

Religious Bias Tars Vietnam Investigators

BY FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
Society of St. Columban
Salerno (NC) — Four of the seven government's leading delegates to investigate charges that Buddhists have been persecuted in South Vietnam are themselves following respective policies of religion.

The delegation comes to Vietnam from the General Assembly of the United Nations on the invitation of President Ngo Dinh Diem's government. The members of the delegation were chosen by the U.N. General Assembly: President Carlos Sosa Rodriguez of Venezuela.

Official representatives of the governments of Afghanistan, Brazil, Ceylon, Costa Rica, Dahomey, Morocco and Nepal comprise the delegation.

The government of Ceylon, one of the most vocal in accusing South Vietnam of religious persecution, has been guilty of the most systematic discrimination against its Christian citizens. They form about nine per cent of the total population of some 9,500,000.

Since the present government came to power in Ceylon, in July, 1960, it has pursued an openly anti-Christian policy. Since December, 1960, it has taken over hundreds of Catholic schools — their buildings, grounds, movable property, and management. Some 50 Christian schools that escaped being taken over were sentenced to gradual death by being forbidden to charge tuition fees.

A zoning regulation in Ceylon compels some Christian parents to send their children to schools that are predominantly Buddhist. Buddhist missionaries from any foreign country are given visas and allowed to work in Ceylon, but no new Christian missionary will receive a visa, even as a replacement for one who has died. There are indications that the government will force all foreign missionaries out of the country within two years, even though their services are evidently needed by the growing Christian population.

No non-Christian parent, be he Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu, may enroll his child in a Christian private school without government permission, which is now rarely given.

Though there is supposed to be religious equality in Ceylon, the government, by a law passed in 1958, has given public money to the Vidyodaya and Vidyakankar universities, both strictly Buddhist.

Some important Buddhist monks in Ceylon have allied themselves with one of the Marxist parties. The present government came to power through a no-contest election pact with the regular Communist party and the Trotskyite party.

(The Ceylon government has been widely criticized also for racial discrimination against the large Tamil minority in the population.)

In Afghanistan, a predominantly Muslim kingdom, no Christian missionary is allowed to work. The only Catholic church permitted in the country is a chapel attended by Catholic foreign diplomats in the Italian embassy, where a priest is employed as a member of the embassy staff.

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No Persecution, Just Favoritism

MILWAUKEE — (NC) — A legislator just back from a factfinding tour in the Far East said here that he could find no evidence of religious persecution on the part of the President Ngo Dinh Diem administration in South Vietnam.

Rep. Clement J. Zablocki of Wisconsin said that while he found no religious persecution as such in the country, he learned that the Catholic Church is given preferential treatment.

He said the Catholic Church is the only church allowed to own land in the country. He said this preference stemmed from the days of French rule and was not a policy of the President Diem administration.

Laymen To Take Diocese Census

WILMINGTON — (NC) — Some 6,000 Catholic laymen will conduct the largest census in the history of the Wilmington diocese starting Nov. 24.

Described as "A Survey for the Future," the census will seek to determine not only the size of the Catholic population, but its social and economic status.

Mgr. Roderick B. Dwyer, Vicar General, said the aim of the census is to obtain data on which to base plans for Catholic education and other programs. Information will be tabulated by an electronic computer and evaluated by a professional demographer.



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Governments, Private Agencies Aid Needy

GENEVA — (NC) — An appeal for continued close ties between governmental and private relief agencies was made by the head of the U.S. Catholic overseas charity organization.

"Governments should have no hesitancy in supporting the programs of social and economic development launched by voluntary agencies. By the same token, I see no reason why voluntary agencies should have any hesitancy in accepting assistance from governments in programs devoted purely to social and economic assistance," declared Auxiliary Bishop Edward E. Swanson of New York, executive director of Catholic Relief Services/National Catholic Welfare Conference.

"VOLUNTARY programs to the extent that they are people-to-people and operate at grassroots levels; develop the most important resources that need to be activated: the people themselves. Unfortunately, too many expect social and economic development to proceed solely or dominantly from the top to the bottom, from national capitals to market towns to villages and slums," the U.S. Relief leader told a world congress of private aid agencies.

It was disclosed that the host organization of the meeting, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, has been awarded the 1963 Nobel Medal for service to refugees. Among the members of this council is the International Catholic Migration Commission, which is represented in the U.S. by CRS-NCWC.

Earlier, a group of 28 leaders in the CRS-NCWC program from many parts of the world met in Geneva with Bishop Swanson to review their activities. Special attention was given to the U.S. Food for Peace distribution by American voluntary agencies abroad.

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75th Anniversary of Corpus Christi

CORPUS CHRISTI Church marked its 75th anniversary with a Mass last Sunday offered by Mgr. John E. Maney, pastor, shown at the left. Bishop Kearney presided at the jubilee celebration.

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Magazines Feature Church

The Catholic Church provided three of the nation's top magazines with material for feature articles in recent issues.

Look magazine in its Oct. 22 edition has an article "Trouble ahead for Catholic Schools" — an analysis of the crisis resulting from not enough nuns and not enough money.

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Rota's Cases Published

Vatican City — (RNS) — The 45th volume of decisions of the Sacred Roman Rota — best known as the Holy See's court of appeals from diocesan courts in matrimonial cases — has just been published. Observator Romano, Vatican City newspaper, reported.