

# Bulgarian Reds Sentence Bishop, 3 Priests To Death; Imprison 36 Others

## Red Court Cites 40 Clergy, Laymen As 'Vatican Spies'

Paris — (NC) — A Catholic Bishop and three priests have been sentenced to death by a Bulgarian communist court.

The same court, "trying" a group of 36 Bulgarian priests and 12 Catholic lay people on charges of "espionage" for the Vatican, handed down the following other sentences: Two priests were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment; six received terms of 15, two of 14, and 11 of 12 years' imprisonment. Fifteen others, including a nun, were sentenced to three to five years' imprisonment.

ACCORDING TO the Bulgarian news agency, those sentenced to death are: Bishop Eugene Bossilkoff, C.P. of Nikopol; the Rev. Kamen Vichev Yankov, rector of the Byzantine Rite seminary in Bulgaria; the Rev. Faval Delaliev, rector of the Catholic seminary in Florov; and the Rev. Joseph Andreev Shabkov, a priest in the town of Staliv (Barna).

Those sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment were identified as: Dr. Peter Sariyski, secretary to Bishop Ivan Romanov, Vicar Apostolic of Sofia, and former rector of a Catholic seminary; and the Rev. Miroslav Burev (or Banchev) former rector of the seminary in Yasbol. Dr. Sariyski in his testimony reportedly accused Bishop Romanov, a war-time hero whose arrest has been denied.

BISHOP ROMANOFF will probably be "tried" in the near future. The third Catholic Bishop in Bulgaria, Bishop Cyril Kuriev, Ordinary of the Byzantine Rite Catholics, was reported arrested two months ago. Bishop Bossilkoff, who is now under death sentence, is 51 years old. He was ordained in 1908 and consecrated in 1947.

The Bulgarian communist reports leave no doubt that the "trial" was carried through in strict accordance with the pattern of communist conduct. According to the reports, all the accused "confessed" their

guilt, asked for "just punishment and clemency," and begged for a chance "to mitigate our guilt before the nation."

They declared, according to the communists, that they had been "misled" and "incited" by the Vatican and its "representative" in Bulgaria as well as by members of foreign intelligence services. The Vatican "representative" was identified as Msgr. Francesco Galloni.

The indictment, handed down September 20, accused the priests and lay people of spying for the Vatican "in preparation for an imperialistic war against the Soviet Union."

THE NATURE of the "confessions" allegedly made by the accused is illustrated by the following excerpts from the communist reports on the "trial":

Dr. Sariyski admitted that Msgr. Antonio Spina (an official of Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church) instructed him to collect political, military and economic information for "the Vatican intelligence service."

Father Yankov "confessed" that he said: "Our most important task as missionaries and representatives of the Pope in Eastern Europe is to preach the struggle against communism." He is also said to have "admitted" that weapons and radio transmitters found in the possession of the accused had come from "the American" and were collected in preparation for war against the Soviet Union.

THE "TRIAL" of the 40 Catholic priests and laymen and its outcome recalled similar proceedings carried on early in 1948 against 15 Protestant clergymen in Bulgaria, who were also accused of "espionage," who also "confessed" their guilt and "begged for mercy" and received long prison terms.

## Vatican Radio Scorns Story From Reds

London — (NC) — Vatican Radio has scoffed at Red propaganda stating that Bulgarian Catholics have "become indignant" at their religious leaders for their "treasonable activities" as "revealed" in the recent "spy" trial.

THE VATICAN Radio broadcast heard here commented on a Sofia, Bulgaria, broadcast which purportedly gave the reaction of Catholics to the trial. At the trial Bishop Eugene Bossilkoff of Nikopol and three priests were sentenced to death. Some two dozen other priests and a number of Catholic lay men received prison terms.

Vatican Radio said that undoubtedly there is "great indignation" among the Bulgarian Catholics. But, it added, this anger is not directed at the victims of the so-called trial but at the Red court and the methods used to break the will of these people so they "confessed" crimes they never committed.

Radio Vatican took up another remark in the Sofia broadcast. The Sofia Radio had said that the sentences of the victims had a "redemptive significance."

"If the sentences, including the death sentences, should be regarded as having a 'redemptive significance,'" Vatican Radio declared, "then one must strain to understand the incredible cynicism of the speaker. But then his behavior is no different from that normally shown by the communists."

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## Sentenced To Death



VIENNA—Bishop Eugene Bossilkoff, C.P., of Nikopol, along with three Catholic priests, was sentenced to death by a Bulgarian Communist court on charges of espionage and "anti-State activities." At the same trial, 42 other priests and 12 Catholic laymen were sentenced to prison terms of from 12 to 20 years. It was reported by the Sofia Radio. The trial, it was believed, virtually wiped out Catholic Church leadership in Bulgaria. The Sofia Radio said officially that all sentences were final and could not be repealed. No date was announced for the executions. (RENS Photo).

## Vatican Paper Brands 'Trial' Red Terrorism

Vatican City — (NC) — Death sentences imposed by a Bulgarian communist court on a Bishop and three priests were denounced here by Osservatore Romano, Vatican newspaper, as an act of "heinous terrorism" intended to intimidate the people of Bulgaria.

THE BULGARIAN regime, Osservatore declared, "wants blood, perhaps in order that its heinous terrorism may be persuasive for a people enslaved, but not yet entirely subjugated." It branded the Sofia "trial" of the Bishop and the priests for alleged "conspiracy and espionage" as "nothing but a useless alibi for a premeditated slaying."

"This is not the first time," the Vatican newspaper said, "that Catholic priests have been sent to the firing squad, but it is a bit unusual in recent times, when the tactic has become rather general in the 'people's democracies' to deport or bury Bishops and priests in prisons so that their memories may be lost in oblivion."

OSSERVATORE NOTED one exception. It said that one Yugoslav ecclesiastic "in these days awaits death in one of Marshal Tito's prisons." The paper did not identify the priest.

Declaring that 24 other priests and 12 Catholic laymen had been sentenced to long prison terms by the Sofia court, Osservatore said it was significant that the condemned prelate, Bishop Eugene Bossilkoff of Nikopol, had been marked for execution although he ranked only seventh among the defendants on the basis of the seriousness of the "crimes" imputed to him.

"IT IS CLEAR," Osservatore commented, "that a decision had been made to attack the Church as directly as possible. The Bishop of Nikopol was condemned to the severest penalty precisely because he is a Bishop. The fact that communist hate is directed above all to the Holy See is confirmed by the announcement of the imminent trial, in Sofia, of Bishop Ivan Romanov, Vicar Apostolic of Sofia."



"The terroristic persecution" of Catholic Bishops, priests and laymen by the Red Bulgarian regime was the subject of telegrams of protest to the U. S. State Department urging the government to secure the freedom of the condemned men. Among those sending protests were, left to right: Francis J. Nally, of Toledo, president of the National Council of Catholic Men, representing some 7,000,000 men; Mrs. William Dalton, of Augusta, Me., president of the National Council of Catholic Women, representing 7,000,000 women and William Stuart, of the National Catholic Youth Council, representing 6,000,000 youth. (NC Photos).

## Lay Leaders Ask U.S. To Protest

(N.C.W.C. News Service) Catholic lay leaders in various parts of the country have now called on the United States government to bring before the United Nations the case of the Bulgarian Bishop, priests and lay people condemned by a Red court on fabricated charges.

Bishop Eugene Bossilkoff of Nikopol, Bulgaria, 28 priests, a nun, a lay woman and a number of laymen were "tried" for alleged espionage and treason by a Red court in Sofia. The Bishop and three priests were sentenced to death, the rest to prison terms varying from three to 20 years.

THE PRESIDENTS of the National Council of Catholic Men and Catholic Women and Catholic Youth urged Secretary of State Dean Acheson to bring the so-called trial before the bar of world opinion at the UN.

In a message to Mr. Acheson, Francis J. Nally of Toledo, NCCM president, said: "As loyal, God-fearing Americans, as Catholic men, our organization calls upon our brethren citizens and upon our gov-

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## Mystery Shrouds Priest's Death in Red Bulgarian Prison

Rome — (NC) — A Catholic priest has died in a prison in communist-dominated Bulgaria under mysterious circumstances, according to SICO, information service of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church.

## Death of Father Bakalski's Cause

The priest was 45-year-old Father Fortunatus Bakalski, O.F.M., Cap., who had been arrested on July 12, and who was reported by the Bulgarian police to have died of double pneumonia on an unspecified day during August. Suspicion centers on the cause of Father Bakalski's death because he was in robust health at the time he was arrested. Neither his religious superiors, nor his family or anyone else, had been advised that he was ill and in danger of death.

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