

A couple passes the burned and damaged Yugoslav Parliament building in Belgrade Oct. 8, the first full day new Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica spent in office.

Caritas urges aid for Yugoslavia

WARSAW, Poland (CNS)—The head of Caritas Yugoslavia, the country's largest Catholic charity, expressed hope that the new government will support efforts for humanitarian aid to ease the "very poor conditions" faced by most of the population.

Meanwhile, the superior of Yugoslavia's Jesuit order cautioned against "vengeful attitudes" in light of current suffering and urged Western governments to link wider economic assistance to real changes.

The Caritas director, Jesuit Father Antun Pecar, said, "Everything is desperately needed here, from food to medicines.

"We count on the new government to offer positive humane cooperation and help us in our efforts to meet the most basic needs," he said in an interview Oct. 5.

The Croatian-born priest was speaking as Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica

continued to consolidate control following his Sept. 24 election victory. Kostunica, a 56-year-old constitutional lawyer, took the oath of office in Belgrade Oct. 7.

Yugoslavia's Constitutional Tribunal recognized his victory Oct. 6 after a day of riots and protests by 2 million people in the streets of Belgrade.

Father Pecar said up to 70 percent of Yugoslavia's 10 million citizens were living in "very poor conditions," while the whole country lacked basic commodities, including oil, sugar and milk.

The priest added that most Yugoslavs had "suffered enough already" and expected immediate improvements under a new head of state.

"For most of the population, the only hope has been to survive day to day," Father Pecar said.

"The new president's first priority must be to reorganize the national economy, setting up projects that will enable people to find work and live normal lives again," he said.

Economic sanctions against Yugoslavia were imposed after NATO's 1999 bombing campaign to stop Serb army and police repression of majority ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo have just been lifted.

In a separate Oct. 7 interview, the superior of Yugoslavia's Jesuit order, Father Laurant Kilbertus, said he believed the country was witnessing "the end of exaggerated nationalism and the beginning of real democracy."

However, he cautioned that attempts to punish former President Slobodan Milosevic and other former regime officials would "achieve nothing."



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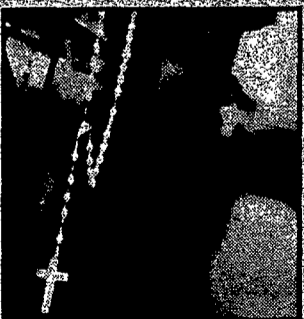
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New partnership will help refugees



Sadia Shinwari prepares traditional Afghani food for her family in their home in Rochester Oct. 8. Sadia and her husband, Mohammad Shinwari, along with their five children, parents and stepbrothers moved from Pakistan six months ago. Rochester.

Since 1975 the refugee resettlement program at Catholic Family Center has served as a clearinghouse for hundreds of refugees annually. (A related story on Page 12 profiles one refugee family.)

Those numbers are about to grow, due to CFC's landmark partnership with the sponsor of another Rochester-area refugee program that closed earlier this year.

With a target date of January 2001, Catholic Family Center plans to absorb many components of the Refugee Resettlement Services Project (RRSP). That program was closed in March by its local ecumenical governing body, the Greater Rochester Community of Churches.

According to Catholic Family Center's Jim Delaney, the combined ministry will take effect pending approval from the U.S. Department of State.

"I've not heard anything to suggest there would be a problem," said Delaney, program manager for CFC's refugee resettlement program.

Officials involved in the new affiliation say this is a historic development. It marks the first time that two national organizations, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) and Church World Services (CWS), have partnered for a refugee resettlement ministry.

The USCC is Catholic Family Center's national affiliate for refugee resettlement. CWS, a Protestant organization with 10 participating denominations, had been one of two national bodies connected with the former Refugee Resettlement Services Project in Rochester.

The Rev. Joseph Roberson, associate director of CWS' Immigration and Refugee Program, said this will be the first "joint affiliate site," as he termed it, between CWS and USCC for refugee services.

"We are looking forward to this new venture with a great deal of hope and excitement," Rev. Roberson commented. "This brings together many in the Rochester faith community who are committed to the resettlement of refugees."

"We view this 'partnership in ministry' as an extraordinary trailblazing challenge and opportunity," Delaney added. "It will certainly be the first serious attempt to forge such an extensive ecumenical refugee resettlement effort at the local level."

The agreement between Catholic Family Center and Church World Services was struck in July. Delaney said that when CWS resumes funneling refugees to the Rochester area, its operation will be housed at Catholic Family Center and handled by CFC staff. The staff will work with churches, resettlement teams and other volunteers to help provide a smooth transition for refugees.

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STORY BY MIKE LATONA—PHOTOS BY JOHN POWELL