

Croatian bishops defend attacks

ZAGREB, Croatia (CNS) — Croatia's military attack of Serb-held territories in Croatia has been defended by the nation's Catholic bishops.

It was a "legitimate action of Croatia to liberate its own territory," said Cardinal Franjo Kuharic of Zagreb, president of the bishops' conference.

The cardinal expressed the hierarchy's views in a nationally televised speech Aug. 5. The Aug. 6 edition of *Glas Koncila*, weekly newspaper published by the bishops, also contained an editorial supporting Croatia's action.

The cardinal said that rebel Serb occupation of Croatia was illegal and caused hundreds of thousands of Croats to be "illegally and brutally expelled from their homes."

Rebel Serbs were also using the occupied territory to occasionally attack Croatian cities, he said.

The cardinal asked Croatian fighters to uphold the government's position that the human rights of noncombatants and wounded soldiers would be respected in military operations.

The bishops' comments came shortly after Croatian troops began a major offensive to regain territory held by rebel Serbs opposed to Croatia's 1991 declaration of independence from Yugoslavia.



Reuters/RNS

A Croatian soldier prays during an Aug. 6 Mass at Sarajevo's main cathedral. Sweeping aside U.N. peacekeepers, the Croatian army captured the rebel town of Petrinja in an offensive that has retaken much of the Serb Krajina enclave.

On Aug. 6 Croatia declared victory, saying it controlled the capital and key cities of the self-proclaimed Krajina Serb Republic, a strip of land along the Croatian border with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatia's military action was taken in co-

ordination with the Bosnian government, also fighting Serb rebels.

U.N. officials and representatives of humanitarian agencies said that the fighting resulted in the fleeing of as many as 200,000 Serbs into Serb-held Bosnian territory. Some described the fleeing as a humanitarian disaster.

Cardinal Kuharic said the Croatian decision to regain the territory was sparked by the incapacity of world organizations to protect victims of Serb actions.

"The principles of justice are still not upheld by international institutions to such an extent that they always protect the victim and deter the aggressor," he said.

Hundreds mourn slain black pastor

DETROIT (CNS) — Two cardinals and six bishops joined hundreds of priests and lay people at St. Augustine and St. Monica Church in Detroit Aug. 5 for the funeral of the parish's slain pastor, Father Donald M. Clark.

Father Clark, 59, a leader among black Catholic priests in Detroit and nationally, was shot to death in his car the evening of July 31 on Detroit's east side.

In 1964 Father Clark was the first black priest to be ordained for the Detroit archdiocese since 1926. Four years later he was one of the founders of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, and he later served the caucus as a board member and as president.

Three days after his death police arrested 18-year-old Dimitrius Robinson, identified as a male prostitute, in connection with the shooting.

According to investigators, witnesses saw the suspect come up to Father Clark's car, and after a brief conversation a shot was heard. The suspect fled on foot as the car sped forward, crashing into a pole half a block away. Father Clark was dead on arrival at St. John's Hospital from a gunshot in his right side.

"Father forgive them; they know not what they are doing," said Detroit's Cardinal Adam J. Maida in his homily, using Christ's words on the cross to ask forgiveness for the priest's killer.

Cardinal Maida called Father Clark "a colleague, a teacher, a pastor and a friend. Your first impression of Father Clark was always his size, but your lasting impression of him was always his smile and his booming voice."

He recalled the slain priest as "a man of God who preached God's word."

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