

Prelates Report Plea for Justice

... (RNS) — The Catholic South African bishops' Conference in a new much-awaited official declaration, again condemned the government's apartheid (racial segregation) policy.

... However, initial reaction to the bishops' statement, among Catholics and others was one of disappointment.

... This resulted from the unusual brevity of the statement, which, it was felt, attracted attention to the Conference's previous pronouncements of apartheid, and that "justice must be done to all groups and persons of the spirit of charity should maintain all relationships."

IN MANY quarters it had been expected that the bishops would make a detailed and ringing denunciation of racism — so they have done in the past — especially in view of a recent statement by Archbishop Whelan, Bishop of Bloemfontein, which was interpreted as being generally in favor of apartheid.

The prelates criticized some aspects of the government's racial legislation as involving hardship and injustice, but stressed that "there is no teaching in the Church opposing the idea of a state composed of a number of national or racial groups maintained in their separate and distinct identity by the state whereof they form a part."

Issued after a plenary session here — in which Archbishop Whelan's statement was thoroughly discussed behind closed doors — the statement by the Bishops' Conference read:

"THE OFFICIAL policy of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference in respect to race relations is that set out in previous statements of the Conference, namely in 1932, 1937, 1940 and 1943.

"The Conference recognized the complex situation in South Africa. The bishops are concerned that law and order should be maintained, that justice be done to all groups and persons and that the spirit of charity should animate all relationships."

"Statements issued by individual bishops are made on their own responsibility," the Conference added, this being the only apparent reference to Archbishop Whelan's position.

Some observers here said the brevity of the bishops' statement was "deceptive."

They explained, that in referring to their previous pronouncements the bishops had quietly "shot down Archbishop Whelan's declaration with an earlier Conference statement which was unequivocal in opposition to apartheid, and particularly its attendant racial effects."

The same observers stressed that in pointing out that statements by individual bishops are made on their own responsibility, the Conference had settled officially the question whether Archbishop Whelan spoke on behalf of the Church.

Left unaid by the Conference, Archbishop Whelan spoke on behalf of the Church.

HE HAD warm praise for the American Protestant missionaries at Mokedi, after the Kilembe tragedy. "The missionaries were in Mokedi, 18 miles away, in spite of the danger, the missionaries came, immediately, rescued the Sisters, and radioed to Kikwit for an airplane to evacuate them from Mokedi."

The province of Kilembe is one of the most densely populated areas of the entire Congo, and the biggest producer of palm oil in the country. Over 450,000 persons live within an area of 60,000 square miles and in the disease of Idli alone there are 175,000 Catholics. The four missions now operating in the old province of Kasai are sparsely settled.

The school children here also felt the enormity of the disaster. Over 1,000 primary school and over 4000 secondary students of both sexes now have no place to go. All lay and religious teachers have left. Hospitals at Tsumu, Mokedi, and Idoko had to be abandoned.

"At Kilembe, they were taken until a certain signal was given, from whatever source, to start pillaging. Somehow the villagers knew the night before they would no longer have jobs the next day. The mission workers all came to ask for their pay just before the trouble began. One of the priests at Kilembe escaped because he was in town and knew nothing of the massacre until word was brought to him. The nuns at Kilembe locked themselves in their home nearby and completely escaped the terrorist's attention."

But reports from Catholic missionaries in the East Pakistan border area stated that departures have been heavy from their seven major mission stations there. All Catholics, they said, have left one mission. Another mission has lost four-fifths of its people. Still another has lost one-half. In one mission, there have been no departures, but missionaries reported that the people there are getting ready to flee.

Children's Aims for Lent

Children at Catholic school show their Lenten aims heads to Honey, nor John B. Mayor, pastor, who is diocesan director of the Bishop's Relief Fund for the world's needy millions. Collections in parish churches of the United States this Sunday will replenish depleted treasury to continue the Catholic Church's worldwide program of mercy to the poor. Children in photo are third graders Margo Witzon, Melissa Rodgers and Mary Villenti.

Christians Flee Pakistan

Taru, India — (NC) — Some 35,000 Christian refugees from Pakistan have arrived in India claiming they had to flee their country because of religious intolerance and economic pressure by its Muslim majority.

About 20,000 of the refugees are Catholics. The rest are mainly Baptists. Some estimates put the total number of refugees as high as 60,000.

Peking Shadow Seen in Congo

Leopoldville — (NC) — The pattern is always the same in terror-ridden Kwilu province of the Congo — total destruction, and it is always explained in the same phrase by the survivors: "We are going to destroy all that was built by the whites. We want you to leave us to settle our political problems here. When you are gone and everything is destroyed, people from Peking and Moscow will come and bring us food, jobs and all the things we need. You can come back later if we have need of you."

A bishop whose priests have repeatedly heard this explanation and who has seen the accompanying destruction is nevertheless determined to return soon to Kwilu and rebuild the missions there.

Bishop Rene Toussaint, O.M.I., of Idrota lost 26 of 30 missions to the rebel bands led by former Congolese cabinet minister Pierre Mulele. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of church, hospital and school buildings, equipment and vehicles were either destroyed or made useless. The bishop's own home at Idrota was wrecked, the rebels breaking all windows and setting it afire.

Pope Names Two Bishops

Washington — (NC) — Pope Paul VI has named two new U.S. bishops. They are: Edgar Thomas A. Donohue, rector of St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y., appointed Bishop of Ogdensburg and Edgar Vincent M. Leonard, vicar general and chancellor of the Pittsburgh archdiocese, named to be Auxiliary Bishop there.

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Fanny Hill Book Ruled Obscene
New York — (RNS) — The State Supreme Court's Appellate Division ruled, 3 to 2, that "Fanny Hill," the 18th century novel of a London prostitute, was obscene and banned its New York publisher from distributing the book.

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