

# Crackdown evokes fear, papal prayer

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II prayed for the young victims of China's political crackdown and appealed to the country's leaders to respect "truth, justice and freedom."

The pope, in his strongest comments to date on the bloody suppression of student demonstrations in the Chinese capital of Beijing, said he hoped that "those who are sad may find comfort" and that "so much suffering will not remain fruitless."

The pope made the remarks during his weekly Sunday blessing from his apartment window above St. Peter's Square June 17. In early June, hundreds of people were believed killed when troops moved against demonstrators in the Chinese capital.

The pope said he had been "profoundly struck by the news and by the images of what was happening in China and, in particular, by the deaths of so many young people."

In these "most sad and tragic moments," the pope said, he wanted to join the "lament of those who suffer, victims of the violence." He said he shared in "the requests of those who hunger and thirst for justice."

The pope prayed that "those who guide the destiny of this great nation will not lack the necessary wisdom in seeking the common good, which is based on respect for truth, justice and freedom."

The pope framed his remarks in the form of a prayer to Mary, Mother of China and Queen of Peace, as she is honored in the Sheshan shrine near Shanghai, China. He entrusted the "beloved Chinese people" to her protection.

The same day, the Vatican newspaper said the world's "horror and grief" over the massacre of young protesters in China is continuing as the country enters the "sad phase of repression."

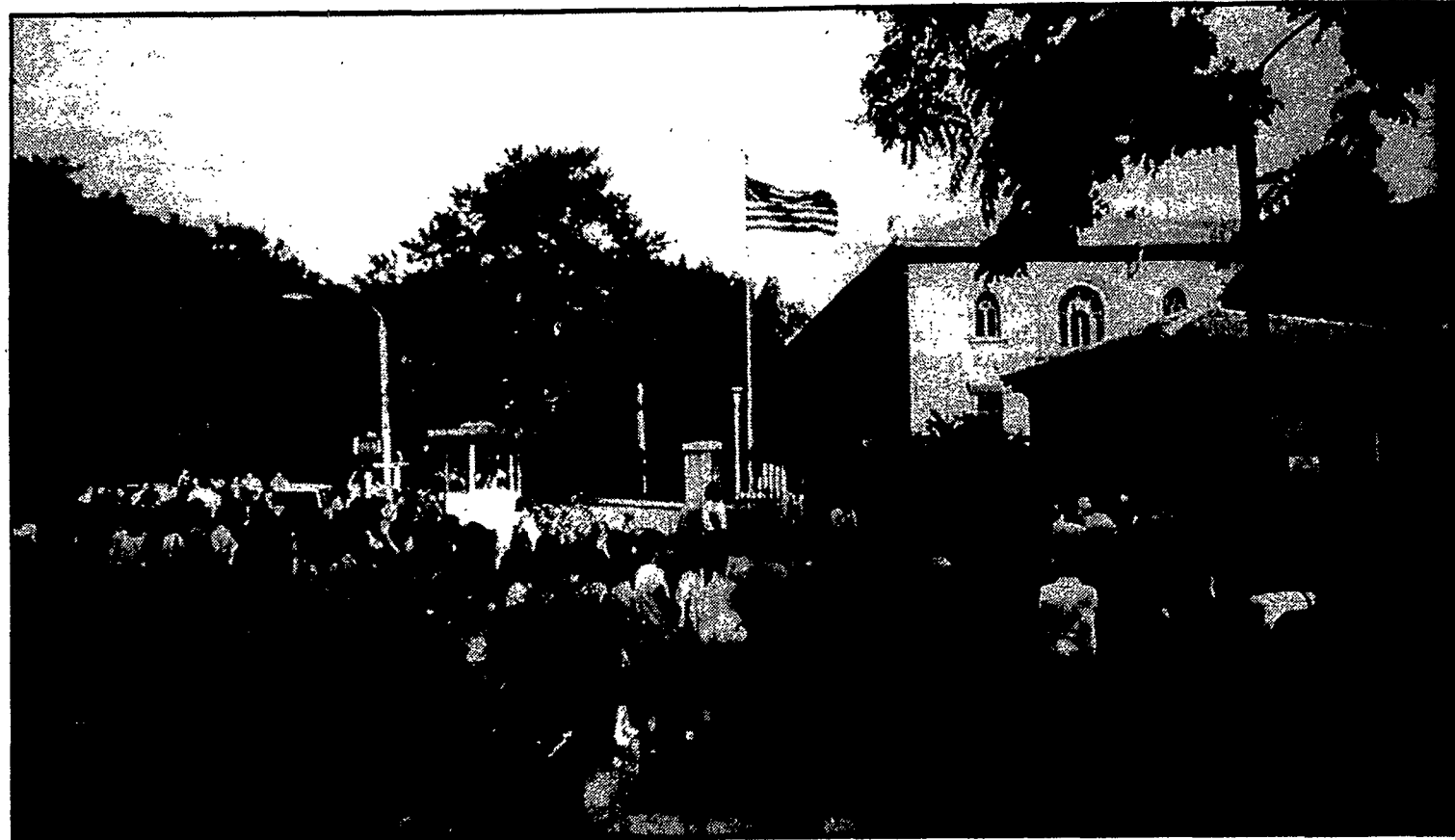
In a front-page editorial the newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said the events in China were linked to a worldwide "crisis of communism" and the collapse of its ideology.

"The horror at the massacre, the grief for the young victims, seriously harms the hopes for the future — not only for the 1 billion Chinese but for the other billions who make up the human caravan," the article said.

"Those Chinese youths who were killed, the students crushed by armored tanks and their uniformed contemporaries burned on the pyre of collective anger are all victims and witnesses — one could call them martyrs — of a terrible injustice," it said.

The outside sympathy and interest in the events "cannot and should not abate as the days pass," the article said.

The current wave of repression in China, it said, illustrates the "grave and dramatic fracture produced by the recourse to the



Some 300 Chinese citizens line up at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to apply for exit visas Thursday morning, June 15. It is the second day since the violence that the visa section has opened. AP Wide World Photo

violence of weapons and ideology."

In Washington, meanwhile, Father John B. Tsang, a Caritas official based in Hong Kong, said the crackdown on China's pro-democracy movement could accelerate the "brain drain" from Hong Kong as well as create more problems for the Vietnamese refugees living in the crowded British colony.

"About 45,000 people per year leave Hong Kong because they are worried about China taking over," said Father Tsang, vice president of Caritas Hong Kong, said. A Britain-China agreement returns Hong Kong to Chinese control in 1997.

"This affects Hong Kong as a whole because these people are the cream of the crop," he said.

Father Tsang, who was in Washington for a personal visit, was interviewed June 14 by Catholic News Service. His organization helps refugees settle in Hong Kong while they await asylum proceedings and helps natives leaving Hong Kong prepare for their new destinations.

"The future of Hong Kong depends very much on the present and future of China," Father Tsang said. "We were very happy when the democracy movement started. We are very concerned now with what is happening in China."

He said it is a tough choice for Hong Kong natives who feel they must leave.

"It's not an easy decision for them, but I think the Catholic Church respects their decision. We are talking about a brain drain, but what can we do? We cannot force them to stay."

Among the proposals to help the emigrants is to provide information on the country they are going to as well as information on the church they will settle near. The plan includes setting up contacts in the countries they have chosen to ease language and settlement difficulties.

Father Tsang said the colony's reversion

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A Vietnamese woman cooks a meal Thursday, June 15, while squatting in her cubicle at a camp for Vietnamese boat people. About 43,000 Vietnamese boat people have taken refuge in Hong Kong. AP Wide World Photo

# Pope tells bankers: Debtors' needs 'more urgent' than depositors'

By Greg Erlandson  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II told a visiting group of U.S. bankers that international debt poses a "serious threat" to peace.

The pope also told them that the decisions of bankers would play an important role in shaping the world's future.

The pope made his comments during a June 19 audience with the administrative council of Chase Manhattan Bank, a U.S.-based multinational banking company.

The pope told the bankers that despite

"positive signs" of prosperity, economic prospects for many people continue to be hampered.

"I am thinking in particular of the international debt question, which remains a serious threat to the peace and progress of the human family," he said.

Some feel that contemporary world problems are "so vast and impersonal as to be beyond effective control," Pope John Paul said.

"But it is my conviction that the attitudes and decisions of leaders like yourselves do make a profound difference for good or ill

in shaping the future of humanity," he told the bankers.

The pope told them they have been "richly blessed" and said he hoped they shared his concern for the "plight of those who are poor, and that you will not fail to be compassionate as well as responsible stewards of the material goods entrusted to you."

The problem of huge loans Third World countries are struggling to repay to Western banks and governments is a major concern of the pope and the Vatican.

In 1987 the Pontifical Council for Justice

and Peace released a document examining the ethical aspects of the debt problem. The document described countries driven to the "very brink of bankruptcy" and called for bold new solutions to the debt problem.

The Vatican document suggested lowering interest rates, extending loan repayments over longer periods and an end to protectionist trade measures.

Commercial banks lending money to Third World countries should remember that the needs of those debtors "are often more urgent" than those of the banks' depositors, the document said.

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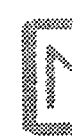
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