

Peace, Aid Asked for Near East

Newton, Mass.—(RNS)—Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bishops of "Near East" churches in the United States have expressed to President Johnson their concern in the Middle East crisis.

"We, the bishops of the Near East churches... representing over one million Americans together with our people," the prelates stated, "have been very distressed by the recent tragic events in the Near East. We preach love and reject violence as means to the settlement of any problem... We wholeheartedly adhere to your statement of May 23 that in this great country stands for the freedom and territorial integrity of all nations in the Near East."

The bishops' telegram also noted that the prelates have designated Sunday, July 9, as a day of prayer for a just peace in the Near East and we pledge our help to those victims of this recent war."

In another statement, the bishops made a public appeal for support of the Near East Bishops Emergency Relief, and requested prayers on July 9 "for the souls of the victims and for a just and honorable peace."

The relief appeal requests clothing, medicine, and funds earmarked for the Near East Bishops Emergency Relief. It was proposed that the relief materials be sent to Catholic Relief Services, Brooklyn, N.Y., or to an agency of the World Council of Churches.

Drivers' Deal

If the 92 million U.S. motorists were required to prove their right through a basic medical/mental exam, at least 10%—or 1.5 million—drivers would lose their licenses, the Catholic Digest estimates.



Colorful Papal Audience

Vatican City — (RNS) — Wearing native dress and carrying tom-toms, Congolese children are received by Pope Paul VI. The children sang the Credo in the Kwangale dialect and performed a brief dance for the pontiff. They also gave him an ancient tribal mask.

'Cool' Climate For Cuba Church

Miami — (RNS) — The church-state situation in Cuba is wrought with Castro's ideocracies. It is oppression with an occasional flair for "revolutionary humanism."

This is the view of Father Ignacio Huilide, an exiled Cuban Catholic priest who meets hundreds of incoming Cuban refugees at the Cuban Reception Center here to offer them comfort and help. He also listens to their experiences as believers under Castro's Communist regime.

"You might say the situation of the Church in Cuba is serious and complicated, but perhaps not as bad as that of some of the sister Churches in Eastern Europe," Padre Huilide said. He then offered the following composite picture of the situation, as pieced together for him by various refugees from all parts of Cuba:

At the top, church-state relations are cool but correct. There is no papal Nuncio in Havana at present. But the bishops function without overt pressure on them or crude restrictions in their movements or communication with the clergy.

The priests' role in Castro society is much more difficult and dangerous. Many of them go to labor camps, some to prisons. The charge is "anti-revolutionary activity" which can be anything from aiding a "suspicious character" or a "worm" (presumed anti-revolutionary), to preaching from the Bible in a manner conflicting with the revolutionary aims of the regime.

The faithful are sometimes ridiculed, other times discounted, by the church. Religious instruction in schools is forbidden. But the churches are open. Mass is attended mostly by older people.

There are militia men assigned to churches for the purpose of providing a psychological impediment to greater attendance, according to Father Huilide. On Sundays or on holy days when the churches are filled to capacity, it is customary for the authorities to block traffic in the area and declare the surrounding streets a temporary playground for children. A local Pioneer group then appears in front of the church with loudspeakers and bull-horns to "entertain" the youngsters in such a way that during the living influence of the church on the people. Thus, sometimes, the whispering campaign had it that many Catholic priests would be exiled. The rumor boomeranged — Catholics rushed to churches with wholesale requests for confirmation just in case the rumor was true.

Although Cuba is predominantly Catholic, Castro is reportedly obsessed with the idea that the police must be especially watchful against presumed anti-state activities by the Jehovah's Witnesses of whom there are but a few thousand left. Most of their workers have long since been in labor camps or exiled, according to exiles' reports to Father Huilide.

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'Unconventional' At Expo '67

Montreal — (RNS) — Opinions of the unconventional exhibit at Expo '67's Christian Pavilion here run the gamut from "tremendous" to "horrid."

The one word used most often to express a visitor's reaction to the pavilion is "different." Whether that difference is good or bad seems to depend to a large extent on the age of the viewer.

Younger people are inclined to express at least some degree of enthusiasm for a presentation that departs radically from the traditional stance of the church—or at least from their concept of that stance.

But older people, particularly those who are churchgoers, expressed bewilderment and disappointment.

The exhibit, sponsored jointly by Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Churches in Canada, relies heavily on still photographs to portray the conditions of man. The first "zone" of the exhibit shows man as he is—at work, at play, loving, fighting, meditating, rejoicing.

In the second zone, still pictures depict the degradation man has injected into his world—poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, racial prejudice, sexual deviations and exploitation. The point is reinforced by a short film which dramatically portrays some of the most horrible aspects of modern warfare.

The third zone reflects the Christian hope for meaning and salvation, again through the use of photographs and fine Biblical texts.

It is this zone that some critics of the pavilion feel lacks force in contrast to the sharp negative impressions made by the two previous sections. Others disapprove of the Churches giving recognition in their pavilion to the darker aspects of life.

"It's horrid," a well-dressed, greying woman told a Religious News Service reporter gathering reactions from visitors as they emerged from the building. "A lot of people who aren't Christians are going to go all through these pictures and mirrors through there and see all that stuff," she worried.

"When we saw 'Christian Pavilion' I thought it would be a lot of joy and religious stuff," said one of the girls.

Another said she "thought it was a spook house at first, when you first come in and see all those pictures and mirrors."

"A place like this, a fair where lots of people are going to see—they ought to show Christians helping one another. I'm very disappointed," she said. Her husband nodded his agreement with her opinions.

Another couple of about the same age also expressed disappointment. "We didn't see a thing," the wife said. "Our minister spoke in such glowing terms. He said we'd come into that third zone and feel so uplifted and come out with such a glow. But we sure didn't get that out of it."

The husband, who said they were members of the United Church of Canada, indicated agreement with his wife's views but added, "We'll be back tomorrow. Maybe we'll get more out of it the second time."

Several visitors—all of them over 40—reported that they couldn't understand it but thought they might come back and give it another try.

One exception to the general bewilderment experienced by the older generation was a man—about 60—from Pennsylvania. "I like it very much," he said with considerable feeling. Then he explained that to get a real grasp of the exhibit "you must stay here"—he indicated the "third zone"—and see the pictures. I think its marvelous.

A young French Canadian mother, accompanied by her husband and young daughter, demanded to know "Who's asking?" for her opinion before she would give it. "It's morbid," she said. "Dark." Then she turned to go she added, "But then I suppose that's life."

Five girls in their early teens on an excursion with school classmates from Syracuse, N.Y., agreed that it was "different," but said they liked it.

"we're too sophisticated and too subtle. They want to know 'Where's Christ?'"

The problem of a meaningful religious pavilion at a World Fair is "a problem of presentation," said Mr. Bartsch, a Lutheran pastor. "The moment we become preachy we lose our audience."

With Expo underway only a couple of weeks, he declined to offer an opinion as to whether the Christian Pavilion was achieving its objective. "But there is no question that it is stimulating thinking and stimulating discussions," which is part of its goal.

Father Teneue Beaubien, S.J., president of the Christian Pavilion, acknowledged that the Christian message was "not being presented in a classical teaching form. Rather, it might be termed an experience, a 'happening.'"

He ventured that those visitors who give the pavilion "the unqualified and serious consideration it deserves will find themselves assailed by the disturbing question which it poses. We believe that they will also be given an inkling of the suggested answer to the question and we hope that, once they have returned to their homes... they will become living witnesses to the message imparted by the Christian Pavilion."

The Rev. H. E. Bartsch, deputy commissioner for the pavilion, said he felt many of these criticisms had come because "people take things out of context."

"For example," he said, "I had three-page letter from a woman dentist in Halifax on the evils of kissing. She said it was one of the causes of tooth decay and what business did Christians have promoting tooth decay?"

But most of the church-oriented critics, he said, "feel that it is 'different,'"



Dialogue With Baptists

St. Louis — (RNS) — There was a Baptist minister at a card wheel whenever the late Cardinal Joseph Ritter traveled in his black sedan. Unknown to many was the fact that the cardinal's chauffeur... Ave Maria Studio... 410 Westminster

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The Rev. Nat Chapel Congo M

Gentilles, Belgium — (RNS)—An ecclesiastical precedent was set here during the solemn inauguration of a memoria chapel erected in memory of the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries martyred in the Congo in recent years.

Protestant missionaries from Sweden, Great Britain and the United States were special guests at an open-air Mass celebrated by Leo Joseph Cardina Suenens, Archbishop of Malines, Brussels, to mark the dedication of the Kongo Missionary Memorial Chapel.

Initially it had been planned to erect a memorial chapel to the 20 Belgian priests of the Holy Ghost. Fathers killed a Kongo on Jan. 1, 1962, as well as 159 other Catholics, Negro and white, who were slain.

However, when 30 other missionary martyrs fell in 1964—among them the well-known Paul Caron—it was decided to include Protestant names as well.

Hundreds of relatives of the Catholic martyrs were present at the ceremony, together with Protestant missionary guest who were later greeted by King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola. Belgian Protestantism was represented by Pastor E. J.