

Top Stories of 1968:

Hopes for Peace in Vietnam Rise in World

By Religious News Service
Hopes of an early peace in Vietnam spread some cheer over the closing months of 1968.

But overpopulation, poverty, racism and economic imbalances — combined with widespread student unrest, violence and open defiance of established authority in many areas — remained ominous realities.

For the religious world, as well as the political, it was a troubled year.

The year's top Roman Catholic story was the growing challenge to Church authority by liberal priests in countries around the world. A major Protestant focus was on the urgent need for a more active involvement of the churches in the social sphere.

In the United States, the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (incorporating strong fair housing provisions) was hailed as a triumph especially for the nation's religious bodies, and an important step toward solving the racial problem.

Passage of the law came after the entire world had been shocked by the murder in Memphis, Tenn., of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., America's top exponent of non-violence in the struggle for interracial justice. The slaying was blamed in part for a sharp upsurge of Negro militancy. The development of a separate black conscious-

ness was evident in many Churches which saw the establishment of Black Clergy Caucuses during the year.

In June, tragedy struck again when Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, highly articulate apostle of social and economic reform, was shot to death in Los Angeles, allegedly by an anti-Israel Arab extremist. Deploping the two senseless crimes, churchmen joined in demands for congressional action to halt the indiscriminate sale and licensing of firearms.

Outstanding Protestant event of the year was the World Council of Churches' 16-day Fourth Assembly at Uppsala, Sweden, in July.

Touching off worldwide controversy was Pope Paul VI's encyclical of July 29 (Humanae Vitae) reaffirming the Catholic Church's traditional ban against artificial birth control. The document stirred bitter criticism in circles worried by overpopulation, as well as sharply adverse reactions even in the ranks of Catholic theologians. Other top stories of the year were:

Religious agencies mobilized a massive airlift to aid starving refugees in Biafra. At the same time, church anti-poverty efforts increased significantly in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Pope Paul became the first pontiff to visit South America when he flew to Bogota, Colombia, in August for the



Civil rights leader Martin Luther King was assassinated.

issued a statement in February urging Washington to halt the bombing of North Vietnam as a prelude to a negotiated peace. The NCC also called for avoiding provocative military action against mainland China, admitting that country to the United Nations, and American recognition of Cuba and the Communist-ruled East German Democratic Republic.

Pope Paul's encyclical climaxed five years of debate and speculation on what his stand on birth control should or would be in the light of modern conditions. One of the first criticisms came from a group of more than 600 American Catholic theologians.

Liberal Catholics argued that sexual morality was a matter of personal conscience and could not be dictated by any authority, even a Pope's. At the annual Catholic Day (Katholikentag) Congress in Essen, Germany, participants in a Marriage and Family workshop voted 3,000 to 80 in favor of a petition calling on the Pope to revise his teaching.

Winding up their annual meeting in November, the U.S. bishops issued an 11,000-word statement in which they declared that while artificial birth control was an "objective evil," circumstances may reduce moral guilt. They said that Catholics who could not in conscience follow these teachings should not feel cut off from Holy Communion.

At the same time, the bishops rejected an appeal of 300 priests for intervention in a dispute between Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington, and 41 priests in his see he had disciplined for their dissent on birth control. According to the cardinal, the priests were "not testing birth control so much as the authority of the Church."

Other hierarchical statements emanating from Canada, France, West Germany, Holland, Belgium, Austria, England and the Scandinavian countries also approved the basic principles of Humanae Vitae, although postulating permissiveness in the light of particular conscience cases.

There were no reservations, however, in statements issued by the bishops of Italy and Portugal and the hierarchies of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In March, the National Council of Churches responded to a report from President Johnson's National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders. It announced a program to attack root problems of racial injustice and the growing urban crisis by demanding better housing and job opportunities for the Negro minority.

In April, the Catholic hierarchy adopted a report calling for massive programs at the diocesan level to combat

39th International Eucharistic Congress (the first such event ever attended by official non-Catholic observers) and renewed his many pleas on behalf of the poor, especially in Latin America.

Areas caught up in the Student Power upheaval included New York, San Francisco, Honolulu, Mexico City, Paris, Madrid and Rome. In August, the Iron Curtain cities of Prague and Bratislava rang with student outrage over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Russian action ended a process of democratization in the country on which religious leaders had placed high hopes.

The World Council of Churches' concern over Vietnam was shared by the National Council of Churches in the United States which

Attention in religious circles also was focused on another 1968 phenomenon: the growing unrest among college students, some seeking campus reforms, others demonstrating for democratic reforms in the political world, protesting against the war in Vietnam, or simply giving vent to dissatisfaction over the economic or political establishment.

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Year-

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racism, all to be carried out in full cooperation with Protestants and Jews.

The Southern Baptist Convention, largest U.S. Protestant denomination, took an historic step in June by endorsing the principle of racial integration. In mid-November, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod announced a \$1 million campaign to provide improved housing to the underprivileged regardless of race or religion.

A year-long spotlight was focused on Biafra, where hundreds of thousands died of starvation. The World Council of Churches and Caritas, international Catholic relief agency, organized massive welfare programs for the Biafran sufferers. Large-scale relief efforts also were conducted by Church World

AROUND THE GLOBE

Tripled Population

Santo Domingo — (RNS) The Dominican Republic has 12 million, three times its population in 1950, according to figures on Development, Population and Resources.

Addressing the seminar, Balaguer of the Dominican nation could support success if its natural resources are developed.

One of the conclusions of the seminar was that integrated development "is possible parenthood freely of a couple."

The seminar was sponsored by the Archdiocese of Santo Domingo, the American Family and Population Council, and Bishop Hugo Polanco Brito, Bishop of Santo Domingo.

Latin American Lay

Lima — (NC) — An effort of the lay apostolate in Latin America was worked out by bishops, priests and laymen in the Inter-American Bishops' Conference in Lima.

A Latin American Lay Apostolate will coordinate the service of laymen, farmer and professional liaison with the Vatican.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

Episcopal Clergy Organize

Portland, Ore. — (RNS) — A union has been organized here by 35 Episcopal priests. It is the second diocesan-wide chapter of the Association of Episcopal Clergy (AEC), although several smaller chapters have been formed.

The AEC is a nationwide organization. Spokesmen said it is "meant to give the clergy some say about their future, salaries, relations with their congregations and their bishops and to foster dialogue." They expressed hope that the organization could stem the flow of clergy out of the Episcopal church by "helping solve their problems before reach that stage."

Damaged Hebrew Schools Aided

New York — (RNS) — Three Hebrew Day Schools damaged last month in a flash of vandalism and arson were given an emergency grant of \$200,000 by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

Samuel J. Silberman, president of the Federation, said it was the first time in its 51-year history that the agency had given a financial grant to a non-member. Normally it distributes funds only to 130 medical, health, recreational and social service member agencies in the metropolitan area.

"We are confronted with an emergency," announced Mr. Silberman, "and a Jewish responsibility that the Federation cannot — nor would it want to — avoid."

Nun Works With Protestant Council

New York — (RNS) — Sister Ann Patrick Ware, S.L., the first Catholic nun to be elected to the staff of the National Council of Churches, is assistant director of the Department of Faith and Order.

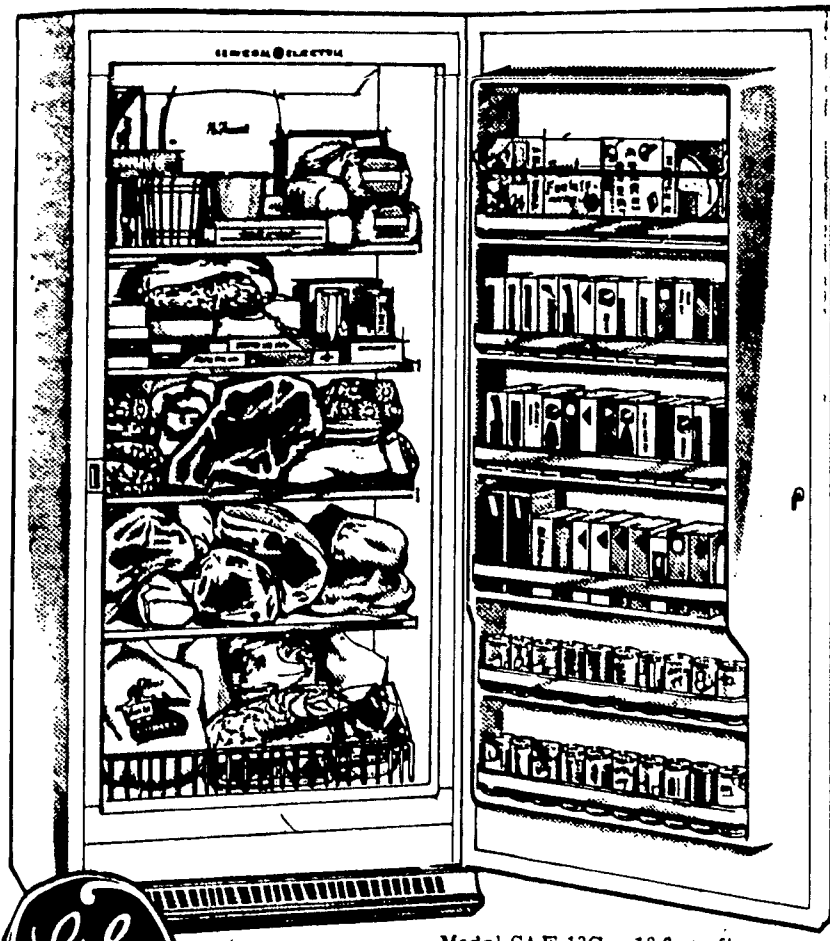
One of her initial responsibilities will be a two-year study on inter-communion which the department plans to publish for use by Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

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