

# Making It Legal, Venezuelan Style

By FATHER VINCENT MALLON, M.M. (NC News Service)

Caracas, Venezuela — It's Eddie Hawkins Day all year in Venezuela. The country's First Lady continuously campaigns to legitimize the unions of thousands of Venezuelans who live together without the benefit of holy wedlock.

Opinion of all shades has been expressed privately concerning Mrs. Carmen America Leoni's efforts to get Venezuelans married.

The matrimony problem in Venezuela is this. A very large percentage of the poor classes set up housekeeping without getting married, for a variety of reasons.

Some do not have the civil documents demanded by the complicated government—red

tape in the marriage office. Some feel that they must throw a big party, but haven't the money at the time. Others just want to try married life to see if it agrees with them, and they don't want to get into too permanent arrangements until they are sure.

Accurate statistics are not available, but it is commonly estimated that a good half of the couples in Venezuela are living in common law unions.

Foreigners and Venezuelans have been talking about this situation for years, but no one really did anything about it until "Lady Menca," the affectionate nickname Venezuelans give to their First Lady, stepped into the picture as a result of her interest in poor children. She found that so many of the thousands of children she was trying to help

could not be helped before something was done to straighten out the marriage situation of their parents.

Through various agencies of social service, Mrs. Leoni locates couples living together who are willing to get married. Many of her helpers are from the cream of Caracas society, others are wives of young politicians. This Mother's Day, 512 couples were married in a great outdoor ceremony in the shadow of towering monuments to Venezuela's military and political heroes.

What makes people decide to get married en masse after so many years? Mrs. Leoni tries to make the idea as attractive as possible. With an experimental group last December, each couple received \$44 from contributions made by friends of the movement.

On Mother's Day, however, cash gifts were dropped, and instead each couple received a relatively modest wedding present. In addition each couple had a best man and bridesmaid provided for them, selected at random from the middle and upper classes of Caracas society. The best man and bridesmaid were asked to provide the wedding rings.

The marriage ceremony itself was quite colorful, with military bands, dozens of priests witnessing the marriage vows, top Venezuelan figures from the President down in attendance, fireworks, 2,000 children belonging to the newlyweds enjoying themselves to the end, and finally a big feast at the swank officers' club built by a disposed dictator to keep the military happy.

Jose Cardinal Quintero of

Caracas publicly praised the initiative of Mrs. Leoni and authorized pastors to do the paperwork on the marriages. Auxiliary Bishop Luis Henriquez of Caracas presided at the ceremony of mass marriages.

But the only attempt to try and prepare the brides and grooms-to-be came from the Christian Family Movement and the Cursillos — a retreat-like Movement of Christian formation — who found it very difficult to get priests to cooperate.

A large group of laymen and the clergy felt, however, that even though Mrs. Leoni's solution could be improved upon, it was better than nothing. With more active cooperation from Church authorities, Mrs. Leoni might well be on the road to curbing the Venezuelan's propensity for common law unions.

## CBS Schedule TV Program on Religion, Taxation

"CBS Reports" will present an hour-long special, "The Business of Religion," beginning at 10 p.m. Tuesday, June 18. The program will be seen locally on Channel 10.

The growing controversy over whether church holdings should be disclosed for taxation purposes will be explored.

Appearing will be Auxiliary Bishop James Shanahan of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, executive director of the World Council of Churches and Rabbi Jacob Hubira of the Synagogue Council of America.

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Russian troops are led away from Moscow, leaving the city to Napoleon, in scene from "War and Peace."

## 'War and Peace' Termed 'Absorbing... Spiritual'

New York — (CPF) — The Russian-made film version of Tolstoy's "War and Peace" — the longest and most expensive movie ever made — has been greeted by the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures as not only "an absorbing cinematic experience" but also as "a singularly spiritual one as well."

"War and Peace," which is more than six hours long and cost more than \$100 million, is being distributed in the United States and Canada by the Walter Reade Organization.

NCOMP described the film's central theme as one which shows "that life emerges, sinks and re-emerges in unexpected and mysterious patterns" and that "in the grip of national cataclysm, man still wants to heal the personal injuries he has inflicted on others."

The Tolstoy classic covered the period from 1805 to 1812 and centered on four aristocratic families and their central figures: Natasha Rostov, Andrei Bolkonsky, Helene Kuragina, her brother Anatole, and Pierre Bezuhov.

"Throughout the six hours that it takes to trace their lives through eight years of critical history," said the film office, "we are concerned with the way in which the human soul

both embraces and recoils from personal love and responsibility.

"The personal struggles inevitably expand to the superstructure, as man grapples with his position in what Tolstoy considered one of the most un-intelligible moments in the movement of history. For each character, the possibility of life and happiness appears and disappears as he alternately experiences the ability to control the narrow scale of personal destiny and the helplessness of being caught up in the will of others, as they plot the much broader scale of national destiny."

But most of the "Catholic Film Newsletter" supplement was given to an appraisal of the techniques used to bring "War and Peace" to the screen, particularly Bondarchuk's extensive use of montage.

In one sequence, noted the film office, "the face of an innocent, uncomprehending child is intercut with the meeting of Russian generals as their commander-in-chief makes the agonizing decision to allow Napoleon to enter Moscow. And as Andrei lies wounded in battle, persaps near death, we see his sister, Maria rocking Andrei's small son who is just beginning life."

"Each of these montages supports one of the (main) themes, but the most wonderful fidelity to Tolstoy's theme of the un-intelligibility of history appears in the montage treatment of the battle of Borodino.

"The linking of the details of this battle is based on the movement and thrust of various volumes assembled to create the feeling of a violent ballet. The object is not to keep track of who is winning the war. It is foremost the furious plunging of life in every direction on the most ruthless level familiar to man."

The film office gave "War and Peace" an A-1 moral classification (unobjectionable for

general audiences) and added that "to Mr. Reade goes the credit of spotting a film classic, and our subsequent gratitude for making it available to us in its substantially original form (it is dubbed into English and is two hours shorter than when it was first shown).

"The goal that 'War and Peace' sets out to accomplish, like life, takes time, NCOMP observed, "and it is gratifying to note that its importer-distributor had as admirable a respect for the film as its director had for its source, evident in the fact that each had the good sense not to mutilate an ennobling experience." (Catholic Press Features)

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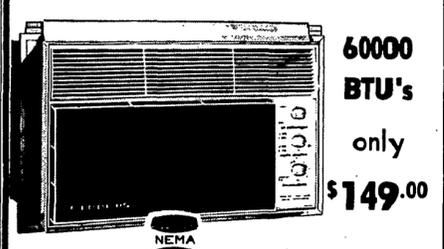
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### LBJ Names Priest To Advisory Panel

Austin, Tex. — (NC) — Father John E. Wale, C.S.C., University of Notre Dame vice president for academic affairs, was named to a 14-member advisory committee on the Teacher Corps by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Purpose of the committee, which includes representatives of business, labor, associations and foundations, is to help obtain the best teachers available to serve poor children in city and rural slum area schools.

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|            |   |                 |                         |                 |                   |                      |                       |                      |
|------------|---|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| DEMOCRATIC | D | 30 PAUL O'DWYER | 60 FENTRES L. FIMBERTON | 70 LOREN BARBIT | 80 THOMAS A. FINE | 90 HERBERT BRONSTEIN | 100 DONALD A. POSEYTH | 110 WILLIAM F. HUMAN |
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### WEST OF THE GENESEE VOTE ROW F

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| DEMOCRATIC | D | 30 PAUL O'DWYER       | VOTE FOR O'DWYER FOR SENATE |                    |                      |                       |                 |  |
| DEMOCRATIC | E |                       |                             |                    |                      |                       |                 |  |
| DEMOCRATIC | F | 60 MELVINE WM BUTTENS | 75 JOHN CARTWRIGHT          | 85 BERTA MACKENZIE | 95 ROBERT O. KRICKEL | 105 MARSHAL S. WEAVER | 115 JOSEPH WERT |  |

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