

World & Nation

C-J Capsules

Contras vie for Catholic support

Mexico City — Nicaraguan contra rebels have "recruited" a farmer's alleged visions of Mary in an effort to rally Catholics against the Sandinista government, said a publication sympathetic to the regime.

Church officials also opposed to the Sandinistas have promoted the reported sightings as the Virgin of Cuapa, reported *Envio*, the monthly public-affairs magazine of the Jesuit-affiliated Central American Historical Institute.

Clandestine radio stations operated by the U.S.-supported counterrevolutionaries, or contras, in Honduras and El Salvador characterized the reported visions as a herald of future victory over the Sandinistas.

Bishops call for land reform

Manila, Philippines — The Philippine bishops' conference has called for "radical land reform," but said changes must be realistic.

In a pastoral letter issued July 15 after a three-day meeting, the bishops said 70 percent of the 55 million Filipinos live in poverty, calling the situation "a scandal of the first order."

The bishops asked the "haves to share with the have-nots, the landed with the landless."

Catholic's firing protested

Detroit — Irish-American groups are protesting the firing of a Northern Ireland Catholic who lost his job after speaking in the United States about job discrimination against Catholics in the British province.

Oliver Kearney, general secretary of Licensed Vintner's Federation of Northern Ireland, a non-governmental agency representing 1,000 pub owners, was fired when he returned to Northern Ireland after testifying before the Michigan and California legislatures on employment and employment guidelines for U.S. firms doing business in Northern Ireland.

Evangelist will stay on radio

Greensburg, Pa. — Father John Bertolucci, the Catholic television evangelist who resigned from his TV ministry in early July, will continue his radio program "Let Me Sow Love."

Donations to Father Bertolucci's TV ministry fell by 50 percent after the scandal surrounding the March 19 resignation of Protestant evangelist Jim Bakker as head of the PTL television ministry.

Official lauds school lunch plan

Washington — A U.S. Catholic Conference official has praised new legislation enacted by Congress to restore the federal school lunch plan to parochial schools regardless of tuition levels.

The new provisions recognize "the reality that private schools, including those which charge higher levels of tuition, tend to enroll significant numbers of lower-income students, many from minority groups, who are on scholarship," said Frank J. Monahan, USCC director of government liaison.

The measure, part of the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Acts, became law July 11.

Father Jenco blasts North

New York — Servite Father Lawrence Martin Jenco, who spent 19 months in captivity in Lebanon, says Lt. Col. Oliver North projected a "terrible" image of American values with his testimony at the Iran-contra hearings.

"There are lies and lies and more lies, and young people begin to see it as something acceptable. This bothers me tremendously," said Father Jenco in an interview at the offices of Catholic Relief Services in Manhattan, where he is beginning a six-month assignment.

Father Jenco was head of the Catholic Relief Services' Beirut bureau when he was kidnapped in January 1985. He was released last July.

In South Africa,

Bishops' newspaper stands up to censorship

By Joanne Sisto

Toronto (NC) — A newspaper published by the southern African bishops' conference has become the country's most widely read and controversial publication, said Dominican Sister Cecilia Smit, who works for the secretary general of the bishops' conference.

Circulation for *New Nation* newspaper rose from 15,000 in 1985 to more than 75,000 earlier this year, Sister Smit said during an interview at the Toronto office of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace.

"We don't know how, but copies of the paper even find their way to remote villages in the rural areas," she said.

Sister Smit, who works for Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa, said the bishops began the paper in August 1985 when they saw a need for a "less biased" newspaper in the strife-ridden country.

"Since the South African press is completely controlled by the government, the bishops decided to subsidize a paper that would bring issues of concern to the people," Sister Smit said.

Each edition of the paper must be reviewed by three sets of lawyers — the newspaper's, the printing company's and the union's — before the week's stories are allowed to run.

New Nation carries stories that none of the other South African papers will run, Sister Smit said. Stories openly discuss details of the treatment of child detainees and student uprisings during the state of emergency. The paper has also printed profiles on working class leaders, she said.

Full-page advertisements by Catholic unions appear proclaiming, "The Lord does not forget his people in prison" (Ps. 69:33) and "We are very alarmed about the continued violation of human rights in South Africa."

In the paper's Letters to the Editor section, poems by 16-year-old children convey the anguish of living under apartheid: "Weep not for those who are shot; Mourn not for those who are dying; Their blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruit of liberty."

When South African President P.W. Botha met with the bishops last fall, Sister Smit said, he wanted only to discuss the success of the paper. "He said, 'Lies, lies, lies, that's all that's published in your paper.' But we know, and the people know, that it's the truth," she added.

Last February, an issue of *New Nation* was banned by the South African government when a front-page story began: "A babe in arms became the latest victim of the state of emergency when it landed in jail days after being born to a detainee in Leratong Hospital."

Sister Smit estimated that more than 1,400 children were being detained in prison by the government as of April 1987.

"If one more issue (of *New Nation*) is banned by the government," she said, "it could mean the end of the paper. It's a wonder it's gone on as long as it has."

At a few whites-only churches across the country, boxes selling *New Nation* were removed when parishioners complained that they did not want to see "political publications" sold outside their churches.

Anti-apartheid coalition does 'God's work' bishops say

Pretoria, South Africa (NC) — The southern African bishops told an anti-apartheid coalition of South African labor unions that the unions are doing "God's work" when they push for justice.

In their message to the second national meeting of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the bishops also praised the labor groups for improving the living standard of many black workers and urged union leaders to focus now on the country's still unorganized domestic workers.

The prelates said the Catholic Church has traditionally promoted the rights of workers and trade unions.

"To the extent that you seek justice, you are involved in God's work," the bishops

said, noting that the July 14-17 agenda of the congress addresses issues of justice.

"We have observed your efforts toward making people conscious of the need to be justly remunerated for their work," they said in their message. "We urge you to give serious consideration to the plight of the domestic workers."

The labor congress represents 36 trade unions with more than 500,000 members in such important economic sectors as mining and auto manufacturing. It was formed in 1985.

The organization's first president, Elijah Baray, endorsed foreign economic sanctions to force changes in South Africa's racial policies — breaking the law by doing so —

Sandinistas blame contras, Reagan for land-mine death of Franciscan

Managua, Nicaragua (NC) — A Salvadoran Franciscan brother and a Nicaraguan parish worker died after the vehicle in which they were riding was blown up July 3 by a land mine on a rural Nicaraguan road.

The incident, in which two other persons were injured, rekindled an argument between the Nicaraguan Church and the Sandinista government, regarding the activities of U.S.-financed counterrevolutionaries, or contras. The government has accused the contras of planting the mine and challenged the Church hierarchy to condemn the rebels. Church officials replied that it was uncertain who was to blame for the bombing and made a thinly veiled criticism of the Sandinistas' unwillingness to negotiate a peace with the contras.

The deaths are also likely to prompt U.S. Franciscans to take action against U.S. contra aid, an official of the North American Franciscan justice and peace council said.

According to news reports, Brother Tomas Augustin Zavaleta, who was working on an Oxfam-sponsored food production project with 1,200 campesinos in Matiguas in the northern department of Matagalpa, was killed instantly by the explosion.

Nicaraguan Church sources said Brother Zavaleta was part of the so-called "popular

church" — church members who see no contradiction between Marxism and Christianity. He also served for four years in the early 1980s as personal aide to Franciscan Superior General Father John Vaughn.

A second victim, parish secretary Imperatriz Martinez, died early July 5 in a Managua hospital as a result of wounds suffered in the explosion, according to a Nicaraguan committee of basic Christian communities.

Riding in the vehicle with Brother Zavaleta and Martinez, and injured in the explosion, were Digna Martinez, the dead woman's sister-in-law (who suffered facial injuries) and Father Ignacio Urbina, a Nicaraguan Franciscan and pastor of San Jose Parish where the food project is centered. The priest reportedly suffered a fractured vertebrae. Both are hospitalized and listed in serious condition.

The Nicaraguan government quoted Father Urbina as blaming the contras for the attack. "This was a planned attack," he is said to have stated, adding that he and his companions had crossed the point where the land mine was placed "scarcely two hours before, and when we came back the explosives were in place."

In May, one of the chief coordinators of the food production project, Tomas

and threatened a civil disobedience campaign against now-abolished "pass laws" requiring South Africans to carry identity cards.

"We are encouraged by COSATU's commitment to a democratic, non-racial South Africa," the bishops said. "We are conscious of the exploitation suffered by many workers in South Africa."

Because they are essential to the "production of wealth," laborers are "entitled to a just remuneration and a share in the benefits that come from that wealth," the bishops said.

They noted that the economic status of many South African Catholic workers has been improved "because of the efforts of COSATU."



New Nation newspaper, published by the southern African bishops' conference, is the country's most widely read and controversial publication. Despite periodic government censorship, issues somehow find their way even to remote villages.