

Ex-Tito Aide Brands Trial as Church War

(The author of the following article, for many years a high official in the Yugoslav government, resigned this year and joined the foreign press section of the Ministry of Information of the Tito regime. He returned to his country, disillusioned by his experience with a supposedly "democratic" regime which he witnessed to be a dictatorship of terror and death by a Nazi-controlled "front" for Moscow.)

By BOGDAN RADIMSKI

When I left Yugoslavia last spring it was clear to me that a great struggle between the Catholic Church and communism would soon start.

I told my American friends in Rome and later here that I felt Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac of Zagreb would be the main target of the religious persecutions and that I should not be surprised if the brought him to trial in an effort to expose him as "traitor to the people" and a "reactionary" who must be eliminated from public life.

For any person who had been in Yugoslavia it was not difficult to make such predictions. After the so-called liberation of the country the people were persecuted by fear and forced to the churches to pray day and night.

Political leaders were arrested, lived in exile or in hiding. The priests of the Church remained as the only rallying point. It seemed as in the old times when Asiatic conquerors invaded the country. Then, too, the only refuge for the soul of the people was the Church.

Much Tragedy

This was particularly true in Croatia where the people have been traditionally attached to the Catholic religion. The communists on the other hand lost control of their power. Many of their followers persecuted and killed priests, monks and nuns.

The "people's court" set up all over the country by the communists, were eager to condemn as many priests as they could find.

Last year I attended some of these trials, where fake testimony was presented in an effort to bring about the conviction of priests. In some villages of my native Dalmatia members of the Communist Party and their supporters stole crucifixes and destroyed them on Sundays in front of the church while people were going to Mass. These anti-religious manifestations have increased the devotion and loyalty of the people. The churches were crowded more than ever before.

Religious processions have attracted increasingly large numbers. In some parts of the country where Catholics and Orthodox Serbs live together, the Serbs joined the Catholic

processions. Tito's regime was identified with the arrival of the anti-Catholic, anti-religious

communists.

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