

# UNITED STATES: World Congress of the Apostolate of the Sea

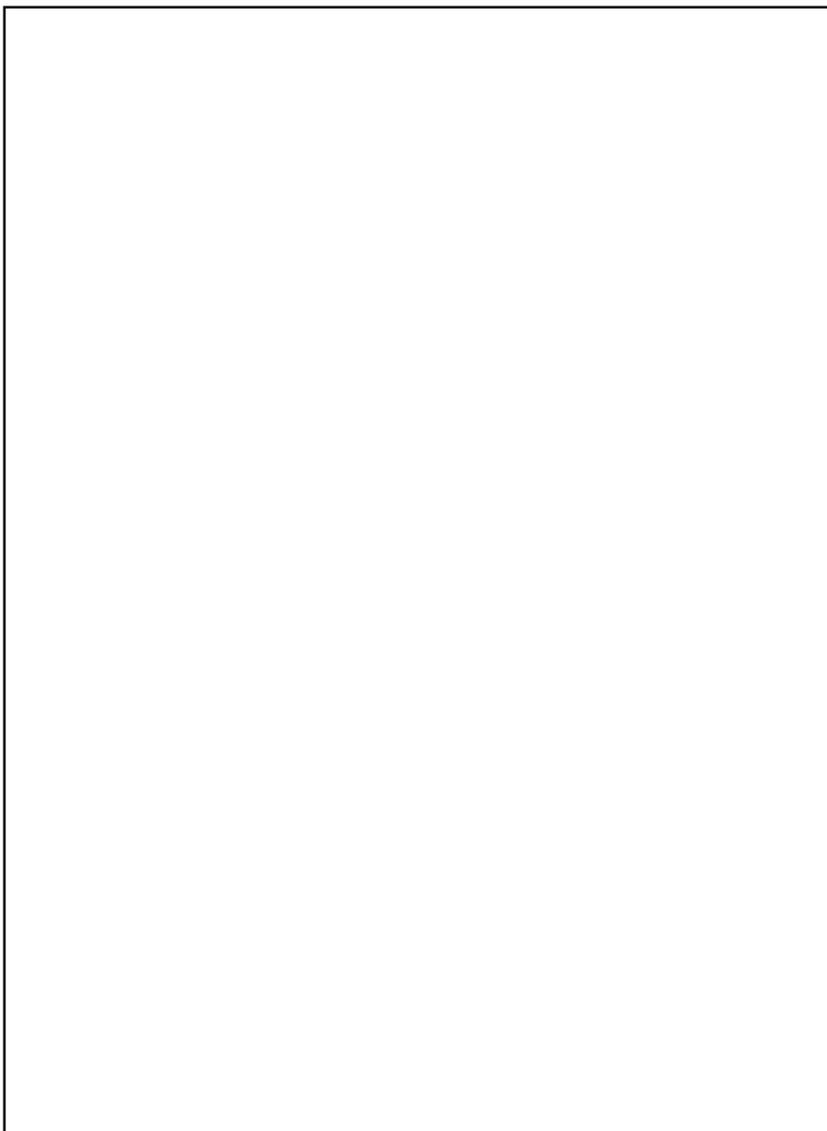
The World Congress of the Apostolate of the Sea brought together, in Houston, Texas, U.S.A., October 8- 13, 1992, more than 230 delegates from 41 countries, who work mainly as Chaplains for sailors and fishermen and as hosts in Stella Maris houses in ports. A strong ecumenical spirit united this mainly Catholic Congress with representatives of the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and other Churches, together with observers from fishermen's organizations, merchant marine officers and support organizations.

ICSF was officially invited to participate in the debates and to present its organizational bases in a Plenary Session. Also present were Marcos do Rosario Pereira and his wife Mathilde, of the Brazilian National Fishermen's Organization, and James Smith of CCFD of France and Jean Vacher, of Mauritius Island, both members of ICSF.

In the final recommendations, attention was called to "the importance of complying with the Maritime Conventions of the International Labour Office, which guarantee the minimum rights and safety of fishermen and sailors. The lack of responsibility for the human person on the part of some shipowners, governmental offices and other persons concerned with maritime affairs, leads to the exploitation of sailors. Unacceptable contracts are still being required and cases of double accounting are still coming to light. Often, the necessary measures are not taken to provide indemnity for unemployment, illness, accidents and even work related incapacity. Life and work on board often take place in deficient housing and nutritional conditions. Some wages are insufficient to sustain a family. All this can be observed specially in industrial fishing which, in many countries, is the profession with the highest rates of accidents and deaths".

With respect to artisan fishing, the document states that 'they are the poorest and most marginated, politi-

cally, socially and economically, of all fishermen. They are frequently left to their own resources in the face of enormous difficulties: the depletion of fish resources; the destruction of fishing zones by national and foreign ships; industrial and urban contamination; over-exploitation due to the use of non-selective fishing gear. Those same artisan fishermen provide food for the costal populations who suffer hunger and have the greatest interest in the protection of marine resources and the costal environment. They need strong support if they are to organize, achieve improved safety conditions and acquire better equipment".



## PERU: Organization of fishworkers

The artisan fishworkers of Peru have organized in FIUPAP, the *Federation of Integration and Unity of Artisan Fish workers of Peru*. The first national Congress was held in Caleta Chorrillos, Lima, from June 24 to 29, 1991, with 70 delegates from 25 local organizations throughout the country. Work was organized in 7 Commissions for the study of the main problems affecting fish-workers: marine resources, infrastructure, finance, fishing legislation, commercialization, social security and illness, specially cholera. In 1992, FIUPAP organized 2 National Assemblies, extending its network to nearly all of Peru's small ports and artisan fishing communities, including those of Lake Titicaca and the Amazon region.

The artisan fishworkers of Peru were associated with the federations of industrial fishworkers, who are integrated into the fishing industry, one of the largest in the world in terms of tonnage taken for fish meal production. Those federations are the FPP, Federation of Peruvian Fishworkers, and, subsequently, the FETCHAP, Federation of Crews for Fishing for Human Consump-

tion. With the creation of their own organization, Peruvians may be more autonomous in their decisions and the acquisition of services, specially credit, consultations and social security, without being subject to political or governmental conditioning factors.

Hernan, member of ICSF, is one of their advisors and has helped with the legal and social configuration and development of the organization. Peruvian fisheries are passing through a severe crisis at this time, which affects all fishworkers. The Fujimori Government, which is strongly authoritarian, is privatizing the fishing industry and foreign enterprises are gaining control of the companies. However, the Government is lending strong support to artisan fishworkers by way of boats, port improvements, means of commercialization and technical advice. For this reason, Peruvian fishworkers will have to strengthen their organization in order to maintain their autonomy and the defense of their rights. Mexico has more than 10,000 kms of coastline on both

## MEXICO The network of costal fishworkers

oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific. Some 330,000 fishworkers use a total of 73,000 boats to catch approximately 1.5 million tons, with a commercial value of around 1 billion dollars. In 1989, there were 94,000 persons organized in cooperatives, 25,000 artisan fishworkers organized in fishing unions or "ejidales", 5,000 workers in private fishing companies and 4,000, in semi-State companies. Most fishworkers live and work in the states of Veracruz, Sonora, Sinaloa, Tabasco, Baja California, Campeche, and Guerrero.

Since 1935, fishworker organizations have been dominated by the cooperatives, controlled by the vertical structures dominant in that country. However, those cooperatives benefited from the law which gave them exclusive rights to exploit numerous species, including prawns, oysters and the fish species with the highest commercial value.

A new organization emerged in 1993, generated by a coordinating instance for support organisms and a significant group of 58 cooperatives and associations in 9 states of the Republic. The constitutional meeting for the *National Network of Coastal Fishworkers of Mexico*

was held on January 30 - 31, 1993, in Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan and in Petacalco, Guerrero, neighboring cities on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The organization bears the name of Jose Luis Valdovinos, a regional leader who promoted the organization and was assassinated by persons unknown in 1992

In their conclusions, the fishworkers denounce the arbitrary treatment of poor fishworkers handed out by functionaries and politicians and call for renewed defense of their rights, principally more speedy processing for the legal constitution of their organizations, greater control of the sources of contamination, access to social security services, the elimination of the interference of political parties in the internal life of their organizations, participation in the debate about laws and regulations related to fishing, and greater coordination with Universities and research and development centres:

The organization has a national coordinating committee, made up of representatives of the diverse states. Melecio Perez Chan, of the fishing cooperative of San Pedro, Tabasco, who participated in the International

Conference in Rome, in 1984, and in Bangkok, in 1990, represents the fishworkers of Tabasco and has shown interest in maintaining fraternal contact with the fishworker and support organizations of other countries

which support the struggles of the fishworkers of Mexico.

In June, 1992, a delegation of union leaders from Chil-

## **PHILIPPINES: Visit of Chilean and Peruvian fishworkers**

ean and Peruvian fishworker organizations were invited by OXFAM-ENGLAND to participate in an interchange experience with fishworker organizations in the Philippines, specially those linked to NACFAR, NATIONAL COALITION FOR AQUATIC REFORM. The central focus of this interchange was to learn about environmental, technological and organizational conditions in that country and to learn the bases for presenting projects to the United Nations and other development agencies. The delegates visited numerous communities and visited organization leaders on more than 8 islands of that island country.

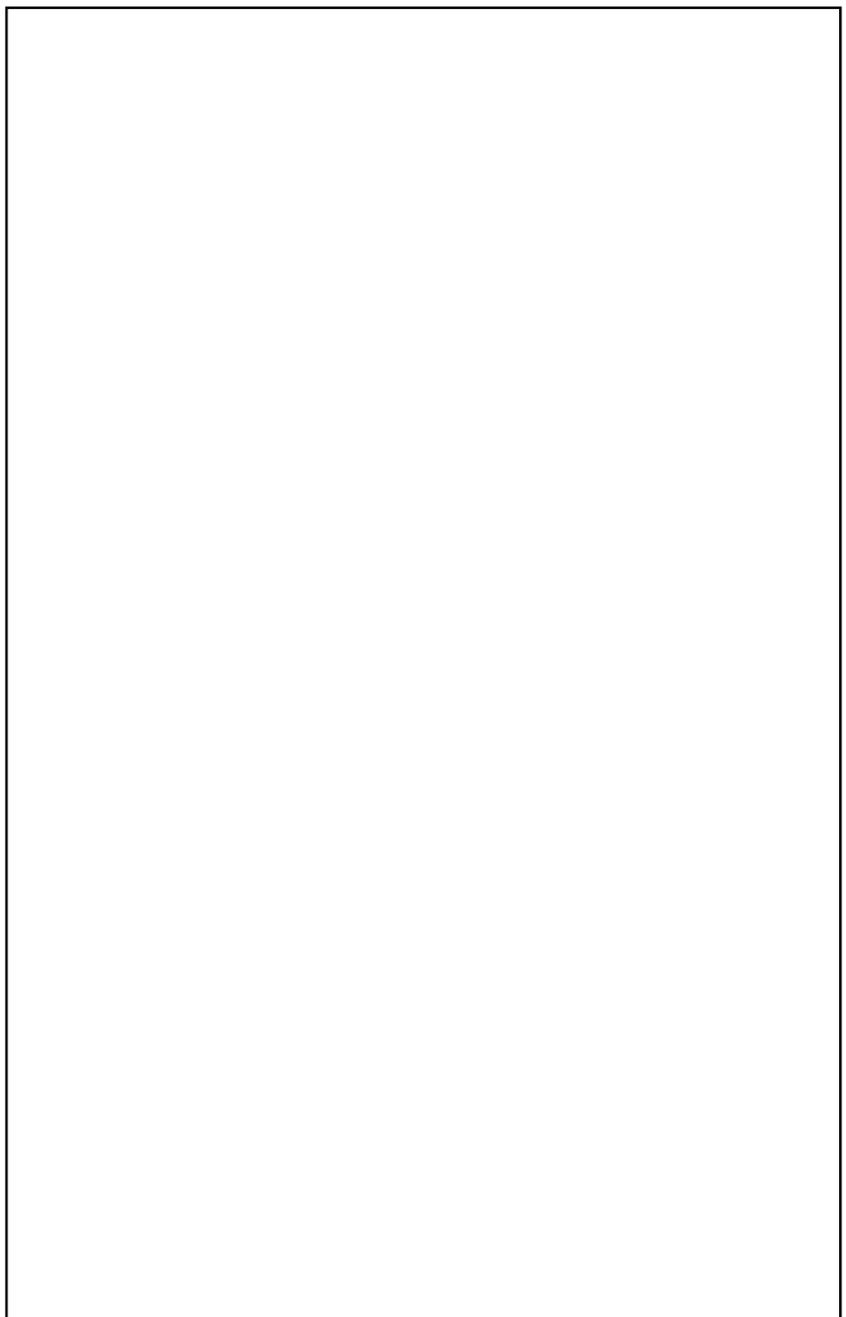
Oscar Vergara, of Arica, Chile, who was then a leader in CONAPACH, commented on that trip:

“Philippine fishworkers have family based organizations, do not participate in the government and do not obtain concrete results. They face serious difficulties. From the technical point of view, their vessels are very traditional with little navigational or catch capacity. The country is very poor in fishing resources. If someone catches 10 kilos, he is considered rich. It’s a night’s work, with 12 sets of nets, to catch 3 kilos. Fishworkers there say that the Japanese have depleted fish populations which, together with severe water contamination, has damaged fishing. The Government supports trolling enterprises. There is an extensive campaign under way to combat contamination, to defend against the cutting of the mangroves and the occupation of the coast by prawn farms. They want 7 kms of coast as an exclusive zone for artisan fishing.

‘I came back concerned because in Chile and Peru we may arrive at the same state if we do not protect our resources- We decided to maintain permanent contact with them so as to help them in their struggle against

contamination. From the technical point of view, we could help them in the ways of managing resources so as to improve their catches and living conditions. Philippine fish workers live as foreigners in their own country, on their own coasts, reduced to seeing resources carried off by other companies.”

Dear Editor:



## CORRESPONDENCE:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your magazine SAMUDRA. I enjoyed your editorial very much.

I was very pleased to note that Chile has passed a law which reserves a 5 mile zone for artisan fishing. That is an important advance.

I was also pleased to note that the artisan fishworkers of Lamon Bay, of the Philippines, successful in obliging their Municipality to that Bay to industrial fishing.

Already in July, 1984, in Rime, during the international conference of artisan fishworkers, I had suggested the creation of a 20 mile reserve zone for traditional artisan fishworkers. I was supported by the fishworkers but the so-called "intellectuals" rejected my proposition of 20 miles, which was already a compromise given that 180 miles would still be left to the industrial ships, together with the open seas beyond the 200 mile limit. This last problem is being considered by the FAO today, although unfortunately, not the 20 mile zone!

Why 20 miles? I requested the Brussels Commission to not authorize European Community ships to operate within the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the countries of the South. The following suggestion was made: **with regard to small costal, or traditional, fishing, it would be better to reserve that zone to which those fishworkers have access. Given that**

**the craft of artisan fishworkers can reach 20 or 21 miles in three hours**, that suggestion seemed wise to me. Since then, I have proposed it consistently, to FAO, in Brussels, to the European Parliament, to the Government in Paris, etc.

On reading the document you sent me, titled "How to feed the Third World", I see that the Brussels Commission could easily include this clause in its treaties with developing countries. The Governments of the South, which would have the right to decide with respect to that zone, will not be decisive for fear of losing the monies to be gained through the treaties already established.

And the small artisan fishworkers, who are not consulted when those treaties are signed, have only one means to exert pressure, violence, to defend their interests and those of costal populations.

Therefore, I would appreciate seeing my suggestion with respect to a 20 mile costal reserve as EEZ, printed in capital letters in SAMUDRA, without necessarily mentioning my name.

H.C. – Honorary Senator  
In November, 1992, eight European NGOs met with the

## **BELGIUM:** **“Battle for Fish” International Seminar**

European Community (EC) to establish a framework for fisheries agreements between EC fishing companies and less developed countries, which would lead to broader perspectives for development. As a result of that meeting, the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA) was created.

On December 1, 1992, CFFA held an International Seminar, in Brussels (Belgium), called The Battle for Fish Conference. Sixty nine countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) participated, all interested in reviewing fishing treaties with Europe. Diplomats of diverse countries, Representatives to the European Parliament, specialist news reporters, representatives of European fishworkers and delegates from a large number of governmental organizations attended the Conference.

The objective of the Conference was to discover the best way to design equitable fishing treaties and to find the way to revise existing agreements.

The arguments put forward by the participants were: respect for marine ecosystems; the conservation of fish resources; sustenance of coastal populations; technological progress for those populations through the development of artisan and industrial fishing, etc. Emphasis was given to the need for financial compensation, adequate to the exploitation of national waters, with mention being made of the threat to European fishworkers and their jobs, arising from the supply of high quality fish by Third World fishworkers.

The delegation from Namibia raised its voice: “We are a country which has recently gained its independence at the cost of sufferings known to all. We wish to end the exploitation of our seas. We, today, and our children tomorrow, have a right to eat. We seek development for our country, specially in terms of fishing rights. What will be left, when everything has been stolen, even our hopes for the future?”

## **ARGENTINA:** **Treaty with the European Economic Community**

members of the Community, has been difficult in terms of relations with African countries, for example. The impact of new treaties has been initially negative for fishworkers and for those countries, in general. Although significant financial resources have been involved, CEE ships have taken over artisan fishing grounds in

The National Collective of Fishworkers of Senegal (CNPS) also spoke: “Artisan fishworkers take 75% of the catch, 15% is taken by the local fishing industry, and only 10% goes to foreign ships. We call for recognition of artisan fishing and seek a portion of the benefits provided for in the ACP agreements, so that artisan fishing can develop as a profession and continue to organize”.

Are European fishworkers and their families really informed with respect to the continued deterioration of their profession, and with respect to the inequality in the precedents set between Europe and ACP countries? Do the people of Korea and Taiwan know that their well-being is often based on the exploitation of the Philippine people? Do Polish families imagine the harsh conditions to which Polish fishing crews are subjected, as they exploit the waters of Latin America? The diversity of perspectives reveals the complexity of the problem.

Among the Conference results was the agreement to review Common Fishing Policy (CFP), which will shape EC management of this issue during the coming 10 years. With considerable reductions in the CE fleet foreseen, significant impact in ACP coastal fisheries is expected. The process of renegotiation (together with the end of term in established treaties) creates an opportunity for improving and implementing more just fishing agreements, with a view to providing more equitable benefits for all parties. Of particular concern to many ACP nations is that their fish stocks will be harvested in a sustainable and productive way, ensuring the full mobilization of their potential to serve as an engine for much needed social and economic development.

The Report of the Conference, produced by CFFA, as well as the expositions and studies presented, are available from the Office of the ICSF Secretariat, in Brussels.

European experience, specially that of some of the new

Senegal, for example, destroying fishing skills and triggering social conflict. The treaties have given priority to companies connected with local governing groups and have generated profits at the cost of artisan fishworkers and the countries, as a whole. Serious conflicts arose in Namibia over the presence of Spanish

trolling fleets taking herring. That new country expelled those fleets from its jurisdictional waters, while a new treaty with the CEE has not yet been signed, given that Namibia is seeking to impose severe restrictions.

Europeans claim to be aware of those difficulties and, for that reason, have created so-called "second generation treaties", such as that signed with Argentina at the end of 1992.

The main points of that treaty should be considered by fishworkers throughout the world because it may affect them eventually:

- The treaty will be in effect for 5 years and grants Community access to new fishing opportunities, of great commercial value, and will reduce the idle capacity of the European fleet considerably.
- It allows for catches of up to 250 tons annually of species which are very valuable commercially (including 120 thousand tons of hubbsi herring), conger and other resources.
- Access is given to foreign ships, many of which will fly the flags of member countries, while others will operate in temporary associations, through which they will have access to a third of the total catch quotas for the species mentioned in the treaty.
- The treaty allows for the permanent transfer of a

## **INDIA: SIFFS ship yards**

with the South Indian Federation of Fishworker Societies (SIFFS) has generated an interesting experience. That federation operates in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with 1070 Kms. of coastline, on which live around 100 thousand fishworkers. Of those, 6,500 are members of SIFFS, in 3 districts, 2 of which are in Kerala (Quilon, Trivandrum), while the other, Kanya Kumari, is in Tamil Nadu. 99% of the fishworkers are Christian, with the remaining 1%, Muslim, which implies great cultural homogeneity, specially in Kerala. The State-organized cooperatives are for owners only and do not function adequately. SIFFS grass-roots communities are registered as 'Village development societies', providing commercialization, savings and credit facilities.

Fish commercialization is carried out through auctions in each grass-roots community of between approximately 50 - 60 persons. One employee holds the auction, under the supervision of a committee. Fishworkers receive an advance on the sale and a receipt. During the day, they go to the office to receive the balance.

To generate savings, between 5% and 10% of each member's daily catch is retained in a savings pass book.

significant number of Community ships through the creation of joint companies, in, which Europeans may hold up to 100% of the capital. That part of the fleet, under the Argentinean flag, will have access to two thirds of total catch quotas.

- In exchange, the European Community will offer commercial concessions in favour of sales in the European market, by way of tariff reductions for fish product imports from Argentina.
- During the five year term of the treaty, the European Community will invest 162.5 million ECUs, European Monetary Units, of which 95.4 million will subsidize the joint ventures, 39.1 will be investments in those companies, and 28 million will go to a scientific programme and specific measures.
- The parties will seek to establish scientific and technological cooperation projects in order to promote the conservation and rational exploitation of resources and balanced development of the industry. Port facilities will be improved and professional and technical formation in the fishing sector will be promoted.

Only the future will demonstrate the impact of these treaties on the fishing economies of countries both in Asia and in Latin America.

In India, a group of ship building workshops associated

The money belongs to the fishworkers but is deposited in a bank and does not earn interest. Fishworkers may obtain loans. In each community, there is a 3% commission, a 2% compulsory savings rate and a 10% loan 'repayment rate.

They may apply for loans when fish are scarce, as occurs between January and April. Social security is limited, given that there is no illness insurance and pensions are paid by the Government. In case of accidents at sea, the Government pays 10,000 Rupees.

Each community pays interest to the district federation. SIFFS does not receive donations and is financed by boat construction activities and sales of motors. The SIFFS Boat Research and Production Center has undertaken research into new kinds of vessels constructed of marine plywood, protected by resin applications and fiber glass. 1,500 boats have been built since 1982. Some private concerns have copied the SIFFS model but have not been able to compete with SIFFS prices. The communities have received the support of Intermediate Technology, of Oxford, Great Britain, under the direct supervision of Brian Riordan. One of the pioneers



in applied research has been the Belgian engineer, Pierre Gillet. The original technology of the catamaran, built of coconut tree trunks has been studied and significant progress has been made toward the development of appropriate technology for sailing, with greater security, mobility and fishing capacity. The models produced are:

**QUILON:** 26 foot water line and Price: 31,800 Rupees.

**ANJENGO:** 26 foot water line beam. Price: 33,500 Rupees. 5 foot beam and 67 inch

**POZHIYOOR:** 28 foot water line and 71 inch beam.

All these boats have a tare weight between 500 and 600 Kilos. Fishworkers obtain bank loans to finance boat purchases.

This experience should be communicated to other fishworkers organizations throughout the world, in order to learn mechanisms for economic and productive association, based on internal savings and the appropriation of technologies according to their needs, possibilities and traditions.

Chilean fishworkers have made progress toward the consolidation of their organization and maturity in their growth strategies. The XIII National Congress, held in

## **CHILE: XIII CONAPACH Congress**

Costa Azul, Fifth Region (Chile), in November, 1992, was characterized by autonomy in the decisions taken and by the active participation of the representatives of each Commission.

Fishworker representatives now participate in the Fishing Councils and the Fund for the Development of Artisan Fishing, following close elections, in which short-

lived "ad hoc" organizations made an appearance.

CONAPACH participates in an extensive network of national and international contacts, within which the need for a united front, both domestically and with the fishworkers of the world, in order to defend resources and improve the quality of life in our communities, is

clear.

The Blue Europe is now present on the coasts of Latin America, through a fishing treaty signed with Argentina, making it necessary to be alert to its possible repercussions in Chile. The huge demand for fish products generated by a population of 300 million persons and the economic and political power of the European Block may

overcome our dependent structures.