

Moslem 'Vatican Council' in Cairo Spurs Catholics to Greater Apostolate

Catholics in their Vatican Council are not alone in trying to build a bridge for their religion into the modern world.

Equally as large in numbers as the Catholic Church (half a billion) but gaining converts in some areas at a 9 to 1 rate over Christians, Moslems of the world just ended their first Pan-Islamic Congress held for a month at Al Azhar University in Cairo.

The 67 delegates from 42 Moslem nations voted funds to make the 1300 year old religion a worldwide force.

Part of their new missionary project is a \$36,000,000 expansion for their 500-acre Al Azhar campus, intellectual center of their religion. The University, started more than 1000 years ago, has 40,000 students from all over the world — most of course from Arab nations but many from the newly independent African nations.

Seventeen of the University's twenty-two schools (science, engineering, medicine, technical, cultural) are free and residence scholarships are readily available for African students who then return to their homelands with their much needed skills and with a new fervor to propagate the religion which made their education possible.

At a time when Catholics decided Latin is no longer of much value as a bond of unity and voted to use modern languages in their rituals, the Moslems at their Cairo Congress insisted that Arabic be taught in all their schools so the Koran, the Moslem Bible, can be read in its original language.

Of particular interest in this connection is the fact that the Moslem Congress concluded with the laying of a foundation stone for a \$3,200,000 House of the Koran in Cairo that will be solely responsible for the publication of the Islamic Holy Book.



Cairo — (RNS) — Some of the 100 ulemas (religious leaders) from 70 countries attending the month-long first Pan-Islamic Congress in Cairo pray in the mosque of the 1,012-year-old Al Azhar University (the Moslem Vatican) where sessions were held.

At the same time it was announced that the Egyptian government would build a special radio station to broadcast recorded recitals of the Koran on a regular daily basis.

The "Palestine issue" was also raised at the Congress and Israel "aggression" was condemned in the name of Islam. Delegates from countries as far removed from the Middle East as the Philippines added their names to resolutions which condemned the Israelis in the name of Moslem unity against "a common enemy," calling on all Moslems to stand together and unite with the Arab League.

The Congress thus indicated it intends to mix religion and politics when either Moslem faith or Arab nationalism stands to gain thereby.

A Moslem meeting in Cairo may seem to be quite irrelevant for Catholics in New York State. The Vatican Council has reminded us, however, that our horizon cannot be limited to our own local area. Our interests and our concerns must be what our title indicates — Catholic, universal, global.

An up-surge in Moslem missionary activity can scuttle the patiently built-up Christian mission projects in Africa, built over the span of centuries of great personal sacrifice of missionaries. In these days of instant communications and violent nationalistic emotions, the work of centuries can be wiped out in a moment—as has happened in the Sudan and at mission outposts in the Congo.

Our concern should not be just a desire that our mission chapels be spared — the Kingdom of God is built, we are sure, in ways better than just with bricks.

The new Moslem vitality should instead be a spur to us Catholics to remember we are heirs of a challenge seven centuries older than theirs — a command most of us leave it to others to carry out — "Go and make disciples of all nations."

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Birchers, Symptom Of Job to be Done

The John Birch Society is variously viewed as the great solution to the worldwide threat of Communism, as a step toward a fascist flavored totalitarian takeover of the United States, as a nuisance and just as a big box of nuts.

The fact that the Birchers don't die out is proof they are a hardy breed — and tonight they will launch a membership campaign in the Rochester area.

In the past few years many priests have warned Catholics that the Birch Society holds doctrines "which the Church rejected seventy years ago."

Such eminent spokesmen as Jesuit Fathers Thurston Davis and Benjamin Masse, Sulpician Father John F. Cronin of the U.S. bishops NWC Social Action Department, Monsignor John J. Egan of Chicago, Monsignor Francis W. Carney of Cleveland and others have told Catholics who are Birch members to get out of the organization because it "stands in open opposition to Catholic social principles."

Birch Society literature, for example, consistently criticizes the United Nations, a line dutifully parroted by Catholic Birchers despite Pope John's encyclical "Pacem in Terris" which specifically calls for a stronger UN rather than a weakened or eliminated UN, and despite Pope Paul's emphatic backing of the UN when he told U Thant last July that the UN puts into practice the Catholic Church's ideals of "brotherhood between nations."

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy two years ago lumped all right wing groups together and called them "untruthful, irresponsible." Former Vice President Richard M. Nixon also two years ago called on "my fellow Republicans to quit the Birch Society."

Senator Barry Goldwater and National Review editor William Buckley, both well known as champions of the conservative viewpoint, have also rejected the Birch Society.

But the Society survives and grows.

Why?

Many people these days want a simple solution to the complicated problems of our times. Like the Black Muslims with their slogan of "either bullets or bullets" so the Birchers think Communism can be swept off the earth with a swift dose of denouncing anyone suspected of being soft on the Red menace.

Such people deserve at least our respect for being concerned for the problems which confront our nation and our world. But these people also deserve our pity. They are doomed to be forever frustrated.

The problems of our times — atomic war and survival, communism and freedom, hunger and affluence, racial justice, health and happiness for the aged, education for youngsters — these need answers forged by Americans and people of all other nations working together intelligently, patiently, openly.

To place one's hopes in snap, simple answers will only compound our problems.

This at least we can concede to the Birchers—they point out to the rest of us it's time we all worked more effectively to attain in our world, in our nation and in our communities what Pope John, just a year ago this month, voiced as every man's hope — "Pacem in terris — Peace on earth!"

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Timetable to Speed-up Council's Fall Session

By PATRICK RILEY

Vatican City — (NC) — The Vatican Council's Coordinating Commission meets today, April 10, to tackle what has developed into the most pressing side-issue of last autumn's second session: how to speed up debate without sacrificing thoroughness or the freedom of speech which is part of the council's very nature.

One proposal to come before the 10 cardinal-members at their meeting is to establish a timetable for the Council's debates. This would allow so many days for one schema, so many for another, and so on.

THE PROCEDURE up until now has been to cut off debates by a vote of the bishops of the Council. The cardinals and representatives of groups of at least five Council Fathers may, however, present their views after such closure of discussion.

According to reports that have been confirmed to a large extent by responsible sources, the work of the Council Fathers is not only being cut out for them; it is being cut down for them. The schema on the clergy, for instance, is slated to be sent to the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of Canon Law, which Pope John XXIII created in March, 1963. The work of this commission is essentially postconciliar.

Five other schemas have been or will be reduced to their central ideal and principles of action, and will be submitted to the Council in this form for debate. It is understood. They deal with the Eastern Churches, the care of souls, Christian education, seminaries, and nuns.

According to a plan reported by the Italian news agency ANSA, each of these radically reduced schemas would be debated in the Council for a few days. Then a defense of each draft would be presented by a representative of the responsible conciliar commission, and another "relator" would present a recapitulation of the criticisms made and the amendments proposed by the Council Fathers.

After that, according to ANSA, a vote would be taken. If the Council Fathers so indicated, the schema would be further amended and then put to another vote.

The bare bones of such skeletal schemas would then be given flesh and blood by post-conciliar commissions.

There is some doubt about the method to be proposed for debating the schema on the lay apostolate, on the missions, and on marriage.

Doubt also surrounds the future of the schema on Revelation, which was a source of friction during the first session of the Council a year and a half ago. There has been doubt expressed as to whether it will be brought before the Council again, despite a counter-indication in Pope Paul VI's address at the closing of the second session.

The reason for this doubt is that some biblical scholars think that modern Scriptural scholarship is not sufficiently ripe. On the other hand, some critics of modern biblical scholarship think that the time is not only ripe but beginning to turn bad.

The future of the schema on Revelation may depend upon its reception at two forthcoming meetings: the first that of the Theological Commission on April 16 (yesterday, just before the meeting of the Coordinating Commission), and the second that of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Both the Theological Commission and the Christian Unity secretariat will have the draft of the schema before them.

Present plans call for full discussion of all aspects of the schema.

three of which have already come under discussion in the Council: on the nature of the Church (including the old schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary), on bishops, and on ecumenism. The fourth is the celebrated "Schema 17" on the Church in the modern world.

The schema on ecumenism has already been sent to the Coordinating Commission, the final clearing house before submission to the Council Fathers. This schema is reported to have been reduced from five chapters to four, with the section on the Church's close ties with the Jews being made an appendix rather than a separate chapter. The chapter on religious liberty, once the fifth chapter, thus becomes Chapter IV.

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Patron of Poland

Defender of the Poor — Amid the luxuries of court life in 15th Century Poland, Prince Casimir managed to practice heroic virtue. His love for the needy caused him to be called "The Father and Defender of the Poor and Unfortunate." He would neither break his vow of celibacy for marriage, nor accept the throne of Hungary, much to the displeasure of his father, King Casimir IV. He also refused to bear arms, believing resolutely in the folly of war among Christians. He devoted his days to contemplation and charity, dying at the age of 23.

Sudan Determined to Stamp Out Christianity

By DR. GARY MACKOIN

Dar-es-Salaam — March 30 — Official discrimination of non-Moslem citizens in Iraq and Egypt is an exercise in brotherly love as compared with the attitude and actions of the military dictatorship in the Sudan.

Some four million of the twelve million inhabitants of an area one third the size of the United States, which stretches south from Egypt along the Nile nearly to the equator, are the victims of organized persecution fulfilling the definition of genocide as condemned by the United Nations.

The Sudan illustrates one of the unhappy results of European domination in Africa. As happened in many cases, completely unrelated populations were here grouped together for administrative convenience as a single political unit. When the colonial power withdrew, the bigger group took control of the artificial state. It then proceeded to create unity by imposing on the minority its language, culture and religion.

Northern Sudan has eight million people who form a cohesive group, Moslems by religion, Arab by culture and language. Living for centuries at the point of meeting of the Arab and Black African worlds, they form a clearly definable racial group, brown in color and exhibiting characteristics of both strains.

Nomads and traders from time immemorial, their character reflects the parched desert and blazing sun. Suspicious by nature and hostile to strangers, they find it natural that the strong should dictate to the weak. Freedom of expression is unknown. If they had suspected that I was a newsman, I could not have got a visa, still less the special pass issued by the Interior Ministry in Khartoum to enable me to visit the closed districts in the south.

It is easy to build up their emotional tensions to a fever level, especially during Ramadan when the Moslem goes from dawn to sundown without food or drink for an entire month. The fast is a remarkable test of fervor and dedication, but unfortunately inspired as a rule by fanaticism and superstition rather than by spiritual concepts of the Koran.

Southern Sudan's four million inhabitants are tribal Africans living at a still more primitive level. They speak a variety of non-Arab languages and are Negro by race. Most of them are Animists or ancestor worshippers, with about a quarter million Christians. Their history, culture and aspirations are totally unrelated to those of the north.

Under the colonial administration, the south served as a source of cheap unskilled labor for the north. At the same time, it was protected from penetration by a system of permits controlling the movement south of Arab traders. The independent Khartoum government continues to exploit the cheap labor, but it began in 1956 and has continued with increasing harshness a program to settle northerners in the towns of the south and to give them control of all aspects of life.

The education system built by the missions was seized without compensation. The Arab language was made official everywhere, and the schools were in large part converted into religious schools for the teaching of Islam. Even funds contributed by international agencies and the United States aid program

have been similarly diverted. Pressure on the missionaries gradually mounted.

Large numbers of both Catholics and Protestants were expelled in 1962 and 1963, and the process has been completed by the mass expulsion of the remaining three hundred missionaries this year.

The quarter million Christians scattered in an area as big as Texas have probably not more than twenty Sudanese priests to care for them. Some Sudanese priests are in jail, and several have fled the country to avoid arrest. Very few educated Africans remain in the South. Many thousands are in jail and even more thousands are in exile. The others have been moved by the government to the north, where they are isolated from their people and from each other.

The government has stubbornly refused to admit a committee of enquiry named by the International Commission of Jurists, with headquarters at Geneva. The facts, however, are too anomalous to be concealed. Yet world opinion remains strangely unmoved by one of the most glaring of the many current violations of human rights.