December. I think it was December 11, 1964. And I was back in the Philippines, December 22nd, just in time for me to go out for Christmas midnight mass. I was tempted to give a Tagalog homily but at the last minute . . . because I'd given one a couple of times when I was a scholastic and I still remembered what I had memorized in those days, but at the last minute I chickened out and did without the homily.

I began teaching. At that time they had shifted the school year and second semester began on January 2nd. Yes, January 2nd, to finish just in time for the new school year in June. I started right away teaching General Church History. And I did that, beginning then and for the

rest of my life more or less. By that time, San Jose Seminary had moved to the Ateneo campus and Loyola School of Theology had been set up in which the seminarians studied. There I began to teach not only the seminarians, but also in the Ateneo History Department.

Father De la Costa had left the Ateneo History Department with a number of people with degrees in European History, Chinese History, Japanese History, but he was the one teaching the two courses in Philippine history, which at that time were only offered as electives for undergraduate history majors. But just a couple of weeks before I came back to the Philippines, he had been named provincial and therefore had to stop teaching. So they came to me, since I was the only one who had a degree in Philippine history, to teach in the Ateneo as well. At that time, they had only a Rizal course as a core curriculum subject, one unit, on Rizal. So after teaching it for one semester, I decided we needed more Philippine history as well as Rizal. To satisfy the curriculum committee, we created the course “Rizal and the Emergence of the Filipino Nation,” which enabled us to give the early part of Philippine history and then culminate it with Rizal.

FVA: When was this?

JNS: This was 1965. For a few years I was the only one teaching Philippine history on the graduate level and I was teaching much of the undergraduate level as well. Miss Helen Tubangui and Dr. Ed De Jesus, who was a graduate student at that time, were also teaching the undergraduate course. But the Ateneo had very little Philippine history. Father De la Costa had been the whole department, in a way, and with his departure gradually most of the other people he had sent to graduate studies left the teaching profession, with the exception of Dr. De Jesus, who later went to AIM and elsewhere. So while teaching at Loyola School of Theology, I taught a graduate course every semester for the Ateneo History Department and that way satisfied our few M.A. students. So they were all, you might say, formed by me because there was no other professor teaching graduate Philippine history. A few years later, when Dr. Nicholas Cushner came back—at that time he was still a Jesuit, but later he would go back to the States and leave the priesthood—but while he was here we created another

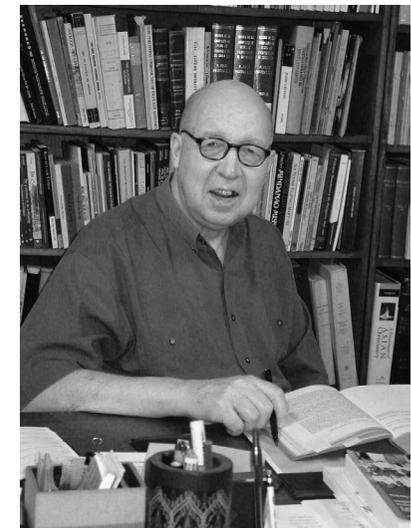
undergraduate course on “The Philippines in the Twentieth Century” and then enlarged our graduate program.

In 1967, which was just a few years after Vatican II, in theology in general there was a concern for inculturation, although the word had not yet come into use, that is, to start from different cultures and historical experience when teaching and studying theology. Fr. Catalino Arevalo who was dean at that time in the Loyola School of Theology asked me to create a course in Philippine Church History. Father De la Costa had given some lectures in Philippine Church History, but in what he left behind all the sources were in Latin and Spanish, which the seminarians were presumed to know. By this time, however, many didn’t know very much Latin and less Spanish, so I began the work of translating sources into English. By 1968, I put out a mimeographed collection which, in the long run, would become my *Readings in Philippine Church History* which I would publish in 1979 and revise after a few years.

In the beginning of that course in Philippine Church History, I’d actually worked mostly with Blair and Robertson. After I had the first mimeographed revision, about 1977, I was able to go to the Lopez Memorial Museum or to the National Library to try and find the originals of Blair and Robertson and translate from the original. As you know, the translations of Blair and Robertson are often not too accurate, so that I was then able to put out a print edition of my *Readings*.

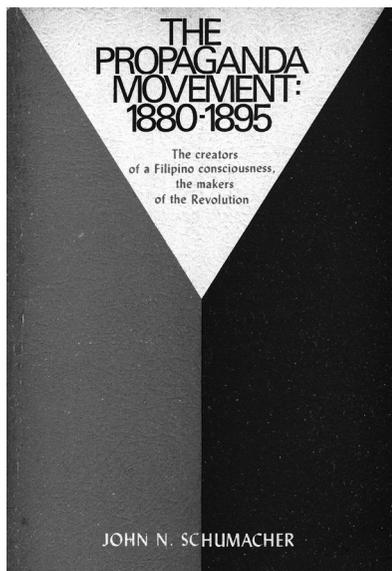
Do you have any other questions?

FVA: I’d like to go back to your Ph.D. Who was your advisor?



Hard at work, 2003

JNS: My first advisor was Professor Boehrer. He was a specialist on Brazil. He died halfway through my preparation of my dissertation. Then I was taken on by a Franciscan, Fr. Matthias Kiemen, who was also a specialist on Brazil. But at least he understood more of the ecclesiastical context that I was writing about. So I really was without a mentor. On the panel for my thesis defense I had Father Kiemen from Brazil; Professor Aguilar, a Cuban who had just recently come to the country, a specialist on Latin America; and Dr. Lee, a Chinese from Taiwan who was a specialist on China and Southeast Asia. So none of



Cover of *Propaganda Movement*, 1973

them really understood my dissertation and therefore everybody passed it willingly and without any complaints. So I was really self-made as far as the Philippines was concerned.

FVA: Why did you write the *Propaganda Movement*?

JNS: Well, it came out of my interest in Rizal and my work on *La Solidaridad*. I really had been working in that whole period from 1880 to 1895, beginning with Rizal's and Pedro Paterno's going to Europe, and then ending up with the death of *La Solidaridad*. I didn't move into the execution of Rizal because that would be

another chapter. So I was really carried along almost from my M.A. thesis in Philosophy through my thesis in Theology to writing my Ph.D. thesis on the Propaganda Movement, which is what I had been concerned with all my academic life.

FVA: How did you feel as an American writing the *Propaganda Movement*?

JNS: Well, I didn't feel anything in particular. I mean, I had the advantage of having lived in the Philippines and studied in the Philippines, and at that time there were very few Filipinos who were writing in his-

tory. It was almost all being written by Americans, whatever was being written at that time.

FVA: You were saying in an earlier conversation that you were studying all sorts of languages. But Tagalog you did not pursue very much . . . and you said that it was something that should really have been drilled into you.

JNS: Yeah, in those days, in all the schools when I first came here after the war, there was the English rule or the dialect rule, as they called it in those days, students were forbidden to speak anything but English, as was true of all the schools before the war. After the war it continued in the seminary, and so when I came here I was forbidden to speak anything except English, which was not very conducive for learning Tagalog. When I started to study Tagalog at Novaliches, I had just worked on it for a year and then the rector found out that I was studying Tagalog. "You know," he said, "Father Superior has written that if anybody studies a Filipino language at all, they should study Visayan, because that's where our parishes are, in Misamis and Bukidnon. So you'd better change now. Continue your Tagalog but study Visayan principally." Which of course was only confusing. There was only one Cebuano speaker in the whole philosophate. He and I used to meet regularly. And I learned a few things in Cebuano, until the superior of the mission came around. When he heard what the rector had told me, he told me to go back to Tagalog. But by that time I had lost a year on it. And then since we didn't speak it in the seminary, though I continued to study it, I never had very much speaking experience. I had permission three or four days a week to speak with the Filipino scholastics who were willing to help me. A number were. They were glad to see somebody studying Tagalog. Not many of the Americans did, we were not encouraged to, in fact. But, you know, I never really achieved a fluency in spoken Tagalog. My Tagalog has always remained, up until the present, largely academic Tagalog. I can read, I can write, but speaking is . . . I can speak if somebody is willing to listen to me, but I can't really take part in a conversation when it goes back and forth. But you know, I read Tagalog materials when I was doing my dissertation and I have that kind of fluency, but not in spoken Tagalog, unfortunately.

FVA: But at least when you were reading the *Noli* and *La Solidaridad*, whenever there were Tagalog words, these things you could fully appreciate.

JNS: Yes, sure, that kind of recognition I certainly had. And decades later when I was a priest, once it was allowed to have mass in Tagalog, I would say mass in Tagalog, I would give a homily in Tagalog, but I had to write it out very carefully beforehand. I couldn't just speak extemporaneously, which of course was probably better. Homilies are not given extemporaneously but written beforehand.

FVA: So based then on your studies on the history of the church in the Philippines, what would you consider as its greatest challenge, the challenge of the church?

JNS: Today?

FVA: Over the centuries, when you survey the history of the church in the Philippines, what are its greatest challenges?

JNS: Well, you know, I think the Spanish missionaries didn't know what inculturation meant. They didn't. They did adapt in their own way to the culture, but of course they more transformed than accepted it, you might say. But what they drilled into people became part of the culture and that remains today. As you see, even people who are not religious, they know what Catholicism is. They know what Catholics practice, they may not understand it well but it's there. Where else would you have holidays during Holy Week, civil holidays, and so on, which are a part of our Filipino culture? But, I think, what the missionaries failed to do is to come to grips with the newer elite culture which was developing in the late nineteenth century. And, therefore, they were in total opposition to it, and therefore the nationalist movement became almost necessarily antifriar. What Rizal pictures in his novels, of the friar parish priest discouraging or belittling people who went to Europe for their education and so on, this was factual, not just an invention of Rizal.

Then in the twentieth century, when the Americans came in and tried to transform the educational system with their idea to transform the culture as well. The church partially failed also then, though it is true that it had to face many problems, namely, the departure of so many Spanish missionaries, and the predominantly Protestant orientation of the American government in spite of the separation of church and state, and finally, the lack of resources with the end of state support for the church. Still the church did not really try to come to terms with the new culture in the earlier part of the twentieth century, as I tried to say in my essay on "A Hispanicized Clergy in an Americanized Country." This begins to change in the 1930s. In the 1940s, of course the war upsets everything. And in the period after the war you have, on the one hand, a continuing battle between many Hispanic-oriented clergy, bishops, and many religious orders on the one side, and the secular elite coming from U.P., largely, on the other. Those controversies in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s were partly because the Church was unable to deal with the secular culture, unable to accept the secular culture and to work within it.

Of course, these problems are ongoing and they're true of some and less true of others. The church was an important factor in the period of Magsaysay, in revitalizing Philippine national culture. And in later periods, of course during the Marcos regime, it was also a factor in providing the democratic opposition to the martial law regime, so it hasn't been a totally negative thing. But this is an ongoing problem, and I think the lack of understanding of the history of the Philippine church on the part of churchmen is a negative factor. That's why I've always given a lot of emphasis to my *Readings in Philippine Church History*. I've taught this in many seminaries. That's why I ended up leaving the Ateneo. I taught for twelve years in the History Department. By that time, I was teaching in a couple of seminaries around Manila, but I was asked to teach in the Davao seminary also. And that was incompatible with being in the Ateneo History Department, so I resigned from the History Department, . . . but not from *Philippine Studies*! I continued through the years to advise the History Department for a while, but I just couldn't take regular courses while I was teaching in three or four seminaries.

FVA: When you teach church history, Father, what are the most important lessons that you want to impart to your students?

JNS: Well, mostly an understanding of what I was just talking about . . . that they understand what the church has done in the past and where it failed or succeeded in the past. And, you know, there's been some great successes like the efforts of the Synod of 1582, where the bishop and the clergy came out, denouncing injustice to the Filipinos. This, I always emphasized, is our tradition and, therefore, when we face similar or different types of injustices, as happened especially during martial law, this is what should be the reaction of the church, to denounce them and to abolish them. I also want them to get a sense of what was the positive that was actually accomplished during all those years, but to warn them against making the mistakes that were made in past periods, such as those mistakes that I mentioned a few minutes ago.

FVA: What may you consider as your greatest contribution to Philippine historiography?

JNS: Of course, my *Propaganda Movement* book is a favorite with me and to know that it's still being used as a textbook in courses in the Ate-Neo makes me happy. On the other hand, one of my books has been reprinted so many times since [it first came out]; *The Revolutionary Clergy* continues to sell regularly after almost thirty years.

FVA: I'd like to confirm, Father Jack, if you were the one who coined the phrase "Propaganda Movement." Was there such a phrase before you published the book?

JNS: I don't think so. No, it was already used by Dr. Gregorio Zaide at least. But, in fact, you know there was great opposition from U.P., Teodoro Agoncillo insisting it should be the "Reform Movement" rather than "Propaganda Movement." To use the term Propaganda Movement was to use a term which had been used by the Nazis, he said. But of course in Spanish it means something quite different, just making known, advertising, whatever. When people talk about

the Reform Movement, I always criticize that because it's a fact that Rizal—certainly by 1890 and probably much earlier—had his sights on independence rather than political reform. He had pretty much contempt for the reforms which were being sought by *La Solidaridad*. He wanted them to write about the Filipinos, their culture and their virtues. Del Pilar—this comes from one of his letters in 1890—says: all of us are agreed on independence in the Philippines but by our own methods and in due time. Now the difference between Rizal and Del Pilar is Rizal wanted to put the emphasis on the Filipino people making themselves ready for independence. As he says in the *El Filibusterismo*, when the time came, in the words of Father Florentino, when people rise to their heights, the structure will fall like a house of cards. Whereas Del Pilar's idea was to get reforms, liberal reforms, so as to annihilate the influence of the friars in the Philippines, and then we can take care of it ourselves. So in the end Del Pilar would have, if he had lived that long, would have agreed with Bonifacio and gone on to revolution. Rizal, as he says in his defense of himself, you know, did not advocate revolution. He advocated independence but not revolution. As he says, "When Spain sees us rise to that height, they cannot deny us independence." Whether he was right or not is hard to say, so many contingencies intervened, including the American invasion and so on.

FVA: When you look back to all of those debates in the 1960s and 1970s about Rizal and Bonifacio, what do you think about it now?

JNS: Well, you know, there were some who wanted to eliminate Bonifacio completely, and others wanted to eliminate Rizal as they saw Rizal wrongly. They said Rizal stands for reforms. But Rizal wanted reforms in the Filipino people, not in the Spanish political regime; if the Filipino people will reform themselves they would be able to take care of the Spanish. Some people, too, back in the 1960s were using Bonifacio for reasons more connected with Marxism, which was current at that time, than with actual history. Bonifacio would certainly share Rizal's ideas but, of course, in the end he was impatient. But I think it's a false dichotomy, to separate Bonifacio from Rizal. He was formed by Rizal. But, in the end, of course, he did go to arms, but

in large part because he was forced to, because the Katipunan was being discovered and the government was beginning to raid them and, therefore, there was no alternative except to go to arms. I don't think he really intended in August 1896 to begin at that time. Maybe he intended it in a year or two but he was forced to take that step sooner. So, I think, you know I think Rizal and Bonifacio were used more to support different ideological positions. And I think it's a false dichotomy.

FVA: Did you ever acquire Philippine citizenship?

JNS: Yes, when, you know, many of us wanted it. When we came here, we came with the idea that we might not go back to the States again. In those days, to go back to the States was very expensive and it could only be done by ship. The idea was that we would make theology here, be ordained here, and stay here for the rest of our lives. Some of the older fathers did stay that way. But since there was no theologate here, we went back to the States and studied there. When communications became easier, of course, there was a possibility of being here and going back to the States. But, as I say, not everybody, but a number of people, did think of becoming Filipino citizens. But the process was so difficult and so open to challenges in court that it was mostly directed against the Chinese community. One good thing Marcos did was when he recognized China and made the process of naturalization straightforward and without any significant expense. [Just before] martial law was declared, Father De la Costa had asked those who wanted to become Filipino citizens to write why they wanted to and the letters would be given to Soc Rodrigo, who would put through a private bill in Congress. Of course, before he could do that martial law came and Congress was disbanded. But when it became possible under Marcos, a number of us applied for Filipino citizenship and then, in 1977, I took my oath as a Filipino.

FVA: Did you write one of those essays for Soc Rodrigo?

JNS: Yes.

FVA: What did you say?

JNS: I can't remember anymore. It was fairly simple. I said I was going to, I wanted to stay here and work with the Filipino people, I intended to stay the rest of my life. Once I had renounced my American citizenship under the Marcos decree, I went over to the U.S. embassy to get a visa to the United States since I was going to the United States to visit my mother. We had to stand in line. I got there at six in the morning and there were already a hundred and fifty people standing out there in line, so I just got behind. I was almost at the counter, and they stopped at 12 o'clock, it was five to twelve. I was feeling faint, but I managed to grab onto the counter and hold myself up until I could get my number to come back the next day. I have nothing against the United States. My family lives there and I've lived there myself, happily, but my main interest is the Philippines and that's where I expect to stay and die.

FVA: Do you consider yourself as a Filipino?

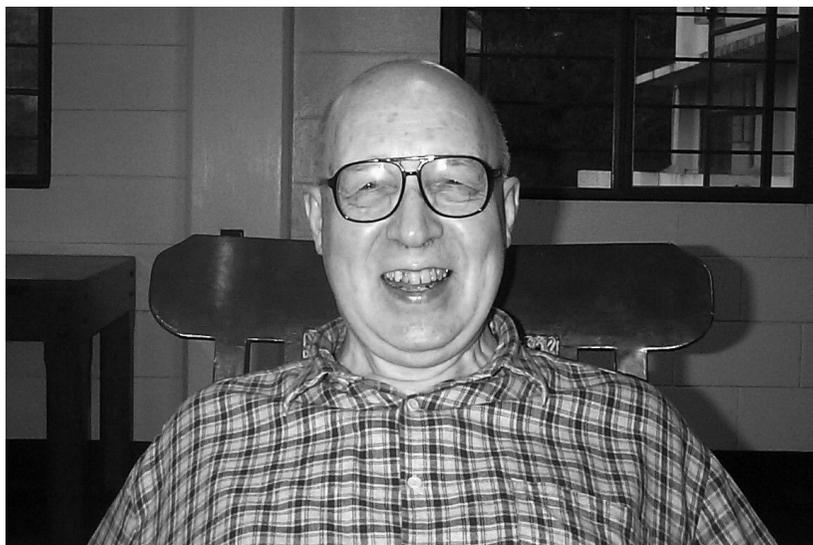
JNS: Yes, a Filipino whose Tagalog is poor.

FVA: In fact, when you read the *Propaganda Movement*, I see here Filipino nationalism.

JNS: I'd like to think that myself.

FVA: Surveying the way Philippine history is written, how do you feel about what has been written since you published the *Propaganda Movement*? What do you think has been the movement in Philippine historiography and where do you see it headed?

JNS: Well, when Rey Ileto's manuscript came out, I read it for the University Press, and I wrote back, "This is one of the most significant things that happened in Philippine history in years." And I think many people have made use of Rey but many don't understand what he is saying. They use the *pasyon* category without understanding what it really means. But I also find some of the newer trends, ah, difficult. So it's a different kind of history. A lot of the categories that are being brought in I find difficult. Postmodernist categories I find difficult



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to understand and I'm not sure that they add anything to what we already know. It's a different philosophical background than mine and I find it difficult to understand. Now, not everything is in that mode. I do find fruitful the use of anthropology to supplement what we did about simply factual history as it were, as if anything is truly factual. That I welcome, though I'm not competent to move in that direction anymore.

FVA: What would you consider as your greatest legacy?

JNS: Well, I would hope it would be my *Readings in Philippine Church History*, that it influence priests, the education of priests, that they would be educated in conjunction with their history and not against it, appreciating it, seeing its limitations but knowing what the church has passed through and what they should do, of course, in the future.

FVA: Father, I think it's been a long day. Thank you so much.