

Holy Land Monastery Hit Jerusalem — (NC) — A heavy mortar bomb hit St. Saviour's Monastery here, headquarters of the Custody of the Holy Land

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A Story the Reds Suppressed! Yugoslav Trial of Bishop of Mostar Disclosed as 'Travesty of Justice'

(NCWC NEWS SERVICE) The communist regime in Yugoslavia had good reasons to make it impossible for foreign correspondents stationed in Belgrade to cover the "trial" of Bishop Peter Cule of Mostar, who was sentenced by a "People's Court" to 11 1/2 years imprisonment.

The nature of these reasons becomes crystal-clear from authoritative reports now received on the "legal" proceedings that took place last July 14-18 before a packed "court" sitting in a motion picture theatre at Mostar, a town in the "People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

TWO FACTS EMERGE from these reports: What took place at Mostar was a travesty on justice equalling in every respect that which led to the imprisonment of Archbishop Stepanac of Zagreb and of many other priests who have incurred the wrath of the Tito regime.

Against a sordid background of hatred, intimidation and denial of the most elementary rights of human justice, there emerges from the reports, however the figure of a spiritual shepherd who, with calm and dignified courage, tore through the web of trumped-up charges, who upheld his right and duty to preach and write against atheistic communism; who proudly proclaimed his readiness to suffer for the Church and for Christ, and who publicly forgave those who had been forced to bear false witness against him.

The so-called judges at Mostar took good care to clear the courtroom before the Bishop took the stand for his final defense statement. They were obviously afraid of the effect his words might have even on those communist led spectators who during the trial booed, reviled and

threatened the prelate and his nine co-defendants. APART FROM THE "judges," the prosecutor and the defense attorneys, nobody heard the Bishop when he admonished the communist judges that if they really desired the good of the people, then they would seek the way of conciliation with the Church of God whose Divine commission it is to teach the Gospel to all nations. The Church or her part, he said, is always desirous of peace, but she will not purchase a specious peace at the expense of her eternal principles.

The Bishop's plea was in vain. The whole conduct of the "trial" had made it clear that its only purpose was to terrorize still further the Catholics and other Christians in Yugoslavia. And the sentences were fully in accordance with that purpose: Bishop Cule received 11 1/2 years imprisonment; his secretary, the Rev. Matthew Nuic, was sentenced to eight years; the Revs. Mladen Barbaric, O.F.M., and Rulin Silic, O.F.M., were sentenced to three years and nine months respectively.

Three Franciscan nuns, Sisters Crescentina, Melita and Felica, have to go to prison for three years, one year and six months respectively; two laywomen received 8-month and 18-month terms; one priest was acquitted.

HERE ARE SOME examples taken from the documents received, illustrative of the methods typical of communist "justice" to "railroad" Bishop Cule to prison. (1) Following his arrest on April 22, 1948, the Bishop was not permitted to confer with his curial officials in regard to preparing his defense. Most of his archives had been confiscated and he was refused access to documents which might have been useful for his defense. He was not permitted to confer with his secretary. For three months, while awaiting trial, the Bishop was held incommunicado in jail.

(2) The defense attorney, appointed by the court, was an 80-year-old man, advanced in senility, who had never been a practicing attorney of Slovene nationality; he did not speak the native Croatian language well. The attorney saw Bishop Cule only once before he went on trial, and then only for a period of five minutes.

(3) DURING THE TRIAL, not a single witness was called in defense of the Bishop and not a single document was adduced for the defense. The defense attorney did not cross-examine any of the witnesses. He failed to object to the constant badgering of the accused by the prosecutor or to protest to the "court" against the hostile demonstrations of the communist spectators.

(4) All of the prosecution witnesses were either prisoners or had just been released from jail. They recited their testimony as school children recite lines of poetry. It was common knowledge all over Mostar that these witnesses had been intimidated to testify against the Bishop; in one case a woman had been tortured until she agreed to bear false witness against the accused.

(5) THE PUBLIC prosecutor took two hours to sum up against the Bishop. The defense attorney made his final statement in slightly more than three minutes, restricting himself to the statement that his client suffered from nervousness and that, therefore, the court might be inclined to show clemency. There can be little doubt that even the attorney for the defense had been subjected to intimidation and was forced to do the bidding of the prosecutor.

The "indictment" of the Bishop, a 34-page document, makes the general charge that he was a "collaborator" with Pavelic head of the wartime Independent Croatian State, with Hitler and with Mussolini; that he was responsible for the pastoral issued by the Yugoslav Bishops in October, 1945; that he preached against the "people" and was responsible for "fascist" writings.

Specifically, he was charged with having nursed a wounded rebel in his house, and with having been the "center of the forces of reaction after the liberation."

Regarding the "collaboration" charges, Bishop Cule declared that, as a patriotic Croat, he was in favor of Croat independence, but he denied that he had ever been a "Stacha" (the Croat party in power during the war).

"I AM AGAINST all forms of totalitarianism," he said. Answering the charge that he had appealed to the occupation police to protect his people against the "Tito-led" partisans, he said: "The partisans had already carried off to an unknown fate 15,000 Catholic Croats of my diocese, and they had killed at



MARSHALL TITO He still persecutes the Catholic Church

least 1,000 of them. I should have been recalcitrant to my trust had I not sought to prevent further massacres."

The Bishop frankly admitted that he had preached against atheism and charged the communists with persecuting the Church. Not even in the new Yugoslavia, he said, is it a crime under written law to preach against atheism.

To charge communists with persecuting the Church is a true statement, he observed, adding "Unfortunately, the persecution of the Church is still raging in Yugoslavia, and that is why the Bishop of Mostar, am standing before this court in my city."

Answering a charge that, during the war, he had been in contact with the commander of the Italian occupation forces in Mostar, the Bishop declared that, far from being a crime, such contacts were expressly sanctioned by the Hague Convention. He went on to say that he had used these contacts to save many people, including communists and their families, and that he had interceded without distinction for Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

THE BISHOP severely reproached the prosecutor for listing it as a "crime" that he had sent priests to the Croatian military forces. He protested against the concept that it is criminal to send chaplains to troops, no matter on what side of a conflict they are fighting. All the fighting forces of the world, except communists, seek to give the consolation of religion to their soldiers, he said.

Bishop Cule proudly admitted his part in the 1945 Pastoral issued by the Yugoslav Bishops and stoutly maintained that every word in it was the truth, particularly in regard to communist persecution.

He challenged the prosecutor to disprove a single statement in the pastoral and pointed out that it is not customary in civilized countries to prosecute a man because he has told the truth.

With equal vigor, the Bishop defended the truth and timeliness of his sermons on the present conflict between "the powers of good and the powers of evil." This conflict, he pointed out, has always existed in one form or another and is intensified today. If it is not permitted to a Bishop to preach on such essentially religious subjects, what is the sense of saying that religious liberty exists in Yugoslavia, he asked.

Bishop Cule summarily rejected the charge that he had been the center of rebellion against the regime in Herzegovina and referred to a letter to his clergy instructing them to abstain from political activity. He equally denied that his secretary was in league with the rebels. The secretary (Father Nuic) has always acted under his (the Bishop's) instructions and, therefore, if there was any violation of the law it was the Bishop who was responsible and not his secretary.

Finally, as to the charge of giving medical aid and shelter to a wounded rebel soldier, the Bishop said he would have performed the same acts of Christian charity for anyone who came to his door, even for a communist. He refused to believe that charity toward a wounded person was a crime and reminded his persecutors that even in the heat of war soldiers have medical aid to their enemies.

Reds Give Pigs To Informers

Berlin — (CP) — Informers and spies who denounce their neighbors to the Communist People's Control Committees in the Soviet Zone of Germany are given prizes and rewards.

A complicated point system, with little pigs as the ultimate prizes, has been introduced in the Angermuende district, Province of Brandenburg.

Undeclared supplies of meat, eggs, oilseed, and nails bring the highest number of points. If they are denounced to the People's Control Committee. As soon as an informer has gathered 600 points, he receives a little pig as a prize with the right to fatten it and eventually to consume it in addition to his normal rations.

Polish Regime Steps Up Attack Against Church

London — (NC) — The communist-dominated regime in Poland, in an effort to divert attention from the deep rift within the Communist party which became obvious following publicly aired charges of "rightist deviations" and "narrow nationalism" against top communist leaders, is now launching an out-and-out war against the Church — and the Catholic press is the first aim in this new campaign.

THIS IS the interpretation informed persons here put upon the numerous arrests of Catholic editors, both priests and laymen, reported from Poland. The latest is that of the Rev. Roman Mielinski, chief editor of the Poznan Catholic newspaper Glos Katolicki. No news is available yet on the charges on which he is being held.

These arrests and the underlying motives have created a situation which caused postponement of the annual meeting of the Polish hierarchy, scheduled to begin this week at the national shrine in Czestochowa, reports from Poland indicate. The meeting is now to be held later this month.

THE ARREST of Father Mielinski raises the number of Catholic editors that have been taken into custody to at least ten. Msgr. Zygmunt Kaczynski, editorial director of Tygodnik Warszawski, Catholic weekly in Warsaw, who was arrested with five members of his staff, was conditionally released after 72 hours, but his newspaper remains closed.

Tygodnik Powszechny, the other leading Polish Catholic weekly, published in Cracow, is still being issued, but the chief editor, the Rev. Jan Pliwowarczyk, S.J., and one of the chief writers, Stefan Klajewski, are under arrest.

Other Catholic writers known to be under arrest are Pawel Jasienica from Cracow and Eugene Paukzta from Poznan.

CCD Directors May Give Papal Blessing

Washington — (NC) — All diocesan and parish directors of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine have been empowered by His Holiness Pope Plus XII to bestow the Apostolic Benediction with a plenary indulgence once according to Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara of Kansas City, Mo., chairman of the CCD episcopal committee.

The privilege was granted by the Pope at a private audience with Bishop O'Hara and the CCD directors, when they visited the Vatican while on the Confraternity pilgrimage to the tomb of Pope Plus XI.

Degree for Irish Official Montreal, Que. — (NC) — John Costello, Prime Minister of Eire, will be honored by the University of Montreal with an honorary degree when he comes to Montreal this month to attend the meeting of the Canadian Bar Association.

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