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Joseph Matt
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Alphonse J. Matt
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Editor: A. J. Matt Jr.

Assistant Editors: Cindy Kinning Paslawski
Peggy Moen

Contributing Editors

William H. Marshner

Frank Morriss

John J. Mulloy

Edith Myers

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Regrets Are Not Enough

By A. J. MATT JR.

This week, we conclude William Marshner's perceptive and informative series on developments in Chile — a report that has great portent for the Church in the United States. There is little doubt that leftist factions in the Church in Chile did much to prepare that nation to accept an Allende as president and who aided and abetted the Marxist class struggle that inflicted such great suffering on the Chilean people during the Allende regime.

That such leftist factions exist in the Church in the United States cannot be gainsaid. That such factions are effective can be demonstrated by the growing political radicalization of significant numbers of priests and religious as well as some among the laity. Unfortunately, this radicalization often is encouraged and supported by personnel directly in the employ of the Episcopacy of this Country. For years, the Division for Latin America — USCC, has harbored a nest of ideologues whose activities and utterances have reflected partisan political bias rather than the pastoral concern one would rightly expect from employees of the Bishops.

A case in point is Fr. Frederick A. McGuire, C.M., Director of the USCC's Division for Latin America. The ink was barely dry on *The Wanderer's* first installment (May 23rd, 1974) of the Marshner report when Fr. McGuire, in the official house organ of the Latin American Division, *Latin America Calls*, charged *The Wanderer* with "propagandizing for the bloodstained Chilean junta" and asserted that Marshner's report was a "deliberate misrepresentation." Now that the lengthy series on Chile has been completed, no fair-minded reader could possibly agree with Fr. McGuire's highly partisan charges.

In fact, in response to an inquiry made by this writer, the General Secretary of the USCC, Bishop James S. Rausch has hastened to dissociate the Conference from Fr. McGuire's intemperate and libelous assertions. In a letter to the editor dated July 17th, 1974, Bishop Rausch declared:

"The comments to which you refer, by Father McGuire and Mr. Cotter, are expressions of their personal

opinion, and are not statements of the Latin America Division or the United States Catholic Conference."

And in a letter to William Marshner dated August 5th, even Fr. McGuire backtracked from his initial charges. His letter to Mr. Marshner declared:

"I wish to express my regret for having, in my column in *Latin America Calls*, described as 'deliberate misrepresentation' your coverage of the Chilean situation as published in *The Wanderer*. I, therefore, withdraw the statement.

"This retraction will appear in the forthcoming issue of our publication in my column."

Whatever these statements might accomplish by way of undoing the damage to *The Wanderer* and Mr. Marshner caused by Fr. McGuire's outburst, they do nothing to assure the Catholics of this Country that the USCC intends to pull the reins on the partisan ideologues within its ranks.

With the political mood in this Country daily becoming more sensitive in the wake of Watergate and the subsequent crisis in the presidency, the Church simply cannot afford the luxury of political ideologues within its official household. Even more, the Church in this Country cannot allow advocates of misguided socio-political "reforms" further to alienate the Catholic people from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As recently as July 31st, Pope Paul warned the faithful against so-called Christian liberation which is "opposed to our faith and our Church" (see p. 1 this issue). While recognizing the legitimate social dimension to "Christian liberation," the Holy Father warned Catholics "to take care that Christian liberation is not used for mainly political purpose, nor put in the service of ideologies in fundamental contrast with the religious conception of our life, nor subjugated by socio-political movements hostile to our faith and to our Church, as worldwide experience still going on today unfortunately shows. Let us not be blind!"

We believe it is not too much to expect our spiritual shepherds, our Bishops, to take heed and to act upon this timely warning from the Vicar of Christ.