Communist Terroristic Tactics In Czechoslovakia Reveal Familiar Pattern

Fists Follow Smiles In Red War Against Czech Catholics

(NCWC NEWS SERVICE)

The post-war methods of communism in Czechoslovakia provide a striking example of the "scientific pattern" that governs the communist war on religion and the Church. Its guiding principle was to prefer guile to force as long as results were obtained. Open persecution was reserved for the time when trickery failed to gain the "spontaneous following," which communism so much desires.

Following the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May, 1945, when the Russians were still in the country, the communists [illegible] by this unique opportunity and seized all important government posts, including control over army and police.

When the Soviet forces left the country the situation [illegible] and fear of the communists [illegible], yet the other political parties failed to [illegible] them from their powerful [illegible].

Not content with a merely [illegible] acceptance by the population, the communists [illegible] to win a [illegible] acceptance by the masses. For this purpose they employed [illegible] tactics. All the [illegible] teachings of communism — such as internationalism, class hatred, dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. — were put away into mothballs. Czechoslovakia [illegible] posed as extreme [illegible] and genuine patriots. [illegible] that Czechoslovakia is a country with old Catholic traditions dating back to the ninth and tenth centuries, and that about 75 per cent of the population is Catholic, communism made a deliberate effort to pose as friends and protectors of religion.

Particularly in Bohemia, the western part of the country, which is populated by Czechs, the communist attitude toward religion seemed favorable for several years.

COMMUNISTS SPOKE respectfully of religion. They even took part in religious activities, going so far that in several villages of the province of Moravia the local communist party organizations asked for special pilgrimages to a shrine of Our Lady, with participation reserved for party members.

During that period, army officers were commanded to take part in Corpus Christi processions. Communists extolled the heroism of the many Catholic priests who had died in nazi concentration camps. Archbishop Josef Beran of Prague and Bishop Stephen Trochta of Litomerice, both of whom had been imprisoned by the Germans, were hailed as heroes and their appointment to their present posts was hailed loudly by communists.

IN SLOVAKIA, the eastern part of the country, the communist kid glove tactics were less in vogue and methods of

Nazi Foe

[illegible] Josef Beran of Prague wearing decorations given him for heroism against the Nazis during the last war.

open persecution were used there from the very beginning. The particular conditions arising from the wartime policies pursued by Monsignor Tiso (who, in 1947, was tried on treason charges and executed) furnish at least a partial explanation of the difference in the communist attitude toward the Church in western and eastern Czechoslovakia.

However, apart from these distinctions, the general tendency of communism in Czechoslovakia after the war was not to persecute the Church openly but rather to win over Catholics and get them under communist domination like the enslaved Orthodox (schismatic) Church in Russia. Communists, for several years played a cat-and-mouse game, assuming an air of friendliness, yet never giving up their role of "protector," with the aim of finally smashing the Church.

THE NON-COMMUNIST parties of Czechoslovakia, overawed and faint-hearted in the first months of the post-war republic, gradually regained their courage and began to attack their self-styled "protectors" and oppressors.

Once more the press became opinion and made no secret of its sympathies with western ideals. Catholic papers, like the weekly Obzory (Horizon), became outspoken in their criticism of communist behavior. Crucifixes reappeared in the schools. Communist violence and deceit were ruthlessly exposed.

The struggle between communism and the other political parties reached its climax before the national elections in May, 1946. Communism sought an overall majority. Knowing that Catholics were the opponents most to be feared, they published leaflets asserting that communism stood for "protection" of religion and labeling any statement to the contrary a vile lie.

COMMUNISTS DID not win 1946 elections; still, by forming a coalition with the moderately marxist Social Democrats, they had a parliamentary majority. The Social Democrats played a double game: sometimes supporting the communists in parliament, but more often the other parties.

From these elections until February, 1948, the situation became more and more hopeful in Czechoslovakia. Communist strength steadily declined. Their violence and tyrannical behavior lost them any sympathy they may have gained. The freedom of the press became ever more apparent.

This was the situation when, suddenly, the catastrophe came. Communists realized that the next election would be disastrous for them, and an order from Moscow forestalled such a calamity. Thus came the coup d'etat of February, 1948.

Communists having gained power through the "workers' police" and the state police (which they controlled ever since 1945) ousted all non-party members from local councils and other autonomus bodies.

PRESIDENT BENES, whose skilled political tight-rope-walker tactics had for two and one-half years delayed the sovietization of Czechoslovakia and preserved at least partial freedom, finally gave in to communist demands, realizing that resistance would mean bloodshed in a hopeless struggle, because the Russians were, if need be, ready to invade the country.

All Catholic diocesan papers, though not political in outlook, were banned. The communist anti-religious struggle,

(Continued on Page 6)

Czech Regime Loots Church Art Treasures

London — (NC) — In its ever-growing need for "hard" currencies the Czechoslovak government is once again interfering ruthlessly with the property rights of the Catholic Church.

Only two years ago a nation-wide search was made for rugs, carpets and tapestries belonging to the Church, and among the spoils were many valuable products of Oriental, French or Belgian craftsmanship, which had been used only on festive occasions for the decoration of the sanctuary.

INDEED, SOME OF the very old churches in the country were forced to part with carpets and tapestries which they had owned and treasured for centuries, and which any museum of fine arts would have been proud to possess.

THE PRESENT action, which was preceded by a government decree prohibiting the customary collections during the services in Catholic churches, has as its object the expropriation of all kinds of ecclesiastical works of art, such as paintings, sculptures, works of wrought iron, panels, and, in particular, gold monstrances and other sacred vessels of precious metal.

Abp. Beran Quips Red About Dachau

Chicago — (NC) — Some months ago Alexei Cepicka, Czechoslovakia Minister of Justice, visited Archbishop Josef Beran at his chancery in Prague.

The communist government official told the noted foe of Marxism:

"You'd better support our front, or else . . ."

Adjusting his zuchetto atop his head, the little prelate smiled, walked over to the closet near his desk, and opened the door slowly. He picked up some rags and said:

"Here's my uniform from Dachau, let's go."

The chagrined minister walked out of the office abruptly.

This anecdote, showing the type of churchman the communists face in their war on the church, was told by a Czech now living here. He is Anthony J. Jandacek, who escaped from Czechoslovakia and is now an editor for the Chicago Bohemian Daily Narod, a Catholic newspaper.

World attention is centered on courageous Archbishop Joseph Beran of Prague, whose arrest is feared at any moment because of his forthright stand against the Communist-controlled Czechoslovakian government. (NC Photos).

Nazi Concentration Episode Failed To Daunt Archbp. Beran

By ANTONIN JANDACEK, EDITOR
CHICAGO CATHOLIC BOHEMIAN DAILY
(Written for N.C.W.C. News Service)

Appointment on November 7, 1946, of Dr. Josef Beran, professor of the Theological Faculty of Charles University and rector of the Prague archdiocesan seminary, as Archbishop of the capital city of Bohemia was an event of extra-ordinary importance for Czechoslovakia.

Selection of a priest who had for years been the victim of nazi concentration camps served to stress the great suffering which the Czech nation and its priests endured during World War II.

BORN IN 1888 and ordained in 1911, the Archbishop had served as a parish priest, a teacher and a seminary rector. When he was associated with St. Ann's Normal School, Prague, he was known as "Our Lamb." (Beran means ram in Czech.) This was partly because of his small stature, but chiefly on account of his modesty and kindliness.

When the nazis took over Bohemia in 1939, they attempted to inject their racism into the seminary of which he was rector. Curtly and decisively Dr. Beran told German officials that the seminary was a school of the Catholic Church, therefore none but Catholic doctrine would be taught there.

For this unflinching stand he was sentenced to the dreaded prison of Pankrac in Prague, and then to Terezin in northern Bohemia.

AT THE TIME Lidice was wiped out in 1942 Dr. Beran was transferred to Dachau. Here he was assigned to sweeping streets.

When Patton's victorious Third Army liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945, Dr. Beran was freed with the rest of the 30,000 prisoners.

Archbishop Beran has always been an intrepid fighter, battling for the principles of Christ and for a better humanity. If he is now in the world limelight it is not because he is displaying a new fighting spirit. It is just that the freedoms he is battling for are of world importance.

Reds Hit Bishops Who Fought Nazis

NCWC NEWS SERVICE

The ruthless and diabolical campaign of defamation which the Red regime in Czechoslovakia is pursuing against Archbishop Josef Beran of Prague follows so closely the pattern employed in the arrest and trial of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac in Yugoslavia and His Eminence Josef Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary that it is evident that the purpose in each case is the same.

A COMMUNIST regime is about to throttle another heroic nation and to hold it beneath the dark waters of terrorism and indoctrination until it loses its being.

In all three instances — first in Yugoslavia, then in Hungary, and now in Czechoslovakia — the Catholic Church has been the last considerable force to stand in the way of totalitarian savagery. In the cold-blooded calculations of the communist masters of these once proud countries, it had to be done away with.

TO BEGIN with, there was a cunning effort to wheedle Catholics in each country away from home. Tactics at various times have included the issuance of newspapers falsely labeled as "Catholic"; the founding of spurious "Catholic Action" groups, and the representation of mere "freedom of worship" as real "freedom of religion." Good will toward the Church was pledged at every turn, but through it all a "national church" separated from the Holy See was held up as the ideal.

This failing, an attempt was made to tear the people from their spiritual leaders — the Bishops; to leave them floundering and without guidance. This failing, the shepherds — the Bishops — had to go.

Actually, the Moscow-dominated regimes in these countries could not have picked three persons more innocent of such charges. All three are "of the people." All three fought the nazis heroically. All three languished in prison for the defense of the common people.

ARCHBISHOP STEPINAC fought the Germans as a soldier in World War I and vigorously opposed the methods of the nazis as Archbishop of Zagreb in World War II. He denounced the persecution of Jews, condemned the execution of hostages, protested the conduct of occupation troops. For all his pains he was imprisoned for 17 days following the war by Tito's police who subjected him to all sorts of abuse and threats.

CARDINAL MINDSZENTY, as young priest and Bishop, was most distinguished for his love of the poor and the tenacity with which he clung to them. He was Bishop of Weszprem when the nazis were in control of his country and he was the most outstanding figure in the Hungarian resistance movement. He refused to permit the nazis to enter his residence in search of people who had taken refuge there. When the nazis broke in, the Bishop met them in his episcopal vestments, and went forth to jail with those who were found hidden in his house.

ARCHBISHOP BERAN spent three years in the infamous Dachau concentration camp as a prisoner of the nazis. The late Eduard Benes, post-war President of Czechoslovakia, lauded him for his fortitude at this time, and said he knew that Czech priests had suffered for their nation during the war.

In each instance, the final action against the principal prelate has been prefaced by all sorts of vilification of the Church and the priests and Bishops in general.

Truman Petitioned to Protest Czech Tactic

Cleveland — (NC) — President Truman was petitioned to protest religious persecution in Czechoslovakia in a resolution adopted at a Catholic mass meeting held in Public Music Hall here. Bishop Floyd L. Begin, Auxiliary of Cleveland, and Mayor Thomas A. Burke were among the speakers.

The protest meeting was held a few hours after Jindrich Kotas, 54, deputy Czechoslovakia consul in Cleveland resigned in a sharply-worded message to the Red-ruled Prague government, refusing to obey an order for his return to that country.

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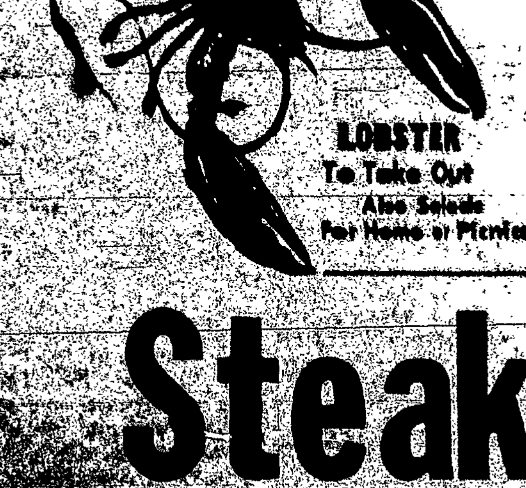

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