

# The Year in Religion -- 1970

## Across the World

By Religious News Service

The religious community in 1970 became acutely aware of its diminishing institutional strength, but nonetheless showed on many fronts that it could move vigorously to meet the challenges of a new decade.

Pope Paul VI, the most widely traveled pope in history, became the first pontiff ever to visit the Far East. On his 10-day tour in late November and early December, he attended the first Pan-Asian Bishops Conference in Manila, made a side trip to Samoa, flew to Sydney for the first Pacific Episcopal Conference and Australia's celebration of its 200th anniversary, conferred with President Suharto in Indonesia, and concluded with brief visits to Hong Kong and Ceylon.

In September the World Council of Churches took a bold step in allocating a total of \$200,000 to 19 organizations fighting racism. Though rela-

tively small, the grants carried great symbolic importance and set off a controversy in both political and ecclesiastical circles that continued for the rest of the year.

Despite an assassination attempt on his arrival in Manila, and protest by a small group of Protestant extremists in Australia, the Asian welcome given to Pope Paul was warm and widespread. He responded by identifying with the aspirations of youth, calling for the redistribution of wealth, and emphasizing the compatibility of participation in the Church with development of Asian culture.

The decision to include Hong Kong on the Pope's itinerary and to omit Taiwan (Formosa) led to speculation that the Vatican wished to prepare the atmosphere for eventual re-establishment of the Church in mainland China. The unexpected release earlier in the year of Maryknoll Bishop

James Walsh after 12 years' imprisonment led some observers to suggest that the Communist government's hostility toward the Church might be softening.

The WCC grants, only one part of an on-going program to combat racism, sought to aid Africans in a different way. They provoked international debate because some of the organizations receiving funds have been engaged in guerrilla activity seeking to overthrow the white minority governments of southern Africa. Though none of the WCC grants were to be used for military activity, critics charged that they nevertheless constituted a church endorsement of violence.

Defenders of the grants countered that the whites of southern Africa were responsible for whatever violence occurred as a result of black determination to achieve liberation, and that the church should show in unequivocal ways that it was on the side of the blacks.

The WCC's white member Churches in the area generally disassociated themselves



Msgr. Pasquale Macchi grapples with knife-wielding artist Benjamin Mendosa after the artist tried to assassinate Pope Paul during the pontiff's arrival ceremony in Manila.

from the Council's action, but resisted pressures, such as those from South Africa's Prime Minister J. B. Vorster, to withdraw from the ecumenical organization.

The racial situation in south-

ern Africa remained a sore spot generally. Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury made a 20-day visit to South Africa during which he opposed violence, but warned that violence would come if the injustices of apartheid were not rectified.

## In the Nation

In the U.S., the Churches were often in tension with various aspects of the culture, but also suffering internal tensions through their continuing racial and liberal-conservative divisions.

The National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) issued a Black Declaration of Independence, warning that blacks would renounce allegiance to the nation if injustices were not redressed. And delegates to the first national convention of black lay Catholics declared they were "black first and then Catholic." In contrast to 1969, however, James Forman and the Black Manifesto received little attention during the year.

Abroad, long years of negotiation were climaxed with the merger of six Protestant bodies to form the Church of North India, and the union of Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches into the Church of Pakistan.

A major story of the year involved Father Daniel Ber-



Father Robert F. Drinan, SJ, flashes the peace sign on hearing of his election to the U.S. House of Representatives.

rigan, SJ, and Father Philip Berrigan, SSJ, who escalated Vietnam war protest by refusing to accept the legal penalties for their acts, an acceptance that had generally been a part of the philosophy of non-violent resistance up to that time.

Sentenced to prison for the (Continued on Page 5)

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