7-23-1991

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Peru: Catholic Bishops Report On Declining Social Welfare Conditions

by Barbara Khol
Category/Department: General
Published: Tuesday, July 23, 1991

According to a report released July 21 by the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, 70% of Peruvians under 15 years of age live in "extreme poverty, chronic malnutrition, physical-moral abandonment, and violence." Conference secretary general Miguel Cabrejos said that the projected infant mortality rate for the 1990-1995 period is 78 per 1,000 live births. Regarding nutrition, the report said 45% of Peruvian children suffer some degree of malnutrition. The Catholic bishops said, "The government, preoccupied with immediate...integration [in international finance], has left aside...sectors as essential as health and education. No more than 12% of the national budget has been allocated to basic services." Next, the report stated that "if we do not have sufficient fiscal resources, at least priority...should be given to social problems." Further "adjustments" affecting the pocketbooks of Peru's impoverished workers are not possible. In addition to rebel violence which victimizes children, "poverty, abandonment and mistreatment are also types of violence..." The Church announced a project to partially resolve high unemployment among young persons via the creation of a temporary work system. Thus far, the clergy has obtained assistance from national and international specialists, and a bank of job openings has been developed with support by the private sector. (Basic data from AFP, 07/21/91)

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