

World & Nation

Amid millennium gala,
**Vatican officials laud reforms;
 cardinal critical of 'blackmail'**

Moscow (NC) — Vatican officials participating in celebrations of the millennium of Christianity in what is now the Soviet Union praised the country's reforms and expressed hope for the future of religion in the country.

But Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, said the Soviet government used the millennium ceremonies to create an illusion of religious liberty under the communist government. He also accused a Russian Orthodox Church leader of ecumenical "blackmail" on the issue of the legalizing the Ukrainian Church.

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Vatican secretary of state, headed the Vatican delegation to the millennium ceremonies, which began June 5 and were to last more than 10 days. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, head of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, also attended.

Cardinal Casaroli, the No. 2 man at the Vatican and the highest-ranking Vatican official to visit the Soviet Union, told government leaders that Christianity is an "uncontestable reality" of human history and must be a factor in planning for the future.

"The realism of men of state makes it a necessity. And respect for man demands it," the cardinal said in a June 10 speech at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. Raisa Gorbachev, wife of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, was present for the speech.

Cardinal Casaroli praised Gorbachev's reform policies and expressed hope that they would lead to greater religious freedom.

The Vatican official noted the improved relations between the government and the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest in the nation, and asked that this "new breath" be extended to Catholics and religion in general.

The Vatican official praised an April speech by Gorbachev in which the Soviet

leader said a new law on freedom of conscience and organized religions was planned.

Cardinal Casaroli met with Gorbachev at the Kremlin June 13 to discuss church-state relations, but both ruled out the possibility of an imminent papal visit to the Soviet Union.

After the hour-long meeting, Cardinal Casaroli said its main achievement had been to establish a dialogue and that it was too early to speak of setting up diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Soviet Union.

Before the meeting, journalists asked Gorbachev when he intended to invite the pope to Moscow, and the Soviet leader said: "Many things have yet to happen."

During a June 11 meeting with religious officials, Cardinal Casaroli asked Soviet President Andrei Gromyko if the government planned to ask religious communities for "observations, proposals and objections" to the planned Soviet religious liberty law.

Gromyko answered that religious communities "will be informed and, as is logical, listened to at every stage of the preparation of the law."

Cardinal Willebrands, alluding to the Ukrainian Catholic Church, asked about the status of Catholics outside the Baltic Soviet republics where the Catholic Church is legally recognized.

The Latin-rite Catholic Church is legal in the Soviet Union, but the Ukrainian Catholic Church, an Eastern-rite church, is illegal. It continues to exist clandestinely with about 4 million members.

"There is no intention to limit the rights of Catholics in our country," Gromyko told the religious leaders. "But there are concrete problems which should be faced with local authorities. In the near future we will answer



UPI-Reuters/NC News
 During a commemoration of the millennium of Christianity in what is now the Soviet Union, Patriarch Pimen (left), the spiritual leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, reads a message to Christian leaders from around the world.

this question, and the region where the Catholics are located will not make any difference."

As millennium celebrations began June 4, Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev announced that talks regarding the status of the Ukrainian Catholic Church would be conducted June 19-26 in Finland. The talks were to be conducted within the framework of an official theological dialogue between representatives of 14 Orthodox churches and the Christian unity secretariat.

But Metropolitan Filaret coupled his an-

nouncement with a warning to Vatican officials not to be too "aggressive" about legalizing the Ukrainian Church.

"Restoration of the church will mean a deterioration of brotherly ecumenical relations," he said.

The Soviet government would have the final voice in determining whether the Ukrainian Church should be legal. It has been illegal in the Soviet Union since 1946, when it was ordered dissolved and its members told to join the Russian Orthodox Church.

But in Rome, Cardinal Lubachivsky criticized the metropolitan's remarks.

"I think that all blackmail should cease in the ecumenical dialogue," Cardinal Lubachivsky said.

The cardinal accused the Soviet government of using the millennium ceremonies to give the appearance that religious liberty exists in the communist-ruled country.

In reality, Ukrainian Catholics live "clandestinely and in fear," he said. The cardinal, a U.S. citizen, lives in Rome, where the Ukrainian Church has its headquarters.

Capsules

Nuns claim victory

Washington (NC) — During a June 9 press conference, Notre Dame de Namur Sisters Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey claimed victory for dissent in the Church, following their religious order's decision to suspend the process for dismissing them as a result of their statements on abortion.

"We accept this victory for all women and men who have had to struggle with freedom of speech and freedom of conscience within the Roman Catholic Church," they said in a joint statement at a press conference in Washington.

The nuns had been ordered to consult with their provincial superiors before making public statements on abortion. When they refused, the order's top superiors began dismissal process against them, issued two written warnings, but then halted the process.

Sister Catherine Hughes, head of the order, explained June 7 that "to dismiss two angry people was not the best way of dealing with the situation."

"We felt we wanted to wait until the climate was different and we could dialogue in a reasonable and Christian way," Sister Hughes said.

Convoy to Nicaragua halted

Laredo, Texas (NC) — A 37-vehicle "peace convoy," co-sponsored by a Maryland-based church organization and headed for Nicaragua, was halted at the U.S. border over a dispute with federal officials who said the trucks could be considered military aid.

The convoy — including 106 people and about 30 tons of food, clothing and medicine to be delivered to Nicaragua — was stopped at about 9 p.m. June 7. As of June 9 the trucks were still parked at a campground in Laredo, according to a group spokeswoman.

U.S. Customs and Treasury Department officials advised convoy participants that the food, clothing and medical supplies would be allowed to be taken into Nicaragua, but the vehicles they planned to leave in the Central American nation would violate a U.S. trade embargo against Nicaragua.

Officials can't be prosecuted

Rome (NC) — A ruling by Italy's Constitutional Court confirmed that officials of the Vatican bank are immune from prosecution for their alleged role in Italy's largest banking scandal.

The ruling, officially announced June 8, apparently closed the door on further legal action against the bank's president, U.S. Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, and two lay officials of the bank.

Another peace plan?

Mexico City (NC) — Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez of San Salvador said the Catholic Church in El Salvador will soon unveil a new plan for peace in that Central American country, hoping to place the pressure of Salvadoran public opinion on the government and leftist guerrillas for an end to the country's 8-year-old civil war.

Bishop Rosa Chavez also said June 8 that President Jose Napoleon Duarte's absence from El Salvador — for cancer treatments in Washington — could calm the passions of Salvadoran political debate and pave the way for the country's politicians to put forth more serious propositions on how to end the conflict there.

Religious need \$2.9 billion

Washington (NC) — U.S. religious orders will need at least \$2.9 billion more than they have in order to take care of their members' retirement needs, according to a national accounting firm's analysis of a survey conducted by the Tri-Conference Retirement Project.

A similar survey done in 1985 put the minimum unfunded liability at \$2.5 billion. The new analysis, conducted by Arthur Anderson and Co., was released in May by the retirement project's national offices in Washington.

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