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Latin America Report

MEXICO: EPISCOPAL GATHERINGS,
STATEMENTS REFLECT DIVERGENCIES

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16 May 1985

LATIN AMERICA REPORT

MEXICO: EPISCOPAL GATHERINGS,
STATEMENTS REFLECT DIVERGENCIES

CONTENTS

MEXICO

Foreign Bishops Attend Assembly Honoring Southern Bishop (EXCELSIOR, various dates; PROCESO, No 439, 29 Jan 85)....	1
Salvadoran Archbishop's Planned Attendance, by Miguel Gonzalez	1
Ruiz: Absence of Democracy, by Juan Gerardo Reyes	2
Indian Narcotics Cultivation Analyzed, by Juan Gerardo Reyes	4
Remarks of Mandez Arceo	5
Brazilian Bishops on Hunger, J. Gerardo Reyes	6
Meeting With Guatemalan Refugees, by J. Gerardo Reyes	7
Lona Faults Pastoral Efforts	8
Papal Trip Ties Denied	9
Ruiz Honored	10
Las Casas Invoked, by Juan Gerardo Reyes	12
Document on Refugees, Ruiz, by Juan Gerardo Reyes	13
Guatemalan Clerical Testimony, by J. Gerardo Reyes	14
Proceedings, Ruiz' Career Characterized	16
Northern High Churchmen Comment on Papal Anticommunism (EXCELSIOR, 26 Jan 85).....	22
Planned Episcopal Talks on Liberation Theology Canceled (EXCELSIOR, 28, 29 Jan 85).....	24
Charge of Communism Rejected, by Victor Payan, Felipe Sanchez	24
Differing Bishops Speak Out, by Victor Payan	25

Tehuantepec Bishop Attacked for Alleged Political Activities (EXCELSIOR, 26 Jan 85; PROCESO, No 433, 18 Feb 85).....	27
Backing of Archdiocese	27
Support From Priests, Religious, by Carlos Fazio	28
Chiapas, Foreign Sects Treated at Plenary Episcopal Assembly (Juan Gerardo R., Eduardo Chimely; EXCELSIOR, 29-31 Jan. 85)..	29
Warning on Chiapas	29
Sects, Social Unrest Associated	30
President's Foreign Policy Backed	32
Sects, Poverty Taken Up	34
Church Juridical Status Discussed	35
Concerns Over Growing Poverty	37
Lona on PRI Detractors	38
Bishops Lona, Ruiz Reiterate Drug Conspiracy Charges (Victor Payan; EXCELSIOR, 16 Feb 85).....	40

FOREIGN BISHOPS ATTEND ASSEMBLY HONORING SOUTHERN BISHOP

Salvadoran Archbishop's Planned Attendance

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 15 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 33-A

[Article by Miguel Gonzalez]

[Text] San Cristobal de las Casas, Chis., 14 Jan--Bishops from Brazil, Guatemala, Bolivia and other countries, including Salvadoran Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, have confirmed that they will attend the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the consecration of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia, to be held on 25 January. The bishops will also visit the border with Guatemala and have an opportunity to talk with Guatemalan refugees.

This announcement was made by Ruiz Garcia, who emphasized the participation in a magnificent Eucharistic celebration for the retired bishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Mendez Arceo. On 29 January, the ecclesiastical dignataries will also preside over the commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the founding of the archdiocese of Oaxaca, one of the first bastions of Christianity in America.

The meeting will constitute a kind of conclave of Catholic leaders from the continent and will certainly provide an opportunity to analyze problems facing the religious profession in America, as well as existing social conditions. "Here we shall see the similarity of problems in the area with those of the different dioceses on the continent. We shall exchange experiences, propose solutions and plan further joint activities," Ruiz explained.

Integral Evangelization

The archbishop of Hermosillo, Carlos Quintero Arce, announced today a diocesan pastoral plan in which it will be stated that "the family, young people, workers and peasants are the priorities that the Church has set for 1985."

He continued: "The Church will take integral evangelization to the weakest groups. It will mainly work with peasants and workers, to whom it will provide the knowledge needed to protect and sustain their rights and the elevation of human dignity. These are the elements with which we shall fight their occasional manipulation by trade union leaders," he said.

"There are many complaints of corruption of leaders who serve their own interests," Quintero Arce said, "forgetting to help the workers. We know of other things that are also clear: The workers and peasants have suffered and we want to help them so that they may develop their own rights and duties, so that above all, they may experience the elevation of their human and Christian dignity and find the way to build true societies."

Thanks to the plan, priests of the diocese must become "fully informed" about labor laws "because we know that the workers are Christians and that there are things we must see as they are, such as trade union disputes and other related matters."

Ruiz: Absence of Democracy

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 23 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 30-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de las Casas, Chis., 22 Jan--In Mexico, Indian rights do not exist. Indians are nothing more than part of the folklore. They live outside the human context, in a culture that excludes them. They have neither names nor identities, says Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia, who maintains that in our country, the problem is that there is no democracy.

In speaking about the problem of the Guatemalan refugees, he notes: "If we do not continue with their relocation, there will be serious problems that will be used by internal sectors seeking a change in the country's overall social structure."

Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas since 14 November 1959, when entrusted with the post by Pope John 23, Samuel Ruiz Garcia discovered in the town an Indian world that surprised him, not only because of the number of faithful who would be under his responsibility, but also, because of their historical backwardness.

In an interview with EXCELSIOR, Ruiz went back in time 25 years, commenting that it seemed to him that the Chiapas Indian communities had simply stood still in time. He was struck by their exclusion from society and even more, "that mysterious personality hidden beneath different languages, customs and the very color of their dress."

Ruiz was born in Irapuato on 3 November 1924 and was ordained on 2 April 1949. However, without any doubt, his contact with the Indian groups and the problem of the Guatemalan refugees occupy a special place in his life.

His years can be seen in his thinning hair. His dress is modest, in keeping with the way he deals with each and every one of the persons who come to greet him. He responds to them in the proper dialect. Five languages or dialects are spoken in the diocese.

Our conversation took place outside, in the streets of this colonial city of San Cristobal de las Casas, on a freezing afternoon.

For Ruiz, the Indians are viewed more as part of the folklore. It would seem that they do not have the right to live as persons, in a country that today suffers economic, political and social problems, all of which have a definite impact on the needier classes.

The bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas says that the Indians live outside of the social context, in a culture that excludes them and that gives them no name or identity. We speak of John, Peter and Mary, but we never give them the human quality they have.

There is aggression toward them, he continued. Some 80 percent of the Indian population in this diocese speak in five different languages and there is a total of 300,000 inhabitants, all victims, he emphasized. We are not seeking a process of modernization, he said, but rather, of egalitarian solutions.

Not Ashamed

Among the problems faced in 25 years of episcopal work is that of the adaptation of Indian culture to Western culture. The Catholic religion is Eastern in origin, he said, and had to be adapted to the circumstances of the Western culture. We are also now facing the different characteristics of Indian culture, he said.

Along another line of ideas, Ruiz explained that in the area of the Southern Pacific, Indians are acquiring a different awareness of their historical role.

He warned that Indians are no longer ashamed of their race or language. There is a close tie between the Church, viewed as the community of citizens, and the political parties, seeking respect for dignity.

On the coming 25 January, Monsignor Ruiz will celebrate his silver anniversary as head of the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, for which motive hundreds of priests and clerics have gathered together from all over the country and bishops are expected from Mexico and Central America.

Among the activities that have most motivated Ruiz is the problem of the Guatemalan refugees, for whom he asks an attitude of respect. To date, they have been forced to move to Campeche and Quintana Roo.

He agreed that the relocation has enabled them to receive better medical care, food and health attention, but he stated that the Mexican policy of aiding the refugees has not changed in the slightest degree. He warned that if the relocation of the refugees does not continue, there will be serious problems that will certainly be exploited by internal sectors seeking a change in the very social structure of the country.

The Church did not invent the refugees, he said. They arrived here, becoming a community in urgent need of pastoral help, thus justifying the work which the Church does in this part of the country.

After noting that another negative point in the attitude of the Mexican Government is that it does not see the problem in its proper dimensions, forgetting

that the refugees are human beings with serious psychological problems of fear. Ruiz said that because of political issues, "the government" often does not tell the truth about what is happening, meaning that the Church becomes the spokesman reporting events. But this in no way turns it into the opposition. Ruiz said that "the Church will support refugees in whatever decision they make, whether it is to return to their country, remain in Chiapas or go to Campeche and Quintana Roo. In all three cases, the Church will provide information enabling them to make a judgment. In no way shall we lead any movement."

Finally, Ruiz said that the Gospel must be universal and be spread starting with the lower classes, for if it should be disseminated from the ruling classes, one runs the risk that the Word of God might not reach all human beings. The driving force for a new world must come from the poor, which fact has been sociologically proven. The powerful do not move if the deprived do not push them, he noted.

Indian Narcotics Cultivation Analyzed

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 24 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 27-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de las Cases, Chis., 23 Jan--The failure to achieve effective application of the Agrarian Law and of adequate financing for suitable marketing of products has caused Indians to plant marihuana and poppies on their land in place of the traditional crops, a practice that at the same time gives them more income.

In addition to the threat represented by the planting of narcotics in Chiapas, there is now a danger that Mexican Petroleum might work oil deposits in the area, a situation that would cause many natural resources to disappear, with the resulting impact on thousands of Indians.

These concerns were expressed by the bishops of the region of the Southern Pacific, who are attending the Annual Plenary Assembly of the Diocese of San Cristobal, for which meeting many Mexican, Brazilian and Colombian clerics have gathered together.

According to the bishops, peasants have stopped growing food, planting drugs instead. As a result, thousands of Indians are starving to death.

The problem of the narcotics could lead us to social disaster, they say, for which reason the bishops are issuing a warning that the problem must be taken care of and solved, thus avoiding repression. The latter solves nothing, but it does drown the peasants in violence.

Since 1977, the problem has been appearing on the horizon and in 1982, it was pointed out as a fact with grave consequences. There was some interest on the part of the state government in talking with the bishops about the matter, but nothing has been done so far.

In another part of their report, the bishops, asking that the problem be dealt with by the community and not privately, state that there is a perfectly organized network for overseeing the cultivation and transport of the plant, which mainly comes from the area of Palenque.

The peasants are deceived by showing them the "advantages of the business" because of the earnings from a sure market.

The bishops also noted the excess of weapons used by private guards in the region, where drug consumption has also risen.

The reasons that have motivated peasants to get involved in drug trafficking have to do with the existence of complicity between high officials and the mafia and, in addition, inadequate government support for rural areas, which forces peasants to emigrate. Those who remain behind see marihuana and poppies as their only salvation. In the final analysis, it is extreme poverty that causes these persons into the drug business.

The image of Mexico will be affected if we continue to accommodate drug traffickers, the bishops say, continuing that it is necessary to guarantee the peaceful ownership of land in the poorer communities, along with technical and financial help.

In Chiapas, production of narcotics has become widespread, mainly in the region near Chilon, Ocosingo and the Lacandon jungle.

The Church has asked the army's help in controlling drug trafficking, but it asked that the peasants not be punished. Rather, the leaders of the ring should be eliminated.

Finally, the bishops noted that living conditions in the region grow increasingly difficult because of the lack of food and the exploitation of the peasants, who are subjected to "company store" practices and who receive starvation wages totaling \$1.50 for a full day's work in 1971.

Remarks of Mendez Arceo

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 24 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 33-A

[Text] San Cristobal de las Casas, Chis., 23 Jan--"I am now concerned with the problems of liberating Latin American peoples," said Sergio Mendez Arceo, retired bishop of Cuernavaca, who also believes that in Chiapas, the movement of the Indians in search of freedom is more important than speaking about socialism.

Monsignor Mendez Arceo is in this city to attend the Annual Plenary Assembly of the diocese, which also coincides with the silver anniversary of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz as bishop.

When interviewed, he declined to speak of matters not connected with the existing situation in Chiapas. "Let us rather speak of what it means for a people to organize to achieve its freedom, which was taken away by its brothers," he emphasized, referring to the uprooting of natives from their homes.

He then explained the significance which leaving the diocese of Cuernavaca meant for him: "I had completed my mission. My diocese and I had prepared for that time. We did so for 2 years so that the new bishop might be properly received and fit into the diocesan activities. I am now seeking a way to work as a good unemployed person!"

What will he now do? "I am now concerned with the problems of liberating Latin American peoples. I am especially studying the case of Guatemalan refugees, which concerns Mexico directly."

He was then asked about his disagreements with Monsignor Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, a matter on which he declined to comment, asking the media to question the archbishop of Mexico.

The prelate added that he had visited Nicaragua, a country that has shown the way to a democratic opening, which means great progress. but also a great risk. He said that this is one example to follow since after emerging from a bloody struggle to be free from oppression, that nation was seeking its integration into the Central American regional system.

Concerning the international context, he said that in Latin America, there are differences, not division, but that in Nicaragua, the differences are deeper.

He repeated, as he noted a month and a half after returning from Nicaragua, that the "world became divided when Christ announced that he was bringing peace not war and when some chose the word of God, while others disobeyed."

Concerning the convergence of ideas of the Vatican and the Reagan Administration, as published in a daily newspaper in the capital, he declined to comment, explaining that he had recently pointed out the "convergency between the Vatican and the United States, but in the sense that both Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan are working against Marxism."

Finally, in an irritated tone, he denied having made statements in Tuxtla Gutierrez and asked that his interviewers give suitable and responsible treatment of information.

Brazilian Bishops on Hunger

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 24 Jan 85 p 27-A

[Article by J. Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal las Casas, Chis.. 23 Jan--The seven bishops of Brazil, who are attending the 25th anniversary of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz' consecration, have stated that 50 percent of that country's population suffers from hunger, but they added that the dictatorship had done them many favors, inasmuch as the human masses, repressed and with their organizations destroyed, had found in the Church a good space to work.

Monsignor Luis Fernandez said that the Brazilian people have great hope with the transition from a dictatorship to a civilian government and that they anticipate positive changes and the formation of a legislative body to change the constitution inherited from the dictatorship.

Fernandez said that the Church's fight is a fight committed to Indian groups and the most deprived population groups.

The national population is very happy over the democratic change that has taken place, he said, and has placed all its hope in substantial changes.

The Church is also happy, although not deceived. The change to democracy cannot transform overnight circumstances that have long prevailed.

It is a time of national openness, said Fernandez, when there is also a great "hunger" for democracy.

He said that it is necessary to have a radical change in ways of life. He also noted that the foreign debt is paid with money, not the hunger of the people.

In addition, he announced that the Brazilian Catholic Church will study in depth the theology of liberation, which has developed extensively in his country.

For his part, Candido Padin said that the change occurring in Brazil is important and that there is already work on a new constitution.

Now the people can elect their own leaders, Padin said, recalling that the military oppression has developed since 1964.

He added that the Church has the will to cooperate on all aspects of social benefit, housing and medical services.

The role of the Church will be one in which Brazilians are aware of the protection of their citizens' rights, he concluded.

Meeting With Guatemalan Refugees

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 25 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 28-A

[Article by J. Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] Huehuetenango, Chis., 24 Jan--A caravan of bishops, made up of prelates from Brazil, Bolivia and Mexico and headed by Monsignor Samuel Ruiz, bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, has arrived at the Guatemalan refugee camp. For 2 years, refugees have resisted relocation to the states of Quintana Roo and Campeche, even though they are living in subhuman conditions and have been denied food by the UNHCR and COMAR [Mexican Commission on Refugee Assistance].

"We still have hope of returning home. We do not want to move away from Guatemala. That is where our loved ones are buried, that is where the rest of our families are, part of our lives," refugees resisting the move said.

After a two-hour trip by car, the caravan arrived at La Gloria Camp, in San cos [as published]. Once there, Ruiz explained to his guests that 2 years ago, 300 soldiers of the Guatemalan Government violated the national territory and killed six Guatemalans who had fled from their homes. In a hut made of wood and cardboard boxes, he gave a brief press conference in order to explain that the attitude of the Church is to be with these peasants who want to return to Guatemala.

These are the first refugees who settled in Chiapas territory, Ruiz Garcia said, at Chupadero Camp. Then, following the attack, they moved further into Mexican territory.

Despite the efforts of the UNHCR, they have refused under any circumstances to be moved to Campeche or Quintana Roo, fearing that they might be sent back to Guatemala where, for them, the spectre of death still looms overhead.

At the present time, the 3,000 refugees are living in tiny huts built out of pampas grass and cardboard boxes, with little access to food. The Secretariat of Government is keeping close watch over them and has issued identity cards for strict control of entry and exit in and out of the territory.

In the beating sun, the Brazilian bishops extended to their Guatemalan "brothers" their love and respect for solidarity, since "in our country there are also many social groups that suffer from hunger and repression."

It was explained that the 389 hectares now occupied in this territory of San Caralampio, in the municipality of La Trinitaria, was bought by private parties and the diocese of San Cristobal so that they might settle there. The refugees are now growing 100 hectares of corn and have some animals to help them survive.

They announced that through the diocese, they will soon obtain a loan from state banks for the purchase of 400 head of cattle, which will help provide better food for the people.

At the meeting held in the big shack serving as a church, the bishop of San Cristobal repeated his desire to continue to help them to gradually overcome their problems and enjoy a better life.

The Guatemalan refugees were also entertained. The bishop of San Cristobal organized various cultural activities, including a series of pre-Hispanic dances led by a reporter from the capital named Saide, who is Lebanese.

Lona Faults Pastoral Efforts

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 25 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 34-A

[Article by J. Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chis., 24 Jan--The Church is in the midst of crisis and in Mexico has failed in its pastoral work, said Monsignor Arturo Lona Reyes, bishop of Tehuantepec, in stating that the latter (the Church) should

be more dynamic, more all-embracing in its modernization. He stated that with the Summer Linguistic Institute, "we were mistaken" and asked that it be fought because "it is making us lose our national identity."

Concerning the work of the progressive Church in the country, he said that there is concern among the bishops over having a pastoral mission of accompanying the poor.

Lona Reyes is in this city celebrating the silver anniversary of Samuel Ruiz Garcia as bishop.

Concerning the work of the progressive Church, he added that different bishops are meeting after their work to exchange experiences in their respective dioceses.

Subjects discussed at such meetings concern the relocation of workers, fishing cooperatives, teachers fired because of salary demands and other needs.

Today, the work of spreading the Gospel cannot avoid human progress. It takes man and his aspirations in order to help him give a social as well as political, cultural and religious response, Lona Reyes added.

He also said that bishops in the diocese are speaking out about the protection of man crushed by the system through collective work courses that lead to cooperation of the faithful in the construction of latrines, roads or bridges.

He said that there are projects aimed at obtaining economic resources in order to buy laying hens or tractors in other cases. We now have a budget of \$20,000 to help the needier cooperatives, he said.

Concerning the fact that the progressive Church is attacked and said to be of the left, he responded: "Let them leave us alone, whether we make mistakes, take an existentialist path or only devote ourselves to works such as clinics or schools."

Concerning the Summer Linguistics Institute, he emphasized that it should be fought because it is contributing to the loss of our nationalism.

We must analyze everything that bombards our nationality through alienating translations of the Bible. The Catholic Church in the United States is contradictory in that it says that it defends the poor, while actually persecuting them," Lone said.

He condemned the attitude of President Ronald Reagan, who reads the Bible every day and refers to nuclear might as a [as published].

He added that war is won by religion and arms, so that Reagan's bombing is now done with Protestant pastors, who have gone through Tehuantepec heading for Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. He said that Protestantism is an alienating religion.

Papal Trip Ties Denied

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 25 Jan 85 p 4-A

[Text] "I swear to you as a priest, as a man and as a Mexican that there is no connection between the trip of Pope John Paul II to South America, the meeting of bishops in San Cristobal de las Casas and the meeting of bishops in Guadalajara," Jesuit Francisco Ramirez Meza said yesterday. Ramirez Meza is the executive spokesman of the Episcopal Commission on Social Communications and director of the Catholic Information Office.

The priest spoke to newsmen who questioned them about the concern of many sectors over the noteworthy coincidence of these three events and the rumors that they might be connected.

The trip of His Holiness to South American countries had been organized and planned for some time. The meeting of bishops in San Cristobal is to celebrate the silver anniversary of Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia in San Cristobal and his widespread, magnificent work in that Indian region.

The bishops gathering in Guadalajara is a meeting to study a conciliary document on the Church in the World Today, to which a number of lay people had been invited, including Ignacio Burgoa, a legal expert, but there is no connection with other events.

He said that on Saturday, the new bishop of Zacatecas, Monsignor Javier Lozano Barragan, will be installed. The ceremony will be attended by a number of priests who will later attend the meeting in Guadalajara.

Ruiz Honored

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 26 Jan 85 pp 17-A, 21-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chis. 25 Jan--Today, Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia, bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas, celebrated the completion of 25 years in the episcopacy: unprecedented in the history of Chiapas, and received the recognition of national and foreign bishops but above all, of his people, who, with him, "feel no fear of persecution."

Following a solemn mass, Ruiz Garcia received many gifts brought to him by Indians from the region: fruit, corn, flowers, handicrafts and majestic tunics for the silver anniversary of the bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas, "the bishop of youth," as he was baptized today.

There had been no rest for Ruiz Garcia since the preceding evening. The celebration began with the traditional serenades of Indian groups, decked out in their typical costumes and accompanied by rudimentary musical instruments.

A rustic violin gave an agreeable sound, albeit out of tune, along with drums and a flute. A monotonous rhythm provided backup for other indecipherable

voices paying homage with their song to the priest who, for 25 years, has accompanied them in their burden of despair and in the face of the countless acts of persecution and exploitation characterizing that region of the country.

One by one, the Indian groups paid homage to Ruiz Garcia. The serenades lasted throughout the night and until the following day, when the solemn mass began.

A sunny day and a sky of vivid blue formed the backdrop for the festivities marking the 25 years of episcopal work of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz.

At 1200 hours, the walls of the cathedral of San Cristobal de Las Casas vibrated to the applause of over 5,000 persons who had gathered together inside to receive the prelate, wearing a miter embroidered in regional patterns.

His crozier had been fashioned by local Indians. His tunic, alb and stole were also made by local artisans.

Preceded by priests, nuns and bishops from Mexico and Brazil, the honored bishop entered the cathedral. Chamula, Tzotzil, Chol, Tojolobal and Pablero Indians were present with striking gifts for their bishop, the bishop who has protected them from the aggression of a society that excludes them.

Monsignor Bartolome Carrasco, archbishop of Oaxaca, was to read the homily emphasizing the work done by his colleague Samuel Ruiz. within a very special historical context.

The words of the archbishop brought tears to the eyes of Ruiz Garcia and most of those gathered together to honor him wept with him.

Following the ceremony, the bishops from Brazil. Bolivia and Mexico attended a dinner given for them in the seminary.

The bishop of San Cristobal was asked: "Monsignor, what do you think of the coming visit of Pope John Paul II to Latin America?"

"I do not have an opinion," the bishop said, bewailing the way information was handled on the occasion of the previous visit of the Pope. "I do not express an opinion because they do not tell the truth. I say one thing, you write it and when it goes into print, only part of it is published. His Holiness, on his previous visit, said many fine things, but the communications media only pointed out the defects, the flaws. I do not express an opinion. There are filters in the information media, possible in the United States. Pope John Paul II expressed many fine things. I do not express an opinion. That is your responsibility and mine."

This was the last contact with Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia, following a ceremony celebrating his 25 years of episcopal work.

Las Casas Invoked

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 26 Jan 85 p 17-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal Las Casas, Chis., 25 Jan--Despite the fact that this country is overwhelmingly Catholic, the ecclesiastical institution is legally excluded from any possibility of action, despite the change in historical realities, said Monsignor Bartolome Carrasco, archbishop of Oaxaca. He said that the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas have enormous natural resources and in addition, are the direct descendants of the greatest pre-Hispanic cultures: the Mayan and Misteco-Zapoteco. However, in the last 15 years, they have been the scene of the greatest injustice and human cruelty.

Carrasco Briseno made the remarks as part of the message he read at the ceremony held in the cathedral of this city on the occasion of the silver anniversary of Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia.

In speaking about the work of the bishops in the Southern Pacific region, he said that there are differences between them, sometimes profound, "but we always try to face them responsibly within a context of the freedom of God's children, trying to find the truth in love, as Saint Paul taught."

He also spoke of the fear of the bishops over the impossibility of "responding adequately to the Lord, for we understand that the magnitude of what He demands always exceeds our weak human resources."

To the thousands of faithful gathered together, he said that Monsignor Samuel Ruiz "was determined to be the pastor of this part of Chiapas, in the midst of historical circumstances which, in substance, differ very little from what Jeremiah suffered 3,000 years ago." Jeremiah was a prophet during the most difficult times of his people.

"As a poor church, with very scant means, we want to evangelize our poor people, knowing that we are sent to a complex reality in which the wolves devour the lambs. In this historic context, we want to learn to be as simple as the dove, but also as astute as the serpent."

He denied that Samuel Ruiz is the ideologist of the bishops of the Southern Pacific region. "It is a matter of forming a collegial team that will try to respond to the historical situation of our area with common proposals seeking to integrate and respect the plurality of existing pastoral theological currents."

Part of the mass was devoted to a review of the pastoral action of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz, to whom he said: "We cannot deny that your prophetic activity and the pastoral of the Southern Pacific region have created in our region, in many sectors of the Church and in other outside spheres an image that on the one hand produces a great current of solidarity, such as the one now manifested, but that also creates rejection elsewhere and even direct attacks."

He reviewed the process followed by the Southern Pacific region from the time of the conquest to modern days. After noting certain negative aspects of the process, he referred to Fray Bartolome de las Casas, who in his opinion "continues to be a deluded idealist who refused to understand his time and fatally opposed the inexorable march of history.

"The bishops of the Southern Pacific region feel in a way that we are the heirs of the prophetic trajectory of Fray Bartolome de las Casas, although we admit that we do not have sufficient courage, constancy and consistency of the first bishop of this region. He will continue to be a model for us pastors today in the future."

Concerning the fact that the Church is legally excluded, he said: "I say so not because I seek power situations that the Church once had, but rather, in order to point out that basically, the causes of this situation we now deplore, due to positions taken in the face of the development of the history of our country, have nothing to do with the Gospel and the prophetic path traced by the first evangelists in the region."

He went on to say that the bishops of the region have faced common problems: repression, refugees and drug trafficking. "We have also made common theological and pastoral proposals on the real situation, the poor and the political participation of Christians in national life, which has brought us the appreciation of many and the enmity of more than a few."

Finally, he gave thanks to God "because he sent to this place a bishop who has distinguished himself for his dedication to helping the neediest persons in the region and has joined with them in order to achieve their liberation."

Document on Refugees, Ruiz

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 26 Jan 85 p 17-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal, Las Casas, Chis., 25 Jan--The bishops of Brazil, Bolivia and Mexico who gathered together in this city to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia said that Mexico could avoid great suffering for Guatemalan refugees if it does not relocate them, in addition to increasing international respect for Mexico.

Following an analysis of the visit to the refugee camps located in the municipality of Trinitaria, the bishops expressed their opinion and issued a document.

Through interviews with refugees, items in the national and international press and information from the diocese and personal experience, "we have realized their suffering and the anguish they are experiencing over the relocation, which also prevents them from enjoying the security they have found living among the Chiapas peasants," the bulletin says.

The position of the prelates is fundamentally based on the faith of the refugees themselves, who refuse to leave the Chiapas territory out of their fear of being taken far from their own homes and because of the help they have received from the peasants and the diocese in the region.

In addition, the bishops have told the Guatemalans that they have all their support and that they would watch over their fate, "informing the people of God of their joys and sufferings," they told them.

They also expressed their total support for the bishop of the diocese, Samuel Ruiz, and asked him to continue to serve the poor and the dispossessed.

They expressed their congratulations for the Mexican Government for the help it has given to "our brothers in suffering," asking God to "move the hearts" of authorities and officials in charge of the refugee problem.

The document is signed by the bishops of Brazil: Aldo Gerna, Augusto Alvez Da Rocha, Candido Padin, Luis Fernandez, Pompeu Bezerr Bessa and Tomas Balduino and Vital Wilderink; of Mexico: Alfonso Robles Cota, Arturo Lona, Bartolome Carrasco, Braulio Sanchez, Jesus Alba Palacios, Sergio Obeso and Sergio Mendez Arceo; and of Bolivia, Julio Terrazas.

Guatemalan Clerical Testimony

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 27 Jan 85 pp 1-A, 12-A, 37-A

[Article by J. Gerardo Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chis.. 26 Jan--In Guatemala, the military oligarchy, which controls most of the economy and the information media, will not leave power. On the contrary, in order to solidify it, there is increased repression of the people, priests, religious personnel and missionaries. Such action has already taken many victims among the ecclesiastical ministry.

Thus it was that the Guatemalan priests invited to the silver anniversary of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia described the situation in their country. Due to the gravity of the situation, they asked that their names not be published, fearing for their lives.

In being interviewed and in documents released to the communications media, the prelates said that there are two lines of conduct in the Church in their country: one, that of the priests and religious personnel living in contact with the people's pain, hunger, poverty and malnutrition, watching many children starve to death and leading many of the priests to commit themselves to the process of change, which is not invented by the Church, but by the struggle of the people themselves.

The other is a reactionary line, far from the people and only living for its own interest. "Everything committed to the liberation of the poor is subversive."

This other Church, more committed to Guatemala, does not seek communism; far from it. What is important for it, the Church, is man, the human person, who must be treated and respected as such.

Over and above all this, if this is also the aim of the communists, we do not care, the Guatemalan priests said, stating that their action was taken by the government as a subversive act and repressed.

Persecution began against religious personnel and 14 priests were murdered, some of them Guatemalan missionaries and others foreigners working in the province. Others had to leave because of death threats. The number exceeds the figure of 200 priests.

This situation means that northern Guatemala will be without priests for a long time. that the churches were turned into military barracks of the so-called Civil Self-Defense Patrol, especially in the northern part of Quiche.

Not Defeat

However, the missionaries said, the repression against the Church is not a defeat. On the contrary, "it is giving us more strength to continue to fight for a new church, a church committed to the process of liberation of the people, a church such as Jesus wants."

They denied that the Gospel is an ideology. Rather, they explained, it is a process of the overall liberation of the human person. There are those who say that to be Christian is to save souls. Jesus Christ did not come to save souls but to save man, the human person, so that souls not be lost in our world.

The Gospel is a process of human liberation of everything that oppresses and enslaves. This might be selfishness, hunger or injustice and exploitation.

Concerning the Guatemalan refugee camps they visited in Chiapas, they said that they are the result of what is happening in their country. Those people and especially the Indians are persons attached to the land, to their customs, to the soil that gave them life, and they will not easily leave the land.

What has happened is that the "scorched earth" policy began to be practiced in 1981.

Using this practice, the government tried "to take away their water and thus kill the population. Then the army came, and since it could not attack the guerrillas directly. it struck at the civilian population, killing the people, burning their houses, destroying entire villages, leaving no tree standing."

Many Left Behind

The scorched-earth policy caused many persons to flee to Mexico, but many were left along the way.

The priests described many cases in which mothers accidentally killed their children for fear they would make noise and alert the army.

They said that the refugees want to return home, but that for the time being, there is no solution to their problems. There is a great deal of talk, of change and of elections, but it is all a smokescreen. Rather, it is "pressure from the United States to gloss over the country with a democratic cover."

In Guatemala, they said, the military oligarchy controls a large part of the country's economy and communications media, so that "it wants to have a civilian president in order to give the appearance of a democracy to the world, as the United States requires, in order to have the military aid sent to Guatemala by the Reagan Administration."

They also denounced the presence in the country of strategic hamlets to which certain persons returned when amnesty was announced. They have food there, they said, but no freedom and in order to leave, they have to ask the army for permission.

They added that many of the persons who returned disappeared, while others went into the mountains. They are in the jungles eating roots, grass and small animals.

The priests said that the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference is taking timid but sure steps in favor of a change in the most reactionary spheres of the hierarchical clergy.

They expressed their support for the Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas so that they might remain where they are and not be relocated, for their living conditions are good and they will slowly make progress.

They said that their fellow countrymen are in their own environment, close to the border, and that they will not lose their culture. A relocation 600 kilometers or more away means taking them away from their land and causing them great suffering.

The other reason for not relocating them is that they have many malnourished children and the move, as well as the difference in climate, would endanger their lives. It would also endanger the lives of the elderly and one must recall that many pregnant women have already died.

Proceedings, Ruiz' Career Characterized

Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 430, 28 Jan 85 pp 24-27

[Article by Ernesto Reyes]

[Text] San Cristobal de Las Casas--The fate of the Chiapas Indians shows hope and its name is Samuel Ruiz, "El Tatic," as he is called by the poor, "el alizador de indios" [defender of Indians], as he known among the rich and government officials.

His work as bishop has determined the modern history of the peasant and Indian struggle in the Chiapas mountains where. from 21 to 25 January, Don Samuel's diocese celebrated his 25th anniversary as bishop. The festivities climaxed on Friday at the cathedral, where guest bishops and friends of Don Samuel, mainly from Brazil and other regions of Mexico, priests from different parts of the world and religious workers in the diocese of San Cristobal had gathered together.

The celebration renewed the enthusiasm and faith of the 800,000 residents of the area, mainly Indians. Songs, speeches, Mexican night, serenades, a solemn mass, a banquet and applause were the order of the day, but also dramatic meetings with Chamula Indians driven off their land. Don Samuel spoke to them in Tzoltzil, one of the Indian tongues he speaks.

From Monday to Thursday, the diocesan assembly took place, analyzing the pastoral work of the diocese. The bishops gathering together spoke of their experiences and analyzed the grassroots communities in Brazil, work among the Indians of Bolivia in the diocese of Los Andes at an altitude of 5,600 meters, the work of Mexican bishops in the Southern Pacific region. Participants applauded speeches by Sergio Mendez Arceo and attention turned to the trials of the theologians of liberation: Leonardo Boff of Brazil and Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru. They spoke of the Indian process in Chiapas and the Chamula case.

Ruiz walked among everyone, wearing a Russian-style black cap, a dark suit and a wide flowered red and blue tie. He had greetings and suitable words for everyone, embraces for his friends, memories of the absent, recollections of the past that he related to the assembly, attention for each and every one. Above all, there were smiles and happiness. He was a friend among friends.

Despite the vacillations, the slow maturation of his path and thought, the difficulties and the harsh attacks by the government and the Apostolic Delegation on his work and ideas, Don Samuel, who daily walks the same land that Fray Bartolome de las Casas walked 450 years ago, has defined his decision, not only to continue, but rather, to carry his commitment to the poor even further, the poor whom he defines as the oppressed.

His path has often been a lonely one. Now he is accompanied by many. One of them is the bishop of Tehuantepec, Arturo Lona, his disciple and friend, another of the bishops who won long applause in the assembly with his tales, his jokes, his individual manner of speaking, his depth of thought and his commitment.

In order to arrive at this stage of consolidation of the diocese of San Cristobal, there have been many problems to be faced by those in the religious life leading "this process of the Church which is inclined toward the poor."

Anthropologist Andres Aubry, who was his friend and collaborator for 20 years, the bishops of the Southern Pacific region, religious workers, newsmen from the region, spokesmen for the communities, bishop friends of Don Samuel, nuns and priests reconstructed the 25 years of his career in four phases.

In 1965, Don Samuel plunged into a movement that could be called one of religious sociology. With the help of canon Boulard, a French priest and sociologist, he traveled through the diocese and studied Chiapas.

Aubry: "Not inspired by ecclesiastical principles, but rather, using the resources of religious sociology, he saw that one day, theology would have to reason, not only with philosophy, but also with the social sciences. This led him to divide the diocese into three: Tuxtla, Tapachula and the Indian masses. He filed a report with the Apostolic Nunciature. The diocese was divided and he was left with the poor part, the Indians, the peasants, the new diocese of San Cristobal."

It was then subdivided into pastoral areas: Tzoltzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, the southern zone, the most conflict-ridden, a combination of Ladinos and Tzoltziles, and the San Cristobal zone, the city, the guiding center. He organized the diocese in terms of an analysis of reality.

The diocese was then very poor in terms of money and human resources. There were no more than ten priests, of which three or four were actually bishops reining over dozens and dozens of square kilometers.

This takes Don Samuel into his second period. Knowing he could not survive if he did not import human resources, he founded CENAMI (National Center of Indian Missions). This was the postconciliary era of Vatican II. In the light of the Council, he reviewed what he had studied as a seminarian. CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference) named him president of the DMC (Department of CELAM Missions), a post he kept for three periods, nearly a decade. His international relations began. He traveled throughout Latin America, met people from Europe. Religious people came from the continent, Europe, the United States. In his diocese, there were some 150 religious workers: priests, nuns, laymen and couples.

Aubry: "He made no distinctions, no differences between ideologies or religious orders, priests, religious workers and laymen. What was important was the commitment. International solidarity is applied in Chiapas, using Don Samuel as support.

"One must realize that his father was a Christer. His family is one of conservative ideology, almost fundamentalist. With Vatican II, Don Samuel came to ecumenism, to the importance of religious sociology, to collegiality, to Catholicity, to internationalism and other things.

"At that time, his speech was culturalist, as he himself now calls it. He preached the Incarnation in Indian cultures. He said that within the ethnic groups, the cultures -- using a culturalist vocabulary and conception -- there is an implicit message, an occult revelation. It is the opportunity of the Indians to give their word in the Church, to be considered with respect. Since he is a scholar of the Bible, he knows that Christianity was Palestinian, Persian, Western. It can therefore be Chamula or Tzeltal.

"He decided to send his people to Mexico City, to the Ibero-American University, to study anthropology, an indispensable tool for the embodiment of Christianity in Indian cultures. He carried what he had glimpsed in the previous stage further.

"One of the instruments theology needs is that of the social sciences. This would lead him straight to the theology of liberation. Naturally, he participated in Medellin, as one of the speakers."

During this period, many people came: Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, more than 20 orders of religious clerics, laymen, foreigners, and so on.

Aubry: "The way to grasp reality had not been theorized. It was resolved with one of Don Samuel's principles: There are no parish priests, but only teamwork. The sociological division of work prevailed. The collegial team would administer a zone as a group. The different visions, ideologies, strategies, theologues and conflicts were overcome by force because they were united by the urgent need to transform a situation by working together."

Religious workers: The third phase, from 1976 to 1981, is the critical period for Chiapas, reaping the harvest of the sequels of Echeverria. It faced "Lopez-Portillismo," meaning oil. The Valasco Suarez-Echeverria method for the jungle and the populist, demagogic attention to the peasants and Indians considerably increased the budget of the National Indian Institute.

Aubry: "Samuel absorbs all this and faced the new situation, not in a predetermined way, but in keeping with events."

A group of religious workers analyzed the situation: "Then came the tragedy in the town of Venustiano Carranza. The soldiers rode in UNICEF tanks, development organizations such as the Prodesch proliferated, along with conflicts in the jungle after the departure of Echeverria. This was the time of the famous negotiations of Don Samuel and Governor Jorge de la Vega Dominguez. The governor's family had a ranch in Nueva Providencia. The governor could not go, even by helicopter, because of the danger of being killed. He had to beg Don Samuel to accompany him in the helicopter. De la Vega was famous as a negotiator, but he had to appeal to the negotiating strength of Don Samuel.

"This was a new period, in which the government could not do without the bishop. It was the period of Golonchan, when Absalon Castellanos Dominguez appeared as head of the Military Zone during the massacre. Juan Sabines, the new governor, almost never went anywhere without Absalon."

Aubry: "The ideological resources of Don Samuel were Vatican II, Medellin and the CELAM at that time, that of the Golden Age. When CELAM started to go sour with Lopez Trujillo, Don Samuel left it. He knew that two CELAMs existed and he identified with the CELAM of Medellin, the first before Lopez Trujillo."

Religious workers and representatives of the communities: The events of this third period gave rise to the outbreak of people's organizations, given the lack of peasant politicization. Enter CIOAC [Independent Central Organization of Agricultural Workers and Peasants] and the CNPA [National Coordinating Board for the Ayala Plan], Turreon's groups, the unions of unions and others. The PST [Socialist Workers Party] also came on the scene. It did not get involved with Don Samuel or identify with him, although Samuel was the scapegoat for the blunders and mistakes of the PST."

Aubry: "The important thing about that time is that those who tried to give consistency to the anger of rural people in order to turn the lack of conformity into organization and critical reflection could not do without the work of penetration of the people done by Don Samuel's church. Samuel was the indispensable interlocutor."

He had already been with the most official organs. "In order to go to the people, there is no passport if one does not go through the people's church. Don Samuel avoided the amalgam: When he had to identify his group, he clearly did so. He celebrated mass in the national assembly of the CNPA, but did not totally identify with it. He had sympathy for it, but clearly chose what side he was on before the people and before its interlocutors."

Don Samuel democratized his diocese, accompanying the peasants in regaining their land and in their organization, never as a sniper, but as a collective undertaking with the entire diocese. The diocese made many mistakes, those made after any liberation. After a revolution, like Romanticism and radicalization.

Aubry: "Don Samuel always theorized his practice. He delegated powers, consulted his people. In certain events, he would fade away so that his diocese might take the floor and make its presence felt."

"Don Samuel changed his discourse, the theorization of his practice. No longer was he a culturalist. Now his option was that of the poor, but he defined the poor, not as a man lacking things, but as the oppressed. This presumes that there is an oppressor and an oppressor-oppressed-dominator-dominated dialectic. The poor are the driving force of history and the agent of evangelization. Otherwise, it is no longer the Gospel. In his international presentations, he did not speak of human rights as the discourse of the times, but of the rights of the poor. His discourse had become social, integral, implicating all social strata."

The fourth period: the Guatemalan refugees, from 1971 to 1984. He did not embark upon this period by accident. He had planned it, foreseen it and had planned his action.

Aubry: "That experience, that involvement of Don Samuel in the people's struggle, gave him many international contacts. His trajectory was now aimed at the Third World and Asia. For example, he was invited to Sri Lanka. He had profound contacts with Filipinos. He broadened his platform. He did not seek it, but rather, reaped it with his action. Don Samuel carried more and more weight."

Religious workers and community representatives: In the Chiapas situation, when the phenomenon of the Guatemalan refugees called on the world press, Absalon entered the office of governor. He had seen Samuel in Golonchan. The press discovered that he had been a colleague of Rios Montt at the Military Academy. Although he was appointed by this administration before entering office, at the end of Lopez Portillo's term, they realized that Absalon's reports were not adequate to analyze the reality of Chiapas. The very government itself, including the Secretariat of Government, needed Samuel's analyses.

Samuel's dialogue gained strength with official bodies, without taking away from his commitment to the people. His analysis of such quality is even the subject of telephone conversations, even by the Secretariat of Government. At a meeting with Reagan, those closest to Don Samuel say, a report was mentioned. "We do not know who made the reference, but an explicit petition was sent to Don Samuel asking him to draft and expand his views."

Aubry: "I do not know what theorization Don Samuel will make of this recent practice. One of his discoveries is diplomacy. He practices evangelical diplomacy, two concepts that usually clash."

Don Samuel himself responded to an implicit question from Aubry in an interview with PROCESO: "My theological reflection is not my own, but the result of a common path. It is not only an evangelizing embodiment of Incarnation in the cultures. At the same time, as the years have gone by, we have gradually discovered what we once had before our eyes, but which we did not see or analyze: the oppressive and repressive situation in which the deprived cultures find themselves. Consequently, there is not only a requirement of Incarnation, but the need for a church to express itself and live in its own raiments. There must necessarily be a liberating dimension. That is our process.

"The relationship with politics is obvious. The Kingdom of God is not only built by the Church, since it is much broader than that, but by all other men of good will as well. The Kingdom of God is not of a single mediation, but of all the political mediations that exist in a human community. That is why it transcends political mediations, although it depends on them. That is the mission we have discovered. One must use or go through the mediations and transcend them. We shall in turn discover that in every new historical situation, there must be situations of sin in which the Christian has to remain critical so that, from the standpoint of the marginalization that has existed throughout history, he make draw a historical balance with the strength of God who is the God of the poor."

Archbishop Bartolome Carrasco of Oaxaca summed up the career of Don Samuel: "Above all, he is a prophet and a maker of prophets. He is a seeker of a new-style Church, one that will respond to the requirements of modern man. Second, he is a friend. He is a team player. He never imposes his opinion. He knows how to listen. He is convinced that God also speaks through others."

11,464
CSO: 3248/279

NORTHERN HIGH CHURCHMEN COMMENT ON PAPAL ANTICOMMUNISM

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 26 Jan 85 pp 11-A

[Text] Three bishops, considered to be representative of the "traditional" Mexican clergy, have spoken about the political significance of the papal visit to South America. If Pope John Paul II believes it pertinent, they said, he will repeat his rejection of communism, along with his censorship of clerics who proclaim the communion between Christianity and Marxist-Leninist tactics of struggle for the liberation of peoples.

Adalberto Almeida y Merino, archbishop of Chihuahua, emphasized "the personal experience of the Pontiff in his native Poland, which leads him to a visceral anticommunism and opposition to anything that might appear to be an inclination to the left or support for Marxism." That is why, he added, that the Pope "has twisted the screws on certain liberationist committees in Latin America."

The prelate from Durango, Antonio Lopez Avina, said: "We must not forget that the innovative interpretation of Christianity does not solely lie in an economic, social and political dimension. That is not the essential thing because it would amount to considering and trying to reduce the Gospel to something purely earthly, forgetting that man is a combination of spirit and matter. For that very reason, the theology of liberation is incompatible with the Christian faith because it embraces open and frank opposition to that which is essential in the Gospel and in the very identity of man."

Furthermore, the Durango prelate said, "the mission of the Holy Father transcends any partisanism, and what he truly desires is the unity of all. In other words, he wants Christ's will to come to pass: that there be a single flock under a single pastor. (For all these reasons), I do not believe that the Pope's visit has anything whatsoever to do with the so-called theology of liberation.

"The Sacred Congregation for Faith has expressed very clearly the Church's thought on certain points of that theology. Now then, the Holy Father can, if he deems necessary, return to the issue," as he did during his visit to Central America a few years ago, Monsignor Lopez Avina said.

The assistant bishop of Guadalajara, Adolfo Hernandez Hurtado, said that the visit of Pope John Paul II, which begins today in Trinidad and Tobago, followed by Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador, will again make it possible, as all his travels do, to strengthen and revitalize faith in the Catholic Church.

Hernandez Hurtado noted that the "traditionalist Church" will emerge strengthened from this papal tour. "We already experienced such results following the visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico 6 years ago," he said. He then referred to the fact that the Pontiff refused to go to Chile and attributed that refusal to "the political problems which that country faces and which do not make a stay there suitable."

For the time being, the assistant bishop of Guadalajara added, it has not been announced that Pope John Paul II is again in Mexico. "The injection of faith and the Christian strengthening he gave us on his trip will be the same as in South America," he said.

Almeida y Merino, archbishop of Chihuahua, noted that in Latin America, "many bishops, priests and laymen, without being communists, are involved in a process of popular liberation that confronts the dominant capitalist ideology, which is why it may appear that they are affiliated with communism. But as one Brazilian cardinal said: 'I know of no biologist who is a Marxist.'"

However, Almeida y Merino warned of the danger that the extreme right "try to take advantage of the bitter personal experience of the Pope, which causes him to apply to Latin America a criterion of communism such as that which exists in his native Poland."

11,464

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PLANNED EPISCOPAL TALKS ON LIBERATION THEOLOGY CANCELED

Charge of Communism Rejected

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 28 Jan 85 p 36-A

[Article by Victor Payan and Felipe Sanchez]

[Text] Oaxaca, Oax., 27 Jan--Bishops from the Southern Pacific region are gathering together in this city to begin a meeting in two days at which they will discuss liberation theology, an issue which, since 1979 in Puebla at the CELAM [Latin American Bishops Conference] meeting, had been silenced by the episcopacy, deeming it to be based on communist principles.

The meeting, which began to be planned amidst the greatest secrecy, will be presided over by Bishop Samuel Ruiz from San Cristobal de las Casas; Chiapas, considered as one of the ideologists of that Catholic faction following the so-called liberation theology.

Participating in the meeting will be the bishop of Oaxaca, Bartolome Carrasco Briseno, while the bishop of Tehuantepec, Arturo Lona Reyes, said that despite his being one of the great defenders of the theology of liberation, he was curiously not invited to or told of the plans for the meeting.

Lona Reyes also noted that "very strange things are going on and as far as I know, the meetings held in San Cristobal de las Casas should continue in Guadalajara, where we are to go tomorrow to participate in the analysis of the theology of liberation."

He said that strange things are going on, but did not further specify and even changed the subject of the conversation to note that "Deputy Teodoro Altamirano, 'El Rojo,' is taking advantage of the opportunity and will in the days ahead go to Mexico City to meet with apostolic delegate Girolamo Prigione, whom he will ask to intervene with the Pope to ask for my removal as bishop."

Lona Reyes was interviewed at Christian House, where he explained that El Rojo and 20 municipal presidents from the Isthmus will tell the apostolic delegate that "I protect and advise those of the COCEI [Labor, Peasant, Student Coalition of the Isthmus], enemies of the PRI members, in order to make the former mayor of Juchitan, Leopoldo de Gyves, a federal deputy.

"They will also accuse me of preaching changes from the pulpit and asking for violence against the PRI, but that is totally false, as is the fact that for 10 years, I have devoted myself to forming shock groups and destabilizing the region of the Isthmus.

"I consider all of this to be absurd, but those people are desperate -- Deputy Altamirano and the 20 municipal presidents -- and they are trying to use all kinds of pressure to nullify their election opponents, in this case, Leopoldo de Gyves, who heads COCEI, the group that is identified with the region."

The prelate returned to the situation of theology and explained that the meetings held recently by bishops from the Southern Pacific zone were for the purpose of signing an agreement to aid Guatemalan refugees in Mexican territory.

"They all say that you are allied with communism. What do you say to that?"

"The theology of liberation is a cry of the poor and this new current will demonstrate the strength of the faith with respect to any political situation."

Lona added that this current is the "same one that Christ formed in behalf of the humble and poor and that those who oppose the proposal are those with interests very close to the system and linked with businessmen. That is why they accuse us of being Marxist-Leninists and even guerrillas."

Differing Bishops Speak Out

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 29 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 28-A

[Article by Victor Payan]

[Excerpt] Oaxaca, Oax., 28 Jan--Amidst great controversy, the meeting of bishops representing the Southern Pacific zone was suspended today before it even began. The meeting was to make an analysis of the theology of liberation, a doctrine with which the Pope does not agree. Some time ago, the Pope already stated that the Church will not adopt the new current of thought.

Consequently, just as the prelates began arriving in this city, they started leaving early today for Guadalajara, where they will attend the Mexican Episcopal Conference.

The bishop of Tuxtepec, Jose de Jesus Castillo Renteria, had noted that he would not attend the meetings in San Cristobal de las Casas and Oaxaca because they were not official and were organized by the leftist clergy.

Presbyter Aristeo de la Vega Cacho, vicar general of the diocese of Oaxaca, stated openly this morning that "the meeting of the bishops will be held tomorrow, but in Guadalajara, and it will be an episcopal conference. There will be no official program here until July, when we shall celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Archdiocese of Oaxaca, attended by the cardinal of Mexico, Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, and apostolic delegate Geronimo Prigione.

De la Vega Cacho said that there were plans to invite the bishops from the Southern Pacific region, led by Monsignor Arturo Lona Reyes from the diocese of Tehuantepec, who, it is true, had been inexplicably excluded from the work of analyzing the theology of liberation which was finally suspended.

Lona Reyes was precisely the person who last week in San Cristobal had announced the meeting of bishops planned for today, which was also to be attended by Central and South American prelates.

11,464
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TEHUANTEPEC BISHOP ATTACKED FOR ALLEGED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Backing by Archdiocese

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 26 Jan 85 p 30-A

[Text] Oaxaca, Oax., 25 Jan--Daniel Quiroga, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Oaxaca, has stated that actions of the bishop of Tehuantepec, Arturo Lona Reyes, aimed at "redeeming the poor and giving a voice to the humble" are not politically motivated and have the support of the clergy in the region.

He added that Lona Reyes' work is very praiseworthy and, far from responding to political watchwords, "dignifies the human quality of inhabitants of that forgotten region of the Isthmus."

Lona Reyes is well-known for his solidarity with the poor and the deprived.

In commenting upon statements by PRI Deputy Teodoro Altamirano Robles to the effect that Bishop Lona Reyes has an "open affiliation with the Labor, Peasant, Student Coalition of the Isthmus (COCEI) and other leftist groups," he said:

"Rather than go around distorting the facts, Deputy Altamirano should devote himself to fighting poverty and to his work in the Chamber aimed at putting together programs for that forgotten area of the Isthmus."

He added that it is the job of the deputy to improve the social conditions of poor people of the Isthmus and not "create useless controversies."

Actually, Tehuantepec suffers from many shortages and there is desperate poverty in the region.

Teodoro Altamirano, he said, heads a movement in Juchitan that aims to discredit Monsignor Lona Reyes and has threatened to send a letter to Pope John Paul II denouncing the prelate "for his open affiliation with COCEI."

Support From Priests, Religious

Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 433, 18 Feb 85 pp 30-31

[Article by Carlos Fazio]

[Text] Priests in the diocese of Tehuantepec have rallied round the local bishop, Arturo Lona Reyes, in the face of what they have described as a "campaign of defamation" against him, led by PRI Deputy Teodoro Altamirano Robles.

On 24 January, the local deputy of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, along with 20 municipal presidents from the Isthmus region, told the press that they would meet with the apostolic delegate in Mexico, Jeronimo Prigione, asking for the irrevocable resignation of Lona.

According to the priests, the interview never came about, nor did they present the petition in question to Prigione, which they interpret as action aimed at slandering the bishop for his pastoral work in the area.

In an open letter, the clergy of Tehuantepec states that the state president of the PRI said that Deputy Altamirano's opinion "is purely personal" and in no way reflects the position of the party.

The priests say: "We condemn this campaign of defamation against our bishop, which has obvious political motives, in this year of federal legislative elections, and we do not want to fall into the trap of provocations or allow ourselves to be intimidated by the threats or be involved in election politics."

They also recall Pope John Paul II's support for Monsignor Lona last year, on the occasion of the report on the diocese presented to the Vatican.

The 160 nuns working in education and the missionaries in the mountains and on the coast of the diocese also sent a letter to the governor of Oaxaca, Pedro Vazquez Colmenares, denouncing "the false interpretation made of the work we do, personified in Bishop Arturo Lona."

They add that "the slander and lies aimed at the pastor disconcert and confuse the poor people."

In the letter to the governor, the nuns and missionaries denounce the poor benefits of education due to malnutrition and absenteeism, infant mortality due to starvation and sickness, the lack of stable work in the city and country and the frustration of Indian peasants over losing their crops, having no hope with the "alleged guaranteed prices" for their products and selling their harvests to the monopolizers for pitiful prices.

11,464
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CHIAPAS, FOREIGN SECTS TREATED AT PLENARY EPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY

Warning on Chiapas

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 29 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 29-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo R. and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 28 Jan--Chiapas is the target of national and international social destabilizers because it is experiencing very serious conflicts, according to Monsignor Felipe Aguirre Franco, bishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez, upon his arrival in this city, where he will participate in the 35th plenary meeting of the Mexican Episcopal Conference.

Interviewed outside the Center of Spiritual Exercises for Priests, Aguirre Franco talked of the trip to be made to Latin America by Pope John Paul II, which he called beneficial.

However, he said that the Pontiff decided not to visit Chile because the proper political, economic and social circumstances do not exist that would give legitimacy to the military regime of Augusto Pinochet.

He said that His Holiness will make his trip to that country at another time, when the circumstances are more favorable, when relations between Pinochet's regime and Chilean society have improved.

After noting that the Holy Father hopes that his visit to Chile will have satisfactory results, he said that a visit to Argentina is also being looked at. Until only recently, there had been a conflict over the Beagle Channel.

Concerning Mexico, he said that fortunately, it still enjoys favorable circumstances for developing in peace, even for allowing the holding of meetings such as the 35th plenary meeting of the Mexican Episcopal Conference.

Unfortunately, he said, our country is very large and there are conflicts in some states, along with difficult situations such as the ones "we are experiencing in the state of Chiapas."

Based on the foregoing, he explained that there are difficult, conflict-ridden circumstances in Chiapas and that the state is the target of national and

international destabilizers because if Mexico had some force for destabilization, "one of the states most suited for the purpose would be Chiapas."

Aguirre Franco said, however, that there is fortunately peace in Mexico and that Latin America is the continent of hope, as Pope John Paul II said.

In addition, Aguirre Franco referred to young people, in whom the Church has a special interest, because in Latin America, it is the majority of the population in the cities and society itself.

We bishops, he said, have urged the celebration of International Youth Year, which was called by the United Nations.

That summons is aimed at helping young people to contribute through their work to changing the structures of our country. It also seeks to have young people participate more actively in the development of our country, which is now going through a crisis that is also international in nature.

After urging young people to be more united, he said that in order to help solve problems of this broad sphere of the population, "our young people must be more aware of the times in which they live."

He also reproved the rereading of the Gospel that some sectors of the Church are doing in spite of the instructions of Pope John Paul II.

In addition, in referring to the participation of the Church in our country, he pointed out that it is necessary to adapt it to reality. But, he warned, the Church, in order to be up to date, must not be an institution that goes ahead with the vanguard or gets behind, causing it to be separated from the people.

That is why, he said, in our country the Church "has loosened the ties of egotism and human security" and has "plunged in regardless of the risk." It is a Church that consents to take man's side, but not the side of man's parties.

Finally, he described the trip of President Miguel de la Madrid as beneficial and necessary in the face of the seriousness of international problems, and noting that given Mexico's international prestige, it is healthy for the president of Mexico to carry the banner of the Third World.

Sects, Social Unrest Associated

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 29 Jan 85 pp 4-A, 34-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal.. 28 Jan--The inadequacies of the Mexican education system result in a lack of confidence on the part of the people, who finally turn to the religious sects. This situation could lead to social unrest, according to Monsignor Ramon Godinez Flores, assistant bishop of Guadalajara, who said that in the constitution, there is a definite bias against the Church, the fruit of the social climate existing 100 years ago.

At the same time, the archbishop of Mexico, Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, said that the Church is fighting the sects and trying to unite Mexicans around the Gospel and the word of Christ, inasmuch as outside that word, they are separated from the divine will and in turn, Catholics are seen as idol-worshipping pagans.

Both are participating in the 35th plenary meeting of the Mexican Episcopacy, whose purpose is the study of the relationship between the Church and state and of the Church with society in general.

In the midst of strict security measures, bishops and archbishops began arriving today from all over the country, along with the Pope's representative in our country, Monsignor Girolamo Prigione.

On this first day of work, it was made manifest that the history of our country has evolved and conflicts between the different sectors have been lessened, meaning that Church-state relations may exist in the not-too-distant future.

Monsignor Godinez Flores also said that the Church is preparing to create the history of the future, which is actually the path of Vatican II.

He also spoke of the historic evolution of relations with the state and emphasized that in the constitution, the Church is treated in a most biased fashion, the fruit of the social climate existing over 100 years ago.

In this respect, he maintained that it is a task to be taken up by the faithful, to see whether the constitution is the one corresponding to the situation today. "Then we shall also study more thoroughly what that doctrine means at this 5-day meeting of bishops from all over the country."

He noted that inadequacies in education have caused the proliferation of sects, due to serious ignorance about our faith, which situation can only be solved when we value the richness of our faith.

He agreed that inadequacies in education are found in education itself as well as in the work done by priests. The Church has schools and universities which, in addition to general education, impart instruction on religious aspects to strengthen faith.

After noting that ignorance has caused many Mexicans to turn to the sects, which offer them money and material goods, he commented that this situation hurts the development of the Church, but could also result in social unrest.

In the face of the invasion of other ideas such as materialism, which does grave harm, Monsignor Godinez said, the task of the Church will be to support acts of faith and take shelter in the transcendental values lacking in our official system of education.

For his part, Corripio Ahumada refused to make statements and confined himself to joking with the newsmen who approached him. When asked whether there are two churches in our country, he said that there is not only one, but many: "We are all churches. You are a church and we are all of the same church."

He later said that the Church is working and that its mission is the same as always: to work for unity and performing the primary tasks of the institution, which is the evangelization of all faithful in the truth of Christ.

35th Meeting

Father Adalberto Gonzalez Gonzalez, head of the Press and Social Communications Office of the Archdiocese of Tapatío, said that the purpose of this meeting is to study "the public right of the Church" and its relationship with other related societies, specifically the state."

He said that at the present time, the Mexican Episcopal Conference has 104 prelates, including cardinals, archbishops and bishops from 12 archdioceses, 54 dioceses, 7 prelacies and 2 apostolic vicarships. In addition, there are to date 16 bishops and missionaries.

The work of the special assembly is aimed at analyzing various documents of Vatican II, referring to its position and work as a human and divine institution.

The sessions will take place in the House of Spiritual Exercises of the Priests and will be presided over by the archbishop of Jalapa, Monsignor Sergio Obeso Rivear.

The meeting is inspired by the desire to foster harmony and cooperation between civil society, the state and the Church, because they involve the same individuals. There will also be an analysis of the action of ecclesiastical discipline based on the provisions of the New Canonical Code. The documents to serve as guides will include: the Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, the Constitution on the Church and an order concerning religious freedom.

The assistant bishop of Guadalajara, Adolfo Hernandez Hurtado, stated that all ecclesiastical authorities in the country have gathered together in Guadalajara and he refused to make any statement, inasmuch as the meeting will involve high ecclesiastical officials who retain primacy in their opinions.

President's Foreign Policy Backed

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 30 Jan 85 pp 12-A, 27-A

[Article by J. Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimeli]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 29 Jan--Bishops from all over the country back the policies of President Miguel de la Madrid, expressed at the Summit Conference of the Six in New Delhi, India, which tends to promote movements for peace and to ask the five nuclear powers to cease the arms race.

Father Ricardo Cuellar, executive secretary of the Mexican Episcopacy, made these statements to EXCELSIOR today, based on the statements of Pope John Paul II, who said that any effort to achieve lasting peace and eliminate the threat of nuclear war is beneficial to mankind, which opinion is shared by the prelates.

Monsignor Jose Guadalupe Padilla Lozano, bishop of Veracruz, said that in his diocese, the people are not deprived, that "there is understanding in the government and the Church."

At the same time, the bishop of Tlaxcala, Luis Munive Escobar, denied that there was any disunity in the Catholic Church. He justified the meeting, which will be positive in seeking solutions enabling us to face a troubled world.

Press Without Information

On the second day of work of the 35th plenary meeting of the Mexican Episcopal Conference, the rigid security measures continue, impeding proper work of the press, which is kept out and denied information.

Both the papal nuncio, Girolamo Prigione, and the archbishop of Mexico, Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, despotically fled from reporters asking their opinion about different national issues and, disregarding common courtesy, refused to make any statements.

At the beginning of the work, the report of Jesuit Father Carlos Corral was presented on "Freedom in the European Economic Community." The content of the speech was not made known, but it was said that the text had to do with "the ecclesiological-philosophical-legal-political-generic budgets of ecclesiastical public law: the temporal order and the spiritual order."

The second report by Monsignor Luis Reynoso, bishop of Ciudad Obregon, Son., took up the subject "Underlying Ideologies in Church-State Relations From the Time of the Conquest to the Present."

In his text, he outlined the ideological trends which, from the time of the conquest, through the colonial period and independence, up to the present, have influenced the basic principles of legislation in our country.

He noted the ideological influence of absolutism, liberalism, especially Protestant in nature,, of legal positivism and finally, of socialism on current legislation.

The fact that the Catholic Church is a complete moral person as the result of its divine founder, and that it has a complete legal order does not mean that it claims to be or should be considered as a temporal power in competition with the state, for its being and doings are of a moral and spiritual order, although this means that its action is extended to the temporal sphere because it has to illuminate and transform with its doctrine the conduct of persons and the community in their cultural, economic and social manifestations.

Proliferation of Sects

In an interview, the bishop of Veracruz, Monsignor Jose Guadalupe Padilla Lozano, expressed his concern, along with other bishops, over the proliferation of sects in the national territory.

He said that this proliferation of sects is far-reaching. The Jehovah's Witnesses are the most generous because they have a great deal of money. He also said that these persons, the members of the sects, are alienating the country and are selling out the Mexicans, since they want to divide those of us who are united."

He emphasized that in the face of this problem, every bishop should seek the most suitable means for countering the effects of the sects on their dioceses. He agreed that the bishops do not have the indispensable human resources for alleviating the problems caused by the sects.

He noted that the sects with the greatest influence in his state are the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptists, Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists.

Sects, Poverty Taken Up

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 30 Jan 85 p 12-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 29 Jan--Mexico has too much outside pressure, for which reason it cannot expel sects such as the Summer Linguistics Institute, which has disturbed the nation's peace in the face of a Church "that was too confident, that went to sleep" during the evangelization process and a weak people that has suffered economically and come to accept handouts from anyone, without regard for their ideological, political and social origin. This situation makes it indispensable to have freedom of education.

These thoughts were expressed by Father Juan Sandoval Iniguez, rector of the Advanced Seminary of Guadalajara, an institution considered to be of great importance in the republic because of the large number of priests who graduate from it."

Interviewed in his offices, he also said, when questioned about whether the Mexican population has become dehumanized, that "humanism began with the Renaissance, but it has degenerated into bestialism and instead of becoming human, we have become beasts. There is bestialism instead of humanism."

Concerning the proliferation of sects, something of great concern to the Mexican Church, he said:

"Sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses are of very great concern because, from the religious standpoint, they disrupt the peace and introduce ideas that are false or biased. But in addition, there is a political aspect because they try to dominate the people using their economic base."

He denied that the actions of these groups are exclusively aimed at weakening the Church. On the contrary, he said that they are aimed at disrupting the unity of the people, who are eminently Catholic.

Concerning persons who from the outside try to control Mexico. without specifying who they are, he explained that their interest is economic. "They are

materialistic. They want economic domination and in order to achieve it, they try to break up the political unity of the country, its religious and social unity."

On another point, he said that in Mexico, there are not enough priests to help the bishops in their work of evangelization. He said that there are 650 priests and 250 nuns in Guadalajara, while there are 9,000 priests throughout the country providing spiritual guidance.

He added that there are 28 seminaries in the republic with a total of 6,000 students.

He said that it is necessary for the country to have freedom of education so that every parent may choose the education for his children and in this way, help the Church overcome problems of deviation with respect to faith.

Finally, concerning the message of Pope John Paul II in the sense that it is necessary to close the gap between rich and poor, he said: "I wish it were possible. That is what we need because the situation we now see in the world is marked, with the rich getting richer and the poor poorer with every passing day.

Church Juridical Status Discussed

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 31 Jan 85 pp 5-A, 31-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 30 Jan--On the third day of work of the 35th plenary meeting of the Mexican Episcopacy, Monsignor Girolamo Prigione, apostolic delegate in Mexico, stated that the Catholic Church, although an atypical society, cannot be excluded from the concept of the state in international law. The entire history of the Church in its relationship with temporal sovereignties throughout the centuries points to the full, autonomous status with which it is endowed.

Prigione spoke to bishops from all over the country gathered together at the conference on the topic "The Church as a Person With Legal Rights, the International Personality of the Holy See, the Vatican State and the Roman Question."

He spoke of the Church as a perfect society in its order and consequently, as a "moral and legal person by divine right."

"As a subject of international law, the Catholic Church is an atypical organization. In other words, considering its specific purpose and special nature and social structure, the Church cannot be placed precisely on the same level as a state or any other subject of international law. Consequently, its position is analogous, but not identical to that of a national state."

The document presented by Prigione is an explanation from the theological standpoint of the Church, an attempt to relate it to earthly aspects, without forgetting that its origin is divine, but that on earth, it maintains representativeness in its hierarchy.

He continued: "This appears to be clear because of the way in which states normally deal with the Church as a perfect society. The exclusive right of the universal church to manage its own affairs is recognized in countless agreements between states and the Church and has been from earliest times.

"The principles and all those invested with power to govern have recognized it in theory and practice. In the language of treaties, in the handling of affairs, in sending and receiving ambassadors and other types of official dealings, they have become accustomed to dealing with the Church as an illegitimate [sic] supreme power."

In another report presented by Reverend Carlos Corral on the topic "The Principle of Religious Freedom, the Limits of Religious Freedom, Competence and Incompetence of the State on Religious Matters," it is stated that:

"Religious freedom is without a doubt one of the human rights most talked about since Vatican II. It is one of the great conquests of mankind against all intolerance and discrimination.

"On the personal level, the speaker said, "the state has the duty of guaranteeing every person's immunity against religious persecution either from private parties or social groups and any human power, this in such a way that on religious matters, no one is prevented from acting in accordance with it (religion), either in public or private, alone or in association with others, within established limits."

In another section of the report, he states that on the family level. it is up to the state to oversee the right that the poor have of directing and freely sustaining domestic religious life. They have the right to determine the type of education their children shall receive and to choose the schools or means of communication they will have."

Finally, Reverend Corral said in his report that on the community level, "the state has the right to assure religious communities of freedom or immunity from persecution in religious matters."

Episcopal Conference

On the third day of work of the Mexican Episcopal Conference, which has gathered together bishops from all over the country, there is still a lack of information and the media are excluded from observing the work of the priests.

Following their work, when the bishops are preparing to take "their sacred food," one could note a very marked division between priests attending the meeting.

While Church officials, headed by Monsignor Geronimo Prigione, gather together to eat in luxury restaurants in the city, protected by a strict security belt preventing them from being bothered in the least, other bishops, mainly from the Southern Pacific zone, attend family meetings where they are given aid and their meals.

Monsignor Ernesto Corripio Ahumada and a small number of bishops use fancy vehicles to move about from the meeting center to unknown places where they take their meals.

A very significant case occurred today, when a group of bishops led by Geronimo Prigione invited Ignacio Burgoa Orihuela, doctor of law, to a luxurious restaurant in this city.

Burgoa Orihuela, who had presented a report from this city, arrived accompanied by the priests to the restaurant, which had previously been cordoned off by countless security officers, who refused to identify themselves. Access was denied to any person not associated with the prelates.

The public at the restaurant was irritated over the attitude of the security officers who ordered certain families to be escorted out and taken to other tables.

The media asked organizers to give them more information in order to prevent any distortion of information -- however limited -- published, which is often incomprehensible because of excessively technical theological terms.

Concerns Over Growing Poverty

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 31 Jan 85 p 33-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 30 Jan--Bishops from the pastoral region of the West have reported that the current problem of poverty affects everyone, but not equally. Its anguishing consequences befall the vast majority of the very poor. In this region, many families no longer have three complete meals a day.

Monsignor Ramon Godinez Flores, one of the three assistant bishops of this city, in a document released today, expressed the opinion of the bishops of this region concerning citizens' right to a dignified standard of living.

The document states that every human being, every family, has the right to "a decorous standard of living." Every person or family in any situation, even of great poverty or inflation, has the natural right to own and use the necessary goods that assure him of food, clothing, housing, education, work, rest and medical care. To deny or impede this right is a serious attack on the dignity of persons and families.

In another part of the document, it is stated that there are growing numbers of families who feel [in]capable of acquiring the minimum goods needed to survive, due to insufficient wages or because they emigrate to the big cities where they can find no place to live.

We urgently ask businessmen, the document states, to display a profound sense of human and Christian responsibility and to reduce their profit margins, continue to offer jobs and maintain production. We know that many are acting with a serene sense of responsibility in these critical times.

Lona on PRI Detractors

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 31 Jan 85 p 33-A

[Article by Juan Gerardo Reyes and Eduardo Chimely]

[Text] Guadalajara, Jal., 30 Jan--"There is no danger that pressures from "minor" politicians in the PRI will influence the removal of any bishop from any diocese in the country, inasmuch as within the Church, the election of prelates is not political, as in the mechanisms of that party. Rather, our system is regulated by a hierarchical method involving many factors, principally the preparation of the clergy.

This was the opinion of the bishop of Tehuantepec, Arturo Lona Reyes, and Father Ricardo Cuellar, executive secretary of the Episcopal Conference, who were interviewed on information published concerning the fact that 20 municipal presidents from Oaxaca, headed by Teodoro Rojo Altamirano, would ask the apostolic delegate in Mexico, Girolamo Prigione, to remove the bishop in question.

Lona Reyes labeled such stories as false, after noting that he had requested a private audience with Prigione.

"I talked with the apostolic delegate, who told me that they had not requested any private hearing with him and that furthermore, he knows my pastoral work. They forget that a year ago, when I returned from Rome, I brought them the satisfaction that the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, approved my pastoral work and that it is not connected in any way with communism or Marxism," Lona said.

Pressures against the bishop of Tehuantepec, as he himself said, are motivated by the fear of the municipal presidents, who think that he would intervene in the election of federal deputies soon to be held.

Concerning this matter, the prelate emphasized that under no circumstances would he intervene in this type of election. He further noted that his work is solely that of accompanying the people, for his only interest is the Indians and the peasants, who make up most of the population of the region.

He also stated that in no way, within the framework of his pastoral work, does he speak in favor of the PSUM [Unified Socialist Party of Mexico], the PRI or the PAN [National Action Party]. In the final analysis, we try to convince "our people of their civic rights."

He went on to say that he would make no formal accusation against Rojo Altamirano because "I am not going to engage in a controversy or lower my work to his level."

He said that there is no danger that pressures from these politicians could give rise to removals in the Church, since the appointment of priests is completely distinct from the method the PRI uses in naming its candidates.

He also denied that there would soon be a meeting of bishops from the Southern Pacific region to study the theology of liberation, a meeting to which he was supposedly not invited.

The rich man must make his wealth serve a social function that at the same time creates work.

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BISHOPS LONA, RUIZ REITERATE DRUG CONSPIRACY CHARGES

Mexico City EXCELSIOR in Spanish 16 Feb 85 'States' section p 2

[Article by Victor Payan]

[Text] Tehuantepec, Oax., 15 Feb--Bishops Arturo Lona Reyes and Samuel Ruiz once again condemned the scheming of Federal Judicial Police in the southeastern region of the country today, a region where there has been an increase in marihuana growing, the percentage of arable land used for narcotics and armed confrontations claiming the lives of innocent victims, all resulting from the ignorance and poverty of the peasantry.

The two priests warned that this is no ordinary denunciation that would unleash repression, which solves nothing and which plunges the people into violence. Rather, they wish to bring hope and justice to the Indians and those who are enticed into vice and the degeneration that practically enslaves them.

Lona Reyes said that all the efforts supposedly being thrown into the fight against marihuana growing have failed due to the fact that "the power of the mafia cannot be explained if one does not assume complicity with high officials." He pointed out that "they should make an exhaustive special investigation into the Coordinating Office of the Office of Attorney General of the Republic, headed by Antonio Sam Lopez, whose attitude is totally irregular."

The prelates said that at the present time, there is no caution in the planting of marihuana and that there are many villages where entire families are involved in the growing of narcotics with total protection of the authorities, as in the case of Cerro del Venado and Rio Hondo, where marihuana is openly occupying fields once planted in corn and beans.

They noted that the peasants are forced to plant the drug because marihuana represents a great deal of money and little work. Furthermore, they are made to believe that there is nothing illegal about the crop and all kinds of implements and seed are provided. Thousands of pesos are paid to them in advance, which for them is an ideal means of escaping poverty and having enough money to support their families, even buy weapons to protect their lives or marihuana fields.

The first time that the bishops from the Southern Pacific region, including Lona Reyes and Samuel Ruiz, reported that the authorities had schemed with

the drug traffickers and that marihuana growing had increased alarmingly in Oaxaca especially was from the pulpit in 1982. They repeated the charge last year and are making it again now because, in their opinion, the situation is growing worse.

The two bishops gave this correspondent a mimeographed pamphlet 32 pages long warning: "Bishops in the Southern Pacific Region," followed by: "Narcotics Trafficking, Pastoral Concern."

It was dated February 1985 and contains an analysis of the problem, which the two bishops describe as follows:

"The production, trafficking in and consumption of narcotics is an extremely alarming phenomenon. It tramples all laws of society and violates the fundamental rights of the citizens. We cannot remain indifferent when, in our society, the death of the poor is planned or occurs. We wish, through our appeal, to help open the eyes of the peasants and not let themselves be deceived. We call on the authorities to prevent the repetition of deaths caused by marihuana and poppy trafficking.

"We remind civil authorities of their responsibility for halting the production, trafficking in and consumption of narcotics. Drug trafficking does not end with the elimination of the producer peasants, the victims of the big mafias. To the communities involved in the cultivating of narcotics, we say: It is not true that this type of crop is legal. It does not solve the problem of hunger. It does not improve the life of the peasant."

Satanic Power of Drugs

"The money obtained through narcotics corrupts the government because it forces it to prostitute itself to disregard the law in exchange for a cut of the earnings. It causes a profound maladjustment of the community, which immediately engenders divisions and discord. The supposed beneficiaries of marihuana are an easy prey to consumerism, alcoholism and even the arms market.

"We have heard the anguished clamor from the communities that are suffering the acts of violence caused by narcotics.

"The Indians and peasants in the Southern Pacific region are an easy prey for narcotics traffickers, among other things, because of a lack of fertilizer and machinery to make the earth produce better and because of the extreme poverty of the Indians and peasants. Many have fallen into the hands of national and foreign crime rings, which order them to go to jail or be murdered if they refuse to continue "cooperating." Furthermore, anyone who informs dies. Anyone who quits dies.

"The producers who show the greatest 'cooperation' receive as a bonus weapons for the alleged purpose of defending themselves against any attack, but in the heat of the alcohol they are constantly given to put them in a stupor. The very peasants are the ones who attack the villagers and these situations of violence frequently end in acts of vengeance and fratricidal deaths.

"With the power of money and above all, the power of arms, the narcotics traffickers practically control the life of the people and manipulate community authorities, removing them in many cases, imposing their own and establishing their reign of terror and death throughout the zone."

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