

WORLD & NATION

Pontiff, Catholic leaders call for peace in Kosovo

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic leaders called for an end to the conflict in Yugoslavia and urged assistance for masses of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo who were seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

"How can we speak of peace, when people are forced to flee, when they are hunted down and their homes are burnt to the ground?" asked Pope John Paul II April 4 in his Easter Sunday "urbi et orbi" ("to the city and to the world") address.

"Enough of this cruel shedding of human blood! When will there be an end to the diabolic spiral of revenge and senseless fratricidal conflicts?" continued the pope.

He called on Yugoslav authorities to allow "a humanitarian corridor to be opened, in order for help to be brought to the mass of people gathered at the border of Kosovo. There can be no frontiers to impede the work of solidarity; corridors of hope are always an imperative."

Earlier Pope John Paul had appealed to all sides in the conflict for a weeklong Easter truce. He made the appeal in a message hand-delivered April 1 by Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, an assistant Vatican secretary of state, to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and sent through diplomatic channels to U.S. President Bill Clinton and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana Madariaga.

The pope asked for a halt in the fighting during April 4-11, the week that separates the Catholic and Orthodox Christian celebrations of Easter. He said a suspension of military action would allow peace negotiations to resume and humanitarian aid to reach suffering civilians.

All eight U.S. cardinals April 1 urged an

immediate end to the fighting and convocation of a peace conference.

In two letters, one to Clinton and another to Milosevic, the cardinals quoted the words of Pope John Paul: "There is always time for peace. It is never too late to meet again and negotiate."

Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, called on Yugoslavia to "immediately halt the unjustifiable and intolerable aggression and ethnic cleansing against Kosovar civilians."

When that stops, "suspension of the NATO bombing campaign would be the appropriate response," he said in a statement, also issued April 1.

NATO began bombing Yugoslavia March 24 after months of unsuccessful diplomatic efforts to reach agreement between the government of Milosevic and an ethnic-Albanian separatist movement in Kosovo, a province in the main Yugoslav republic of Serbia. Ethnic violence in Kosovo reached a new height after the NATO attacks began, and thousands of civilians streamed out of Kosovo.

As of April 4, more than 360,000 Kosovo refugees had crossed into neighboring countries where resources were strained and conditions were desperate, according to Western officials.

To ease the burden on Albania, Macedonia and other regions receiving refugees, NATO countries said they would accept 96,000 refugees. Germany said it would take 40,000, and the United States and Turkey 20,000 each. Norway, Canada and Greece also said they would accept refugees. A Vatican official who visited



Reuters/CNS

A Yugoslav Red Cross worker displays shrapnel in front of a ruined house in the southern Serbian town of Aleksinac April 6. Yugoslav officials said NATO missiles killed at least five people in a residential area the previous night and destroyed an oil refinery and bridge over the Danube River.

refugee camps in Albania said church agencies were working to aid refugees, but much more needed to be done.

"The church is doing very much, above all Caritas (the Catholic aid agency)," Archbishop Paul Cordes, head of the Vatican's umbrella humanitarian organization "Cor Unum," told Vatican Radio by telephone from a refugee camp in Kukes, Albania, April 3.

"They are doing a lot, but it is still too little. And thought must be given to aid in the future, because those (refugees) who are now arriving certainly cannot remain under these conditions," he said.

Catholic Relief Services, the international relief and development agency of the U.S. bishops, donated \$600,000 to aid those suffering from the conflict. CRS said in an April 1 statement the funds would be sent

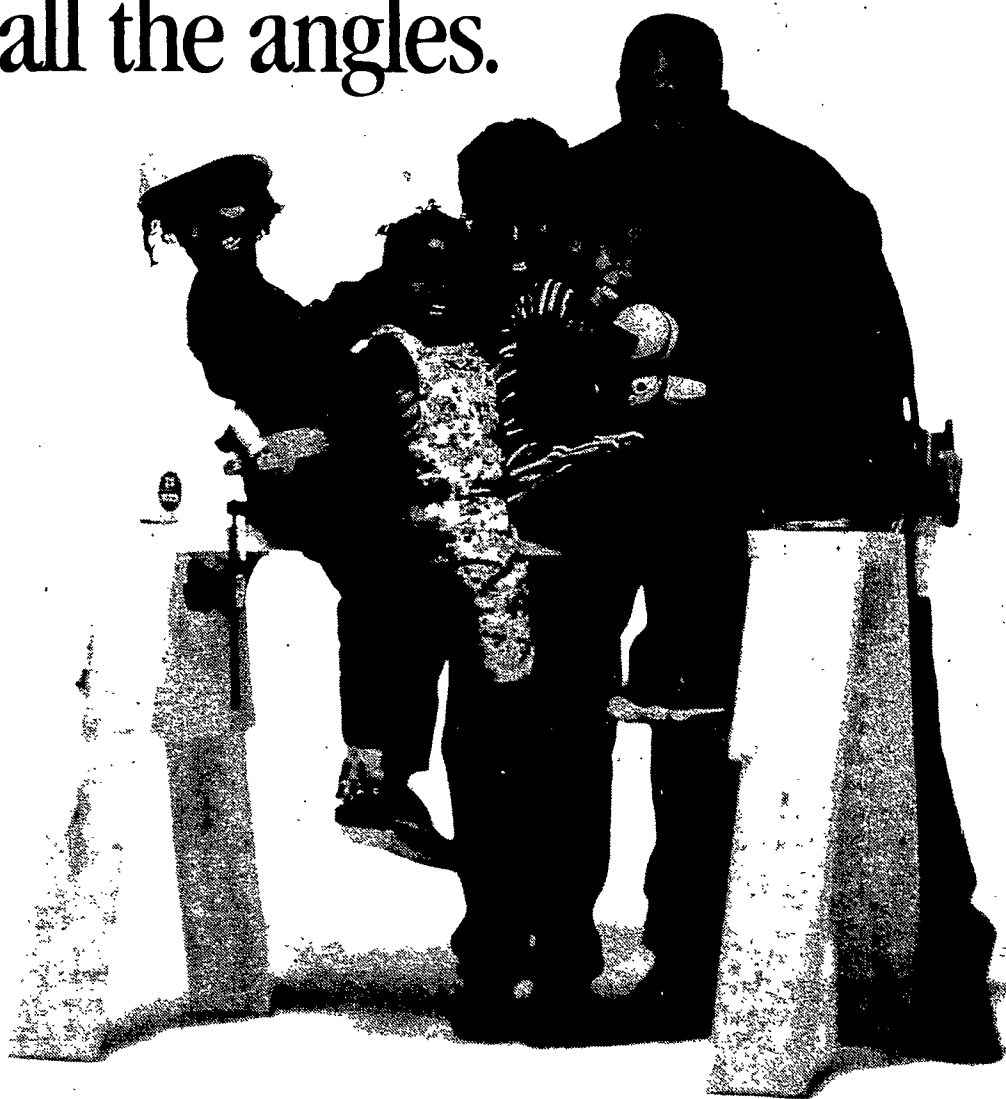
to the Yugoslav Red Cross, the aid agency of the Orthodox Church, Caritas Yugoslavia, and the relief operations of Belgrade Archbishop Franc Perko.

Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster, England, prayed Easter Sunday for the people of Kosovo and for a return to negotiations "lest a greater tragedy overtakes us all," and asked people to respond generously to requests for material help.

A similar appeal came from Archbishop Ivan Prendha of Zadar, Croatia, president of Croatian Caritas, the Catholic Church's charitable agency in the country.

"During these difficult times for all the inhabitants of Kosovo, we remember our own suffering during the war in Croatia and the great humanitarian assistance that we received for years," Archbishop Prendja said. "May this spur us to generosity."

Mike Brooks tried all the angles.



Then he did a 180.

STRENGTHENING families

When Mike Brooks left jail, he decided he wasn't going back. Aided by his own determination and a job training program, he built his family a home and laid the foundation

for a new life. Turning lives around is one of the good things that happen when you give the United Way. In fact, just 50¢ more a week will allow us to further strengthen local families. If you haven't given before, \$1 a week is a great way to start. Thanks for your support.

MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

United Way 

Please give generously