

Leaders call for peace in uneasy Yugoslavia

WASHINGTON — Pope John Paul II and other religious leaders pleaded for both peace and "self-determination" in Yugoslavia amid threats of all-out civil war over the June 26 declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia.

Yugoslavia's Catholic bishops backed the independence of the two republics June 27, and the statements by the pope and other Catholic officials reflected that position.

"The constitutional changes which have taken place did not come about because of any unilateral governmental decree by the officials," the Yugoslav bishops said, but by "the will of the people who opted for democracy in free elections."

The bishops subsequently called the central government's attempts to suppress Slovenia's and Croatia's independence "contrary to morality, to the respect for human rights and to the rights of peoples to self-determination."

The bishops of Slovenia jointly declared their support for independence the day before the secession vote. "As our nation begins its way of independence, the Slovenian Catholic Church remains tied to it and united with it," they said.

An uneasy cease-fire in early July ended fighting between federal troops and Slovenian independence forces that left at least 62 dead in the northwestern republic of Slovenia.

At the same time, however, scattered local violence mounted in neighboring Croatia as pro-unity Serbian guerrillas attacked police and other officials representing the republic's separatist majority.

On July 8, a four-day-old truce in Slovenia was bolstered by a central government proposal to grant Slovenes control of all Slovenian international border posts if they agreed to turn customs revenues over to the federal government. Slovenia is the overland gateway to Western Europe, since it is the only republic of the six bordering Italy and Austria.

As federal troops battled with Slovenian militia forces the previous week, Pope John Paul declared that "the rights and

legitimate aspirations of peoples cannot and must not be suppressed with force."

Two days earlier, at the consistory at which he installed 23 new cardinals, the pope urged a peaceful coexistence in Yugoslavia that "corresponds to the legitimate aspirations of the populations of that beloved land."

In a telegram to Ante Markovic, prime minister of the central government, the pope urged "in the firmest manner ... the suspension of the use of force."

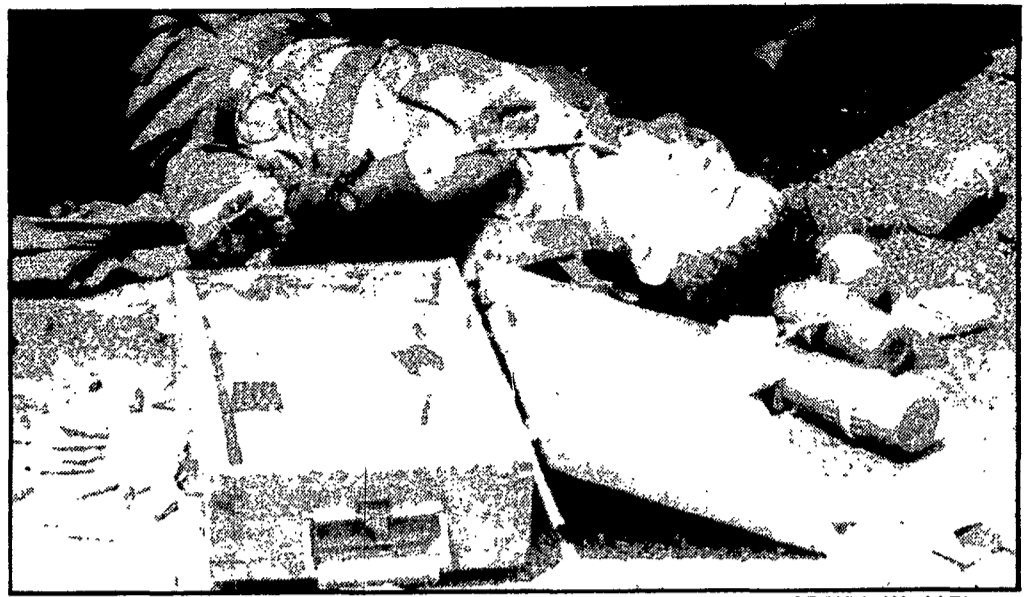
He also wrote to Slovenian President Milan Kucan and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, calling for an end to the use of force and "creation of conditions favorable to dialogue among the diverse national groups."

At his general audience July 3 he called the conflict "a fratricidal and useless war" and urged all parties to end "the hellish cycle of violence and hate."

Vatican Radio reported July 4 that Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Pavle and Slovenian Catholic Archbishop Alojzij Sustar of



AP/Wide World Photos
A Yugoslav army soldier embraces his crying mother in Vrhnika July 4. Hundreds of soldiers' parents took advantage of a cease-fire to see their sons in Slovenia.



AP/Wide World Photos
A dead Yugoslav soldier lies on the ground near an ammunition case of shells after heavy fighting with members of the Slovene defense force near Brezice on July 2.

Ljubljana issued a joint appeal "for peace, respect for freedom, non-violence and tolerance."

The Slovenian bishops' justice and peace commission issued a statement July 5 declaring that Slovenia had "passed the most critical test" of independence by standing up to "the aggression of the Yugoslavian army."

The commission warned sharply against "intolerant nationalism" and ethnic retaliations, however. "We cannot let our justified indignation at the behavior of the

army and its leaders transform itself into hate against those who belong to other peoples, particularly the Serbs," it said.

In an interview published in an Italian newspaper July 7, Ljubljana's Archbishop Sustar said Slovenia's secession was irreversible.

"It is no longer possible to change course. We cannot renounce democracy, freedom and the respect for human, religious, natural and moral rights ... We must be ready to suffer and sacrifice," he said.

Focus on nominee turns to his religious allegiance

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The inference that Judge Clarence Thomas should be more carefully scrutinized as a nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court because of his Catholic background has been widely denounced as inappropriate and unconstitutional, but it also has had some supporters.

Thomas was nominated July 1 by President George Bush to fill the vacancy created by Justice Thurgood Marshall's retirement from the high court.

The following day Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder told reporters Thomas should be questioned closely about how he would vote on abortion law cases because he is Catholic. Wilder later apologized to those who may have been offended by his comment.

Thomas, a one-time seminarian who lists his religion as Catholic in biographies, most recently has regularly attended an Episcopal church in a Virginia suburb of Washington.

Wilder, a Democrat who has been included on various lists of potential presidential contenders, told reporters that questioning Thomas about abortion relevant to his religion is fair game, particularly considering the pope's statements that abortion should not be permitted. Himself a Baptist, Wilder said for Thomas "the question is, 'How much allegiance is there to the pope?'"

"Since it is a matter that could be based solely on religion — any number of people in the country do base it solely on religion — I think it is a legitimate question," Wilder said.

A Wilder assistant told Catholic News Service July 5 the governor "has apologized, if he offended anyone."

Bishop Walter F. Sullivan of Richmond, Va., said Wilder's remarks are "inappropriate and unfortunate."

"I do not remember the qualifications of Justices (William) Brennan Jr., (Anthony M.) Kennedy or (Antonin) Scalia ever being questioned simply because they are Catholics," Bishop Sullivan said. Brennan retired from the Supreme Court in 1990; Scalia and Kennedy were appointed to the court in 1986 and 1988, respectively.

Wilder's comments "opened up a can of worms," according to Robert Destro, associate professor of law at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

"If anti-Catholicism is the basis for this, it bears the implicit assumption that Catholics cannot think for themselves," said Destro, who specializes in religion and civil rights.

But other prominent Catholics prove there is not necessarily any unity of thought because of religion, said Destro, citing U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., Scalia and Brennan as examples of diversity of opinion among Catholics in high places.

"You couldn't have more polar opposites in their interpretations of the Constitution than Scalia and Brennan," Destro said. Brennan was considered to be one of the court's most liberal justices, Scalia one of the most conservative.

The idea of Catholicism becoming an issue in an appointment to the court is outrageous, he added. Rejecting a man solely because of his religion is as unacceptable as rejecting someone for his race — "people like Doug Wilder decry that all the time," said Destro.

While Wilder has been the focus of attention, Destro said remarks made by other prominent politicians may not be as explicitly anti-Catholic but "are just as bad as Wilder's."

Wilder has come under fire from Virginia legislators and prominent Catholic politicians, who point out that the Constitution prohibits any religious test as a requirement for office or public trust. But others, including Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Republican, and a spokesman for the abortion-rights group, Catholics for a Free Choice, have said they agree with Wilder.

Hatch, who sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will conduct Thomas' confirmation hearings, told *The Washington Post* religion is fair game for questions.

"I think it's fair to ask if his Catholic faith means he would blindly follow the pope," Hatch said. "You can ask the question in a sophisticated way that would be less offensive than what Wilder said, but I don't think it's out of line to raise these questions."

YOUR HEADQUARTERS FOR SCHOOL UNIFORMS

NOW'S THE TIME...

to purchase your child's school uniform. Please don't wait until the last minute.

CALL OR STOP IN TODAY while we still have a large selection of sizes and colors.

attie's
Est. 1940
Young Fashions

PANORAMA PLAZA
1467 Penfield Road
Rochester, New York 14625
(716) 586-8655

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 10-9; Sat. 10-6; Sun. 12-5