

## Vatican by Augustinus

### New threats to the Pope's life

*As the May 13 anniversary of two attempts nears, Cardinal Willebrands lends himself to an anti-papal scenario.*

With the approach of May 13, the anniversary of two attempts on the Pope's life, new threats have reached the person of John Paul II. This time, they center on his upcoming visit to Belgium and Holland, to begin on May 11. Posters went up on April 17 on Amsterdam walls, promising a reward of 15,000 guilders (\$4,350) to anyone who would kill the Pope. The posters called him "Duce II" and depicted him with a swastika on his arm.

The posters stated that the Pope must be "liquidated" because he is a member of "a fascistoid and criminal organization which is guilty of centuries of torture, blackmail, and thievery against the most wretched sectors of society and persecutions against the Jews."

The posters are signed by four organizations: MAF, the Nordic Terror Front, Autonomy 80, and Worker Autonomy of the Netherlands.

"Nordic Front" is already known for having organized various dynamitings in Groningen, while the other three groups seem to be as yet unknown in Holland. Four youth, who were arrested for pasting up the posters and then released, turned out to be close to the Kraakers group, which is linked to the notorious French "Direct Action."

In Belgium, anonymous telephone calls came in to the main daily papers, among them one announcing that the Pope will be assassinated in Brussels on May 15. Previously, unknown persons broke the hands of a statue of the Virgin in Beauraing, a suburb of the capital.

Meanwhile, a wave of vandalism

has hit Rome. A molotov cocktail was thrown at the Church of Sant'Agostino, and another against the Church of San Carlo.

This climate of threats and violence is being fed by groups of laymen or Catholics rebelling against the Church of Rome. In Belgium, the Center of Lay Action is putting out letters and mimeographed documents protesting the Pope's visit. One of these says that "when the papal message presents materialists and atheists as incomplete human beings, responsible for war, the nuclear peril, hunger, and injustice in the world, there is no doubt that the pluralist character of our civil society is directly threatened." They go so far as to accuse the Pope of creating a "total confusion between the temporal and the spiritual."

But the nastiest threat came out in Holland, where the "alternative" publishing house Tabula published a satirical and pornographic version of *Osservatore Romano*, the Holy See's press outlet, with an article talking about the amorous "adventures" of the Pope and stuffed with pornographic photographs. On page 1 of the paper appeared a photo of the late John Paul I, entitled, "Welcome to Holland": a clear death threat, since John Paul I died after barely a month in office!

In the same countries, anti-Pope festivals have been held, organized with the aid of the Tabula publishing house. Catholic circles linked to the dissident Dutch theologian Schillebeekx, who is very active in contesting the future trip of the Pope, and the Jewish community have made it known that they don't intend to meet

with the Pope. Their pretext is an interview released by Cardinal Willebrands to the magazine *Free Netherlands*, where he allegedly said that the Pope does not intend to dwell in his speeches on the holocaust of the Jews and the Nazis' crimes.

That Cardinal Willebrands, the highest authority of the Catholic Church in that country, is lending himself to such a scenario is no surprise. He was the guiding spirit behind the recent meeting called "Nostra Aetate: Retrospective Twenty Years Later," on relations between the Catholic Church and Judaism, held in Rome at St. Thomas Aquinas Pontifical University.

To the amazement of participants, the Jews were represented by the shady Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the which also aroused a certain resentment in the Jewish community of Rome, which is one of the oldest in the world.

On that occasion, journalists had the opportunity to ask Cardinal Willebrands in person the reason for this choice. Somewhat annoyed, the Cardinal replied: "I chose the ADL because they are everywhere, in Italy, in Sweden, in the U.S.A.; they are the most powerful Jewish organization and they are my friends."

Well-informed Vatican circles are wondering what relation there is between the meeting in Rome with the ADL, organized by the Dutch cardinal, and the posters in Holland accusing the Pope of anti-Semitism. The coincidence of the two events is striking.

Undoubtedly the ADL, as its secretary Nathan Perlmutter said in an interview granted during the meeting, put tremendous pressure on President Reagan around his upcoming trip to West Germany. Were similar pressures put on the Pope?