



Priests Among Dissidents

Two Roman Catholic priests are among the "Movement of the Twelve," a group of prominent Nicaraguans who are leading citizen opposition to the regime of Gen. Anastasio Somoza, whose family has ruled Nicaragua for more than 40 years. Eleven members of the group returned to Nicaragua on July 5 despite threats of incarceration. Left to right, in this recent photo, are Father Miguel d'Escoto, of the Maryknoll Foreign Mission Society; Carlos Tunnerman, former president of Managua's National University; agronomist Ricardo Colonel; economist Arturo Cruz, Jesuit Father Fernando Cardenal; architect Casimiro Sotelo; lawyer Joaquim Cuadro Chamorro and writer Sergio Ramirez. In the front row are industrialist Emilio Baltadano; physician Dr. Carlos Gutierrez and lawyer Ernesto Castillo. (RNS)

Troops May Be Excommunicated

Managua, Nicaragua (RNS) - As leftist Sandinista guerrillas fought with national guard troops in an offensive against the regime of President Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the Nicaraguan Catholic Church threatened the government troops with excommunication.

The Church charged that Gen. Somoza's government had launched a wave of repression against priests and churches in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

The warning was contained in a circular from the Archdiocese of

Managua, signed by the vicar general, Msgr. Bosco Vivas Robelo. It was broadcast once on Catholic Radio, a church-owned station.

The station's director, Father Bismark Carballo, said he had been ordered by the government to take the announcement off the air.

No Ties Urged with Vatican

Silver Spring, Md. (RNS) - The executive director of Americans for Separation of Church and State has called on President Jimmy Carter to end the practice of naming a personal envoy to the Pope.

Andrew Lee Gunn, in a letter to Carter, urged him to "ignore the reported request" of New York Gov. Hugh Carey and Rep. Robert Giaimo of Connecticut that the post be upgraded to the rank of full ambassador.

Gunn said that "any regular U.S. government representation at the Vatican, whether by a Senate-approved full ambassador or a semi-official presidential envoy is objectionable."

"It would single out one religious faith for special preference and discriminate against all others," he charged. "It would constitute a de facto entanglement of religion and government, in violation of the spirit, if not the actual letter, of the Constitution."

According to a news report, Gov. Carey has urged full diplomatic status for the post held until recently by Miami attorney David Walters. The governor was quoted as saying the appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican would be "for our (U.S.) benefit." He also is reported to have said, "The Vatican has a great many programs going in areas where we don't have diplomatic relations."

Vatican Says No To Death Penalty

Vatican City (RNS) - The Vatican daily, L'Osservatore Romano, has condemned capital punishment as "homicide."

In a front-page editorial on the planned execution of a Texas woman through the use of a lethal injection, the paper said that whether such a method of execution is more humane than the electric chair is irrelevant.

The principle at stake, it said, is the "fundamental inviolability of human life."

The editorial was signed by Franciscan Father Gino Concetti, an Osservatore editor.

"The right to life is inalienable. No human

authority can violate it with impunity."

Earlier this year, Roman Catholic Archbishop William D. Borders of Baltimore denounced capital punishment as "not morally justified," saying that legal executions simply "further erode respect for life."

Noting that Catholic bishops in other countries have also called for abolition of the death penalty, Father Concetti said:

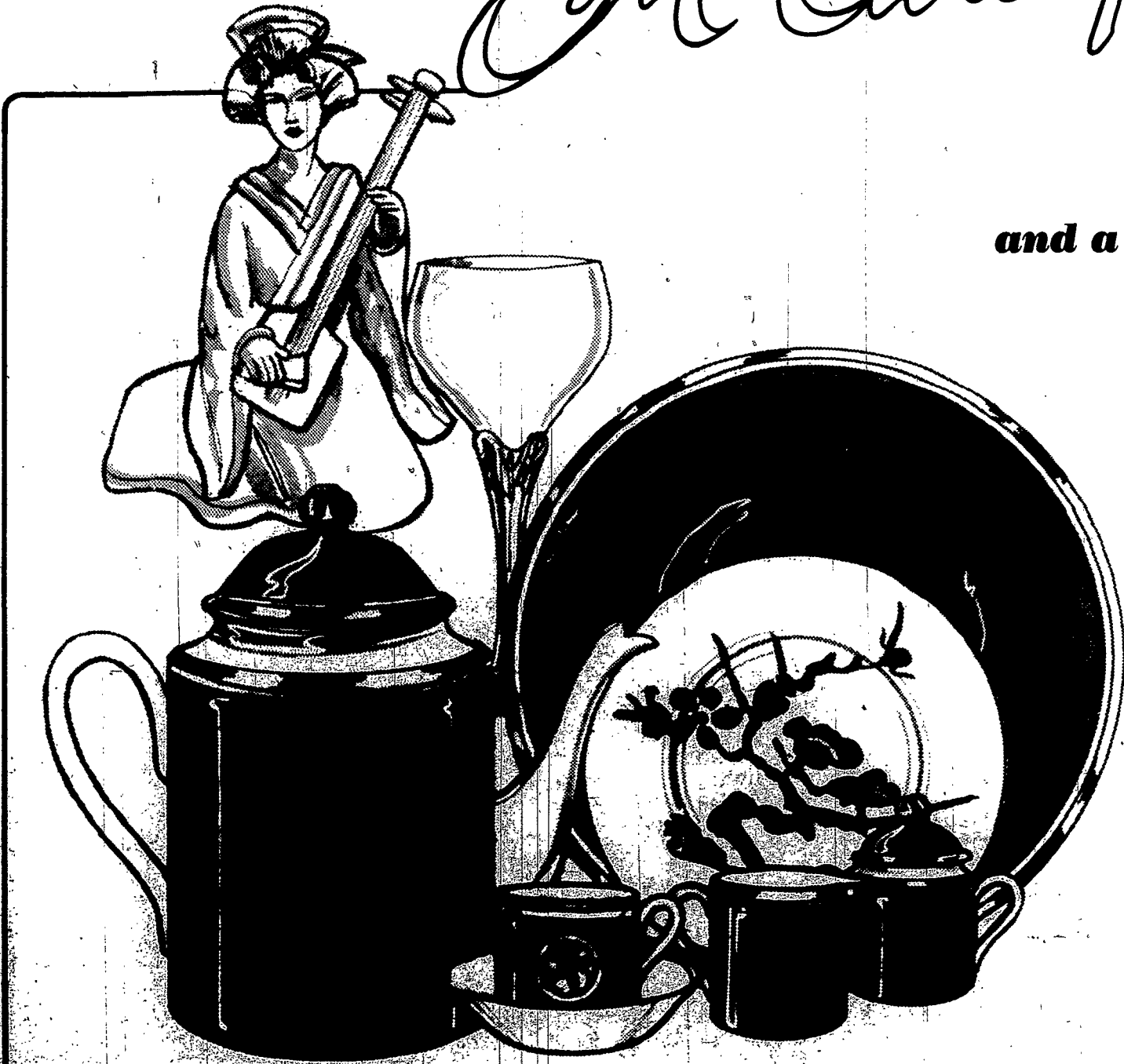
"Their reasons in essence are the reasons of the Gospel and of the dignity of the human person. We believe that these reasons must prevail over the ones advanced by those who favor the death penalty as a means of combatting criminality."

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