

Nuncio Trying to Mediate Basque Conflict

Madrid — (NC) — The apostolic nunciature here is trying to mediate between the Basque clergy and the Franco government in the growing crisis — punctuated by arrests of priests and terrorist attacks on police — sweeping the Pyrenees.

The central government has suspended civil liberties in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa, and the provincial governor has restated his determination to keep order and abide by the law.

The center of the storm is the pastoral letter of Bishop Lorenzo Bereciartua y Ealerdi of San Sebastian, in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa, who protested the arrests and search of rectories and other residences as "violations of the existing concordat between Spain and the Holy See."

"I believe," the Basque bishop said, "that the letter and the spirit of the concordat protect the inviolability of parishes, as well as the person of the priest who cannot be brought to (civil) trial nor can he be deprived of his freedom, unless procedures clearly stated in the concordate are followed."

The 1953 concordat requires that before civil arrest or trial of clerics, the respective bishops must grant permission.

The official press unleashed a barrage of criticism against the pastoral. CIFRA, the Spanish government news agency, said the ministry of foreign relations, which also handles Church affairs for the government, had not received any official protest from the bishop or from the nunciature.

The San Sebastian chancery office answered by distributing a list of the violations to several groups and foreign correspondents. The list has not been published in Spain.

Some observers say that Fernando Maria Castella, minister of foreign relations, quietly sought to stop the pastoral through Church channels but was unsuccessful.

Now Archbishop Luigi Daglio, apostolic nuncio to Spain, has asked the laity and clergy of the Basque country that, "in unity with their bishops, they join in an effort of friendship and good will, generosity and humility, to save the Church in this decisive hour for the spiritual future of the Basque diocese."

The statement was distributed by the Bilbao chancery office after a long interview with the nuncio. The chancery's bulletins have been critical of government measures and have supported the views of Bishop Bereciartua.

The statement adds that it is the hope of the Vatican representative that the latest conciliation efforts of several

bishops are successful, because "they try to stress those things that can unite, rather than divide, with the aim of finding a practical solution in charity to the delicate problems of the pastoral work of the Church in the Basque country."

The three Basque provinces of Biscay, Guipuzcoa and Alava, plus neighboring Navarre, have a combined population of 1.5 million, distinct from the Spanish people in language, traditions and outlook. Their industries contribute a large share of the country's economic output.

Since the Spanish Civil War

ended in 1939 Basque leaders have insisted on recognition of their traditions. In recent months the drive has been set back because of terrorist activity. This has provoked greater repressive measures from the central government. Many Catholic leaders and priests have been involved.

The Spanish Bishops' Conference has kept out of the conflict, except for a commentary on the teaching authority of the bishops published by the magazine Ecclesia, official organ of the bishops' Catholic Action movement.

"In some cases," the magazine wrote, "the bishops, in their mission to teach all the

people of God, have the charisma of infallibility." Observers feel that this comment in view of the fact that Ecclesia did not carry Bishop Bereciartua's pastoral letter, is meant to support the view that order and unity must be kept in the Basque area as elsewhere.

In addition to criticism from the press, the Basque bishop was the target of Gen. Carlos Iniesta Cano, military governor of Madrid and one of the younger top-ranking leaders in the government.

At a speech in Vigo in northeast Spain, Gen. Iniesta said that "the pastoral letter

has been an unacceptable statement which I view with a sad heart. I suppose the government will take the pertinent measures."

Most officials object to the failure of the bishop to express outright condemnation of terrorism.

In a related move, the Bilbao Bishop's Advisory Committee, made up of priests of that diocese, published a report saying that "the Church's unique competence to organize her worship services, and the right of the Christian to participate in those services according to his own conscience, must be clearly defined."

This was a reference to government orders that the public could not attend Masses for a Basque youth, Javier Echeverrieta, killed some time ago during an exchange of gunfire with police in which one of the police was also killed.

The advisory commission also made reference to the four priests in jail and the five released after completing their sentences. Again, it denied permission for civil authorities to bring to trial another 66 Basque priests charged with "subversion." It did so, on advice from the bishop.

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Tolerance
Birth Issue

By John A. Gray
(NC News Service)
London — English a bishops defended Pope ruling on birth control i ment Sept. 24, but too ant line toward coupl artificial contraceptio dividual hard cases, and the primacy of an infior science.

The joint statement on encyclical, Humane Vitae, meeting of the bishops chairmanship of John Car nan of Westminster.

In a special word to p bishops stated:

"The Pope does not atte parents how many chil ought to have. This deo to be taken by the parei the light of all the moral tions laid down in the ency of these considerations is exercise of the marriage remain in itself open to mission of life, although, a points out, in fact, no artificial methods of bi jugal act is followed by :

"Nevertheless it is agair of God to take positiv s stroy the possibility of th son of life."

The statement appeale nents of the papal ruling i their minds. It stated:

"In view of the contro the encyclical has aroused, of England and Wales ca Catholics to conduct thei in a responsible and tenj ner and in a mutually spirit."

"Discussion has so fa mainly on the question of tion. The impression is giv Pope set out merely 2 artificial methods of bi vix he could have done sentencs."

"The encyclical speak s the dignity of marriage, th married love and the ol responsible parenthood."

"Pope Paul wrote his only after years of study in the heat of controver sers appear to have forgot Pope is the Vicar of Chr him to issue encyclical I ever he thinks it his duty

"No member of the thought the questions pr could be resolved by a m his task was to fill the e to present the Pope with It was always understo decision must be made b as Christ's vicar. . . .

"From the beginning regarded this decision as he personally must mak encyclical has evoked seision on the whole exer magisterium (the Churcl authority). It is being in a matter so moment the lives of millions, the responsibility should no one man even though he of Christ.

"At the council it w recognized that a quet delicacy as contraception properly be debated b assembly. Collegiality n subject of further study,

(Continued on P

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