

Andean Report by Gerardo Terán Canal

Cultural relativism pushed in Chile

Advocates of the "pluralistic" state want to redefine the role of education and the Armed Forces.

Like the rest of Ibero-America's erstwhile "democracies," the government of Chilean President Patricio Aylwin is attempting to undermine the principles of western, Christian culture which underlie the country's most important institutions, and still represent a moral reserve for a population subjected to almost 20 years of "flea market" economics. One of the vehicles through which this is being promoted is the government's educational reform, which requires altering the Constitution; another is the attempt to eliminate obligatory service in the Armed Forces.

The two issues are related. The 1990 book *The Military and Democracy: The Future of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, which *EIR* has made famous as the "Bush manual" for destroying the continent's armed forces, warns that the militaries of the Southern Cone of Ibero-America in particular have a "dangerous" commitment to defending the values of the "Christian West . . . honor, dignity, loyalty" (see *EIR*, Jan. 11, 1991). The book argues that such an outlook is "messianic" and "ethicist," and must be replaced with a more "pragmatic" view.

Education Minister Ricardo Lagos, a member of the Chilean Socialist Party, recently presented the government's educational reform bill to Congress. Its basic axiom is that "the state has no precise conception of man, because it is a non-confessional state."

Representatives of the Chilean Catholic Church immediately re-

sponded to this assault on natural law. In statements published in *El Mercurio* July 7, Msgr. Felipe Bacarezza, of the church's Doctrinal Commission, stated, "I think it is a fraud to say that no conception of man exists, and at the same time, to try to educate."

In an interview with *El Mercurio* June 28, Monsignor Bacarezza had spoken at greater length on this topic. "To say that an educational document has no conception of man is impossible, because then it is not education. . . . The problem with this document is that it is relativistic." Bacarezza, who belongs to the Vatican's Congregation for Education, added that "relativism argues that all conceptions are equally good, and that is not true—it's impossible. It cannot be true that man is—and simultaneously is not—a creation of God; or that man's ultimate purpose is to take pleasure in God and at the same time that he has no purpose."

Msgr. Antonio Moreno, the archbishop of Concepción, who is a member of the same commission, charged that the educational reform's purpose "is to teach values and culture; but it's not clear exactly *what* principles government agencies will use to develop this new culture."

On June 23, another bishop, Msgr. Javier Prado addressed the church's concern with education and culture when he called on the Aylwin government to ban a performance by the Iron Maiden rock group, which he characterized as a "psychological microbe" threatening the nation's youth. He charged that the group's

songs deliver subliminal "demonic" messages, and warned that the group's presence in Chile would encourage the proliferation of sects and rites harmful to human beings.

In refuting the bishops, Education Minister Lagos simply confirmed the church's worst fears: "The state cannot be, or express, a monopoly over only one truth," he said, "because then the pluralistic and democratic state cannot exist. We are promoting values based on the human person and these are the values concentrated in Chilean society."

Military leaders have responded sharply to attempts by some parliamentarians to eliminate obligatory military service, seeing these as related to the assault on western culture. During this year's ceremony swearing in new Army recruits held July 9, Brig. Gen. Arturo Silva Soupe, vice commander of the Army's Second Division, stated that "obligatory military service is nothing more than the unalterable extension of the national will to remain united in the search for the general common good."

That is why, the general said, "when we note with concern that in some sectors of modern society, there is a tendency to make everything relative—for example, discussing the usefulness or the justice of military service—this only reinforces our absolute conviction that the correct path is that indicated by the law and faith in . . . the spiritual, the values and traditions of our Fatherland."

General Silva Souper called on the new recruits not to allow themselves to be "dragged down by the agnostic materialistic current which appears to be overpowering the new generation's youth," and he urged them not to fear "fighting the negation of those values which allow us to clearly identify that which is on the side of the good, and that which is not."