

Open Persecution Feared In Peron Rift With Church

By Associated Press Staff

The tense situation in Argentina between President Juan D. Peron and the Catholic Church shows signs of deteriorating into open persecution of the Church. This is indicated by reports from both Argentina and neighboring countries which seem to condemn fears that the Peron regime is aiming at making the Church completely subservient to the state.

Although the Argentine Constitution recognizes Catholicism as the religion of the nation, Peron and his aides are apparently determined that the Church be kept strictly within its traditional and rigidly barred from exercising any influence in political and social life.

THE PERON POLICY has already manifested itself in these ways: (1) By openly proclaiming that no Bishop or priest may criticize the government or seek to organize any specifically Catholic group in the country or profess any life of the country. (2) By aiming at the secularization of the schools. This is an about face on the part of the government. It was only in 1947 that a law was passed making the teaching of the Catholic religion a regular subject in all primary and secondary schools. (3) By introducing legislation that legalizes divorce in Argentina.

The divorce law was passed through a special session of the Argentine Congress in a single week that cannot but intensify the rift between the nation's Catholic leaders.

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Peron Drops Religion As School Credit

Buenos Aires (RNS)—El Pueblo, Roman Catholic daily newspaper, reported that "Catholic Religion and Morality" had been removed from the list of subjects for which credit is given toward promotion in Argentine schools.

It was the third government move affecting the teaching of Church-State relations in last month. A WEEK after President Juan D. Peron's first attack on the clergy, the government announced that lay spiritual advisers would be appointed for all primary and secondary schools next year. Catholic observers interpreted the announcement as a step toward the elimination of religious instruction.

Shortly afterward the regime issued a decree tightening its control over religious education and ending Church jurisdiction over the appointment of teachers of religion and religious programs in the schools. The decree abolished the National Department of Religious Teaching, the Inspectorate General of Religious Education and the National Committee of Culture. It transferred their functions to the Ministry of Education.

There is evidence that the government's anti-Church campaign is continuing with the support of various pro-Peron elements. Despite vigorous protests, a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe was removed from the premises of the meat workers union in Patisa on orders from union headquarters. Police prevented an attempt to stage an act of public redress for the removal.

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Where Christ Was Born



This is Bethlehem today as seen from the Tower of the Church of the Nativity, which is built over the traditional spot where Jesus was born 2,000 years ago. (RNS Photo)

Abbe Dimnet, Author, Lecturer Dead At 88

Paris (NC)—Abbe Ernest Dimnet, well-known author, scholar, and lecturer both in France and the United States, died (Dec. 23) in Trelon, his birth place, at the age of 88. He was a Canon of the Cambrai cathedral.

After his ordination he taught English at the Catholic University of Lille, and from 1902 to 1923 he taught at the Stanislas College in Paris. IN 1919, HE delivered the eight Lowell Lectures at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In addition, on his tour, he raised \$100,000 in the United States to help restore the University of Lille. His best-known books include "The Art of Thinking," published in 1928; "My Old World," and "My New World," in which his autobiography appeared. Other works include a study of the Bronte Sisters, a literary biography of Paul Bourget, and "France Herself Again" published just before the beginning of World War II.

One Catholic Band In Rose Bowl Parade

Pasadena, Cal.—(NC)—The ROTC band of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, will make its first appearance at the Tournament of Roses Parade here, January 1. It is the only Catholic band appearing in the parade. The 59-member group will represent the Fiesta San Jacinto Association of San Antonio in the rose parade. It will accompany a float in the Heart of Texas float.

Convention Plans

Washington (NC)—Plans for the 12th annual National Catholic Educational Association convention to be held in Atlantic City, N. J., from April 12 to 15, are well under way. It was disclosed at NCEA headquarters here by Magr. Frederick G. Hoch, walk secretary-general.

Engaged Couples Permitted To Register For Housing

Cologne, Germany (NC)—Catholic officials in western Germany welcome a new regulation adopted by more than 50 communities which permits engaged couples to enter their names on the priority lists for the allotment of vacant apartments.

Under normal circumstances, civil and religious ceremonies take place on the same day with the bridal couple stopping at the registry office enroute to the apartments. THERE IS STILL a grave housing shortage in most of western Germany and local authorities exercise strict control as to who is entitled to occupy available housing. Hitherto, the rule has been that only married couples without a home of their own are registered in the priority list. They then have to wait until their turn comes, which may take a year or more. The result of this has been that many couples in order to shorten the waiting period, went through the civil marriage ceremony, that is, legally required in Germany and thus gained the right to be registered as a married couple. Then they put off having the religious ceremony performed until they had finally obtained a home.

THIS LONG DELAY between the civil and religious marriage ceremony involves obvious moral dangers which have caused grave concern to Catholic authorities.

Boston Priest Named Traveling Missioner

London (RNS)—The Rev. Leo F. Corbett, S.S.E., of Boston, Mass., assistant rector for the past seven years of the Society of St. Edmund's motherhouse at Whitton, Middlesex, has been appointed Traveling Missioner of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentford, Essex.

'No Christ In Christmas' Holiday Display Stirs Dispute

Denver (RNS)—A spontaneous movement to "put Christ back into Christmas" has mushroomed here during the past few weeks as the result of a controversy over downtown holiday decorations that are completely without any religious note.

The dispute has become one of the biggest "letters to the editor" issues in years as residents have written Denver newspapers to protest or praise the decorative display put up by the Retail Merchants Assn. Merchants paid \$16,000 to festoon lampposts all through the downtown area with huge paper-mache figures having a striking resemblance to the seven dwarfs of Snow White. They also added huge chess heads, toy soldiers and dolls but nowhere is there a figure of religious significance or even a Santa Claus. THE DISPLAY, which lights up at night, has inspired charges of "separatism" on one hand and claims of "delightful fantasy" on the other.

Denver has never had a formal "Put Christ in Christmas" campaign of the kind promoted by many other communities. But without any formal leadership such a movement is developing as a result of protests against the nature of the downtown display. Said one letter writer: "I am saddened by the hideous and irreverent so-called decorations. More and more each year they are taking Christ out of Christmas. This is something for sober-minded folks to ponder."

NOTE ANOTHER: "Just what are they (the decorations) depicting? A New Orleans Mardi Gras? Surely nothing suggestive of the Christmas spirit. Couldn't someone take them down before Christmas Eve?"

But the letter which brought the heaviest argument and the greatest response was one defending the display. It said: "Certainly it is nice to see some type of holiday decorations that portray the actual gaiety of the season rather than the religious angle. 'Certainly that part can be handled by those who care to watch the individual interpretation given at their particular church. There are more people who do not believe in the religious angle than those who do. A non-sectarian, non-religious angle is by far the most appropriate.'"

He Didn't Want To Foot The Bill

One Choi, Korea (NC)—Father Michael O. Zurno, of Brooklyn, N.Y., dressed and washed his shoeless orphans early one morning at the Maryknoll mission here to take them to the city to buy a pair of prized Korean rubber shoes for each.

The 65 young victims of the war-torn country lined up at the shoe store to be checked off by the Brooklyn padre. A shrewd little slicker, not an orphan, slipped out of his shoes and jumped into the boys' line. When Father Zurno didn't recognize the boy he asked him if he was one of the orphans. The lad wisely lowered his head and just pointed to his bare feet. "But they were the giveaway," explained Father Zurno. "I took one look at his unwashed feet and knew he wasn't one of our boys." P.S. The boy got the shoes.

Cardinal Gracias Heads India Bishops

Bombay, India (NC)—India's sole Cardinal has been elected chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. The Indian hierarchy elected His Eminence Valanton Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, at a meeting held under the presidency of Archbishop Martin H. Lucas, S.V.D., Apostolic Internuncio to India. Cardinal Gracias replaces Archbishop Ferdinand Perler, S.J., of Calcutta as chairman of the conference. The meeting re-elected Archbishop Thomas Polakamury of Bangalore as general secretary and Archbishop Archbishop Donat Caramazza of Delhi-Simla as designated joint secretary.

Franco's First Grandson Baptized

Madrid (RNS)—Generalissimo Francisco Franco's first grandson was baptized at the little parish of El Pardo by Bishop Leopoldo Elio y Garay of Madrid. The boy, son of the Caudillo's only child Carmen Matgosa de Villaverde, was christened Francisco de Asis Jose de la Santissima Trinidad y Todos los Santos. The marriage, previously, had borne two daughters. The christening was attended by Gen. Franco and the Spanish Cabinet.

THE REST ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT



This 16th century art treasure, 'The Rest on the Flight into Egypt,' by Paolo Caliari, called El Veronese, is in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Fla. (NC Feature)

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