

Editorial

The Church And Communism

"We must never allow the Communists to be the only ones concerned about social reform."

Thus a leading adviser to three popes, including Paul VI, explained succinctly the Roman Catholic Church's contacts with Communist governments as a "moral imperative for peace and justice in the world."

Cardinal Luigi Ciappi, OP, in an interview with the diocesan newspaper the Providence Visitor, also said the Catholic Church has a "moral obligation and a right" to speak out on social questions regardless of political consequences.

Many have criticized the Church for its involvement in social causes, particularly in the Third World nations of South America and Africa. Many, indeed, see the Church, or members of it, as dupes of Marxists or Communists for espousing causes supported by the leftists.

The cardinal's words are clear. The Church has a duty to help the downtrodden "regardless of political consequences." Looking at it pragmatically, the involvement of the Church in social reform in Latin America and elsewhere is an anti-communistic strategy.

Lest Cardinal Ciappi's name and credentials be questioned, he is Pope Paul's personal theologian, the same role he filled for Pius XII and John XXIII. He was in Providence to receive an honorary doctorate from Providence College, an institution run by his order of Dominicans.

Pope Paul thinks highly enough of him to have made him a cardinal in June.

Good Riddance

Cautiously speaking, it is at least a sign of good news that Chile has abolished the dreaded secret police DINA.

Admittedly there is the nature of a political ploy about the termination, coming as it did while Terence Todman of the United States State Department was visiting Santiago.

Yet it shows the efficacy of President Carter's pressure on Chile over human rights violations and political restrictions.

It also is a compliment to the work of the Catholic Vicariate of Solidarity which has persisted in opposing governmental oppression.

The news of the DINA disbandment comes hard on the heels of a finding by a Chilean military court that nothing substantiates charges by the secret police that Irish Columban Fathers had harbored political fugitives in their residence in Santiago.

The Courier-Journal printed a first-hand account by a Columban priest of a secret police raid in which a housekeeper was killed. The Chilean government has been repressive as regards freedom of the press and the Courier-Journal was fortunate in being able to print an eyewitness account of the events which the court recently studied.

Regardless of the permanence of the recent possible changes in Chilean policy, it is important to note that they at least in part came about because of attention directed at the country through the efforts of the U.S. government and the Church. That should be a sign that such efforts continue not only as regards Chile, Brazil and other Third World nations but also in the case of Eastern European nations where human rights also are systematically abused.

Opinion

Editorial Decried

Editor:

In its editorial of Aug. 11, the Courier-Journal voiced approval of Governor Hugh Carey's veto of the death penalty.

However, the Governor's concern for human life seems to be limited to convicted murderers, because he also favors public funding of abortion.

Curiously this double standard regarding human life is also evident in the reaction to human rights violations in Communist and non-Communist countries.

There is great reaction to the alleged and real human rights violations in the non-Communist countries such as Chile, Argentina, Rhodesia and South Africa.

Yet in the Communist countries like Vietnam, Cambodia (especially Cambodia) and Eastern Europe where human rights violations are much greater, the reaction is far more subdued.

This double standard of human rights concern must stop if progress is to be

made in correcting human rights violations.

In our own country we should demand the restoration of the death penalty in order to protect the human rights of the law-abiding.

As long as life imprisonment is obsolete and escape always possible, society should be protected.

Capital punishment provides that protection.

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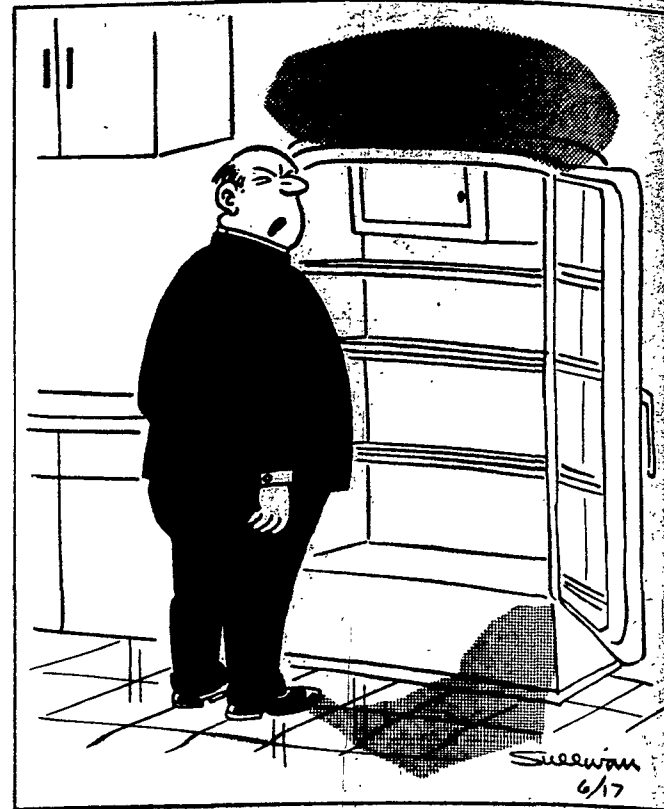
Astrology A Superstition

Editor:

I have never written to your newspaper before. I realize that you are in a difficult position, having to publish letters from all sides, including many that have recently insulted my alma mater, St. Bernard's Seminary, wrongly questioning its orthodoxy.

I have wanted to respond to these letters but felt that I could not dignify them with an answer. Now, I must challenge your newspaper itself.

In your recent "Back to School" supplement (C-1, Aug. 17) an anonymous



"I'LL BE MY OWN KEEPER, MRS. DONAHUE - NOW WHERE DID YOU HIDE THE FOOD?"

article called "Free Time Plans" advised parents to "go to school part-time and take just one course that has always interested you - tennis, sculpture, floral arranging, or even astrology." (Page 14a).

Astrology is forbidden by the First Commandment and it has no rightful place in a Catholic newspaper. Why did you not advise them to take a course in theology or Scripture? Many parishes

have such courses.

Thank you for the good job you're doing otherwise.

Rev. Mr. John F. Gagnier
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Editor's Note: The story in question came from a news service. We agree with Mr. Gagnier's letter and thank him for the opportunity to correct the mistake.

Letters, Whether from Great or Small, Really Bolster Morale of Oppressed

Editor:

After the murder of Father Rutilio Grande, SJ, in El Salvador in March 1977, the expected words of condolence were forthcoming from Rome. As the persecution of the Salvadorean Church intensified, the archbishop made an urgent trip to Rome. On returning he announced that Pope Paul had ably performed one of his principal ministries on behalf of the universal church, that of "confirming the brethren."

The several months that followed proved that the Church of San Salvador would need to know that Rome was providing moral support as frantic attempts were made to divide the archdiocese within itself and the united front assumed by El Salvador's five dioceses. Quickly and expectedly, additional messages of support were forthcoming from other national hierarchies. On July 6, the head of the U.S. Bishops' Conference, Ar-

chbishop Bernardin pinpointed the reason for the conflict: "In few other countries today has the Church's pastoral ministry been met with such intense and organized opposition... The tiny majority of rich and powerful, zealous guardians of sterile and unjust status quo, have not hesitated to employ every means at their disposal to obstruct the preaching of the Gospel."

He concluded by sending his "expression of fraternal solidarity" to "the whole people of God in El Salvador who struggle and suffer for justice..."

What began to happen next was the unexpected - hundreds of messages of support from lower level Church organizations and even from many individuals began to flood the mail of San Salvador. A typical example came from the officers of the Priests Council in Des Moines, who said in their letter, addressed to the Archbishop of San Salvador, "We pledge to remind ourselves and our people of our bonds of unity with you who are suffering for our faith and to realize that it is the faith of the suffering Church which offsets our guilt."

Lay members of the Franciscan Third Order in Allegany, N.Y., signed a joint letter of support at their monthly meeting.

The impact of these letters coming from Catholics in influential United States of America, is indescribable for shoring up the morale, particularly of those many, many sideline Catholics in Latin America who find it easier to believe when they see miracles. The demonstration of international public support coming from average people is a miracle for those who live in Third World countries and who believe the only way to merit attention or win sympathy is to suffer some enormous

natural disaster like an earthquake or hurricane.

Of much lesser impact than messages from powerful countries like the U.S., but of greater significance, is the support that the Salvadorean Church has received from sister Churches in Latin American countries where similar conditions exist. Like the widow's mite in the Gospel parable, while of lesser value in helping the poor, it has greater spiritual significance because it is a gift made from poverty.

The message of solidarity to the Church in El Salvador from the deanery of Eastern Managua, Nicaragua, dated July 14, 1977, and read from the pulpits of the deanery on that day, is too important an example of this kind to overlook. Several priests could not sign it or read it for fear of reprisal. What does the letter say? Less, really, than Archbishop Bernardin's, who is, without faulting him or the U.S. Catholic Church, the rich man in the parable of the widow's mite because there's little danger, little cost, in making support statements.

Like so many "sensitive" statements of this kind, the Managua statement is essentially a web of quotes from higher level Church documents, applying them to the situation in El Salvador. The statement notes that the Salvadorean Church "is suffering from having shared in the popular struggle on behalf of the oppressed. In this, it is doing nothing more than being faithful to Pope Paul VI when he said that 'we can't stand on the sidelines and observe passively the desperate struggle of the dispossessed, of those who have no voice, of those who are trying to overcome those conditions that condemn them to live on the margin of life... The Church has the obligation to

help give birth to their liberation, and to insure that it is an integral liberation."

The Managua statement, after much more detail, concludes thus: "We believe it opportune to make public our solidarity. Furthermore, no one is unaware that here in Nicaragua the same black clouds are hanging over us as those that threaten our neighbor, El Salvador."

I say that as long as those storm clouds swirl over the Catholic Church in Latin America, there's going to be opportunities to keep those messages of support and comfort coming, particularly from the United States.

One sure source for current information is Washington Office on Latin America, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002. Another is the Latin America Desk, U.S. Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC, 20005.

And it's not too late to send a simple support letter to Archbishop Oscar Romero, Arzobispado, San Salvador, El Salvador.

Father Bernard Survil
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Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Editor's Note: Father Survil is one of three American priests expelled from El Salvador in February, 1977 and is an occasional contributor to this page.

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

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