Vernon Kirby

Homosexual counter-demonstrators bear a banner reading "Portals of Hell" to the HLI Conference.

Homosexuals Protest Pro-life Gathering in the Netherlands

Helvoirt, The Netherlands—The Dutch people are known around the world for their civility and tolerance, but apparently "tolerance is not regarded as a virtue by certain segments of Dutch society," said the leader of an international pro-life organization that is hosting a conference in Helvoirt. The March 11-14 conference at Emmaus Conferentie-Oord in Helvoirt is being targeted by protesters from Dutch homosexual, feminist and pro-abortion organizations.

About 100 garishly attired protesters, many sporting multi-colored hairdos and wearing black leather outfits, marched Thursday, March 11, to the front of the conference center on the outskirts of Helvoirt. Partially blocking the entrance to the facility and impeding highway traffic, the demonstrators proceeded to bang on large oil drums and garbage cans, blow whistles, sound sirens and use other devices to raise a raucous cacophony of ear-splitting noise for more than two hours.

The group also utilized a truck-bed stage with amplified sound system to project noise at the former seminary. Men and women dressed as witches paraded about. Several men with torches and bottles of kerosene spat fire from their mouths and some of the group stood in the driveway with a makeshift banner that said in Dutch "The Portals of Hell."

"They apparently wanted to give us Hell, and we got a fairly good taste of what Hell must be like," said Fr. Paul Marx, OSB, PhD, founder and president of Human Life International, U.S.-based organization with branches in Eindhoven and in Mechelen, Belgium. "The demonstration was ugly, hateful and juvenile."

"We came to this lovely place to conduct a quiet conference for pro-life leaders throughout Europe, but these unruly protesters seem to find our presence here very threatening," said Marx.

"While the homosexual-feminist sideshow outside our gates is superficially entertaining, thoughtful people should be deeply concerned about what is really taking place there. The protesters have hurled several derogatory epithets, including 'fascist,' at HLI and conference guests. But I ask you: Who is using inflammatory rhetoric and who is attempting to ridicule and disrupt the rights of others? This demonstration is a disturbing attempt to silence the expression of ideas that these people outside don't like. It really is a form of anti-religious bigotry and intolerance," stated the HLI founder.

"What we are seeing is the clash of two cultures," said Fr. Matthew Habiger, executive director of HLI. "There is the culture of death, represented by those who pervert and destroy the fruits of human sexuality, and there is the culture of life, represented by those who believe in the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. These people say that we are old-fashioned, repressed and frustrated, but I believe they have it upside down and backwards. Ours is the way of hope and life; it is the way of the future."

Habiger called the protest "a prolonged temper tantrum; a childish performance from the theater of the absurd."

The HLI conference has drawn more than 250 pro-life leaders, representing approximately one million people from 15 European countries, to hear speakers on a variety of pro-life, pro-family topics and to pray and strategize.

Conference topics included euthanasia, homosexuality, abortion, sterilization, contraception, feminism in the Church and genetic engineering.

The protesters also staged another demonstration at the conference on Saturday, March 13. ■

Vernon Kirby

Homosexual activists use a siren and other noisemakers in an attempt to disrupt the pro-life conference.

U.S. Military Doctors Defy Order, Refuse to Perform Abortions

Clinton's Order has Stirred Moral Anguish on the Divisive Issue of Abortion

Bonn, Germany—Military doctors and other medical personnel at American facilities in Europe are refusing *en masse* to perform abortions. This hamstrings efforts to implement a new Clinton administration policy intended to broaden the military community's access to the procedure.

Military officials said that none of 44 obstetricians and/or gynecologists in the European theater were willing to perform abortions.

Two days after taking office, President Clinton reversed a ban that, since 1988, has prohibited American military hospitals abroad from providing abortion services to military personnel and their dependents.

But more than three months later, military doctors, nurses and anesthesiologists are refusing to assist in abortions on moral and religious grounds. As a result, the Pentagon has been unable to comply completely with Clinton's order.

"As of today, we have no takers," said Col. Ogden DeWitt, assistant chief of staff for the Army's clinical services in Europe.

For Clinton and his advisers, the January 22 order was designed to ensure that military families and servicewomen posted abroad would have the same access to child-killing procedures available to Americans at home. Clinton ordered that no government money be used to provide abortions, so military facilities were to charge women $477 for the procedure, assuming it was done on an outpatient basis and no complications arose.

But within the military, with its strong tradition of religious and political conservatism, Clinton's order has stirred moral anguish on the divisive issue of abortion and concern that the administration will impose its political agenda on an unwilling population of military doctors.

Clinton's abortion initiative has prompted charges of insubordination.

"I find it hard to believe that every single person working overseas has a personal conscientious objection to providing abortions," said Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colorado. "I think this is just one more time they're trying to jerk Clinton around. No one has said 'no' to the military or asked them to do anything they didn't want to do for 12 years. And if they don't want to do something, they can make you crazy."

Military officials said that none of 44 obstetricians and/or gynecologists in the European theater were willing to perform abortions. That would force female soldiers and military dependents instead to undergo the procedure at local mills in their host countries.

Col. Barry H. Thompson, command surgeon for the U.S. Air Force in Europe, said that all 10 obstetricians under his command expressed an "unwillingness on a personal or moral basis" to perform abortions. "I don't suppose I was surprised," he said.

Similar difficulties have been reported at American installations in Asia.

Experts said the military doctors' unwillingness to perform abortions reflects a trend that is widespread in the civilian medical community, as well.

They said the military's concern could reflect another civilian trend—that with declining interest, fewer medical schools are teaching doctors, civilian and military, how to perform abortions. ■

New Polish Law Includes Sex Education

Warsaw — The government of Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka — strongly backed by the Roman Catholic Church — is in no hurry to implement the more liberal provisions of Poland's newly implemented abortion control law. The legislation, which became effective in March, permits abortion only when pregnancy is the result of a crime, or when prenatal tests show the baby has major and irreversible defects. Estimates are that the measure will make illegal more than 95% of cases in which women traditionally sought abortions under the previous 1956 communist-era abortion-on-demand law. As a partial tradeoff for the more restrictive law, abortion activists won support for amendments to allow sex education in schools, provide aid to pregnant women, and assist the Roman Catholic Church and other organizations to take care of mothers.

This legislation permits limited abortions. Estimates are that the measure will make abortions illegal in 95% of cases in which women traditionally sought abortions under the 1956 communist-era abortion-on-demand law.

But the government has not begun work on any of the three tasks assigned to it. The Health and Labor ministries said they have not received any guidance from the Cabinet's legal bureau, and are not working on any regulations to implement the law. In the case of sex education, the Education Ministry has no intention of doing so. Education Vice-Minister Kazimierze Marcinkiewicz has said there will be no new classes in schools because a "family-oriented education" is included in biology and Polish language classes. A spokesman at the ministry went further, saying the whole issue is linked with lack of money to introduce new classes. If the ministry can get some money a weekly class might be instituted that would cover health, the environment and the family but not sex education per se. ■