

Archbishop Faces Death in Tito "Trial" Yugoslavs Cleared Church, Pope Says

Rome, Oct. 5.—(NC) — Whatever may be the fate of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac at the hands of his accusers, history will record his trial before what is termed a "people's court" in Zagreb as an example of Christian courage and conviction in the face of perverted justice.

This is the unanimous opinion reached here on the basis of reports from the school gymnasium where the trial was staged with all the techniques developed by totalitarian regimes for such purposes. The "real" people of Croatia crowded the churches to pray for their Archbishop.

There was, on the one side, a four-man tribunal, whose members did not even pretend to act in a manner befitting judges but plainly considered the defendant guilty from the very moment the "trial" was opened.

There was a prosecutor who mistook his functions for that of a political agitator; and, fully in keeping with the atmosphere at such propaganda trials, there were the crowds packing the court room, jeering the defendant and applauding the presentation of so-called evidence.

And, on the other side, there was the Archbishop, disclaiming the legitimacy of the trial, answering only when the honor of religion or the Church was at stake, until, in an impassioned address, he tore through the maze of distortions and exposed the true purpose of the trial: to destroy the Church in Croatia and the centuries-old loyalty of the people to the Holy See and to make religion a subservient instrument of the State.

"Compared with the case built up by the prosecution, the answers of the Archbishop were like a blast of wind against a spider's web," wrote Osservatore Romano in comment on the reports from the trial.

"Before the judges at Zagreb, Archbishop Stepinac defends, with the innocence proper to a worthy Bishop, the liberty of the Yugoslav people," declared *Il Quotidiano*, organ of Catholic Action.

It was in a 40-minute address to the court that Archbishop Stepinac, often interrupted by the jeering crowds, told the court that just as "the communists have the right to fight for their materialistic theory, so we have the right to fight for Christianity."

"You talk about freedom of religion in Yugoslavia today and imply that it is greater than anywhere else," he said, "and I tell you that a great number of priests have been killed here.

"You could have interned them; you did not have to kill them. The people will never forgive you for that, and there was never a bigger scandal than that anywhere else in the world.

"Not one Bishop or Catholic priest is safe for his life, day or night. When you want loyalty from us, then we also demand our rights."

And then the Archbishop added this ominous statement: "Not only does the Church in Yugoslavia have no freedom, but in a short while it will be annihilated."

The Archbishop dismissed charges accusing him of collaboration with the Croat Ustashi regime during the years from 1941 to 1945 by making it clear that he maintained some relations with that regime for the one and only reason that there was no other

FACES TRIAL



ARCHBISHOP STEPINAC

authority existing in Croatia at the time.

"Tell me," he said, "who was my authority in 1941? Was it the (Belgrade) Simovic government who put in a king illegally against the constitution? Was it the treacherous London exiled government? Was my authority Mikhailovitch (Serb general, executed this year by the Tito regime) who wasn't known at that time? Or was this government my authority which didn't even exist then?"

"From May 8, 1945, (the day when Tito came to power in Croatia) you were my authority," the Archbishop said, "and not before that. From that day on you had the right to ask me for my behavior, and I can go, with a clear conscience, to the other world."

At the very beginning of the "trial" the Archbishop told the court: "My conscience is clear and I am not going to say any more about it. You can bring a thousand proofs but you will never be able to prove a single crime." The Archbishop promised that he would "give a full account when conditions in the country are settled," and that then "there will be no one who will say a word against my archbishopric."

When the prosecution introduced as "evidence" photographs showing Archbishop Stepinac in the company of Pavelic at the opening session of the Croat parliament, Archbishop Stepinac said: "I see no reason not to go to ceremonies when I am asked. We all know what such ceremonies mean. I have been in your parliament, too, but that does not mean I approve of your ideology."

And when the prosecution read an article describing Archbishop Stepinac blessing the Ustashi "Crusaders," the prelate simply said: "I give my blessings to all who ask.

"Does that include criminals, too?" the court wanted to know.

"Everyone has the right to get blessings," the Archbishop said.

In an interview with reporters at the trial, Bishop Joseph Hurley declared the proceedings to be of the greatest importance and expressed the hope that the trial would be fairly reported. He called Archbishop Stepinac the "Mercier of our time," referring to the Belgian Cardinal Mercier who during World War I gained fame as defender of the rights of Belgians against the Germans.

Rome, Oct. 6.—In a speech delivered at his summer residence, Castel Gandolfo, to the Sacred Tribunal of the Roman Rota, which resumes its activities tomorrow, the Pope declared today that Yugoslavia had acknowledged as long ago as 1942 that neither the Holy See nor the Roman Catholic Church had had any part in the "so-called forced conversions" in Croatia. He categorically rejected the charges made at what he called the "very sad trial" of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac that he himself had approved such conversions.

The Pope began by explaining what the church meant by "freedom of conscience" and by tolerance toward other religious confessions. He dwelled particularly on the article of the Canon Law saying that "nobody must be obliged against his will to embrace the Catholic faith."

Referring directly to Monsignor Stepinac's trial, the Pope continued: "If, therefore, a few days ago, according to news appearing in the press, the public prosecutor in a very sad trial affirmed that the Pope himself had approved the so-called 'forced conversions' and moreover—that he had done so for reasons of national imperialism, we have the right and the duty to reject such a false accusation. In order that our assertion may be duly documented, we consider it fitting to read to you a memorandum of the Secretary of State, dated Jan. 25, 1942, in reply to a question submitted to it by the Yugoslav legation to the Holy See about the movement of conversion which Yugoslavia herself expressly acknowledged that neither the Holy See nor the Catholic Episcopacy in Croatia had had any part whatsoever."

Washington, Oct. 4.—(NC) — The propaganda trial of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac aims at crushing the Catholic Church, "the strongest bulwark against communism in Yugoslavia today," writes *The New York Times* in an editorial, saying that the trial of the Croat prelate "has no more relation to justice than that of General Mikhailovitch."

"The defendant is only a target through which the poisoned arrows of the prosecution are aimed at a larger objective," writes the Times. "As the Mikhailovitch trial was used to advance the Communist party line that the United States and Britain approved and supported the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia, so the Stepinac trial is being used to charge the Catholic Church with a similar collaboration."

Pointing out that Archbishop Stepinac "dragged to the bar is proving more formidable than when he was free," the Times says "not since Cardinal Mercier, Roman prelate of Belgium in the First World War, and Pastor Niemoeller in Hitler's Protestant Germany, has any churchman so boldly faced entrenched tyranny, shielded only in the armor of his conscience."

Having failed to crush the Church through murders of priests by the secret police, "the trial of Archbishop Stepinac is the heaviest weapon against the Church Tito has yet rolled out," the Times says in conclusion, adding:

"If the lessons of history mean anything, he is merely making a martyr whose spirit and influence he cannot kill."

LARGER THAN THE SKY

THE STORY OF JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS, BASED ON THE BOOK BY COVELLE NEWCOMB ILLUSTRATED BY ADDISON BURBANK

PRESENTED BY TIMELESS TOPIX THE CATHOLIC COMIC 128 E. 10TH ST. ST. PAUL I, MINN.

AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER...



THE FAMILY INTENDED TO GO TO BALTIMORE, WHERE JAMES WAS BORN, BUT THEIR SHIP WAS WRECKED OFF THE COAST.



A RESCUE SHIP BROUGHT THEM TO NEW ORLEANS, WHERE JAMES GOT A JOB IN A GROCERY STORE.



A FEW YEARS LATER...



WHEN FATHER GIBBONS SAID A PRAYER FOR PRESIDENT LINCOLN IN ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, NEAR BALTIMORE...



THE YEAR FATHER GIBBONS WAS OBTAINED IN BALTIMORE, THE CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT MOST OF THE CITY, WHICH WAS IN A BORDER STATE, SYMPATHIZED WITH THE SOUTH.

John Tully Starts Book Club

A new book club in the Catholic field has been organized by John C. Tully, editor of the magazine "Books on Trial".

One of the chief features of the new club will be the offering of a wide variety of books from which its members may choose.

For September there are two books — *Truths Men Live By*, by Rev. John A. O'Brien, Professor of Religion at the University of Notre Dame; and *The Miracle of the Bells*, a novel by Russell Janney, co-author of the musical play, *The Vagabond King*.

Members may take both books at a considerable saving in cost; or they may take no book at all. They agree to buy only four books a year. If a member takes only one of the books, this will count toward a free dividend.

The club is sponsored by the Thomas More Book Shop, 220 W. Madison Street, Chicago, which was founded by Mr. Tully in 1939, and which has since been instrumental in helping a number of book shops in other cities to get started in business.

"The Thomas More" is a unique "not for profit" organization which performs various services for the benefit of readers. Beginning in October, another new service for dealers and librarians will get under way. They will be supplied at 10-day intervals with appraisals of current books, prepared by the Staff of "Books on Trial", which now numbers nearly 100 of the leading Catholic book-reviewers of the country.

Chicago, Sept. 27.—(NC)—One of the first releases of the Variety Record company, soon available to the public, will be an album entitled "Let Us Pray," consisting of the best-loved prayers and the circumstances around which they were written.

Charlotte Named Convention City

Charlotte has been named 1947 convention city for the Catholic Committee of the South.

North Carolina carried off all top honors at the 1946 convention in New Orleans with the award of the convention and with two of the three top lay positions in the organization going to North Carolina laymen.

Edward MacClements, Charlotte, was elected vice chairman of the Catholic Committee of the South and John E. Eck, Gastonia, was re-elected treasurer of the organization.

Chairman is Father Vincent J. O'Connell, SM, professor of theology at Notre Dame seminary in New Orleans.

Cardinal Samuel Stritch was the outstanding speaker on the New Orleans program. He told the convention that the so-called "youth problem" was really an "adult problem." Cardinal Stritch decried pessimism that thought the country might go Communist. "Why should we change our way of living for something inferior?" he asked. He said there was more sound thinking in this country today than ever before. He praised the progress made by labor, said it was insurance against Communism.

Monsignor T. James McNamara, chairman of the committee's department of racial relations, said, "The Catholic Church does not allow pigmentation to determine its attitude." He said that all men are of one family, said race prejudice was wrong.

Father Vincent O'Connell, chairman of the department of labor and industry, said organization of labor is "not a necessary evil but a necessary good."

Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, San Antonio, urged formation of discussion groups to fight against racial injustice.