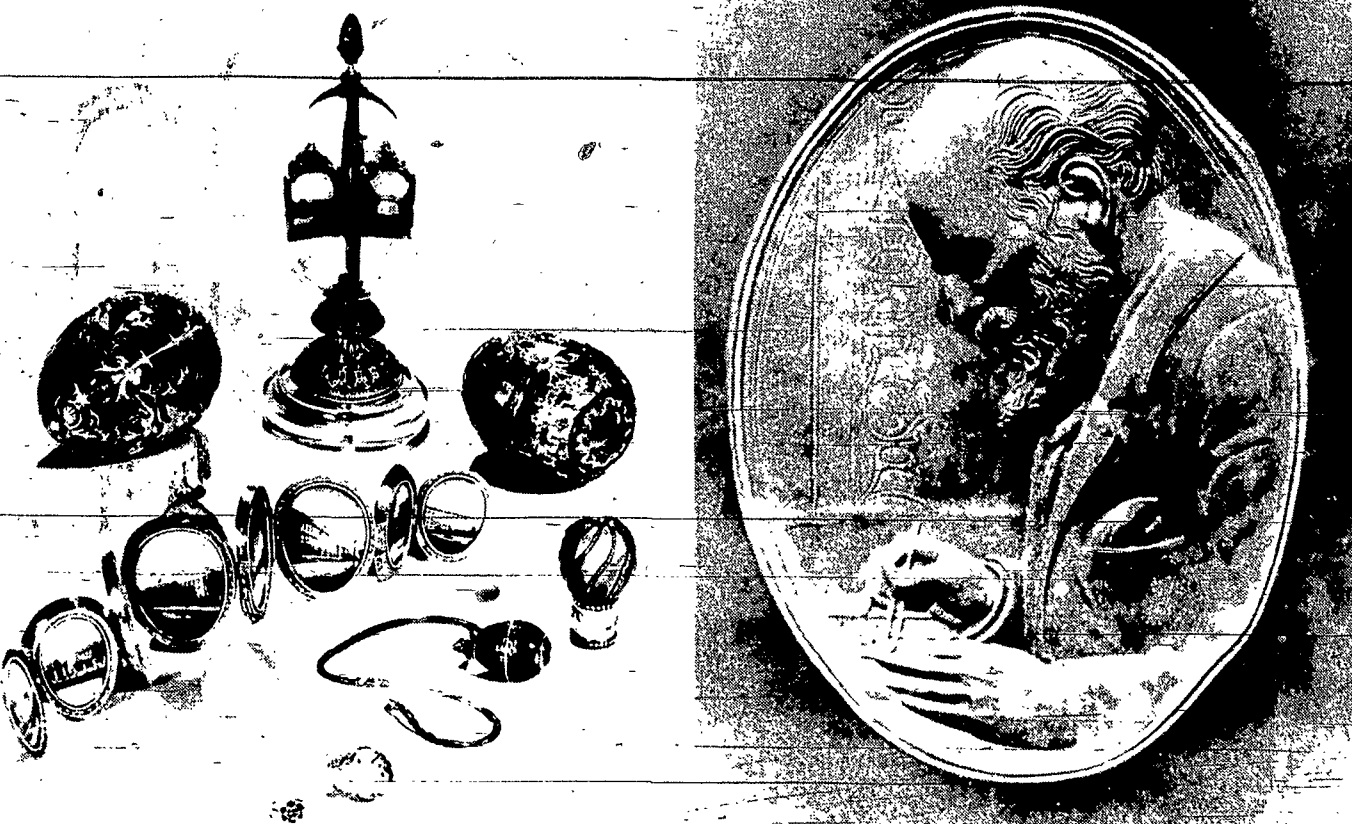


International News



Priceless Eggs and Their Maker

The custom of giving colored or decorated eggs as gifts has never been so costly as when the members of the royal family in pre-Revolutionary Russia celebrated Easter in this fashion. Made of every kind of precious metal, elaborately enamelled, studded with diamonds and rubies and other jewels, trickily put together so that (as in the hinged egg shown at lower left) scene of favorite castles and places could be painted on their insides. They were the handwork of one of the most famous jewelers of all time, Faberge, who is shown at work in the medallion relief at right. (Religious News Service)

Sister Wears Combat Boots

By VIRGINIA EADES
NC News Service

Managua, Nicaragua — At 7:30 in the morning in Managua, the heat was already oppressive. In the small airport that serves the capital there was little activity. A twin-engine plane of World War II vintage sat on the apron waiting to take me and a dozen other passengers to places with names like Bonanza and Bluefields.

Siuna was my destination, an hour's flying time from Managua. There is no road into Siuna, so flying is the only way to get there — unless you come to the East Coast by freighter, go up river by barge, and finally over some roads that only jeeps can negotiate. The landing strip at Siuna is just a wide gravel extension of the road into the three separate little villages that form one large community, and the terminal building is a small, bare wooden structure with a tin roof.

It was at Siuna three years ago that the first Holidays for Humanity doc-

Maryknoll Nun at Work In Jungles of Nicaragua

tor came to spend a "vacation" helping sick and impoverished people.

Holidays for Humanity, a program founded by a Catholic physician, Dr. John C. Slaughter of Evansville, Ind., enlists doctors, nurses, teachers and technicians to volunteer their vacations (two to four weeks) to minister to the needs of isolated villages and clinics in Central America.

Dr. Joseph Blanca of Shreveport, La., was the first doctor the people of a region of some 12,000 persons had ever seen, and they came to him in such great numbers that for two weeks he worked a 13-hour day at the little clinic. Some of the patients came on foot, three days on the road. Others came on mules and horseback and waited half a day to see him.

Since Dr. Blanca left Siuna there have been months when no doctor served there. Meanwhile, Maryknoll Sister Constance, a nurse, administered to the area's needs.

Recently turned 50, she has more energy and drive than most women half her age. She often arises at 3 in the morning and reads until breakfast.

Before she came to Siuna more than 10 years ago, she had never been on a horse. Now she is an expert horsewoman because her preventive medicine crusades take her every week on horseback out into the "bush." She puts on her long divided skirt, heavy wool socks and (of all things) combat boots, and rides away, her veil flying in the breeze.

Because a government doctor and Nicaraguan-trained interns and nurses have taken over the Social Security Hospital at Siuna and are taking care of the medical needs of the people, Sister Constance is phasing out her little clinic. But this is not to say that there is no longer anything for her to do. The war against disease is never-ending and Sister Constance is busy every day with vaccinations and inoculations.

"If you're going to write about conditions that the Holidays for Humanity doctors and nurses are going to face here," she said to me on my second day at Siuna, "you'd better ride out with me and see what it's like."

I said I'd like nothing better, and she began immediately scouting around for another pair of combat boots.

Two of the horses belonged to the mission; the others to the mining company officials at La Luz. There were four of us — Sister Constance and Sister Aileen, a plucky Irish girl with flaming red hair and freckles; Alejandro, a teacher from the school, who was our guide, and I.

We were in the saddle nearly seven

hours, all told, with only an hour out for lunch about 3 in the afternoon. We rode mile after mile down river beds, through narrow jungle paths, up and down slippery banks. The mud and slime were so deep that the horses sank halfway up to their haunches with every step and made sucking sounds as they laboriously pulled out their shanks, only to sink into the mire again.

The sun was relentless, and I was soaked with perspiration in less than an hour. I marveled at the Sisters, who were covered from head to foot with their habits but showed no signs of discomfort. Sister Constance from time to time would break into song — either "Don't Fence Me In" or the Nicaraguan national anthem, "Salve a ti Nicaragua."

By mid-afternoon we reached Alejandro's uncle's house where we stopped for sandwiches and orange juice. The house was like most in the bush, unpainted timber with thatched roof and bare floors. Don Pedro greeted us with great dignity and offered to play his accordion for us while we ate.

Lunch over, we plodded on to our destination, a little rural school a few miles beyond. Our party grew to five when Don Pedro saddled his mule, stuck a flashlight in his hip pocket, and strapped a pistol and cartridge belt around his waist. With still three or four hours of riding ahead of us, he knew it would be dark before we could reach La Luz again, and insisted on accompanying us through the jungle.

Once we reached the school, we had to turn around and go home. It was a holiday in Nicaragua, the Day of the Dead (All Souls Day), and the school was not open. The trip had only served to show me the conditions Sister Constance must face on her trips into the countryside to treat the rural people.

The ride back was even worse, because we took a different route through pure jungle, and it was getting dark. It was a moonless night and, at times, we couldn't see the person ahead of us. Once we reached the river bed and could see the tiny lights of La Luz in the distance, Don Pedro shook hands and returned alone.

To Sister Constance, it had been a normal day.

"Tell your Holidays for Humanity doctors," she said, "that what we need most out here are general practitioners, or any specialists who are willing to do general practice-type work. And if they're afraid of horses, we could just go to areas that are reached by jeep. There are plenty of those, too."

Abortion Bill Killed

Albany — (NC) — The State Assembly defeated an attempt to pass a bill easing the state's 85-year-old abortion law.

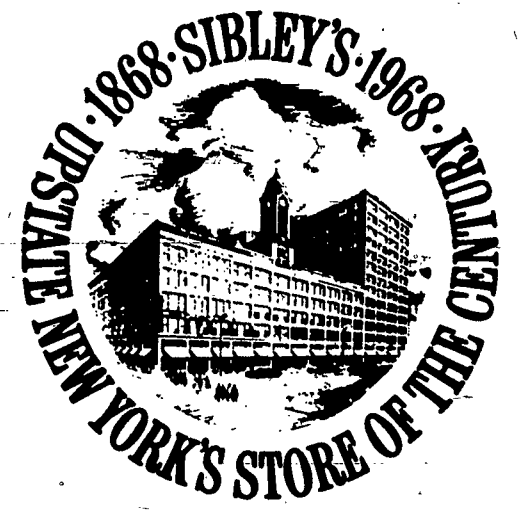
Proponents asked for an on-the-record roll call vote when the measure came to the floor. When it became clear they did not have enough votes to pass the bill, the sponsor, Assemblyman Albert H. Blumenthal, a New York City Reform Democrat, requested the measure be recommitted to the code committee. The action killed the bill for another year. The state Senate will not take up the bill since it already has been defeated in the Assembly.

The defeated bill was not the one backed by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. The governor's bill would permit abortions for a wider variety of reasons, but now has no chance of getting to the floor this year.

"It's dead for this year, but we'll absolutely try again next year," Blumenthal said.

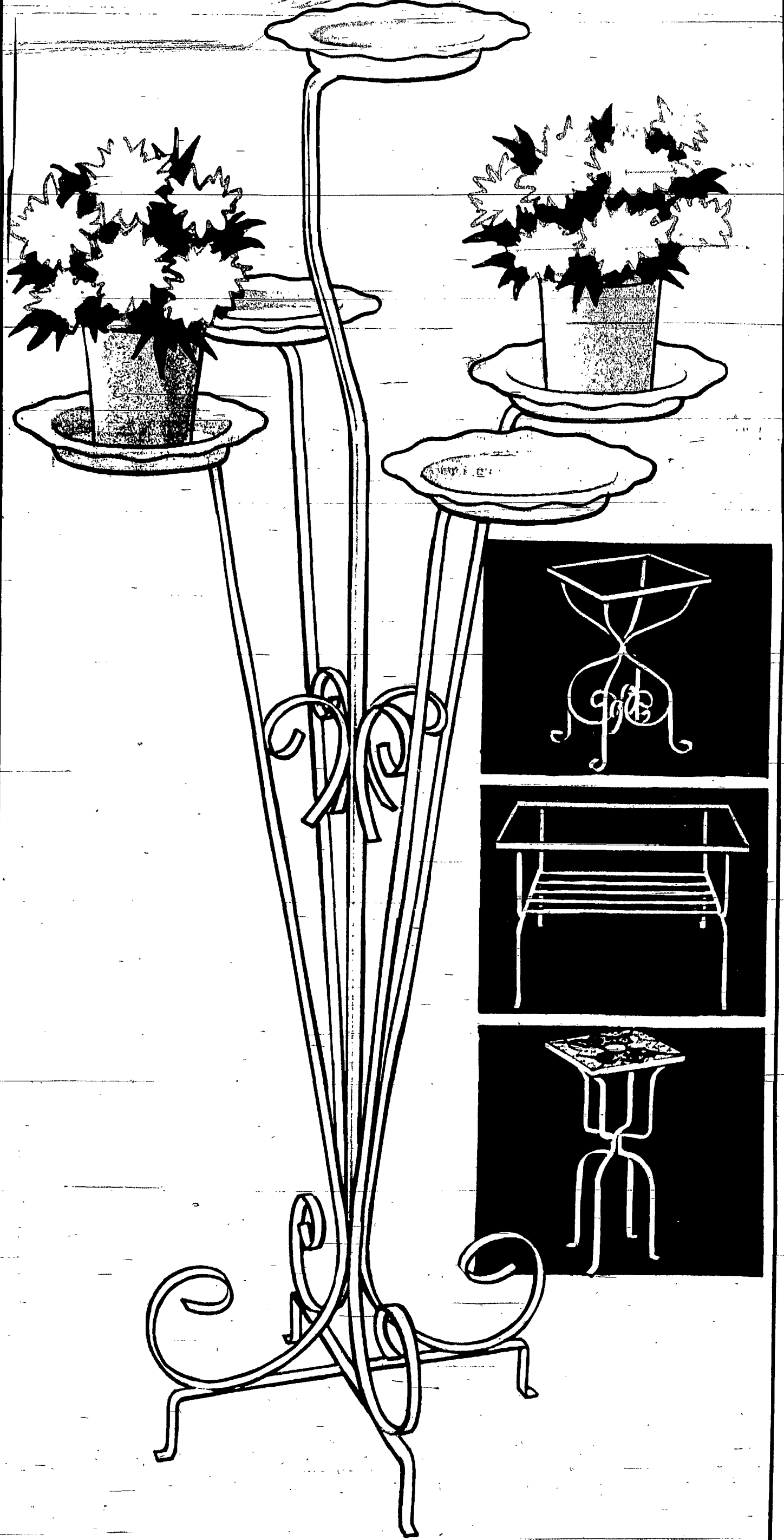
He told newsmen the chief opposition came from the New York State Catholic Welfare Committee, a central organization of the state's eight Catholic Sees. Other opposition came from some Protestant church groups, medical, legal and welfare groups.

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Violence, Apathy Hit by Cardinal

Mexico City — (NC) — Maurice Cardinal Roy of Quebec, on a visit here as chairman of the Pontifical Commission for World Justice and Peace, said Christian teachings condemn violence in solving social problems, but also condemn "the false prudence that lacks the courage to make needed reforms."

The prelate, who has been touring Latin America for several weeks, said he was impressed by the number of Catholic organizations and institutions already applying Pope Paul VI's encyclical, The Development of Peoples, in their respective countries.

But, he added, Latin Americans still have to assume fully their responsibility in working towards economic balance and a just social order, so every citizen can promote his own welfare in a climate of freedom and common good.

The cardinal added at a press conference in the headquarters of the Mexican Social Secretariat that national efforts for development do not eliminate the need for foreign aid. The pontifical commission, Cardinal Roy indicated, is engaged in persuading rich countries to devote at least one per cent of their gross national product to assist poor countries.

Spaniards Protest

Bishops' Presence

In Parliament

Barcelona, Spain — (NC) — Leaders of 30 lay apostolate groups in Barcelona have petitioned two high-ranking Spanish prelates to resign their government appointments to the nation's parliament, the Cortes.

"We believe the Second Vatican Council's directives are very clear on this point," the petitioners told Archbishop Casimiro Morcillo of Madrid, vice president of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, and Auxiliary Bishop Jose Guerra Campos of Madrid.

(A spokesman at the Madrid chancery office reported that an average of 40 letters a day are received on the subject, some in favor, some against the bishops' presence on a government political body.)

The Barcelona statement pointed out that "this is a matter that deeply affects the Church in our country."

"If, furthermore, we take into account the fact that great numbers, particularly among the workers, have left the Church because the symbol of such a union," the document emphasized.