

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## Letter from Britain

Renato Puentevella

*Philippine Studies* vol. 9 no. 4 (1961): 677–679

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

tions at the fifth stage becomes, in the light of Red China, extremely significant to the world and takes on a personal note for us in the Philippines a few hundred miles away.

The book seems to have overstated its claims as an alternative to Marx's dynamic theory of history.

ANTONIO AYALA

### *Letter from Britain*

There is a sign in the Paddington railway station in London which cannot fail to impress the foreign tourist as he steps down from the train. It says "Queue here for taxis." Parked underneath it is a row of black cabs. It is comforting for him to know that he can secure transportation to his hotel without recourse to lung-power or semaphore. I mentioned this later to an English Jesuit. He thought it was an after-effect of the war. "Before the war," he said, "Englishmen were the last people in the world to queue."

Another fall-out effect of the war is the reluctance of the English to waste food. One notices this trait in public eating-places. After a vigorous plying of knife and fork, during which the latter never leaves the left hand, the last morsel is dispatched and the plate cleared of all debris.

The English are among the most helpful people in the world, especially to bewildered strangers. I had just arrived at Salisbury, encumbered with three pieces of luggage and at a loss where to hail a taxi. A man in the street, realizing my predicament, mounted his bicycle and pedalled down the block to fetch me one. I was reaching into my pocket for a tip when I saw him cycling back. He called out, "It's coming!"—accepting for his pains nothing more substantial than my "thank you".

Another time I was standing in line at a bus-stop in Twickenham, at the point of frustration because the townspeople I had asked for Pope's Villa did not have the slightest notion of what I was talking about. (One man directed me to the police-station.) As a last chance I questioned an old gentleman standing in front of me. Without a moment's hesitation he left his place in the line and walked with me to the house.

The British tradition of fair play seems to pervade not only the cricket fields but also sectors of life where one normally expects cut-throat competition. The traveller will discover, perhaps to his

chagrin, that taxicabs bringing passengers to the railway station may not take passengers *from* it. The purpose of this regulation is to ensure the even spread of business.

Another thing the traveller will notice is that when a store does not have the article he is looking for, often enough he will find that shop assistants will graciously direct him to stores that do have it.

The English tend to be super-patriotic, which is only natural in a people with such a glorious past. This "nationalism" is evident in the advertisements one sees on poster and billboard, in newsreels and TV broadcasts. But it first struck home to me during the time of the Rome Olympics when I read a newspaper article which tried to excuse the failure of British athletes by citing the even greater disappointments of American track stars. "At least we did better than they did!"

This tendency to upgrade "ourselves" by downgrading others was evident in a letter to the *Times Weekly Review* of November 3, 1960, attacking American education for its "high wastage rate" and the fact that "in the United States there is virtually no subsidizing of higher education". The writer was answered by an American housewife living in Switzerland who concluded her letter: "Distorted criticism of other countries' educational systems, especially criticism designed to foster complacency at home, will not benefit any of us."

The threat of American financial takeover abets this chauvinism. One headline was "U.S. Takeover Bid Starts Storm." Ford's £129 million offer for the 45.4% shares of Ford of England publicly held "caused high indignation in the Commons", since the move would put nearly half of the motor industry in Britain in American hands.

Not everyone felt so strongly. *The Observer* for November 20th, 1960 editorialized: "The fuss over Ford has been misdirected. There is no conceivable case, in the present state of British law, for withholding Government permission from the American Ford Company to buy up the minority of shares—they already own a controlling majority—in their British subsidiary. How can it be argued that what is good for General Motors, who own all of Vauxhall, can be wicked for Ford, which is offering \$300 million to secure a similar 100 per cent ownership at Dagenham? Arbitrary discrimination against a single foreign firm would prejudice Britain's reputation for fair dealing, and Ford might very well retaliate by putting all its European eggs into the West German basket."

Kellogg's has already established a beachhead on the English breakfast table and is holding its own against such hardy perennials as tea and marmalade. Woolworth's is part of the English metropolitan scene, as familiar to Britons now as the pillar post or mailbox. And "American hotdogs" have invaded the seaside resorts.

Considerable interest was aroused by the American elections of a year ago. The press in general welcomed Kennedy's victory, interpreting it as an augury of a stronger, more vigorous America. *The Guardian* (November 8, 1960) pointed out that "Most people in this country have a natural attachment to the Democratic Party, based on the memory of Franklin Roosevelt and the foreign policy of President Truman." Two days later it hailed "Mr. Kennedy's election . . . as a tribute to the people who elected him." It observed that "Mr. Kennedy has already shown himself to be an adroit and courageous politician, and he has a strain of ruthlessness without which no President can succeed. He will need all his courage—and much of his ruthlessness."

Patrick O'Donovan of *The Observer*, in a "forthright appraisal of the United States' new President-elect" which appeared in the November 11, 1960 issue of *The Universe*, wrote: "He (Kennedy) is a man who will make the idea of America exciting once again. He will have America call the tune, pour out the new ideas and suggestions, not Russia. He will make America true to its tradition of gentle revolution. He will make it once again good and stimulating to be on her side. His will be a strong and enterprising America. It will not be noticeably a Catholic one."

*The Times Weekly Review* (November 17, 1960) offered this piece of advice: "He (Kennedy) will increase confidence on this side of the Atlantic if he can command the support in high office in Washington of such men as Mr. Adlai Stevenson, who is certainly in England the best-known leader of the Democratic Party and in the opinion of many the finest exponent of what should be its liberal principles."

Whether or not, after lapse of a year, Mr. O'Donovan and the writer for *The Review* are to be adjudged good prophets is still argued within the United States; although even Mr. Kennedy's strongest (non-political) opponents have had to admit that the worst they anticipated has not befallen. But the press opinions cited at least show how high British expectations were.

RENATO PUENTEVELLA

### *Implications of Freedom*

In view of the grave danger in which the freedom of the world stands at the present moment, and in view of the controversies on freedom that appear on the Philippine scene from time to time, it is opportune to study the philosophical basis on which freedom rests