

Pope Condemns Mafia For 'Barbarous Violence'

Palermo (NC) — Pope John Paul II cruised around the Sicilian capital of Palermo Nov. 21-22 and strongly condemned the attitudes and activities of the Mafia which, he said, had caused the streets to be bloodied by "barbarous violence."

Only hours before the pope's arrival, as if scripted for him, four gangland homicides ripped the area.

The pope gave strong backing to the Church's efforts — led by Sicily's 64-year-old crusading Cardinal Salvatore Pappalardo of Palermo — to rid Sicily of the Mafia.

The efforts of Cardinal Pappalardo and Mayor Nello Martellucci of Palermo to steer the press from preoccupation with the Mafia toward other aspects of the island's religious and civic life went for naught. Much of the media coverage focused on the two of the pope's 13 speeches which referred to the Mafia.

The pontiff touched on a variety of other themes, such as the importance of the

home, Sicily's role as a cultural and ecumenical crossroads and the centrality of the sacraments in Catholic life. Sicily is about the size of Massachusetts and is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea.

On Nov. 21, the pope took a 60-mile helicopter ride from Palermo to the Belice River Valley in the interior. A 1968 earthquake ravaged the rural villages in the valley, leaving more than 300 dead and 40,000 homeless.

Government programs have been slow in rebuilding the area. The pope celebrated Mass for 150,000 worshippers on a hillside near Santa Ninta, where 7,500 families still live in shacks fashioned from corrugated tin and fruit crates, built as temporary shelters 14 years ago.

Pope John Paul called for stronger relief efforts, saying that he could not help but "raise my voice to denounce the unnatural continuation of such a pitiful situation."

Returning to Palermo, the pope was greeted in the city's palm-lined main square by

Mayor Martellucci, who told the pontiff that "the preponderant fraction of Palermo's citizens know the subtle and warming pleasure of honesty, give witness to a universal belief in rectitude and have a lay missionary sense of self-giving."

The mayor echoed a theme sounded by Cardinal Pappalardo at a Nov. 20 press conference when the prelate suggested that a myopic focus by the press on Mafia-related violence would present to the world "a Sicily which would be distorted and limited to some facts which, while we do not deny them, nevertheless do not exhaust the reality, the multiplicity, the fullness of so many values which are in Sicily."

Responding to the mayor's address, the pope praised Sicilians for their "orientation to family life, the exemplary capacity for self-giving and for solidarity toward others, especially the suffering, an innate respect for life, and admirable sense of responsibility and of honor."

But he referred also to the "incidents of barbarous violence which for too long



Pope John Paul II blesses boats in Palermo. He visited the dockyard after touring a region devastated by earthquakes in 1968. (NC Photo)

have bloodied the streets of this splendid city."

According to police, Palermo is the center of drug smuggling, extortion and loan-sharking activities which provide the Sicilian Mafia with revenues of several billion dollars a year.

Organized crime has been responsible for more than 100 murders in Palermo this year, as rival gangs struggle to control the heroin trade. Police believe that more than one third of the world's heroin is processed in Sicily.

Last September, at the funeral of the head of Italy's anti-Mafia police task force, Alberto Dalla Chiesa, who with his wife was slain in the center of Palermo, Cardinal Pappalardo lashed out at government inactivity in battling Mafia crime.

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Pontiff Meets Helmut Kohl, West German Chancellor

By Nancy Frazier

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II met in private audience Nov. 18 with the new West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a Christian Democrat.

The two men discussed Poland, human rights and U.S.-Soviet arms limitation talks, said a spokesman for Kohl.

After the papal audience Kohl said, "It was a fine talk. I am very impressed." Kohl spent about 40 minutes with the pope and half an hour

with Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, papal secretary of state.

Pope John Paul II also spent about five minutes exchanging greetings with Kohl's 10-member entourage, Vatican sources said.

The Vatican released no details about the discussion between the pope and Kohl, who was en route to Bonn, West Germany, after meetings in Washington with President Ronald Reagan and other U.S. leaders.

Pope John Paul II gave the

West German leader a series of medals of his pontificate, and Kohl gave the pope a volume of the collected speeches of the late Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first post-World War II chancellor and a key figure in the postwar Christian Democratic Party.

Kohl went from the Vatican to a meeting with Italian President Sandro Pertini and other Italian government officials.

West German sources said Kohl had considered cancelling his one-day visit to Rome when the Italian government of Giovanni Spadolini collapsed Nov. 13, but later decided to go ahead with the trip because its "principal motive" was the audience with Pope John Paul.

Kohl became chancellor in October after the government of Socialist Helmut Schmidt collapsed because of a no confidence vote in the Parliament.

4th Man Arrested In Papal Shooting

Rome — Ivanov Sergia Antonov, a 35-year-old Bulgarian airline official, has been arrested by Italian police as the fourth alleged conspirator in the shooting of Pope John Paul II.

Antonov, a Bulgarian airline station chief here, allegedly checked Memmet Ali Agca into a hotel near the Vatican and drove him to St. Peter's Square on the day the pope was shot, an Italian news agency claimed.

Agca, a Turkish terrorist, shot the pope on May 13, 1981, with a Browning

Report: Pope to Visit El Salvador

San Salvador — Pope John Paul II will visit El Salvador either in February or March, Auxiliary Bishop Gergorio Rosa Chavez has announced.

The trip is expected to include visits to other Central American countries and also to Haiti.

The Vatican issued no immediate statement on the announcement.

revolver. Although they would not furnish details, police say that Antonov was "very active" in the attempted assassination and helped Agca in a "material way."

Agca, serving a life sentence in an Italian prison, always claimed he acted alone. But police charged Antonov with complicity in the shooting.

Previously, Omar Batci, a Turk, was arrested in Switzerland. He allegedly told Italian police that he furnished Agca with the pistol used in the shooting, according to the Italian press. Another Turkish national, Musar Cedar Celebi, was arrested last month in West Germany and is awaiting extradition to Italy in connection with the assassination attempt.

Archconfraternity

The women of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family of Our Lady of Victory Church will attend Mass at 9 a.m. Sunday Dec. 5, at the Church on Pleasant Street. A Christmas breakfast will follow at the Genesee Crossroads Plaza Hotel.

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