

Europe Hits Conviction of Abp. Stepinac

London, Oct. 16 (AP)—A wave of indignation and protest by European Catholic leaders followed the conviction of Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb on charges of treason.

Cardinal Augustin Gollnitsch, Archbishop of Strasbourg, denounced the conviction of Stepinac as a "crime against the conscience of the world."

Archbishop Stepinac is a Croat of his country, and a native of his people," he declared. "This conviction is one of gross injustice and a crime committed against a great judge who has believed in all these years, irrespective of race or creed."

The English of Columbus, and the people of a resolution to Forme Minister Charles M. Allen, Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, and British Foreigner Winston Churchill, urging the British government to take steps to secure the speedy release of Archbishop Stepinac.

Archbishop Stepinac was arrested in 1941 and held in custody in Croatia for a year.

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Clergy Toll Found Heavy

New York (AP)—The figures showing the heavy toll of the persecution suffered by the Church in Yugoslavia are cited by the Inter-Catholic press agency here in a Special News Service, based on Vatican radio broadcasts.

In 1944, there were 1,826 Catholic priests in all Yugoslavia; today there are only 200. One hundred and eighty six priests have been killed without any trial process of a kind, 22 have been "temporarily" suspended, 12 have been sentenced to long prison terms, and 200 others have died.

Tito vs. Abp. Stepinac — Pilate vs. Christ

(This is the second of three articles written in this country by the former secretary of the imprisoned Archbishop Stepinac, Vukobrat Lovbic.)

By the REV. STEPHEN LACKOVIC
(Former Secretary of Archbishop Stepinac)

The prosecutor in the trial of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac in Zagreb spoke ironically; yet, though quite unintentionally, he pronounced a great truth when he said that the Archbishop stood before the court "like Jesus, standing in the way of the Communist Party which seeks by all means to realize its atheistic materialistic program."

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What were the charges against Jesus? We read about them in the Gospels: "If He (Jesus) were not a criminal, we should not have handed Him over to thee... we have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar."

What were the charges brought by the communist accusers of Archbishop Stepinac? We read about them in the newspapers: "He is a terrorist conspirator... he is an enemy of the people... he is an opponent of the Yugoslav regime..."

There is another distressing parallel between the trial of Jesus Christ and the trial of Archbishop Stepinac. It comes to mind when we read in the newspapers that several priests accused the Archbishop from the witness stand.

I can testify that these priests were eyewitnesses of the Archbishop's unceasing labor in behalf of those suffering persecution at the hands of the Ustashi regime and its German masters. They knew that Archbishop Stepinac risked his own freedom, perhaps his own life, to save the freedom and the lives of others: Catholics and Jews, Serbs and Croats, Orthodox and Moslems, communists and others.

They knew that truth was not the purpose of the trial.

"The procurator wondered exceedingly" when Jesus did not answer him a single word. Did the procurator and the judges at Zagreb wonder, too, at the man whose doom they sought?

Perhaps there were some among them who, directly or indirectly, owed their lives to the accused. And yet they brought themselves to cry, "Crucify him," at the man who was their true friend and protector against oppression.

"He made no answer," the Gospel tells us of Jesus when he was accused before Pilate by the chief priests and the elders. He remained silent because he knew that His life gave the answer to all accusations and also because He knew that the judge did not seek the truth. Archbishop Stepinac, too, "made no answer" to the accusations. He did not have to speak; his letters, his actions, his whole life speak for themselves. And he, too,

was silent because he knew that truth was not the purpose of the trial.

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By Rev. Stephen J. Ryan

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