

Reformers in Czechoslovakia Reinstate Bishop, Priests

Prague — (RNS)—Stalinist convictions of a bishop and 40 Catholic priests were overturned by the national supreme court as this country continued its liberalization program.

Bishop Karel Otčenasek, secretly bishop of Hradec Kralove in 1950 and arrested by the government a short time later, had his conviction overturned and is expected to take up his episcopal duties in the near future.

Bishop Otčenasek had been given a 13-year prison sentence and was released in 1963. Since that time he has worked as a truck driver.

The 40 priests whose convictions were reversed by the court will be allowed to resume their pastoral work.

However, it was made clear that priests will still be required to take the oath of loyalty to the Czech Socialist Republic and Church property confiscated by the government in the late 1940s will not be returned.

Three other bishops had earlier been "rehabilitated" by the government and allowed to resume their posts. They are Bishop Stephan Trochta of Litomerice, Bishop Josef Hlouh of Ceske Budejovice and Bishop Karel Skoupý of Brno.

Another Czech bishop, who like Bishop Otčenasek, had been consecrated in secret is presently living in the West and has not been allowed to return to Czechoslovakia.

He is Bishop Paul Hnilica who was secretly consecrated in 1950 while imprisoned in a Communist concentration camp. Bishop Hnilica had been a Jesuit seminarian at the time of his arrest. His consecration was revealed by the Vatican only after he escaped to the West in 1964.

In June he made three attempts to return to his native country but was turned back each time by the Czech border guards.

Also in exile is Joseph Cardinal Beran, 79, who had been released from house arrest and allowed to go to the Vatican in 1963. Since that time he has served in the Vatican Curia and is still regarded by Church authorities as the formal Archbishop of Prague.

The actual running of the archdiocese is in the hands of Bishop Frantisek Tomasek, apostolic administrator of the

archdiocese. The return of Cardinal Beran is believed to be one of the issues that the Vatican will raise when it opens negotiations with the Czech regime of Alexander Dubcek in October.

However, Bishop Tomasek has noted that the issue of the cardinal's return, while of importance, is "not the most important" issue for the Church at the present time.

Theology Program Designed for Both Clergymen, Laity

Emmitsburg, Md. — (RNS)—A new graduate program in theology, designed to attract both clerical and lay students, will be inaugurated in Mount St. Mary's Seminary here.

The announcement of the new courses was made by Msgr. Hugh J. Phillips, president of Mount St. Mary's College. He said that the degree programs will be open to those studying for the priesthood and to all qualified students who want to major in theology and do not intend to enter the clerical life.

Plans are underway for Summer courses to begin in the Summer of 1969. Future plans also call for evening classes in theology.

Bible, Newspapers Called Complementary

Loveland, Ohio — (RNS)—Neither the Bible nor the newspaper make sense unless one is held in each hand and they are read together, a National ecumenical seminar for women was told here.

Dr. Alice Wonders, chairman of the department of religion and philosophy at Texas Wesleyan College, Fort Worth, addressed a study session sponsored by Church Women's United.

The professor discussed the seminar theme which dealt with changing concepts of God and new dimensions of faith in the modern world. Sister Marie McDermott of the Sisters of St. Joseph, San Francisco, was the other main speaker.

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It was in line with a statement by the archbishop just before the opening of the month-long conference, which continues to Aug. 25. He said that "we shall have very special emphasis on poverty and hunger, in the working class, and again we shall be reminding ourselves and others of the need to be helping the hungry."

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Six Czech Bishops Pre-Involved In Conference

Prague—Six Czech and one Polish bishop met in a square between the palace and Hradcany castle for a historic meeting with the president, Ludvik Svoboda.

The meeting took place Tuesday night. Under Communist rule, the present ecclesiastical structure suffered nearly 20 years of disruption, along with the Czechoslovak church.

Bishop Karel Skoupý of Brno, Moravia, who led the effort to be restored to office last May by the new government after 18 years of enforced absence from his diocese.

Bishops Josef Hlouh of Ceske Budejovice, Bohemia, and Trochta of Litomerice, spent the last five years in prison. Bishop Trochta, 25 years in 1948, is believed to have also served seven years.

Also attending the conference were Bishops Ambroz and Robert Pobony and the most Rev. Frantisek Tomasek, the apostolic administrator.

Pope Hoopes Use of Key to Freedom

Castel Gandolfo, Italy — Pope Paul VI has expressed that his new exploration of "the barriers which impede peaceful relations between nations."

The Pope's hopeful message contained in a letter to the First International Conference on the Exploration of Outer Space.

The Pope, however, warned about exploitation. He singled out space as a benefit to all of mankind, but only a certain group—the exclusion of other countries—should be used for the creation of an instrument of propaganda aimed at subverting, at the end, strengthening racial and social classes against one another.

The Pope noted that of a scientific nature has been accompanied by progress in the field of international cooperation. He pointed out that a preliminary on space work had been necessary to work out overall "space law" and discipline these matters.

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