

# USCC's Fr. McGuire Challenges Truth of Wanderer's Chile Report

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Fr. Frederick McGuire, C.M., head of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Latin American Division, has challenged William H. Marshner's report "Chile First Hand — A Report From Santiago," which was published in the May 23rd issue (and subsequent issues) of *The Wanderer*, describing the story as "propagandizing for the bloodstained Chilean junta."

Marshner has responded to the charges, calling them libelous, and he demanded an immediate retraction.

Writing in the May issue of *Latin America Calls*, a USCC publication, Fr. McGuire called Marshner's report a distortion. He said that it contradicted a report from the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), which stated that "severe torture is carried out systematically by the junta."

The priest added that the ICJ report was made on the basis of interviews with various government ministers, judges, advocates, academic lawyers, and "others concerned with human rights, including Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez of Santiago."

Fr. McGuire went on to say that the label of "eccentric," by which Marshner described the persons whose only contact with Chile is through revolutionaries, must be affixed to an ICJ member, who is a former assistant U.S. Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, because "he believes torture and repression are common place in Chile."

"The *Wanderer's* eccentric label must also be applied to Auxiliary Bishop Fernando Ariztia of Santiago and his fellow Chilean eccentrics, Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz, and High Rabbi Angel Kreiman," said the priest. They are members of the Committee for Cooperation for Peace in Chile, which has compiled dossiers on

"hundreds of cases of torture" in Chile.

Fr. McGuire called on the Catholic Press Association in the United States to make a "public statement on the obvious violation of journalistic ethics implicit in a Catholic newspaper like *The Wanderer*, openly propagandizing for the bloodstained Chilean junta."

"I cannot believe that this *Wanderer* correspondent is merely a hopeless incompetent," said the official. "His reporting is a deliberate misrepresentation. It is scandalous that U.S. Catholics should be subject to reporting which denies the existence of flagrant human rights violations publicly documented by unimpeachable church and secular sources."

Fr. McGuire asserted that "this type of malicious propagandizing does not come under the protection of journalistic fair comment and criticism."

In a letter accompanying the Latin American Division publication, James Cotter, associate director of the division, said he challenged *The Wanderer's* "right to deny the facts of torture and social, economic repression and deliberately misrepresent the Chilean reality, painting the junta as altruistic and defamed by a Leftist world press."

In a statement released June 4th, Marshner responded to Fr. McGuire's charges and demanded a retraction of the accusations against him.

"It is disquieting enough that Fr. McGuire should choose to respond to my report with a call for the censorship of my opinions and with a libelous attack on my character," Marshner said. "It is even worse, however, that he should do so without taking the trouble to

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## In This Issue . . .

Part II of William H. Marshner's exclusive report on the situation in Chile, the report that has the U.S.C.C.'s Latin American Bureau in a frenzy.

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read my report in its entirety and without making the least effort to contact me in order to learn my precise views. As a result, he attributes to me things I simply never said.

“For instance, I never denied that some significant number of political prisoners had been tortured in Chile. I never said that I ‘could not find’ such people or other enemies of the present government. On the contrary I explicitly said that they could be found if one went out of one’s way to look for them — pointing that one did have to go out of one’s way. There is just no getting around the fact that the junta is a popular government. My report argued, therefore, that the narrow preoccupation of Fr. McGuire and many other commentators with purely civil-libertarian questions had the effect of distorting the ordinary reality of Chile’s life under the junta beyond recognition.

“As to Fr. McGuire’s two insinuations that I am some kind of ‘propagandist’ for the Chilean government and that I am ‘guilty of deliberate misrepresentation,’ they are neither true nor worthy of reply, except perhaps in a court of law. I expect a prompt retraction.

“Finally, if Fr. McGuire really believes it is morally and ethically wrong to defend the present government, than I challenge him to apply to Archbishop Tagle of Valparaiso, the same ferocious anathemas he applies to *The Wanderer* and to me. For Archbishop Tagle, just three weeks ago, defended both the junta itself and its anti-Communist policies in a pastoral letter on reconciliation and the Holy Year (cf. *El Mercurio*, international edition, May 13th-19th, 1974). Even more recently, twenty-one priests in Santiago issued an open letter to the same effect (cf. *Washington Post*, June 1st, p. F-1).”