

# 1978... So Far a Trial for Churches

From I

announcement that "drastic changes" would eliminate anti-semitic elements.

On the federal scene, the Packwood-Moynihan Bill, which would provide tax credits of up to \$500 per student per year to individuals who pay tuition at the elementary, secondary, trade school or college level, divided religious groups. The U.S. Catholic Conference is lobbying for it, the National Council of Churches against it. A bill which would require religious groups to provide detailed information on their lobbying activities was unanimously denounced by church representatives, as was an Internal Revenue Service ruling, later modified, barring tax-exempt groups from questioning political candidates and publishing their responses.

Church groups continued to challenge corporations in stockholder resolutions on a variety of issues, from "redlining" poor neighborhoods out of consideration for loans, to investment in South Africa. One major gain was made as Bristol-Myers curtailed its use of "milk nurses" to market infant formula in the Third World, which a group of nuns charged promoted malnutrition and lowered resistance to disease.

South Africa cracked down on dissidents with the arrest, protested by the country's bishops, of black Catholic student leaders and the banning of a black Christian weekly, *The Voice*. Meanwhile the Transkei, a black territory formed by South Africa, outlawed the Methodist Church, apparently for its position against polygamy, and started its independent brand of Methodism.

Christian leaders in Ghana accused that country's leaders of suppressing freedom of speech, and religious leaders in the United States called for economic pressures against the Ugandan regime of Idi Amin, including boycotts of Ugandan coffee.

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) condemned the intervention of foreign nations in



**Prelates from many denominations demonstrate their approval of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament.**

African affairs, and warned that the "liberation of Africa as a whole" was at stake. The AACC was also involved in a dispute with the Kenyan government. Its general secretary Canon Burgess Carr, went on sabbatical leave in the United States.

Peter Vins, the 21-year-old son of imprisoned Baptist leader Georgi Vins, was arrested in his home in Kiev and sentenced to a year in prison for "hooliganism" and "parasitism." Two Soviet Jewish activists, Vladimir Slepak and Ida Nudel, were convicted of "malicious hooliganism" in separate trials and sentenced to internal exile in Siberia.

Italy and the world were shocked by the terrorist kidnapping and slaying of former Premier Aldo Moro, a personal friend of Pope Paul. Italian Bishops were critical of a liberalized abortion law passed by that country's Parliament.

Early in the year, a three-member U.S. team representing major Christian organizations served as a catalyst in the settlement of a hunger strike in Bolivia that seriously threatened the country's peace. A 13-day hunger strike was staged at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva and in other cities on behalf of missing political prisoners in Chile. It was ended when Chile's Catholic bishops were told the military

government would look into the fate of persons missing since the regime took power in 1973.

Among ecumenical advances, pledges of greater cooperation among Protestants and Roman Catholics in Europe were made during an unprecedented ecumenical conference in France. And at a meeting in Ghana, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Evangelical Presbyterian Churches agreed to recognize the validity of each other's baptisms.

Intercommunion guidelines for use in certain special circumstances were issued by the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark and Louisville. A group from the Lutheran World Federation made a three-day "fraternal visit" to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and discussed a forthcoming Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue. During a visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Catholicos Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians, called upon all Churches "to unite under the auspices of the World Council of Churches."

Efforts at Lutheran unity did not go far. The Lutheran Church in America declined an invitation to hold bilateral talks with the Missouri Synod, while indicating that it favors multilateral talks with that Church and the American Lutheran Church (ALC). The ALC's Church Council turned down a proposal from the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) calling for a commitment of "organic union" by four Lutheran bodies by 1979. The AELC proposal was also rejected by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

In their Spring meeting, the U.S. Catholic bishops worked out three comprehensive pastoral plans for family ministry, evangelization and social action, focusing on the roles of executive committee set aside proposals of support for the Equal Rights Amendment and of urging the Carter Administration to limit further investments in southern Africa.

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