

World & Nation

C-J Capsules

"Explosion" feared in Chile

Mexico City (NC) — The Vatican and the U.S. government fear "a violent explosion" in Chile if Gen. Augusto Pinochet hangs onto power, according to Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, retired archbishop of Santiago, quoted in the June 6 edition of the Mexico City newspaper El Dia.

Pinochet's apparent reluctance to hand power over to a democratically elected government after more than 13 years of military rule has brought about the current crisis, said Cardinal Henriquez, who added that he would be willing to mediate a peaceful solution, but denied that he would run against Pinochet.

Pope encourages lay women

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II has called for "a wider and more active participation of lay women" in Catholic evangelization.

In his 1987 World Mission Day address, released by the Vatican June 16, the pope advocated women's involvement in formation of the nuclear family, dialogue with non-believers and non-practicing believers, and the promotion of Catholic culture. He also praised the work of women in "traditional occupations" and encouraged their active role in missionary work.

Bishops support referendum

Washington, D.C. (NC) — Two Catholic bishops joined political and religious leaders June 18 in delivering to Congress more than half a million signatures from a nationwide referendum to stop contra funding and other U.S. military aid in Central America.

Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit and Bishop Walter F. Sullivan of Richmond, Va., spoke at a press conference on Capitol Hill, before the coalition of religious and peace groups presented bales, pails and bags of referendum signatures to the office of House Speaker James C. Wright, D-Texas.

Newsweek article denounced

New York (NC) — The Council of Priests of the Archdiocese of Managua, Nicaragua, has written a letter to the editor of Newsweek magazine, protesting a June 15 report of possible financial aid to Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo of Managua from the CIA and Lt. Col. Oliver North.

The cardinal had earlier denied receiving any money. The Newsweek story said that there was no evidence that the cardinal knew the source of the alleged funding.

The Council of Priests denounced the Newsweek report as false and expressed outrage "at the flippancy of the authors who attempt to defame, denigrate and discredit" the cardinal.

Consultants praise pastoral

Washington, D.C. — Consultants who reviewed a rough draft of a U.S. bishops' pastoral on women reacted positively to it on the whole, according to Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., writing committee chairman. The pastoral's treatment of women's concerns is divided into five categories: women as persons, women in the Church, justice toward women, marriage and family life, and women and sexuality.

The committee also includes Archbishop William J. Levada of Portland, Ore.; Bishops Matthew H. Clark of Rochester, N.Y., and Thomas J. Grady of Orlando, Fla.; and Auxiliary Bishops Alfred C. Hughes of Boston and Amedee W. Proulx of Portland, Me.

SOAR campaign given grant

Silver Springs, Md. (NC) — Support Our Aging Religious, a campaign to help U.S. religious orders face retirement costs, has received a \$500,000 grant from the Loyola Foundation, a Washington, D.C., foundation established in 1969 to aid Catholic missions.

The foundation will present the money over the next five years in equal payments, 75 percent of which must be given to congregations facing "immediate and critical need" in caring for elderly members.

SOAR was established last September by lay Catholics, in response to a study that showed that nuns are facing a retirement deficit estimated at \$2.5 billion.

NCCB head urges talks with Jewish leaders

Washington (NC) — The president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has praised the idea of "further dialogue" with Jewish leaders who protested Pope John Paul II's planned June 25 audience with Austrian President Kurt Waldheim.

But he left open the question of what form the dialogue should take.

In a June 22 statement the NCCB president, Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, said, "I see the wisdom of considering further dialogue at some appropriate level with a representative international Jewish agency." But he added, "How this may be done is beyond my particular competence to determine."

U.S. Jewish leaders urged a "substantive" discussion with Pope John Paul in light of his decision to meet with Waldheim, whom they have called "an unrepentant Nazi."

Allegations have been made that Waldheim, a former U.N. secretary general, was connected with Nazi wartime atrocities in Yugoslavia. Waldheim has denied the allegations, saying they are an attempt to smear him.

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, said the Jewish leaders are not insisting on a specific time or place for the special meeting.

Rabbi Waxman said the group would prefer that the substantive meeting take place before the scheduled Sept. 11 Miami meeting between the pope and Jewish leaders. As the Miami meeting is planned to be largely ceremonial, Jewish leaders prefer to have a substantive meeting with the pope before that event, but would take it during or after if need be, Rabbi Waxman said.

Archbishop May noted that the pope did not initiate the meeting with Waldheim and that "such a meeting is in keeping with the standard practice of the Holy See to receive duly elected political leaders."

"It can also be noted that to be received by the pope does not mean that the Holy See is making a statement on the personal character of the one being received. It is the pope's practice to maintain dialogue with many of the world's political leaders, a duty he exercises frequently as he fulfills his diplomatic and pastoral responsibilities," the archbishop said.

In his statement Archbishop May said he believes U.S. Catholic-Jewish relations are "strong enough to overcome any specific difficulty of the moment."

Archbishop May said he hopes the Sept. 11 meeting between the pope and the Jewish leaders will continue "despite the serious concerns by some" that the intention of the pope to receive Waldheim "will impact negatively on the Miami meeting."

The archbishop noted that preparations for the Miami meeting have been underway for more than a year, and he said that the NCCB "is proud of the dialogue which has taken place concerning this event. In fact, we see it as a concrete result of the excellent relations we maintain with our Jewish brothers and sisters."

The American Jewish Congress announced June 18 that it would withdraw from the September meeting with the pope in Miami, but later modified its stand, after most Jewish leaders said they postpone decisions on the meeting until they had consulted further among themselves and with Catholic leaders.

A Vatican statement June 20 defended the Waldheim audience as a state visit requested by Waldheim, who was "democratically



NC News/UPI-Reuters
Representatives of U.S. Jewish organizations stand outside the Jerusalem residence of Archbishop Carlo Curis, apostolic delegate in Jerusalem and Palestine. They were protesting a decision by Pope John Paul II to grant a Vatican audience to Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, who is accused by U.S. Jewish organizations of involvement in Nazi war crimes.

elect" president of Austria and who previously undertook "missions of great responsibility for peace" as U.N. secretary general.

The negative reactions to the announcement caused "surprise and profound pain" because they raise "questions and doubts about the consideration and respect of the pope and the Holy See toward the Jewish people and especially their situation during the inhuman persecution which struck them," said the statement; referring to the Nazi Holocaust.

Vatican press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said June 19 that Austria had "repeatedly requested" the meeting.

Rabbi Waxman, spiritual leader of Temple Israel in Great Neck, Long Island, presided at a June 19 meeting that involved the International Committee and three groups that are not committee members: American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League and National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Participants issued a joint statement saying, "We urge that an early meeting with the pope take place to clarify for us, and all those who share our dismay, the motivation for imparting the honor of a papal audience to Kurt Waldheim."

"To urge is not to demand," said Rabbi Waxman, disputing a "Jews Demand Papal Summit" headline in one paper. "We didn't throw down any gauntlet. We don't want to break relations, but neither do we want to have to swallow something unswallowable." Jews, he said, are looking for some response that indicates the Vatican considers Jewish-Catholic dialogue a matter of concern.

He said the June 19 meeting included Rabbi Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, and the joint statement represented a "modification" of Rabbi Siegman's earlier announcement that the Congress was withdrawing from the Miami meeting.

The Jewish community, Rabbi Waxman

said, includes "right-wing" elements opposed to any interfaith dialogue and agencies determined because of their own goals to continue relations. "Then there is an intermediate position I represent with a consensus that we would like to continue under conditions that can satisfy our constituency," he said.

Rabbi Waxman voiced concern that Vatican officials made no effort ahead of time to talk with Jewish leaders about the Waldheim visit. "If you feel you have to do it, at least discuss it," he said.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, speaking to reporters June 21, warned that it would be a mistake for Jewish leaders "to threaten or be perceived to threaten" a boycott of their scheduled meeting with Pope John Paul.

Inclusion of the meeting in the schedule of the papal visit, he said, has shown the pope's concern for the Jewish community "in an extraordinary way," and Jews would be "missing a great opportunity" if they did not go through with it.

Speaking to the reporters, the cardinal voiced strong regret at attempts to tie the Waldheim visit to other matters and discern a pattern of Church actions affecting Jews.

"It would be a mistake to relate it in any way to the question of formal diplomatic recognition of Israel," he said.

The pope's handling of the Waldheim visit, Cardinal O'Connor suggested, might turn out to deal with the issues in unexpected ways.

"The Polish government was anxious to have him come to Poland till he got there," the cardinal remarked. "Mr. Waldheim might regret having importuned for this visit."

Contributing to this story were Tracy Early in New York and Agostino Bono in Rome.

Ordination count on rise; priestly ranks grow smaller

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — The number of priests worldwide has continued to decline, but ordinations and seminarians increased more than 6 percent in 1985, a Vatican study shows.

The effect of the overall decline on local churches varies, the study said, depending on the role played by non-ordained persons, or "cooperators," helping at the parish level.

In Europe and North America, for example, there were an average of two or three such cooperators per priest in 1985. In Africa, where lay catechists have a greater role, the number was nearly 14 per priest, the study said.

Worldwide, there were 2,091 Catholics for every priest in 1985, the study showed. An increasing pastoral burden has been on priests in Central and South America, where the ratio is about 7,000-to-1.

The study by the Vatican's Central Office for Church Statistics was released June 23. It confirmed several trends established over the last 10 years.

Priestly ordinations continued to rise, from 6,333 in 1984 to 6,785. That is the largest yearly increase since the number of ordinations reached a low of 5,765 in 1979.

At the same time, more than 8,000 priests died or left the active ministry during 1985. Thus, the number of priests worldwide declined from 405,959 to 403,480.

In the United States and Canada, the number of priests dropped from 69,337 in 1984 to 68,942 in 1985.

The phenomenon of an "aging" priesthood also has continued worldwide, the study said. In North America, the median age of priests is nearly 54. In South America, it is about 51, in Central America nearly 50, and in Africa, 43.

The study showed that for the 10th consecutive year, the number of major seminarians increased, from 80,302 in 1984 to 85,084 in 1985. The increase was the largest registered during the same 10-year period.

The greatest increase was in Asia and Africa. In North America, however, the numbers of seminarians declined nearly 200 to 8,090.

The projected replacement of currently active priests varies greatly among regions, too. In Asia and Africa, the number of seminarians is nearly 60 percent of the number of active priests, while the lowest level is in North America, where the rate is only about 12 percent, the study showed.

The number of permanent deacons increased by nearly 7 percent worldwide from 1984 to 1985, the study said. Most of that increase was in the United States and Canada.