

South Africa controversy spills over into United States

By NC News Service

Controversy over apartheid surged undiminished within South Africa and spilled over into the United States as well in late August following the failure of a meeting between leading South African churchmen and the government to achieve progress.

As violence continued, bringing the death toll in about a year to more than 625, South African Catholic bishops and other clergy pleaded for peaceful change but warned that without efforts to end apartheid the unrest will not cease.

Among incidents sparking further hostility was the detainment Aug. 22-23 of about 800 schoolchildren, many under age 13, rounded up by police on allegations they failed to go to school. After being held at a local police station, they were apparently released to their parents. About two dozen political activists also were arrested.

After a meeting of Catholic and Protestant church officials and South African President Pieter Botha on Aug. 19, Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban announced that no progress was made in solving South Africa's crisis because "we hardly began to communicate at all."

In a statement, the racially mixed clergy delegation advised the president that "unless people see a significant substantial move from apartheid to sharing, there will be no end to the unrest."

During a visit to the United States, another South African Catholic leader, Bishop Michael Rowland of Dundee, also warned

that the South African government must end apartheid or escalating violence "will result in the greatest bloodbath the African continent has ever known."

Apartheid, South Africa's system of racial separation, is "a morally repugnant policy," Bishop Rowland said in an interview in Los Angeles.

Archbishop Hurley's meeting, which also involved Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational church officials, followed Botha's Aug. 15 hard-line national address. In the speech, the president reiterated earlier proposals for only limited changes in apartheid.

Archbishop Hurley, at a news conference in Pretoria, said that during the session with Botha, "the two separate perceptions of South Africa's reality were so different that we hardly began to communicate at all."

Botha "did not really answer any of the issues we raised," the Catholic archbishop added. "We haven't anything substantial to take with us as a result of this meeting."

In another development, the Catholic bishops of southern Africa urged South Africa's Chamber of Mines to accept the demands of mineworkers and avert a potentially violent strike.

"Now that workers are unionized, they are demanding a living wage, that is, a wage that enables them to provide decent support for themselves and their families," said a statement released Aug. 19 by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, which includes bishops of South Africa,

Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland.

A strike, which might affect about 400,000 workers, "could lead to widespread violence and immense suffering," the bishops' statement said.

According to the bishops, a large proportion of the miners earn "below-subsistent wages, even after the July increase implemented by the Chamber of Mines," an organization representing mine owners.

The meeting of Archbishop Hurley and the other churchmen with Botha was marked by the absence of Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu of Johannesburg, Nobel peace prize winner, who had sought a private meeting with the president for several weeks.

Bishop Tutu declined to attend the session with the other church officials because he thought it would be ineffective. As a condition for the meeting Botha had demanded that the bishop renounce civil disobedience. Bishop Tutu, an advocate of non-violent methods of achieving change, refused to do so.

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, Bishop Rowland said his diocese, southeast of Johannesburg, is struggling to provide for the more than 100,000 blacks whom the government has relocated there. The diocese seeks to develop agricultural cooperatives and small-scale cottage-craft industries; it operates an orphanage, clinics, schools and a fledgling well-drilling project, he added.

The bishop said it was "unimportant" that the majority of people relocated were not Catholic. "Our duty is to provide them with

food, clothing and shelter and help them build some means of economic self-sufficiency," he said.

Divestment of U.S. industry in South Africa "would result in the closure of factories and industries that offer jobs with decent wages and living conditions," Bishop Rowland added. "The best conditions blacks have are as employees of U.S. companies," he said.

An American opponent of economic actions against South Africa, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, a Baptist minister who heads the Moral Majority, met with Botha Aug. 19 and praised the South African government's "progress." He also urged the purchase of krugerrands, the nation's currency.

"Here we have a country that is making progress, that is a friend of the West," the Moral Majority official said. He added that Botha had told him apartheid is no longer national policy.

On his return to the United States, Mr. Falwell prompted an outcry when he said Bishop Tutu does not represent South Africans and called the Anglican bishop a "phony."

In comments meant for Bishop Tutu but delivered in a taped television interview, Mr. Falwell Aug. 23 apologized: "I'm saying that if the word 'phony' to you, as communicated to you, meant that I was impugning you as a person or minister, I apologize. I was impugning the fact that you, sir, do not speak for the South Africans any more than I speak for all Americans," Mr. Falwell told Bishop Tutu.

Tax reform, fairness to poor: More to taxes than money

By Liz S. Armstrong

Washington (NC) — There's more to taxes than money — there's morality, for instance, according to the U.S. Catholic Conference, which wants any tax code changes to protect the poor.

Several tax reform proposals, including President Reagan's, await fall congressional action.

In written testimony, released by the USCC Aug. 21, Msgr. Daniel F. Hoye, USCC general secretary, pleaded for fair tax treatment of the poor and for continued charitable contribution tax deductions for non-itemizing taxpayers.

He likewise chided administration and congressional proposals for not including tuition tax credits.

Submitted Aug. 15 to the House Ways and Means Committee, the USCC remarks closely parallel testimony presented to a Senate panel in June by the National Conference of Catholic Charities. Both, expressing concern for the poor, assert that government fiscal policy directly affects the

nation's treatment of the disadvantaged.

As Msgr. Hoye wrote, the tax code "embodies many of the values and priorities of our nation's social and economic policies. The tax code is, to be sure," he added, "a complex, technical document. But it is also a moral document...."

Like Catholic Charities, the USCC underpins its tax proposals with the concept of distributive justice — the idea the benefits and burdens of maintaining a society ought to be fairly and proportionately distributed among its members.

Distributive justice involves "a strong presumption against extreme inequities in the distribution of income and wealth," the USCC testimony said. Moreover, it means "that taxes ought to be assessed according to the ability to pay" and that "progressivity" ought to be a major principle reflected in the tax code," the testimony said. "As a general rule, those with greater wealth and income ought to pay taxes at a higher rate than those with fewer resources."

Over the last several years, as both the

USCC and the NCCC pointed out, the tax burden on the poor has increased while those at the upper levels of the income spectrum have gotten tax breaks.

Taxes have in fact pushed families at or near the poverty line into poverty, Msgr. Hoye wrote. "The tax system is actually making the poor poorer."

He noted that while the presidential and congressional tax reform plans "would significantly reduce or eliminate income taxes on the poor," these intentions should be made "an ironclad commitment" and a "top priority."

Msgr. Hoye's testimony recommended several key policies, also backed by Catholic Charities in its earlier testimony, including expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit — a credit offering tax relief to low-income workers with children — so that the EITC eliminates income taxes by those below the poverty line and offsets payroll taxes levied on the working poor.

Both the USCC and NCCC also rejected a proposed flat tax rate and said the tax plan should affect the rich more.

A flat tax would tax all incomes at the same rate, perhaps 10 percent. Critics contend that 10 percent of a poor person's income, which must pay for basic necessities

of food and shelter, is a heavier penalty than 10 percent of a wealthy person's income. The wealthy also often have funds tied up in shelters and other assets which are not part of direct income.

The USCC also claimed that compressing the 14 current tax categories into three, as suggested by the Reagan plan and others, would "have the effect of producing a disproportionate benefit for the wealthy."

Msgr. Hoye suggested Congress consider adding a fourth or fifth tax bracket to the reform package, a proposal made earlier by the NCCC.

The poor should not be pitted against middle-class taxpayers, either, he added. Yet, the poor could be protected and the middle class offered tax relief if tax loopholes were closed, tax progressivity were increased, and the higher corporate income tax levels were restored, he said.

Msgr. Hoye also argued for retention of the tax deduction for non-itemizer taxpayers and called charitable giving "one of the distinguishing marks of our American society."

Unless continued by Congress, the non-itemizer deduction would end at the close of the 1985 tax year.

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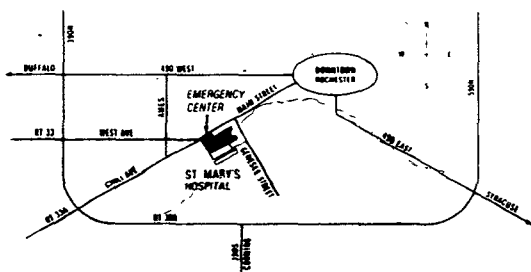
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