

**ARCHBISHOP STEPINAC**

*The Man and his Case*



**Archbishop Stepinac (left) with Rt. Rev. Dom Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, O.S.B., Abbott of Monte Vergine, Apostolic Visitor to the Yugoslav Hierarchy from 1941-45.**

Archbishop  
**STEPINAC**

*THE MAN AND HIS CASE*

*By*

ANTHONY HENRY  
COUNT O'BRIEN OF THOMOND

Ph.D., LL.D., Pol. Sc. D. (hon.)  
*Foreign Editor, The Standard, Dublin*

*Foreword by*

THE MOST REV. JOHN C. McQUAID, D.D.  
*Archbishop of Dublin*

THE NEWMAN BOOKSHOP  
WESTMINSTER, MD.

1947

Copyright, 1947, by  
THE NEWMAN BOOKSHOP

To  
MRS. PAULINE M. KELLY,  
*whose friendship was the strongest encouragement to,  
and greatest help in, writing this book.*

*Royalties to be used for the aid of refugees from Yugoslavia.*

## Foreword

Count Anthony H. O'Brien of Thomond is unusually well qualified to write a memoir on Archbishop Stepinac. A sojourn in Yugoslavia, knowledge of the country and its language, personal friendship with Archbishop Stepinac in recent years, are exceptional advantages. In addition, long training in higher legal science and in literary work has given him the judicial balance and power of exposition that one looks for in the careful handling of a difficult theme.

The case of Archbishop Stepinac is very complex and very simple.

The position of an Archbishop-Primate in a country like Yugoslavia, at a period such as that which we have witnessed, necessarily required the Archbishop to enter into relations with every movement and every manner of person. His life must then seem to be a maze of difficulties.

On the other hand, the directness of the supernatural ideal which guided the Archbishop allows us at once to understand his attitude in any position of crisis. The Archbishop was always the spiritual Ruler and Teacher of his flock.

In his trial and unjust condemnation, therefore, Archbishop Stepinac is but another symbol of the unending persecution of the One True Church.

We are grateful to Count O'Brien of Thomond for having firmly cut through the tangle of national and international politics to delineate with accuracy the heroic charity and courage of this Catholic Archbishop-Primate, who has confessed the Faith before men.

✠ JOHN C. MCQUAID  
Archbishop of Dublin,  
Primate of Ireland.

*Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1947.*

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE . . . . .	1
INTO EXILE . . . . .	3
THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST ARCHBISHOP . . . . .	5
ON THE EVE . . . . .	10
TESTING-TIME . . . . .	15
"FREEDOM" IN TITOSLAVIA . . . . .	27
SCENE-SHIFTING . . . . .	42
A SERIES OF "TRIALS" . . . . .	48
SETTING THE STAGE . . . . .	52
THE CURTAIN RISES . . . . .	60
THE ACCUSED ACCUSES . . . . .	65
THE VOICE OF THE VATICAN . . . . .	76
NON-CATHOLIC OPINION . . . . .	80
A PERVERSION OF JUSTICE . . . . .	90
MESSAGE TO THE WORLD . . . . .	94
INDEX . . . . .	97

*All Serbo-Croat names are spelled phonetically, except that of the Archbishop of Zagreb (pronounced Step-eeen-atz) with which readers are familiar from Press reports.*

# *List of Photographs*

## FRONTISPIECE

	<i>To face page</i>
GUESTS OF HONOR . . . . .	42
AT THE GOVERNMENT PARADE . . . . .	43
IN THE COURT ROOM . . . . .	60
IN HIS PRISON CELL . . . . .	61



## *Preface*

**E**VER since the arrest of Mgr. Stepinac I have considered it my sacred duty to tell all men of good will that all the accusations brought against him are either pure falsifications or gross distortions and malicious misrepresentations of the facts.

Close connections with Yugoslavia for over a quarter of a century certainly give me the right and the competence to do so. For more than five years I stayed in that country—two years and a half of them in Zagreb where I had the opportunity of speaking with Mgr. Stepinac once a week at least and thus becoming fully acquainted with his personality and his activity, his views and his opinions.

This book is but an imperfect attempt to sketch the outstanding figure of this great, wise, and saintly Prelate; a small contribution to the fight against the persecution of the “Yugoslav Cardinal von Galen” and the “Mercier of our time”; a humble token of my everlasting gratitude for his friendship of which I shall remain proud to the end of my days.

May Our Lady of Marija Bistritza, the Patroness of Croatia, whose devoted son and zealous servant Mgr. Stepinac has been all his life, guide this book on its way so that it may achieve its aim: to make its readers realise, and raise their voices against, the crime committed by the enemies of Christ and His Church in depriving Mgr. Stepinac of his personal freedom and impeding his labours for God and the people of Croatia.

O'B.—Th.

Dublin, New Year's Eve, 1946.

## *Into Exile*

**A**T 7:30 p.m. on March 11, 1938, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg had broadcast his last speech as Chancellor of a free and independent Austria.

Hardly ten hours later a group of SS. men searched my house in Vienna for hours and then took me to the Police Headquarters. After an almost continuous 48-hour interrogation I was sent to the Central Police Prison. There I spent more than three weeks, together with 15 other people, in a small cell, thirteen feet by seven, till I was transferred to the County Court Prison. On June 25 I was suddenly informed that I could go home. Very soon I discovered, however, that I had a home no longer, for in the meantime my house and everything in it had been requisitioned and converted into a home for the Hitler Youth.

Early in August, while I was still considering where to go to abroad, I received a confidential warning of the Germans' intention of confining me to the town of Gotha in Thuringia. So I went to "visit" friends whose estate was but a few miles from the border, and in the night of August 20 I was rowed across the river March, which formed the eastern frontier between Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Living in Prague I witnessed the development of the Sudeten crisis, the Czechs' firm determination to resist Hitler's threats and their betrayal by England and France in the dark days of Munich. Fully aware that—in spite of Hitler's solemn declaration—the cession of the Sudetenland was not his "last territorial demand," but only the first of many to come, I was thinking hard where to go next.

On November 26 a friend of mine, a high official in the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rang me up and asked me to come and see him at once as he had some very important and urgent news. When I called at his office he told me that the German Legation had demanded my extradition for "instigation

to murder." This "crime" I had committed in being the Commanding Officer of the Austrian Auxiliary Army formations which quelled the National-Socialist rising in Upper Austria and Styria after the assassination of Chancellor Dr. Dollfuss in July, 1934.

The German grip on the Czechoslovak Government was already much stronger than was generally known at that time, and I fully recognised that the Czechs could not risk getting into trouble with the Germans for my sake. So we decided after a long and detailed discussion of the possibilities of the situation, that I should leave—supplied with a genuine passport, but under an assumed name—as soon as possible for Yugoslavia. Then they would inform the German Legation that I had left Czechoslovakia for an unknown destination.

The Hungarian transit visa and the Yugoslav entrance visa were easily obtained, and in the evening of November 28 I departed from Prague. But when I arrived in Bratislava, on the Czechoslovak-Hungarian frontier, the trouble started. The train service with Hungary, interrupted since the Munich crisis in September, was to be re-opened "any day." In fact, this had already been officially announced, but nobody knew the day.

I had to make a difficult choice: either to walk more than 20 miles to the next Hungarian railway station or to travel through Austria. The chances of getting undetected through the passport control on either route were fifty-fifty, even a little better via Austria. So I took the risk, and everything went all right. However, I must confess that I felt nervous and uncomfortable all the time until, eight hours later, the train crossed from Austria into Yugoslavia. I was fully at ease only when in the early morning of November 30 I arrived in Zagreb.

## *The World's Youngest Archbishop*

THE morning of December 1, 1938, is still as vividly before my mind's eye as if it had been but this morning. A few minutes before 10 a.m. I was walking with the secretary from his office through the magnificent, long, high-ceilinged corridors of the *Kaptol*, the Archbishop's Palace, dominating the city, with its huge round towers still like the fortress, as which it had indeed served many and many times in the long and turbulent history of Zagreb and of Croatia.

I saw little of the famous staircase, of the masterly stuccoes, of the beautiful old frescoes, of the many portraits of the Archbishops of Zagreb. For the nearer we came to the Archbishop's apartment, the greater my interest grew. What will he be like, the young Prelate to meet whom had been my greatest wish ever since I had first heard of him more than four years ago? For though we had been in correspondence during these years, I had never met him in person.

\* \* \*

All I knew of him flashed like lightning through my mind.

Aloysius Stepinac was born in Krashitz, a village on the outskirts of Zagreb, on May 8, 1898, as the seventh of the eleven children of small peasant farmers. He had hardly finished the seventh class of the episcopal minor seminary at Zagreb in 1916, when he was conscripted into the Hungarian Army (Croatia was then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). After his basic military training he fought for over a year on the Italian front, reaching the rank of Cadet Warrant Officer and being twice awarded the Medal for Valour. He was then made a prisoner-of-war. After a few months in Italian captivity, he, whose family had always sympathized with the South Slav idea, volunteered for the Yugoslav Legion, formed of Croat and Slovene prisoners-of-war. Fighting as a Second Lieutenant on the Salonika front he distinguished himself so much that he won the highly coveted,

yet very rarely awarded *Karageorge Star*, the Yugoslav Congressional Medal of Honor.

Back in civilian life after the end of the war in 1919, he completed his classical studies and entered the College of Economics at Zagreb to study agriculture. In 1924, however, he decided to become a priest. For seven years he was one of the most brilliant students of the Pontifical German-Hungarian College in Rome where he was ordained on the Feast of Christ the King, October 26, 1930, and received the degrees of doctor of philosophy and doctor of theology.

Returning to Croatia in July, 1931, he worked as a curate among the workers in the poorest section of Zagreb, personally visiting thousands of homes. It was then that, impressed and moved by the misery and want, both material and spiritual, which he encountered, he founded *Caritas*, a charitable organization for material and moral aid to the most needy of his people. After more than a year he became secretary to Archbishop Dr. Ante Bauer of Zagreb.

It had created quite a sensation, not only in Yugoslavia, when on May 28, 1934, less than four years after his ordination, the Holy Father Pope Pius XI had nominated him Titular Archbishop of Nicopsis and appointed him *coadjutor cum iure successionis* to his Ordinary. Only 36 years of age, he had become the then youngest Archbishop in the world. After Archbishop Bauer's death on December 7, 1937, he succeeded to the Archiepiscopal See of Zagreb.

I remembered what Fr. Rauch, S.J., who had been his Vice-Rector at the German-Hungarian College, had told me about his student's vocation: how since his birth it had been his parents' greatest desire that Aloysius should become a priest; how his mother had kept three fast days a week for 30 years to obtain the grace of the priesthood for him; how coming home from the war he had entirely given up the thought of becoming a priest; how even arrangements for his marriage had been on the way; how his mother kept praying and fasting three times a week; how all

of a sudden the "old love" got hold of him with an irresistible force and in a moment all was overthrown and there was only one idea and one ideal for him—the priesthood.

I remembered how Mgr. Dr. Koroshetz, the great leader of the Slovene People's Party, had praised the young Archbishop's prudent handling of Yugoslavia's two political hotheads—Dr. Matchek, the stubborn leader of the Croat Peasant Party, and Premier Stojadinovitch, the clumsy would-be dictator; how he had told me—and the priest-Minister of the Interior knew what he was talking about—that several times it had been due solely to the Archbishop's moderating influence on both sides that the often highly critical tension had not exploded into open hostilities.

I remember how enthusiastic Dr. Mazhuranitch, President of the Yugoslav Senate and former Minister of Justice, who was anything but a good Catholic and much less a friend of the clergy, had been about Fr. Stepinac's care for the people in the slum section of Zagreb; how highly he spoke of his foundation of *Caritas*, the directorship of which he had retained even as Archbishop; how a sound of envy had been in the voice of this scion of one of the oldest and most famous Croat Patrician families when he told me of the great enthusiasm and joy with which the Croat people, especially the poorest amongst them, had received the young priest's elevation, and of their high esteem and great admiration, immense loyalty and deep love for their new Archbishop.

I remembered how Mgr. Dr. Shimrak, editor of *Hrvatska Strazha*, the leading Catholic daily, had told me but the night before:

"You have known me for nearly 20 years, and you must admit that I am certainly not a man who is likely either to be sentimental or to exaggerate. Wait and see for yourself, and when you get to know him you will agree with me that he will become one of our great Croat Bishops, perhaps even the

greatest we have ever had. Our young Archbishop, God bless him and keep him for many years to come, is really a sage and a Saint."

\* \* \*

A firm and yet soft voice answered the secretary's knock. And when he opened the door I saw a tall, slim figure rising from the huge desk, covered with papers and books, and coming with long, quick strides across the large room to meet me.

"Praised be God that you are here, and safe. I have been worrying about you all the time since Cardinal Caspar (Archbishop of Prague) had informed me via Switzerland of your departure," Mgr. Stepinac said, firmly shaking my hand.

Sitting beside his desk and answering his many questions for nearly two hours I watched him with close interest all the time. The likeness with his name Saint was striking. His lean face was not only handsome, but really beautiful—of a beauty, however, that I have rarely seen. Yet, his mouth and his chin showed him as a man of character, will-power and determination. The light of his penetrating eyes revealed the intensity of his deep religious convictions and the strength of the spiritual flame burning within him. His speech was short and precise, not a single word too many, and always to the point. His thoughts were lightning-swift and often of a terrifying logic, going straight to essentials.

Already at this very first meeting he impressed me deeply. This son of Croat small farmers carried himself with great dignity. Yet, his modesty was at once striking and touching. His personality and every one of his words and gestures radiated sincerity and kindness. I felt very clearly that I was in the presence of a man of real greatness of mind, heart and soul.

During the past twenty years I had visited many countries and had met, especially at the various International Eucharistic Congresses, the majority of the world's greatest churchmen, Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops. Most of them I had come to esteem, the others to admire. But two of them have made upon me an impression which shall last as long as I live. And I shall

always consider myself fortunate for having had the opportunity of meeting these two whose great part in the history of the Church was then unforeseen: in 1923, the then Apostolic Nuncio in Germany, Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli, the present Holy Father; and in 1938, Mgr. Aloysius Stepinac.



## *On the Eve*

**D**URING the two years and a half of my stay in Zagreb I received innumerable signs of Mgr. Stepinac's favour.

Once a week at least I was his guest for lunch or dinner. The ensuing discussions of topical problems, which in these critical years were more than abundant, developed and welded a friendship which I consider the greatest and most precious of the many favours he bestowed upon me.

This close and intimate contact enabled me to get to know him as only a very few others do; to see his saintly life, which had won him the admiration and love of the faithful; to note his simple and modest, almost frugal, habits, keeping just the bare minimum (I learned from his secretary that he used but 3,000 dinars, about £12, a mere fraction of his monthly income, for himself; the rest went to the poor); to observe his unceasing work for his Church and his people.

He established new parishes in Zagreb, which had trebled its population since World War I; built new churches, extended his care for the poor in his Archdiocese by founding new branches of *Caritas* throughout the country. He organized the yearly *Sotzialne Tjedne* (Social Weeks), attended himself all the lectures and at their conclusion had those taking part in them as his guests for tea in the Palace.

He did everything in his power to ease the steadily increasing tension between the Croat Peasant Party and the Government in Belgrade. His was no small part in the conciliation, which began with the dismissal of the would-be dictator and friend of the Axis Stojadinovitch and ended in the successful conclusion of the *Sporazum* (Agreement) of August, 1939, giving Croatia a large measure of autonomy.

From these discussions with Mgr. Stepinac I know that he still adhered to the ideal of his youth: an independent Yugoslav State, but in the sense in which it had been founded in 1918—not a

State in which there was a hegemony of the Serbs over the Croats and Slovenes, but a federation of the Serbs and Croats and Slovenes, in which Serbia would be a free Serbia, Croatia a free Croatia and Slovenia a free Slovenia.

In the course of our discussions he often denounced bitterly the many clumsy and stupid attempts of the Serb régime in Belgrade, prior to the *Sporazum*, to curb the activities of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and to impair her rights. He was particularly frank and outspoken on the many and constant attempts at proselytism by the Yugoslav authorities. I still remember how indignant he was—and it was then that I realized for the first time in my life the real and full meaning of “righteous indignation”—when he told me of the Yugoslav school authorities’ deliberate policy of transferring young Catholic school mistresses to remote villages where they had to work with young Orthodox teachers, in order to promote mixed marriages.

I know that he was absolutely opposed to the Croat extremists, who were ready to identify Croatia’s fate with that of National-Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy: the *Frankovitz* (as they were called by the Croat people after their ideological father, the late Dr. Josip Frank, a Jewish lawyer in Zagreb) or *Ustashe* (as they called themselves), whose leader, Dr. Ante Pavelitch, had been living in exile for over 10 years.

His was a particularly high conception of authority and the rule of law. He was the most outspoken opponent of mob rule. And yet, it was to be his fate to live in two periods when mob rule, in its two worst possible forms, was rampant in his own country: first the National-Socialist and Fascist régimes and then the Communist régime.

Thousands and thousands of Austrian, German, Czech and Polish Catholics of Jewish origin owe perpetual gratitude to Mgr. Stepinac. They asked for his help and received it. Within his *Caritas* in Zagreb he organized a special Relief Committee for Refugees. For over two years I was allowed to help him in this work. From what I have seen with my own eyes I can testify

that he did all in his power to find shelter for these people in Croatia and to enable them to live an honest and decent life; that he helped those who wished to leave Yugoslavia, mostly for England, the United States or South America; that in most of these cases he paid out of his own pocket the major part of the travelling expenses, which were far beyond the means at the disposal of the Relief Committee.

There were quite a number of Protestant refugees of Jewish origin living in Croatia. As most Protestant residents, nearly all Germans, either sympathized with, or were afraid of, the Nazis, the Protestant Bishop of Zagreb—an honest and kind-hearted but weak and frightened man—did not dare to help them. So Mgr. Stepinac took care of them, too. His Relief Committee paid half of their weekly assistance, the other half coming from a Protestant Relief Fund in England.

From the very first day the Relief Committee began to work, the German Consul-General at Zagreb kept close watch over Mgr. Stepinac's activity for the refugees. And the German Minister in Belgrade even made several formal complaints about it to the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In the same manner he cared for the thousands and thousands of "Aryan" refugees fleeing to Yugoslavia from the German terror after the occupations of Czechoslovakia and Poland, and helped them to go to the Near East where they could join their compatriots. It did not matter to him what their political convictions were. I still remember, to quote but one example, the young German Communist who came to the Refugee Committee asking us to help him to go via Bulgaria and Roumania to the Soviet Union—which we did.

\* \* \*

Just as the morning of December 1, 1938, so the morning of March 24, 1941, is still clear in my mind's eye. Little more than three weeks before, the German armies had virtually occupied Bulgaria, and in the interval increasing pressure had been brought to bear on Yugoslavia.

The following day the Yugoslav delegates were to sign the Three-Power Pact in Vienna. In long and detailed discussions during the previous days it had been decided that I should leave for Belgrade and complete there as quickly as possible all necessary arrangements for going to the United States via Turkey, Palestine and Iran.

I had come to pay my last visit to Mgr. Stepinac. It was a sorrowful farewell. We both knew, though we did not mention it, that many hard and bitter years were in store for him and his country. For though we both firmly believed in the final victory of the Allies, we were both also fully aware that it was still a long way off.

I remember well those few hours we spent together for the last time. Once again I had reason to admire his quick thinking. We discussed every chance and risk that I could meet with on my long journey to safety. Many an important point had never struck me at all. Mgr. Stepinac, however, not only thought of every one of them, but at the same time also knew how they should be dealt with.

I still remember our discussion about the critical political situation in the Balkans and the almost certain involvement—in one way or the other—of his country in the war. As he talked to me of the many and great responsibilities awaiting him if the dreaded calamity should befall Yugoslavia, I felt very clearly that I was listening to a man of extraordinary strength of character, who would prove his worth in the times that try men's souls.

\* \* \*

After a week in Belgrade I had nearly completed all the necessary arrangements (British *laissez passer*, Yugoslav exit permit, Greek, Turkish and Iranian visas). In fact, I was to depart in the evening of Tuesday, April 8. But the beginning of the German *Blitzkrieg* in the Balkans—the bombardment of Belgrade by the *Luftwaffe* on Palm Sunday, April 6—frustrated my plan.

By train, car and on foot I tried to make my way down to the Bay of Kotor, where I was to join the members of the British

Legation in Yugoslavia and to embark with them on a British destroyer. But just as the sudden outbreak of the war, so its sudden end prevented me from carrying out my intention. When the Yugoslav Army capitulated on April 16 I had reached only Mostar and was still over 100 miles from my destination.

So I made my way down to the Dalmatian coast where the Italian occupation authorities confined me to the island of Korčula (between the coastal towns of Dubrovnik and Split), on which I remained till Christmas Eve, 1943.

Despite innumerable difficulties and obstacles, I managed somehow to remain in constant contact with Mgr. Stepinac, till the Italian surrender on September 8, 1943, when all communications with Zagreb were completely cut off. Hardly a week passed without bringing some traveller, mostly a priest or a nun, either with a letter or a verbal message.

Jewish refugees, of whom there were at one time nearly 1,000 confined to Korčula, so that the German and Croat Press used to refer to it scornfully only as the "Island of the Jews," were the first who brought the news of Mgr. Stepinac's attitude towards the German and Italian occupiers and the puppet régime of Croatia. What they reported made me feel proud of belonging to the Catholic Church, prouder than I have ever felt in my whole life.

## *Testing-Time*

ON the morning of April 10, 1941, the Germans occupied Zagreb, capital of Croatia. Vice-Premier Dr. Matchek, the leader of the Croat Peasant Party, who had decided to stay in the country, flatly repudiated their overtures for collaboration, and was sent to a concentration camp near Graz in Austria. In the evening they proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia, headed by Dr. Ante Pavelitch, leader of the not very numerous, but the more active, Croat extremists.

The task of his crack troops, known as *Ustashe*, was not only to crush, with Axis aid, those loyal to the Yugoslav Government, but to eliminate the Serb minority, nearly all of them belonging to the Orthodox Church, within the newly-drawn frontiers of Croatia. They were offered the choice between conversion to the Catholic faith or death.

There were, it is true, a very small number of individual Catholic priests and religious in whom their nationalism was stronger than their religion. But the Catholic Church as a whole, all her Bishops and the overwhelming majority of her priests, led by the Archbishop of Zagreb, made this evil plan impossible.

From the very beginning of the occupation of his country to the end of the war, whenever the German-dominated Croat Government sought to enforce the pagan ideologies of the conquerors, the Primate of Croatia stood up fearlessly again and again in defence of Catholic principles and teaching.

Throughout the bitter years of war, whenever it became known that Mgr. Stepinac was to preach, immense crowds packed the Cathedral at Zagreb to hear the only voice which even the dreaded Gestapo could not and dared not silence, as it was raised time and again against the pagan doctrines of totalitarianism.

Extracts from his sermons were not only used in the propaganda of the British Ministry of Information and the United

States Office of War Information, but also broadcast by the Soviet-sponsored radio station *Slobodna Jugoslavia* in Tiflis and even by Tito's Partisans over secret wireless transmitters.

He defended, protected and aided all victims of oppression, Communists in their turn included. Without any consideration of religion, race, nationality or political convictions he tried to help them all.

He had but one purpose in mind when he maintained some correct formal relations with the authorities then in power: to use these contacts so that he might intervene on behalf of those who were under sentence of death, imprisoned or persecuted. He never honoured any invitations to any public ceremony unless he had in his pocket a list of persons awaiting execution, in prisons and concentration camps.

So vigorous and effective were his protests against the persecutions and his intercessions for pardon or release, that he succeeded in saving innumerable lives, though he could not save all of them.

His proud record during this period has been summed up in the Vatican in a few words:

"Archbishop Stepinac is the Cardinal von Galen of Yugoslavia!"

\* \* \*

In the following pages I shall give but a small selection from Mgr. Stepinac's record during the four hard and bitter years under the foreign occupiers and their Croat puppet Government. All these facts are taken from reports published in periodicals which no one could even suspect of being pro-Catholic: the leading (Protestant) Swiss papers *Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, *National Zeitung* and *Basler Nachrichten*, and the *News Digest*, issued during the war by the British Ministry of Information.

\* \* \*

Little more than a fortnight after the beginning of the occupation of his country, at the end of April, 1941, Mgr. Stepinac intervened on behalf of Orthodox Serbs, held as hostages and threatened with execution.

In a letter to Pavelitch, of May 14, 1941, he solemnly protested against the execution of 260 Orthodox Serbs, held as hostages, without trial by the *Ustashe* at Glina.

In a letter to the Croat Minister of the Interior of May 22, 1941, he denounced the violation of human rights through legislation directed against Serbs, Jews and gypsies.

In another letter to the same Minister, of May 30, 1941, he demanded equitable treatment for "non-Aryans."

In a special circular letter of May 15, 1941, he told those, Jews and Orthodox, who were asking to be received into the Catholic Church, that he wished them to be sincerely convinced before embracing their new faith.

At the end of June, 1941, he transmitted to Pavelitch a letter from Mgr. Dr. Josip Ujchitch, Archbishop of Belgrade, appealing for the cessation of the persecutions of Orthodox Serbs in Croatia and demanding more humane treatment of prisoners held for political or racial reasons.

Mgr. Stepinac strongly and publicly condemned the forced "conversions" of Orthodox Serbs and the persecutions which were the alternative to "conversions." He established ecclesiastical commissions, under the immediate control of an Episcopal Committee, to investigate every conversion and to ensure its freedom and sincerity.

In the pulpit of his Cathedral he exclaimed in July, 1941:

"We call God to witness that we have always been opposed to any compulsory attachment to the Catholic Church. We must declare that the Church has done all in her power to give aid and protection to the Orthodox . . ."

On December 17, 1941, he informed Pavelitch in a letter of the decision the Yugoslav Hierarchy had reached at their Conference:

"The solution of all questions regarding the conversion of Dissidents is in the exclusive competence of the Hierarchy. Only those could be received into the Church who, without



having been subjected to force of any kind, might be converted of their own free will, after having become convinced in their own mind that the Catholic Church is the only true Church.

"All illegal procedures against the personal liberty and against the property rights of Dissidents should be rigorously prohibited. Dissidents should suffer no punishment, unless it be like that of any other citizens after having had a trial in accordance with all legal requirements . . ."

It was through Mgr. Stepinac's firm stand that Pavelitch's endeavours to impose the Catholic faith by force ended in complete failure; that the presence of Orthodox within Croatia was accepted and an autonomous Croat Orthodox Church, with a Patriarch in Zagreb, was officially recognized.

At the end of 1941, the Royal Yugoslav Government in exile in London, helped by British military authorities, sent Army Captain Rapotetz on a secret mission to Yugoslavia. Captain Rapotetz was especially instructed to get into contact with Mgr. Stepinac. In the course of his six months' stay in the country he spoke with the Archbishop six times.

Mgr. Stepinac knew of the nature of Captain Rapotetz's mission and arranged with him to distribute to war victims, including all those persecuted for their political convictions, the funds that would be sent to him secretly by the exiled Government in London.

He told Captain Rapotetz that he knew he was being criticized abroad for not breaking *openly* with the Pavelitch régime. He said he could easily do that and be forced to retire to a monastery, but he had to take into account the thousands of victims who would be left helpless in such a case, as they depended entirely on him.

When Captain Rapotetz returned from Yugoslavia he gave the following report on Mgr. Stepinac's behaviour:

"As soon as the persecutions of the Serbs, Jews and all the others started, the Archbishop protested against such acts to

the Quisling régime of Croatia. This happened about the end of June, 1941. When the persecutions did not stop, Archbishop Stepinac took more dramatic steps. He went to see Pavelitch himself. Entering his office he said: 'It is God's command: Thou Shalt Not Kill!' And without another word of explanation, he turned and left the Quisling's Palace."

Shortly before Christmas, 1941, Mgr. Stepinac requested permission to visit the concentration camps to bring relief and consolation to their inmates.

On New Year's Eve, 1941, in a sermon in his Cathedral, he condemned in the strongest terms the principles of Nazism and Ustashism and their entire régime of terror, so that the *Ustashe* openly threatened to kill him.

In February, 1942, he protested to the Croat Minister of the Interior against the demolition of Orthodox churches in the Province of Senj.

One month later he protested against the extermination and mass deportations of Jews to concentration camps.

In a sermon preached in his Cathedral on the Feast of Christ the King, in October, 1942, a few days after the publication of an order obliging all Jews to wear the yellow "Star of David," Mgr. Stepinac strongly condemned anti-Semitism and Nazism:

"All members of the human race, without exception, are the creation of God. *Memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris!* The members of this race or that may have a higher or a lower culture, may be black or white; they may be parted by oceans, may live at the North Pole or at the South Pole. The essential thing is that the Jews who are the object of hatred and the proud Aryans, all without exception, have an equal right to say: *Pater noster qui es in caelis!* This right comes to them from God and nobody can deny it to them.

"Thus the Church has always condemned, and condemns to-day, all violence and injustice which is committed in the name of racial and nationalistic theories. She has never coun-

tenanced, and does not countenance to-day, the extermination of Jews or gypsies on the pretext that they constitute inferior races.

"The Church would betray her mission if she did not raise her voice in defence of those who to-day cannot protest against the injustices weighing upon them—whatever be the race or nationality to which they belong . . ."

Two priests and six nuns of his Archdiocese were of Jewish origin and, therefore, had to wear the yellow "Star of David," too. The indignation of the population was so great and their comments so frank and drastic that the Croat Government, after having tried for a few days to suppress the people's sound reaction by police force, quickly beat a retreat and exempted these eight people. Mgr. Stepinac, however, solemnly declared from the pulpit of his Cathedral:

"I have ordered these priests and nuns to continue wearing this sign of belonging to the people from which Our Saviour was born as long as any others will have to do so!"

Defending all victims of oppression, he obtained in November, 1942, to quote only one instance, the reprieve of two Communists, the brothers Vlado and Voda Kuresh, who had been sentenced to death.

Mgr. Stepinac vigorously protested against the actions of the Croat Government in prohibiting publication of speeches by the Holy Father, such as the famous Christmas Message, 1942, and others.

When the "Nuremberg Laws" were promulgated in Croatia under German pressure, Mgr. Stepinac wrote to Pavelitch on March 6, 1943, in protest against this measure:

"No worldly power, no political organization has the right to persecute a man on account of the race to which he belongs. . . . The Catholic Church fears no earthly power when there is the question of defending human rights . . ."

On March 13, 1943, the first Sunday in Lent, he preached to the thousands who packed his Cathedral:

“Mankind has become used to the lowering of the value of money, but that is nothing special. Mankind has also become accustomed to the cheapening of many other material values. But to the lowering of the dignity of man, and of his worth, no human being can agree without a struggle.

“Every man, to whatever race or nation he belongs, bears the stamp of God . . . He has absolute rights which no earthly power can take from him or diminish . . . Laws which are intended to protect the community as a whole may not transgress these rights, and every transgression of them can only have evil consequences. . . .

“Last week I had the opportunity of seeing many in tears and to hear the sighs of strong men and the wailing of helpless women, who were threatened with the destruction of their family life for no other reason than that their origin was not in accordance with the theories of Nazism. The representatives of the Church could not remain silent without betraying their office. . . .”

The immediate sequel of this firm stand was the withdrawal of the “Nuremberg Laws” a few days after their promulgation in Croatia.

On March 27, 1943, when informed that a train with 1,800 Jews was shortly to pass through Nova on its way to concentration camps in Poland, Mgr. Stepinac succeeded, despite repeated refusals and many difficulties and obstacles, in bringing food personally to the relief of the deportees.

A few weeks later he did the same for another transport of 2,000 Jews being taken to Germany from Greece.

In May, 1943, to quote again but one example, he protested publicly against “the incredible atrocities committed by Italian troops against the defenceless population in the districts of Krashitz, Vidovina and Vrhovatz.”

On October 3, 1943, on the occasion of a penitential procession in Zagreb, he declared in his sermon:

“We are striving with all our power to proclaim in public life, as strongly as we can, the principles of the divine and eternal law—whether it concerns Croats or Serbs, Jews or gypsies, Catholics, Dissidents or Mohammedans . . . .”

In October, 1943, again on the Feast of Christ the King, Mgr. Stepinac preached in his packed Cathedral in strongest denunciations of the German practice of holding whole families, whole villages, indeed whole regions collectively responsible for acts of sabotage.

Copies of this sermon were printed and widely distributed. The clergy read it from their pulpits, and in Dalmatia alone 82 priests were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment by the Germans as a result.

In the same sermon Mgr. Stepinac warned the *Ustasha* Government that if they did not change their methods they would alienate the entire population. As a result he was kept under house arrest by Pavelitch for several days, and was violently attacked by all the newspapers, especially in an article by the Croat Minister for Enlightenment in the Government daily *Hrvatski Narod*. This denounced him for “meddling in politics.”

A well-known industrialist in Zagreb who was found in possession of a printed copy of Mgr. Stepinac’s sermon was sent to a concentration camp where he died. All editors and journalists were prohibited by the *Ustasha* Government from reporting anything the Archbishop might say.

When the editor of the Catholic weekly *Nedelja* published Mgr. Stepinac’s sermon at Christmas, 1943, he was threatened with the gallows if he should print any more of the Archbishop’s words.

On three occasions, however, he did not protest publicly, did not utter a single word, did not write a letter, but hid his great sorrow and grief deep in his own soul, thus proving irrefutably that he had only the good of his people at heart: when an Archi-

episcopal estate was plundered; when his parents' home was destroyed by the Nazis and the Partisans; when his own brother was arrested, accused of Communism and collaboration with the Partisans and executed by the Germans on November 23, 1943.

\* \* \*

The four bitter years of war, the hardest in the many centuries of Croatia's history, were also the hardest of the twelve years Mgr. Stepinac has been in office. During the war against the Axis, the occupation and the civil war, Croatia and the Croat people have suffered immensely. Five different armies were fighting on the comparatively small Croat territory. Great losses in life and property were caused by the German, Italian, *Ustasha*, *Chetnik* and Partisan armies and by heavy bombing by the Allied air forces.

And in this ocean of suffering, the Archbishop of Zagreb was the only one from whom all victims were expecting help and relief. And they did not do so in vain. Many times Mgr. Stepinac sent his last penny to alleviate human misery.

The *Kaptol*, the Archbishop's Palace in Zagreb, was a place of shelter, refuge and relief for the hunted, the persecuted and the hungry. He established public kitchens, helped all the poor, gave everything he had to give for the relief of the devastated regions of Southern Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Hertzegovina.

He set up branches of *Caritas* throughout the country. There, hundreds of wagonloads of food and tons of clothing, which parish priests and religious orders had collected in answer to Mgr. Stepinac's appeal, were distributed without distinction as to nationality, race, creed or political conviction, to Catholics and Orthodox, Jews and Moslems alike.

Hundreds and hundreds of Jews I met in Dalmatia and later in Italy, when asked how they had been saved, answered with a single word: "Stepinac!"

The Jews have particular reason to thank Mgr. Stepinac from the bottom of their hearts, and a great number of Jewish organizations all over the world have publicly acknowledged this and

expressed their gratitude. Only a few months ago Swiss papers published a statement by the head of the Jewish Community in Zagreb, declaring that "the Archbishop of Zagreb was the only man in authority who had publicly denounced the injustice and cruelty of the anti-Semitic campaign and had done all he could to help us."

Immediately after the beginning of the occupation Mgr. Stepinac flatly rejected the German demand for the names of Jewish refugees known to him and the Relief Committee.

When Jews were put into concentration camps, he sent his secretary, Dr. Stjepan Latzkovitch, to the camps to report on the conditions there and to arrange for all possible help and assistance.

He hid hunted Jews under his own roof. And when the staff of the Schwarz Home for Aged and Sick Jews in Zagreb were arrested and imprisoned, he directed Catholic nuns to take over and care for the patients.

Supported by the Papal Secretariate of State he secured a large number of passports and visas from South American countries, and succeeded in getting hundreds of Jews smuggled out of the German-occupied territory to ports whence they could travel to safety.

Even to-day he is still maintaining a home near Zagreb for a group of elderly homeless Jews, who prefer to remain under his hospitality rather than take advantage of the facilities now available through UNRRA and international relief organizations.

Immediately after the Germans had occupied neighbouring Slovenia they expelled almost all Catholic priests from that country. Mgr. Stepinac gave aid and shelter to all of those priests who came to Croatia. He was the driving force behind the welfare organization which took care of the many thousands of civilian refugees from Slovenia. Everyone of the Slovene leaders whom I met was full of praise for his generosity and devotion.

Mgr. Stepinac was the first to find ways and means to help the

thousands and thousands of Croats living and dying in the most miserable conditions in Italian concentration camps. These innocent victims of the occupation had been removed to Italy from the Croat littoral. He sent again his secretary, Dr. Latzkovitch, to get in touch with these imprisoned people and to help them by intervening with the Nazi and Fascist authorities for their release.

He also thought of the 10,000 Croat workers taken to Germany for forced labour by the occupiers: he sent a priest to organise pastoral care amongst them.

For these efforts he is now being accused of "collaboration with the Nazis and *Ustashe*." But his sole intention was to help these people without any regard for politics, without any regard for what men of ill-will would say or how they would interpret his actions. Christian Charity, which he constantly preached and zealously exercised, has no regard for narrow and limited human opinions. "We must help our neighbour," he wrote to me once, "whoever he be, where and when we can, to the best of our ability."

Mgr. Stepinac took special care of those orphans whose parents were killed in the war, regardless of whether their parents were Catholics or Orthodox, Jews or Moslems. At one critical moment when the lives of more than 400 Orthodox children were in danger (they had been forcibly torn away from their mothers, who were sent either to concentration camps or to forced labour in Germany), he took care of them all.

He placed thousands and thousands of poor and destitute children in homes. Most of these children were the children of Partisans, even of Communists who are now holding important positions in the Tito régime. He cared for them with even greater love because they were the most neglected and the most needy.

To-day, people of ill-will not only try to minimize Mgr. Stepinac's efforts in this regard, but they claim falsely that the children were hungry and maltreated and even murdered by the



Catholic nuns in whose care they were placed. It is true that he was not able to give them everything he would have liked them to have, but he did protect them from cold and hunger. Catholic nuns are so renowned the world over for their care for children that it is unnecessary to refute this monstrous accusation against them.

\* \* \*

In his love and care for his Croat people he found a way to contact the Allied Forces Headquarters in Italy during the war, and prayed them to save Zagreb and other Croat cities from bombing. The Allies' reaction spared the capital itself and saved thousands and thousands of lives. After every air attack on the outskirts of Zagreb, which were heavily bombed and largely destroyed, he visited the victims and organised every possible help.

The German and *Ustasha* authorities bitterly and scornfully called Mgr. Stepinac an "Anglophile Archbishop" and a "philo-Partisan" and hated, but at the same time feared him. His life was endangered several times, and he was spared only because of the high esteem and great admiration, immense loyalty and deep love of his Croat people.

## *"Freedom" in Titoslavia*

THE attitude of Tito's National Liberation Front, the leaders of which were—except for a few figureheads in high-sounding, but entirely unimportant positions—all dyed-in-the-wool Communists, towards the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia was from the very beginning of the movement one of extreme hostility.

The following are quotations from two letters to priests in the United States written by Mgr. Gregory Rozman, Prince Bishop of Ljubljana, in November, 1945. When Tito's armies, supported by the Western Allies, swept into his Diocese, he took the grave decision to leave Yugoslavia, together with 162 of his priests and 48 seminarists, after 34 priests and 6 seminarists had already been killed by the "liberators."

"Speaking from my conscience as a priest and shepherd, from a heart proud to be Slovenian all my life, and fully realizing my own heavy responsibilities before God, Who will be my Judge, I solemnly declare:

"The Communist Party of Yugoslavia has abused the genuine and sincere desire of the entire people to get rid of the invader and to be freed of his terror, for its own political aims which consisted in the carrying out of a political and social revolution and seizing power in the State.

"It was towards that end, and only that one, that the Communist Party organized the National Liberation Front.

"We, on the other hand, seeing this and basing our judgment upon the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of Pope Pius XI, have been quick to realize that this was by far the greatest danger that had ever faced the Slovene people.

"It was our duty then, as shepherd of the people, to warn them of this danger and to try to avert it.

"We have done all that can be done in order to deepen the

roots of the religious life of the people, not without success, I must say, thanks to God and to His Blessed Mother.

"That we are right, the present situation in our homeland has come to prove. Pure Communism rules there now and is in full authority . . . ."

"I cannot find words in which to put what I suffered when I saw what the Fascist and Nazi invaders did to exploit our struggle for liberation for the mutual extermination of the Slovenes by themselves.

"I shed tears in situations when I was helpless to prevent this. . . . But the Communists were unapproachable for any sort of discussion.

"They wanted power and nothing less. Full power. They were out to destroy every shadow of any opposition to Communism.

"I hope our actions will receive full justification in the light of events to come. . . .

"The British and the American peoples, too, will one day be put before a clear choice.

"If they are reluctant now to save the Balkans from Communism, they will have to face Communism much nearer, and it will be much stronger. . . .

"Believe me, I know Communism, it is a satanic totalitarianism of terror, much more logical in the pursuit of its aims than Fascism ever was. . . ."

\* \* \*

To tell the whole story of the violent and fierce persecution of Catholics in general and the clergy in particular since Tito came to power would take not one, but several large books. However, principal passages from three joint Pastoral Letters of the Archbishops and Bishops of Yugoslavia, of March, 1945, September, 1945, and September, 1946, and a condensed survey of the present position of the Catholic Church in this Communist-dominated country will suffice to expose the true nature of the

"freedom of religion" that, according to Tito and his henchmen at home and abroad, prevails in Yugoslavia.

\* \* \*

Joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops of Zagreb and Sarajevo and the Bishops of Banjaluka, Djakovo and Krizhevtzi, issued after their Conference at Zagreb on March 24, 1945.

"The enemies of the Catholic Church, being also the followers of materialistic Communism, which the entire Croat nation with one accord rejects, have in our Croatia exterminated with fire and sword priests and the more eminent of the faithful. Judging by their ferocious manner, it is readily apparent why they accuse all Bishops, priests and religious as war criminals; why they wish to foist totally false accusations of crime upon them. In the civilised world, however, not a single person will be found approving such fictitious and arbitrary accusations, or believing that Bishops, priests and religious Orders of men and women, known the world over, are war criminals deserving capital punishment, or that they are the perpetrators of massacres. Perpetually shall the blood of these heroic martyrs cry out in accusations against those who grasp murder as a means of power . . . .

"The Catholic Bishops of Croatia are prepared and ready to have each individual case investigated by the representatives of other nations, and by an international commission. In this way the charge of war criminality will be proved a lie, and simply a means of exterminating those who oppose and want no part of Communism. Wherefore the assembled Croat Bishops recommend that a committee be set up to examine all cases, to gather facts which shall be readily presented to an international commission. Thus the truth will be known: how lies have been made the instrument of an ideology the followers of which labour in every way to enslave the world, even though they are numerically inferior and in Croatia their number approaches next to nothing . . . .

"All criminals, of whatever political leaning, must be called to justice and be punished for their crimes. It is evident to all true lovers of justice that guilt cannot be fully and truly judged by those moved by hatred. If any priest—which is most rare—has injured others in their rights, we should not hesitate to inflict ecclesiastical punishment upon him, even to cast him out of the priestly or religious state. But now from the depth of our souls we send forth our protesting cry before God and mankind, against the systematic killing and persecution of innocent priests and Catholic faithful, many of whose lives excelled in sanctity, and whom the enemies of the Catholic Church, through diabolical perjury, have brought to death. . . ."

\* \* \*

Joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Yugoslavia, issued after their Conference at Zagreb on September 20, 1945.

"Even during the war a great number of priests were killed; not so much during battles or actual fighting, but following death sentences decreed by the present civil and military authorities. When military operations came to an end, the death sentences against Catholic priests did not cease. According to available data, 243 died, 169 are in prison or concentration camps, and 89 are missing . . . .

"The tribunals pronounced these death sentences after summary trial, and the accused often did not know with what they were charged until the actual trial. Frequently they were denied any defence, and not allowed to call witnesses or to be given legal assistance. If the Public Prosecutor had the right to deny a fair trial to these priests sentenced to death, how could their guilt have been established? Were these priests all guilty of murder? . . .

"In the Franciscan Monastery at Shiroki Brijeg all the friars, 28 of them, were put to death without any trial, and without any of them having touched a rifle, still less fought against

the National Liberation Army. Nevertheless, they were accused of hostile acts, although almost all of them were known for their opposition to Fascist ideologies.

"There were cases where thousands of faithful Christians asked the authorities for the release of priests, pledging their innocence. Nevertheless, the priests were not spared. This proves that such sentences were not pronounced in the name of the people and of their Christian rights. Death sentences were inflicted upon them for having divergent political convictions, and not for having committed any specific crimes. . . .

"The number of those priests put to death is greater than that of the victims of any massacre known in Balkan history for centuries. Most of them were not allowed religious assistance in their last hour. . . .

"By this we do not intend to defend the guilty, as we know that there were isolated cases of priests, blinded by national and party passion, who committed offences against the law and had to be put on trial before a secular court. We must, however, emphasize that the number of such priests does not justify the serious accusations made in the Press and at meetings against the Catholic clergy in Yugoslavia. These are aimed only at deceiving the public and depriving the Church of her prestige. . . .

"A great number of priests are in concentration camps, sentenced to long years of forced labour. But this is not enough. Dr. Janko Shimrak, the Bishop of the Greek-Catholic Rite, is deprived of his liberty up to this very date; and the fate of another Bishop is unknown. The concentration camps are not fitted for a long stay, and they often lack the essential minimum of food. Priests are compelled to perform work which offends their priestly dignity, and they are often prevented from taking part in Sunday services, or from celebrating Holy Mass. They are given no opportunity to defend themselves and to prove their innocence. We have been unable to discover the present whereabouts of many priests deported by order of the Govern-

ment authorities, and all search has remained fruitless. . . .

"Of about a hundred Catholic periodicals existing in Yugoslavia before the war, not even one is being published today. . . .

"The National Printing Press at Zagreb was obstructed by every conceivable means, and when the obstruction was not successful, its Director was sentenced to loss of national honour. The printing works, which were not his property, were seized, and were returned to us only a few days ago, following our protest. The great printing works of the Catholic Printing Society of Ljubljana were taken away from the Catholics. The same happened to the Catholic printing works at Mostar, Shibenik, Sarajevo and Maribor. This is a systematic and premeditated campaign against the Catholic Press. The freedom of the Catholic Press is for the Catholic Church a matter on which depends the fate of many souls. . . .

"In Croatia religious teaching has been relegated to the last place, as the least important subject. In all elementary schools religious instruction has been reduced from two hours a week to one hour. Nowadays, when the need for religious instruction is greater than ever, it is gradually being reduced, while it is completely abolished in the secondary schools. . . .

"Among all Christian people the marriage bond was considered sacred, a holy Sacrament celebrated before the altar of the Almighty. Now even this has changed. It is evident that the bond of civil marriage is quite different. The civil authorities annul marriages celebrated in church. This is in opposition to the divine law. The number of such marriages annulled during the last few months in Zagreb alone is very considerable. . . .

"Materialism and hatred are being publicly and privately preached and spread in Yugoslavia. . . .

"The duty of attending Holy Mass on Sundays has been rendered impossible in many cases by meetings and assemblies held purposely at the time of Church services. . . . The young are being compelled to perform special work on Sundays and

are thus intentionally hindered from carrying out their religious duties. . . .

"By this Letter we do not wish to initiate a struggle with the new State authorities. Our thoughts are directed to the peace we need so much. We are firmly convinced that, for the healing of our country's wounds, there must be respect for the Catholic religion and its influence. . . .

"We shall not be disturbed by false attacks and accusations to the effect that we support reaction and the enemies of the nation. We are one with our people. . . .

"We uphold the precious principles and the untarnished religious inheritance which we have received from our ancestors, and we ask the right to live in harmony and love with all our fellow citizens, without regard to their religion or nationality. . . .

"It is not the duty of the Church to prescribe solutions for political, national and economic problems, as long as they are in conformity with general ethical principles that bind everybody. The Church is interested only in the spiritual concerns of the faithful. . . .

"The first condition of a return to peace in Yugoslavia is the restoration of complete freedom to the Church. . . ."

\* \* \*

Joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Yugoslavia, issued after their Conference at Belgrade on August 27, 1946:

"In the exercise of our apostolic duties, we Catholic Bishops have many consolations, but we also have many difficulties. Our great consolation is the increase in the number of the faithful who come to Holy Mass in search of their only salvation, that which comes from above. We are happy to state that the people go more and more frequently to Our Lady's places of pilgrimage, for she is—and she has shown it throughout the whole history of Christianity—a powerful help of



Christians. May this faith be a testimony which will atone for the numerous insults coming from her forgetful children. The people who respect our Heavenly Mother will not betray their ancestors. . . .

"We are also happy to confirm the fidelity of our flock to the Church and to her Head. Relations between the spiritual pastors and their flock are becoming more and more close, in spite of the many attempts to destroy them. Our faithful know that theirs would not be the Church if Peter were not present. The strength of the Church finds its origin in Rome, and any breach with the Papacy would mean the destruction of Catholicism in Yugoslavia. We will not listen to attacks against the Pope, and we will take advantage of each attack to bind ourselves more closely to the Holy See. . . .

"Among the difficulties which disquiet us, let us mention the absence of many priests. Many parishes are without their spiritual pastors—the priests have been carried off to concentration camps, either during the war or during the course of the past year. There are countless churches destroyed or in ruins, and often the priests are obliged to live in private houses as their presbyteries have been requisitioned. Once again we deplore that we are not allowed to publish our Catholic periodicals. Our youth is thereby deprived of instruction, and Catholics are not able to read their newspapers. . . .

"Among the things which bear most hardly upon us are the following facts: The Church has not the right to own property, a right which has been recognized as hers for many centuries; and so it is impossible for her to continue her work of giving assistance to those who day and night knock at the doors of the churches. We are grieved to see that our nuns are not allowed to give help and assistance as they formerly did, and we are grieved also to see them prevented from serving God in works of charity. The Church is reduced to poverty, but that does not worry us. On the contrary, we look with confidence to Heaven, where our Father will think of us. We are

also sure that the faithful will not forget us, but will willingly remember the needs of the Church. . . .

"Other difficulties grieve us all the more since they pertain to the domain where the Church, mother of divine truth, should have true freedom of action. For example, priests should not be condemned because they preach about God, eternity, the Church, the Pope, and all those other religious truths which the Church should spread throughout the world. . . .

"It is unjust and untrue to accuse the priests of not loving their country and their people. The Catholic clergy have always been close to the people, and deeply sensitive to their needs and aspirations. The fact that these people, in the most difficult moments of their history, have sought security and help from the Church, proves that they see in their priests not traitors to their country, but their best friends and most faithful protectors. . . .

"Prayer before and after class in the schools has been officially suppressed. Likewise the symbol of our redemption, the Crucifix, has been banned, and so have the services for schools on Sundays and Feast days. General Communion for young people no longer occur. No longer are we allowed to preach during Lent to the children. The catechism is suppressed in certain schools. In others, where it is allowed, it is given the last place, and the hours which the authorities have chosen are the least suitable. The rooms allotted are inadequate and squalid, and when the priests wish to teach the catechism in the churches to avoid these inconveniences, they are forbidden to do so. As a consequence of these facts, we demand and expect that full liberty of conscience should be granted and assured to children to practise their religion, when they and their parents ask that they attend catechism at school or at church. . . .

"We must condemn the error spread by Baur and Strauss a hundred years ago. Their sayings—that Christ never existed—are widespread to-day, particularly in the schools and at

meetings. The object is to efface from history the One Who is its centre and for Whom countless martyrs died, as did St. Peter and St. Paul. The proofs of the existence of Christ are irrefutable. Catholic school-children are often asked to prepare for school work books which are condemned and are dangerous to the soul. . . .

“As shepherds of the flock of Christ, as guardians of the exterior and interior of those temples—the souls of the children—we, the Catholic Bishops, share the care of our faithful, and it is in their name that we raise our voices, that we may be permitted to ensure the education and instruction which are required by Catholic training and the conscience of our faithful. Let practical expression be given to fine phrases about ‘freedom of religion and of conscience.’ If it is permitted to teach atheism, it is just that we should be accorded the right to teach the eternal truths which lead us to God. And since the Catholic Church is recognized—no one doubts that—we have the full right to demand that the authorities should respect our freedom of religion and of conscience, in the fullest sense of the expression. . . .

“We here solemnly declare that we do not desire a conflict with the State, because we know how harmful is a conflict between Church and State. But we expect from the authorities that they shall allow us to bring up youth in the Christian spirit, for it will merit heaven and will form, at the same time, the élite among the citizens. A youth that is conscious of its duty and will live according to the ten commandments of God would be the best foundation for the social and economic order in our country. The State which assists the Church in the field of religious instruction thus renders itself a most valuable service. . . .

“We have tried to present our point of view as clearly and as calmly as possible. We have put before you our complaints, our consolations and our distress, because it was our duty as Bishops. We have had the courage to speak thus because our

Constitution, under Article 27, guarantees to us, as to all other citizens, freedom of religion and of speech. . . .

"We pray to God that He may enlighten with His truth those who are to-day managing the State in our country, in order that they may learn that the State flourishes best when the citizens are contented. . . .

"May our Heavenly Father, together with the Son and the Holy Ghost, grant absolution to us, to our children and to all our people. . . ."

\* \* \*

The following condensed survey of the present position of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia is based on the latest available authentic data.

An unceasing mendacious and scurrilous campaign against the Church and the clergy is being carried on in the Press and on the air.

This iniquitous campaign must remain unanswered because the Catholic Press has been completely suppressed. Of about a hundred flourishing Catholic periodicals before the war, not a single one is being published to-day.

In the schools, atheism is being openly taught and religion mocked. Children are forced to recite anti-religious poems and songs.

Young Catholics have been barred from higher education. The Communist Youth Cells decided that "reactionaries" and "clerico-Fascists" had to be expelled.

Children and adults have been forced to do "public work" or to attend "spontaneous demonstrations" on Sunday mornings to keep them from attending Mass.

Catholics are denied the right of association. All their societies have been dissolved. Even choir practice has been prohibited by OZNA, Tito's Secret Police.

In the immense Yugoslav Army no priest is allowed to officiate for the soldiers, who are prohibited from entering a church, not permitted to call a priest when ill or dying, and denied Christian burial.

Every Catholic school, both elementary and secondary, has been closed and the buildings, representing decades of labour and sacrifice by the Catholics, confiscated.

Except for a very few of the larger Catholic hospitals, for which the Communists have not had enough Partisan nurses, all institutions of charity have been closed.

Catholic orphanages and homes for the aged have been closed and the Sisters turned out into the street.

Hundreds of Catholic nuns have been expelled from their convents and the houses expropriated. The Communists have openly declared that they are planning to smash every vestige of religious communities.

Catholic nuns have been told to go out and get married and raise children for the Communist State.

Hundreds of parish and episcopal buildings have been occupied, entirely or partly, by Communist organisations.

Most of the theological seminaries have been occupied by the Communists, who are gradually making the training of priests impossible.

Practically all Catholic Church property has been confiscated. The endowments built up over centuries for education and charity, the gifts of generations of generous people, are being used for the consolidation of the Communist State and the maintenance of the huge Communist Army.

In many regions newly-appointed parish priests have not been allowed to take possession of their parishes unless they have been approved by the local Communist authorities.

Parish priests have been expelled from their presbyteries and obliged to seek shelter with their parishioners.

In scores of villages, priests have been prohibited from entering their churches under threat of death.

Hundreds of churches have been closed. Some of them have been expropriated and are being used for storage of grain.

Wayside shrines all over the country have been destroyed.

At one shrine in Slovenia, which is especially visited by many

of the faithful, Communists planted land mines, with the result that one child was blown to bits.

The most sacred shrine of Croatia has been wantonly profaned. Communists dragged the venerated statue of Our Lady of Marija Bistritza, the Patroness of Croatia, from the Cathedral of Zagreb and smashed it to bits in the square in front of the Cathedral. OZNA then accused the priests of the city of this crime and cynically threatened them with prosecution for "an act against religion."

Religious books and objects of devotion have been burned in churches. The churches themselves have been saved from conflagration only by the heroic efforts of the faithful.

OZNA spies in churches have distorted every word of sermons, and so many priests have been arrested on trumped-up charges of "political utterances" (i.e., every word that does not follow the Communist party line) that the Bishops have advised their priests not to preach, but just to read catechetical and ascetical books to the faithful.

Utter terror reigns all over the country. Catholic men and women disappear in the dead of the night, and their families cannot find out where they have been taken. Most of them never return; the others come back, broken and silent. But if they talk of their experiences, they disappear again—this time for good.

More than 2,000 Catholic intellectuals are interned in the concentration camp at Lepoglava, and it is to be feared that most of them will never leave it alive.

The walls of the houses all over the country are covered with the slogan painted by Communists: "Death to the Priests! Death to the Signers of the Pastoral Letter!"

Many priests have been told frequently by Communists: "It would be a pleasure to me to kill you, but the Party thinks the time has not yet come."

Priests and nuns are interned in the dreaded concentration camp at Stara Gradishka, where they have to suffer bestial tortures

which are beyond all description and comparable only to those at the notorious Belsen.

Very few of the military chaplains in the Army of the Independent State of Croatia are still alive. All the others, accused of having been "officers in the army of opposition during the occupation," have been killed.

Savage outrages, often beyond all description, have been committed against the dead. The bodies of some of the priests who had been murdered by Communists were hacked to pieces and thrown into the sea. The graves of only a very few of the victims are known.

The graves of German and Italian soldiers and of Yugoslav civilians murdered by Communists have been levelled and the crosses over them destroyed.

Every one of the Archbishops and Bishops in Yugoslavia has been arrested by OZNA and held in prison, some of them for only a few hours, others for several days or even weeks. Since their release they have been subject to such rigorous surveillance by OZNA that they are virtual prisoners in their residences.

The following members of the Yugoslav Hierarchy have up to the present become victims of Tito's persecution of the Catholic Church:

Mgr. Josip Tsarevitch, Titular Bishop of Aristium and retired Bishop of Dubrovnik, missing for nearly two years, presumably killed;

Mgr. Janko Shimrak, Uniate Bishop of Krizhevtzi, died on August 9, 1946, as the result of maltreatment during several months in prison;

Mgr. Josip Stejepan Garitch, O.F.M., Bishop of Banjaluka, died in exile at Graz, Austria, on June 30, 1946;

Mgr. Ivan Sharitch, Archbishop of Sarajevo, and Mgr. Gregory Rozman, Prince Bishop of Ljubljana, are in exile in Austria.

**"FREEDOM" IN TITOSLAVIA**

41

Number of Catholic priests in Yugoslavia in 1939 . . . . .	1,916
Number of Catholic priests in Yugoslavia in 1946 . . . . .	401
Number of Catholic priests killed . . . . .	369
Number of Catholic priests imprisoned . . . . .	175
Number of Catholic priests in exile . . . . .	409
Number of Catholic priests missing . . . . .	562
	<hr/>
	1,515
Number of Catholic Sisters killed . . . . .	12
Number of Catholic Sisters imprisoned . . . . .	50
Number of Catholic lay people killed, estimated (in Croatia alone) at . . . . .	400,000
Number of Catholic lay people imprisoned, estimated at over . . . . .	100,000



## *Scene-Shifting*

A FEW days after the end of the war in Europe, Mgr. Stepinac was arrested by the new authorities and held in prison for 17 days. Then he was allowed to return to his Palace, but constantly and closely watched by OZNA.

When Tito visited Zagreb for the first time since he had come to power, soon after the war had ended, he expressed the desire to meet the Archbishop, whom his Partisans had released from 17 days' imprisonment but two days before. Mgr. Stepinac naturally called immediately on Tito and was received by the then Premier of Yugoslavia with the correct formal attitude which the occasion demanded—just as he had been formally received by Pavelitch.

During this visit Mgr. Stepinac told Tito:

“I did not come here to ask any favour for myself. I came because you sent for me. You have taken me out of the prison for a purpose. Let me remind you what I stand for: I insist upon freedom for all the people. You have given no signs that you intend to respect the Constitution. I am going to resist you on every move in which you disregard the Constitution and the people. . . .”

And Mgr. Stepinac has kept his promise. The same fearlessness he had steadfastly shown and maintained throughout the war in the face of the totalitarianism of Hitler, he now steadfastly showed and maintained in the face of the totalitarianism of Tito. Guided only by his duty as a Bishop of the Catholic Church, by his determination to uphold moral principles and the rights and dignity of the human person against any violation, no matter by whom perpetrated, and no matter what justifications were offered, he fought for the rights of his Church and of his Croat Catholics against the oppressive measures of the Communist régime.



*(Religious News Service)*

#### GUESTS OF HONOR . . . .

From left: Three dignitaries of the Orthodox Church; the Partisan General Commanding in Zagreb; the Secretary to the Apostolic Visitor; Auxiliary Bishop Dr. Lach; Archbishop Dr. Stepinac; Dr. Bakaritch, Communist "People's Premier" of Croatia; the Soviet Military Attache; the Croat Minister of the Interior, Dr. Hebra.



*(Religious News Service)*

. . . . AT THE GOVERNMENT PARADE  
at Zagreb in September, 1945, celebrating the establishment of  
the "People's Government" in Croatia.

In September, 1945, all the papers in Yugoslavia published two photographs showing Mgr. Stepinac with his Auxiliary Bishop, Mgr. Lach, and other Catholic and Orthodox Church dignitaries as guests of honour in the company of Dr. Bakaritch, Communist "People's Premier" of Croatia, the Soviet Military Attaché and the Partisan Commanding General in Zagreb, at the parade celebrating the establishment of a "People's Government" in Croatia.

A few days later the joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Yugoslavia, issued after their Conference at Zagreb on September 20, 1945, was read from the pulpits of all the Catholic churches in the country.

At once the propaganda machine of the Tito régime started a fierce and violent campaign against Mgr. Stepinac who, as head of the Catholic Hierarchy in Yugoslavia, had been the first signatory of the Pastoral Letter.

This campaign against Mgr. Stepinac was founded on pure falsifications, gross distortions and malicious misrepresentations of the facts, the very same kind of pure falsifications, gross distortions and malicious misrepresentations which we shall see used at the "trial" before the so-called "People's Court."

The following are but a very few characteristic examples of the Communist attempts to blacken the unimpeachable record of the Archbishop of Zagreb and to depict him as an "enemy of the people and the State."

On November 4, 1945, Mgr. Stepinac attended the establishment of a new parish in the town of Zapresitch near Zagreb. Uniformed Partisans attacked his car with stones and revolvers. He escaped this attempt on his life, but the Parish Priest, who was seized and beaten into insensibility, became a victim of the plot: the Partisan attackers had placed a revolver in his pocket while he lay unconscious on the ground.

And the Croat Minister of the Interior issued the following statement:

“The attack was begun by the people who opposed the growth of the Church. It reached its climax when an armed priest fired into the people in order to put down the opposition. . . .”

On December 19, 1945, the newspaper *Vjesnik* published a photograph of Mgr. Stepinac together with high officials, military and civil, of the Pavelitch Government, describing it as a “political meeting,” at which “the Archbishop exchanged warm greetings with high *Ustasha* officials and saluted the *Ustasha* flag with the Nazi salute, thereby giving full support to that Government.”

In reality, the photograph was taken at the opening of the annual Zagreb Fair, to which both State and Church dignitaries had been invited. While the National Anthem was being played, the military and civil officials rendered the Nazi salute, while Mgr. Stepinac merely stood to attention—thus openly demonstrating his opposition to Nazi ideology. The arm raised to the Nazi salute, alleged to be the Archbishop's, was that of a Croat official standing behind him!

On December 21, 1945, *Vjesnik* published a letter alleged to have been written by Mgr. Stepinac to Pope Pius XII, asking for “special blessings for the Independent State of Croatia and the Pavelitch régime.” He had written several letters to the Holy Father, asking, however, for “special blessings and aid for the Catholic Croat People,” and not for any particular party or form of government. This request for Papal aid was answered by the Holy See in sending food and clothing to Italian concentration camps where thousands and thousands of Croats, accused of being opposed to Mussolini's Fascist State, were being held.

On January 1, 1946, *Vjesnik* wrote that at a Partisan meeting in Zagreb, a “spokesman of the people” had declared “that he was an eye-witness to the daily visits of the German Minister to Croatia, SS-General von Kasche, to Archbishop Stepinac's Palace,” and that the purpose of these visits was “to plot against the people.” The truth is that General von Kasche never visited

Mgr. Stepinac and, therefore, never entered the Archbishop's Palace.

On January 19, 1946, *Vjesnik* published several photographs for the purpose of representing Mgr. Stepinac as "a great friend and helper of the *Ustasha* and Nazi Governments." These photographs were taken after the Pontifical Mass in the historic St. Mark's Church, which preceded the opening of the Croat Parliament. Tito's propaganda described this as "collaboration with the *Ustasha* Government," but failed to mention that Mgr. Stepinac took this occasion as an excellent opportunity of admonishing in his sermon the members of the Croat Government and Parliament to safeguard the people's rights and liberties, and of expressing his strongest opposition to persecution.

On January 26, 1946, *Vjesnik* accused Mgr. Stepinac of neglecting to do anything for seven Catholic priests who had been sent to the concentration camp at Jasenovatz, and wrote that after one of them had been released, he went to the Archbishop to protest that nothing had been done to protect them. The truth is that Mgr. Stepinac protested many times to the Pavelitch Government, demanding the release of these priests, but without success. I met the priest who, after his release, had visited the Archbishop, and he told me he had done so to thank him for his intervention on behalf of all the priests.

On January 28, 1946, *Vjesnik* published an anonymous letter accusing Mgr. Stepinac not only of neglecting his duty to protect persecuted people, but even of approving and encouraging these crimes. The chapter of this book, describing his work for all the suffering and persecuted people in his country, regardless of religion, race, nationality or political convictions, exposes the complete falsehood of this accusation.

The best refutation of this anonymous letter is the following statement, dated March 20, 1946, by the *Opera Rafaele*, the renowned Catholic Welfare Agency for Emigrants, with headquarters in Rome, which was entrusted in 1940 by the Papal Secretariate of State with the aid to refugees.

"This Agency was charged with assisting numerous refugees who under the menace of Nazi persecution came to Italy from 1940 to 1943. It has rendered aid to more than 10,000 refugees, among them a great number of Jews from Yugoslavia.

"The Secretary of this Welfare Agency made frequent trips to Zagreb to confer with the Church authorities there about the problems of Jewish refugees and to visit their families remaining in Croatia.

"On these occasions he became acquainted with the charitable and heroic deeds of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Dr. Aloysius Stepinac. During the years of the Nazi tyranny, the Archbishop's Palace was open to all who sought refuge from the violence of the Nazi persecutors.

"The leader of the Jewish Community in Zagreb declared that the Archbishop was the only man in authority who had publicly denounced the injustice and cruelty of the anti-Semitic campaign.

(Signed) GEOFFREDO MELCHER."

In January, 1946, the Partisan propaganda organised a "people's demonstration" in protest against the black market in Zagreb. The way of the demonstration was deliberately so arranged as to pass the Archbishop's Palace. When it arrived there, a few Partisans, using the huge number of people as a background, demonstrated against Mgr. Stepinac, demanding his trial for "crimes against the people." The next morning all the papers presented it as a "people's demonstration against the Archbishop of Zagreb."

To prove Mgr. Stepinac's "collaboration with the Fascists" the Tito propaganda accused him of writing a letter to Benito Mussolini in which he allegedly praised the Italian Fascist régime and thanked him for sustaining the Independent State of Croatia. Official Italian sources, however, declare that Mgr. Stepinac never wrote a letter to Mussolini, that he wrote only one letter to the Italian military authorities, strongly protesting

against the injustice to, and oppression of, Croats by the Italian Army.

There is no need to give further examples of the Communist propaganda against Mgr. Stepinac. It will be sufficient to recall what Mr. Randolph Churchill, son of Mr. Winston Churchill and from 1943 to 1945 a member of the British Military Mission to Tito's Headquarters, wrote after his visit to Mgr. Stepinac in the *Daily Telegraph* of January 23, 1946:

“The Yugoslav propaganda against the Archbishop of Zagreb has only one purpose, i.e., to prepare the trial of the Archbishop.”



## *A Series of "Trials"*

TITO's Government boast that in establishing what they perversely call "democracy," 572,000 (out of about 15,000,000) of their own people have been put to death. All the evidence coming out of that unfortunate country proves that this is not merely an exaggeration intended to impress Moscow with the thoroughness of the ruling Communist clique.

Tens of thousands have died in concentration camps, tens of thousands have been summarily shot, without even the pretence of a "trial" before an entirely political tribunal like that which sentenced General Mihailovitch. But there have also been "trials" of the most prominent non-Communists, to which the widest publicity has been given.

On August 30, 1946, sentences were pronounced in a "trial" at Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, in which the two most prominent Catholic leaders were among the accused: Mgr. Gregory Rozman, Prince Bishop of Ljubljana, and Dr. Miha Krek, former Vice-Premier, Minister and Chairman of the Slovene People's Party.

Both are living in exile and were tried *in absentia* with four others who were present, and against whom charges of treachery were legitimately being brought, in order to create the impression that their activities during the war were similar. Mgr. Rozman and Dr. Krek were actually tried because the Slovene People's Party, for which about 70 per cent. of the people of Slovenia voted in pre-war elections, while fighting bitterly against the Axis invaders, also strongly resisted Tito's Communist Partisans.

Both were found guilty of "open political and military collaboration with the enemy," and sentenced *in absentia* to 18 and 15 years forced labour respectively, to loss of civic and political rights for a further ten years and confiscation of all their property.

This "trial" proved to have been but the first in a new series. The next ended on September 13, 1946, at Varazhdin, Croatia,

where four priests were among those charged with "participation in a conspiracy," the centre of which was alleged to have been the Franciscan monastery at Chakovetz, and were sentenced to varying terms of forced labour.

Another "trial" opened in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, on September 9, 1946, where eighteen men were charged with "association with the *Ustache-Krizhari*, opposition groups to the Government." Twelve of the accused were priests: Dr. Ivan Shalitch, Secretary to Mgr. Stepinac, and eleven Franciscan friars, including Fr. Modestus Martinchitch, Provincial of the Croat Province.

Dr. Shalitch was in the same car as Mgr. Stepinac on November 4, 1945, when stones were thrown and shots fired at it by uniformed Partisans, breaking the glass and slightly injuring him. He was arrested in December, 1945, with two other priests from the Archbishop's household and the eleven Franciscan friars, on a charge of supplying medical stores to the *Ustasha* underground movement—in other words, of giving relief to fugitives. They had been in custody for nine months before being brought to trial, and one can easily imagine the dazed condition in which they emerged from the OZNA prison.

On September 17, 1946, the "trial" took a turn which was, to say the least, strange and too reminiscent of the famous "trial" of Zinovieff and Kameneff in Moscow in August, 1936. Two of the accused, Fr. Martinchitch and Dr. Shalitch, linked Mgr. Stepinac with the *Ustashe-Krizhari* in their testimony.

Fr. Martinchitch said that "the centre of all terroristic action and intervention from abroad was the Archbishop."

Dr. Shalitch said that "the Archbishop's Palace in Zagreb was the centre of *Ustasha*, *Krizhari* and terrorist action." He testified that Mgr. Stepinac had visited Dr. Vladko Matchek, leader of the Croat Peasant Party (now living in exile in Paris), and that the visit was "of a political nature." He asserted that "valuables" accumulated by the Archbishop were to be used for terroristic work.

A circular letter by Mgr. Stepinac to the priests of his Arch-

diocese, in which he declared "our conscience is absolutely clear," was read in Court. Referring to this letter, the Public Prosecutor asked the secretary whether in his opinion this statement was true.

Dr. Shalitch replied:

"I think the Archbishop's conscience was not clear."

Then the Public Prosecutor asked:

"What did the Archbishop want?"

And Dr. Shalitch answered:

"He wanted the Independent State of Croatia which was established by the *Ustashe*, Germans and Italians."

The secretary also said that Colonel Lisak, one of the co-defendants, had spent a night in the Archbishop's Palace, and that the flag of the *Krizhari* had been blessed in the Archbishop's private oratory.

When the "trial" was resumed on September 18, the Public Prosecutor declared that Mgr. Stepinac was "the immediate accomplice, promoter and collaborator" in the activities of the organization of the eighteen defendants.

"For this reason I have given orders that Stepinac be put in prison and that investigations be opened against him. When the investigations are complete I shall indict him on offences against the people and the State."

One sentence in this declaration deserves special attention, for it demonstrated clearly what sort of "justice" is being administered in Tito's Yugoslavia, what course the "trial" was going to take and what fate Mgr. Stepinac could expect:

"When the investigations are complete I shall indict him . . ."

Without knowing what the outcome of these investigations would be, the Public Prosecutor, nevertheless, already predicted: "I shall indict him . . . ." The accused was already considered guilty and convicted before the investigations had even started.

The Public Prosecutor then asked for, and was granted, a ten-day adjournment of the case against the eighteen accused so that Mgr. Stepinac could be charged jointly with them.

A few hours later Radio Belgrade broadcast a Government communiqué announcing that Archbishop Stepinac had been arrested at 6 o'clock in the morning.

## *Setting the Stage*

**D**URING the period preceding the "trial" selected members of the Communist Party in Croatia were summoned to a series of special meetings and given orders to intensify the terror that has been reigning in that country ever since its "liberation" by Tito's Partisans.

From the arrest of Mgr. Stepinac to his conviction the Yugoslav Press and radio kept up a fierce campaign of vilification against him, obviously inspired, as the very same calumnies in the very same terms were repeated over and over again by every paper and every radio station.

Attempts were made in Government and private offices, factories and shops to force employees to sign petitions calling for capital punishment for Mgr. Stepinac. Meetings for this purpose were also called by the "street secretaries" (Communists in charge of every street). Refusal to sign, it was clearly indicated, would result in loss of work.

Despite strong pressure brought to bear upon them, large groups of workers, including 7,000 railway men, firmly refused to sign a petition demanding Mgr. Stepinac's condemnation to death.

"Spontaneous" demonstrations were staged in Zagreb. Men and women leaving factories, shops and offices after their work were stopped and herded into the parade. The columns marching through the streets shouted, at the command of their Communist leaders: "Death to the Priests! Death to Stepinac!"

Teen-age boys and girls, whipped to frenzy by screaming Communist Youth Group leaders, or threatened with beating, were driven through the streets—in UNRRA lorries (a fact confirmed by Mr. Leo F. Hochstetter, former UNRRA Director of Public Relations in Yugoslavia, in the *Saturday Evening Post* of November 2, 1946)—to hurl stones at presbyteries, monasteries and convents.

The terror against Bishops and priests was increased. Bishop Lach, Mgr. Stepinac's second Auxiliary, was arrested on a Confirmation tour and held for a night in prison at Koprivnitza. Bishop Bonifachitch of Split was turned back on a pastoral visitation at Imotski, where Communists threatened him with revolvers and slashed the tyres of his car. Bishop Pushitch of Hvar was forced to abandon his Confirmation tour in the islands because of Communist demonstrations against him. When the Bishops protested to the authorities they were told that the "people" had the right to demonstrate against "anti-national" Bishops.

During that time, six priests were killed by terrorists. Communists invaded many presbyteries and ordered the priests to leave under threat of death. The Archiepiscopal Curia had no alternative but to advise them to seek refuge elsewhere to save their lives.

But since the day of Mgr. Stepinac's arrest the people of Croatia had not ceased to fill the Cathedral at Zagreb and all the other churches in the city and throughout the country, which were often unable to accommodate the throngs gathering to pray for their Archbishop.

OZNA agents informed the priests of Zagreb that they would be prosecuted for "disturbance of the public peace and order" if they permitted any gathering of more than five people in front of their churches.

OZNA agents stood at the doors of some churches, writing down the names of those entering. Fathers of families were dismissed from work; mothers, widows and orphans of fallen Partisans were deprived of their State pensions for the sole reason that they had attended Mass. Asking for a reason of this discrimination, they were told: "The priests are your friends; go to them for help!"

On Sunday, September 22, at 5 a.m., OZNA agents called on all parish priests and prohibited them reading in church the circular letter sent out by the Archiepiscopal Chancellery, express-

ing belief in Mgr. Stepinac's innocence and asking for prayers for him.

Every effort was made to render Mgr. Stepinac's defence as difficult as possible and to incapacitate all those whose important task it was to supply counsel for the defence with the necessary documentary evidence.

Mgr. Stepinac was arrested on September 18; the indictment, dated September 23, reached him and his counsel the following day; he went on trial, presumably for his life, on September 30. He and his lawyers had but six days in which to prepare the defence; the prosecution had been preparing the case against him for nearly a year, as the newspaper attacks on him clearly demonstrate.

Mgr. Stepinac's friends proposed two counsel for the defence, Dr. Politeo and Dr. Andrus. The Court accepted the former, but rejected the latter and substituted for him Dr. Katichitch.

From his arrest on September 18 to his conviction on October 11 Mgr. Stepinac was allowed to see his counsel only once, on September 27, and then but for one hour.

Bishop Franjo Baron Salis-Sewis, Mgr. Stepinac's Auxiliary and Senior Vicar General, had been in charge of the Archdiocese since the Archbishop's arrest. On September 24, the day the indictment was published, he was arrested by OZNA, but released the same evening after eleven hours of questioning. He was arrested again and questioned for five hours on September 27, the day when Dr. Politeo and Dr. Katichitch had their only one-hour conference with Mgr. Stepinac.

On September 26 Mgr. Ante Slamitch, Director of the Archbishop's Chancellery, was arrested by OZNA and detained *incommunicado* till September 28. During these three days he was kept in a filthy cell, crawling with vermin, and frequently interrogated.

Canon Stjepan Bachitch, Mgr. Stepinac's intimate associate, was also arrested and questioned by OZNA shortly before the opening of the "trial."

On September 25, 1946, Tito told delegates to the International Students' Congress in Prague, whom he received when they visited Belgrade, that he had informed the "Pope's representative, Mr. Hurley," that "in the new Yugoslavia everyone is equal before the law, and priests who break the law will be punished. . . ."

But Tito did not tell his student-visitors that Mgr. Hurley, within the limits set by diplomatic courtesy, had given him a clear-cut picture of the persecution of the Catholic Church now raging in Yugoslavia; nor that as Regent of the Apostolic Nunciature in Belgrade, he had politely, but firmly, informed him that the indispensable condition of any peaceful solution of the religious conflict caused by this persecution was the complete restoration of the liberties of the Catholic Church in that country.

On September 24, 1946, six days after his arrest, the following indictment against Mgr. Stepinac was published:

"1. As a member and instigator of the *Ustashe-Krizhari* terrorist group of the defendants Lisak and Shalitch and their accomplices, he helped to organize the crimes of the *Ustashe-Krizhari* groups;

"2. He collaborated with the occupying Power, and most closely with the so-called Independent State of Croatia of Ante Pavelitch, and helped the *Ustashe*;

"3. He organized the re-baptism of Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia and Hertzegovina to the Catholic faith;

"4. As Military Vicar to the *Ustashe* and other military bands he was responsible for hundreds of chaplains who incited the *Ustashe* and others to hatred, strife, and crimes against the Croat people and other peoples of Yugoslavia, and against their struggle for liberation;

"5. He made the Catholic Press, and above all *Katolichki List*, the semi-official organ of the Archdiocese of Zagreb, a channel of propaganda for the occupying Power, for Pavelitch and for the *Ustashe*, for justifying terrorism against the people



and forcible conversions to the Catholic faith, for a filthy campaign against the national liberation struggle, and for the instigation of national and religious hatred;

"6. In agreement with Pavelitch, he hid the archives of the *Ustasha* Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other criminal *Ustasha* documents, in the Archbishop's Palace."

To show how absolutely unfounded and inconsistent these charges are I shall analyse them point by point:

1. The *Krizhari* (Crusaders) were a non-political body of Croat youth within the Catholic Action organization, founded twenty years ago with the approval and under the patronage of the Yugoslav Hierarchy. In the last year of the Pavelitch régime a strongly nationalist and anti-Communist movement was founded, the members of which called themselves also *Krizhari*, but their group was in no way identical or even connected with the Catholic youth organization.

2. Mgr. Stepinac's record during the war years, of which I have given ample account in the preceding pages and could have given much more if space permitted, is sufficient to show the monstrosity of this charge.

When a Croat delegation, headed by Pavelitch, went to Rome in May, 1941, to offer the crown of Croatia to the Duke of Spoleto, Mgr. Stepinac flatly refused to be a member.

In May, 1943, when Mgr. Stepinac came to Rome on his *ad limina* visit, the Pavelitch Government made representations to the Holy See that "the Archbishop of Zagreb be persuaded to desist from his severe attitude towards us."

On November 3, 1943, *Voelkischer Beobachter*, official daily of the National-Socialist Party in Germany, wrote that Mgr. Stepinac had "protested against mass reprisals" and, in general, "attacked the present régime."

On the same day the Croat Minister for Enlightenment denounced Mgr. Stepinac in *Hrvatski Narod*, Croat Government daily, for "meddling in politics."

The following month, December, 1943, the Croat Minister of the Interior complained to Right Rev. Abbot Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, O.S.B., Apostolic Visitor to the Yugoslav Hierarchy, that "Archbishop Stepinac has never uttered a single word to show his adherence to the present Government."

3. Here again Mgr. Stepinac's record during the war years is the best refutation of this charge.

4. Mgr. Stepinac had been granted all the faculties of a Military Vicar, but without this title, in the event of war. This was done, however, in October, 1940, six months before the Pavelitch régime. He was, therefore, the Military Vicar of all Catholics in the regular Royal Yugoslav Army and not of the *Ustashe*.

5. *Katolichki List* was never the semi-official organ of the Archdiocese of Zagreb. Though it published on a special page the official announcements of the Archiepiscopal Chancellery, its editorial policy was entirely its editor's concern. To hold Mgr. Stepinac fully and directly responsible for it is, to put it mildly, highly unreasonable. Besides, Archbishops—and the Archdiocese of Zagreb is the largest in Yugoslavia and one of the largest in the world—have other and much more important tasks than the immediate supervision of Catholic newspapers.

A few days after the beginning of the Pavelitch régime the leading Croat Catholic daily, *Hrvatski Glas*, was suppressed, and within two months the number of Catholic periodicals had already been reduced by one third. This was the attitude of the régime towards the Catholic Press which Mgr. Stepinac allegedly had used to support it.

When on November 3, 1943, the Croat Minister for Enlightenment denounced Mgr. Stepinac in *Hrvatski Narod* for "meddling in politics," all the Croat papers attacked the Archbishop fiercely, among them—*Katolichki List*, the alleged "semi-official organ of the Archdiocese of Zagreb"!

6. Shortly before the Pavelitch Government fled from

Zagreb, the Foreign Minister, Dr. Alajbegovitch, a Bosnian Moslem, asked Mgr. Stepinac to keep documents of historical value from the archives of the Croat Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He feared that the Government buildings might be destroyed in the fighting between the Croat Army and the Partisans. Since the Archbishop's Palace was close to the magnificent Cathedral, he hoped that it would not be attacked.

Mgr. Stepinac consented to keep these documents under the express condition that he would notify the new authorities. This he did officially as soon as they were established. The Partisan authorities acknowledged, in writing, the receipt of this information, and directed that he should hold these documents pending further disposition.

\* \* \*

Mgr. Stepinac was indicted under the "Law on Crimes against the People and the State," passed on August 15, 1945, and amended on July 9, 1946. It has, therefore, no application at all to most of the alleged acts mentioned in the indictment. Furthermore, it is so sweeping and general in character that under its terms almost anybody can be prosecuted for almost any act.

In every democratic country judicial power is exercised by professional judges. In Tito's Yugoslavia, however, a single stroke of the pen destroyed the whole legal and judicial structure. A decree of February 3, 1945, not only abolished all laws, regulations and orders imposed by the occupying Powers, but also "all legal status based on laws, regulations, orders, etc., which had been in force in Yugoslavia until April 6, 1941, in so far as they are in contradiction with the achievements of the national liberation struggle, the declarations and decisions of the Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslavia and the local Anti-Fascist Councils, as well as with the legal decisions taken by the Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslavia, its delegations, its Government and delegations of the local Anti-Fascist Councils."

Legal procedures take place in that country in the so-called "People's Courts," comprising mostly not a single legally-trained

person. The "judges" make their decisions, even on capital charges, on the basis of their "conscience" and some recently passed vague and sketchy legal regulations—in other words, they act entirely at their discretion.

The newspaper *Slobodna Dalmatziya* wrote on December 31, 1944:

"Instructions as to work and organization of the Courts were given by the Anti-Fascist Council of Croatia. According to those instructions judgments are not to be given by trained jurists under the complicated laws hitherto in force, but are to be made by the best sons of the people, not by the dead letter of the written law, but by the proper healthy conception of the people. The judges are to be chosen from among the people. . . ."

The newspaper *Politika* published on November 26, 1944, a statement by Mr. Milovan Krujitch, Trustee for Legal Affairs of the Anti-Fascist Council of Serbia:

"In the course of the national liberation struggle the people have swept away the old authority in all its forms, including the legal system. . . . The people have developed their own people's legal system. . . ."

And Radio Belgrade described on May 29, 1945, how the "judges" are being chosen:

"It is not important that the judges be professionals; it is important that they have democratic ideas and are devoted to the Movement. . . . The judges of the District People's Courts and the County People's Court in Belgrade will be elected by District Assemblies and the Municipal Assembly respectively. . . ."

## *The Curtain Rises*

ON September 30, 1946, the "trial," staged in a school gymnasium with all the techniques developed by totalitarian régimes for such purposes, was opened before the "People's Court of Croatia," while the real people of Croatia crowded the churches to pray for their Archbishop.

There was, on the one side, the three members of the Court, who did not even pretend to judge, but plainly considered the defendant guilty from the very moment the "trial" was opened; the Public Prosecutor, who abused his office by acting as a political agitator; the carefully selected crowd packing the court room, who jeered and hissed the defendant and applauded the so-called "evidence."

There was, on the other side, the Archbishop, who rejected the legitimacy of the "trial" and answered only when the honour of religion or of the Church was at stake, until, in a calm and impassioned 38-minute speech, he tore through the maze of pure falsifications, gross distortions and malicious misrepresentations and exposed the true purpose of the "trial"—to destroy the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, to break the centuries-old loyalty of the Croat people to the Holy See and to make religion an instrument serving the State.

Mgr. Joseph P. Hurley, Bishop of St. Augustine, Florida, and Regent of the Apostolic Nunciature in Belgrade, and the British and United States Consuls in Zagreb, attended all the sessions of the "trial." Mgr. Hurley rose and bowed each time Mgr. Stepinac was taken to and from the dock.

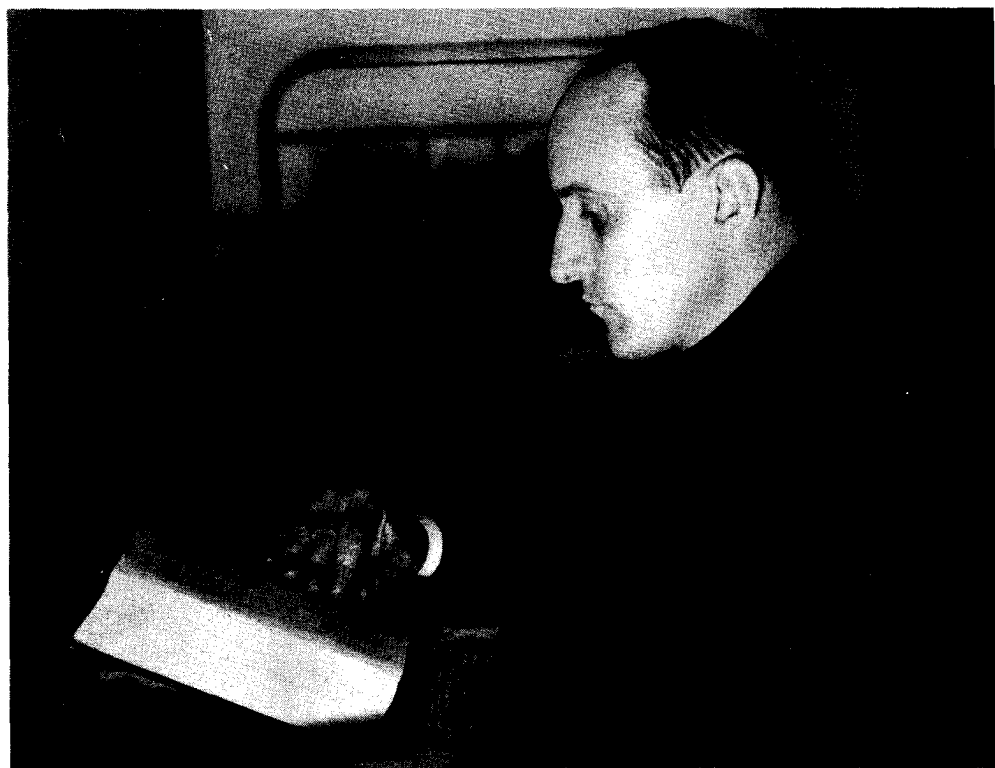
In an interview with foreign Press representatives covering the "trial," Mgr. Hurley called Mgr. Stepinac the "Mercier of our time," referring to Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, in Belgium, who during the 1914-1918 war had gained world-wide fame as a courageous and fearless defender of his people's rights against the German occupiers.



*(Press Association)*

#### IN THE COURT ROOM

Most Reverend Dr. Joseph P. Hurley, Bishop of St. Augustine, Florida, and Regent of the Apostolic Nunciature in Belgrade, rose and bowed each time Archbishop Stepinac was taken to and from the dock.



*(Associated Press)*

**IN HIS PRISON CELL**

Archbishop Stepinac reading the Code of Canon Law while awaiting the verdict.

The 51-page indictment, read by the Public Prosecutor of Croatia, quoted statements reported to have been made by Mgr. Stepinac under interrogation:

“The accused declared that there exists a dispute between Church and State, a fight of ideologies and principles, in which he cannot give up religious and canonical principles. . . .

“The accused declared that no court in any other country could sentence him or priests, either under international or divine or natural law. . . .”

It concluded with accusing Mgr. Stepinac of responsibility for two joint Pastoral Letters of the Yugoslav Hierarchy in March, 1945, and September, 1945. The level of this document can be best judged by its final sentences:

“In the later part of March, 1945, the Catholic Episcopate, headed by Stepinac, issued a Pastoral Letter which was written in accordance with Pavelitch’s orders and the text of which was composed by the Chief of the *Ustasha* propaganda . . . . On September 20, 1945, Stepinac issued a Pastoral Letter in which he encouraged the *Ustashe* and other traitors in committing further crimes. In this Letter he also wrote various lies and slandered the new Yugoslavia.”

In his opening statement the Public Prosecutor declared:

“The Archbishop is going to continue to maintain in his conscience, to which he frequently refers, that such clergymen are prosecuted without any reason—just for nothing—and that it is a persecution of the Church and of religion and not a prosecution of criminals.

“He is even going to maintain arrogantly that all this is no fault of his. This man is no longer an Archbishop, but the most responsible of the terroristic conspirators. . . .”

And the Public Prosecutor concluded:



"There is no question of persecution of the Catholic Church, of priests or of the faithful, but criminal proceedings against the accused Stepinac who, as a traitor to our people, helped the occupiers and closely collaborated with Pavelitch and the *Ustashe* against national liberation, and, after the liberation, took part in, aided, encouraged and supported the dispersed remnants of the *Ustashe*."

At the very beginning of the "trial" Mgr. Stepinac, pleading not guilty to all charges, 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. . . .

"When there is peace, when it is possible to publish documents, and when everyone can say his own words without fear, then there will be no one who will say a word against me. . . .

"I shall give an account of my activities when conditions in the country are settled."

This statement caused the Public Prosecutor to jump to his feet and exclaim:

"I consider that conditions here are settled when it is possible to bring you before a People's Court."

The text of an address, said to have been delivered by Mgr. Stepinac in July, 1944, was read in Court, quoting him as saying that Croatia was passing through hard times, and "perhaps worse is to come." This statement, the Public Prosecutor maintained, proved that he had "worked against the Partisans."

During concentrated questions about the Pastoral Letter of March, 1945, Mgr. Stepinac confirmed his belief in the statements he had made. In fact, he added, he considered that numbers of priests were still "improperly punished."

When the Public Prosecutor introduced as "evidence" photographs showing Mgr. Stepinac in the company of Pavelitch after

the Pontifical Mass preceding the opening of the Croat Parliament, Mgr. Stepinac said:

"I see no reason why I should not 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 that I approve of your ideology!"

When the Public Prosecutor read an article describing the Archbishop blessing the *Ustashe*, Mgr. Stepinac simply said:

"I give my blessings to all who ask for them."

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

"Everyone has the right to get blessings," Mgr. Stepinac replied.

The Public Prosecutor alleged that in 1944 Mgr. Stepinac had condemned Allied air attacks. Even if he had, it would hardly constitute a crime—many a good patriot in America and England had condemned them, too. But he had not, for early in 1945—according to a report by the United States Office of War Information, published in the *New York Herald Tribune* of October 13, 1946—he had publicly declared:

"Air attacks on German cities were provoked by the Germans, who first used their Air Force against civilian populations."

The witnesses called for the prosecution to support the gravest charge—that Mgr. Stepinac had "collaborated with the enemy"—declared that the Archbishop's political activity had been in opposition to Pavelitch.

Of three former high officials of the *Ustasha* régime, one said that Mgr. Stepinac was the friend of Dr. Vladko Matchek, leader of the Croat Peasant Party, who had spent the war in Axis custody. Another, Marshal Slavko Kvaternik, Commander-in-Chief of the Croat Army, who was supposed to link Mgr. Stepinac

with Pavelitch, stated that the puppet Premier had hated the Archbishop.

During the final stages of the case for the prosecution, Mgr. Stepinac repeatedly refused to defend himself or to answer the charges against him, saying:

“Time will have its own reward when I have the right to say what I want to say.”

Asked if he had not “mixed political and Church activity,” he replied:

“I did everything according to Catholic morality.”

Concluding his case the Public Prosecutor made angry comments on Mgr. Stepinac’s stubborn silence:

“You are trying to assume the role of a martyr like Jesus before Pilate. Your silence is a concealment of your acts. You wanted to put a knife in the back of the Croat people.”

It was then that Mgr. Stepinac delivered his 38-minute address to the Court, frequently interrupted by shouts, jeers, laughter and hisses from the hostile audience assembled for the “trial.”

## *The Accused Accuses*

“**T**O all charges brought against me here in this Court I answer that my conscience is clear in every way—even though those present ridicule this. I shall not try to defend myself, nor shall I appeal against the verdict. For my convictions I am able to bear not only ridicule, hatred and humiliations, but—because my conscience is clear—I am ready at any moment to die.

“Hundreds of times here in this Court I have been called ‘the accused Stepinac.’ There is no one so naive as not to know that with ‘the accused Stepinac’ here on the defendant’s bench sits the Archbishop of Zagreb, the Metropolitan of Croatia and the head of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia.

“You yourselves have many times appealed to the accused priests here in this Court to acknowledge that only Stepinac is guilty for their, the people’s and the clergy’s stand. The ordinary Stepinac could not have such an influence, only Archbishop Stepinac could.

“For seventeen months there has been waged a campaign against me in public and in the Press. Furthermore, for twelve months I have borne actual internment in the Archbishop’s Palace.

“You accuse me of having re-baptized Serbs into the Catholic Church. But you use the wrong word, for he who has been baptized once need not be re-baptized. What you accuse me of is not re-baptism of Serbs, but of having caused conversions of Serbs to the Catholic Church. I shall lose no words on this matter, but only repeat that my conscience is at peace and that the time will come when history will establish the truth.

“As an illustration of what really happened, I may reveal to-day that I had to transfer parish priests to other parishes, because they feared reprisals on the part of the Orthodox for putting obstacles in the way of their reception into the Catholic Church.

It is a fact that during the late war the Church had to find her way through many terrible situations, but we can calmly say that we have done everything to help the Serb people.

"You accuse me of having allowed Trappists to occupy the Orthodox monastery of Grahovitz. Firstly, this monastery at Grahovitz was once a Catholic monastery belonging to the Pauline Congregation. Secondly, this monastery was empty. Thirdly, the Trappists were thrown out of their own monastery at Rajhenburg by the Germans. I think that it was my sacred duty to help these poor expelled monks in the circumstances as they were then.

"You accuse me of having instituted the Office of the Military Vicariate. The President of the Court here asked me whether I did not think I committed an act of treason when in the matter of this Vicariate I approached the Government of the Independent State of Croatia. I was Military Vicar in old Yugoslavia. I was trying to settle this question to the satisfaction of both the State and the Church. The Concordat had settled it, but the Concordat collapsed, after having been signed and ratified, in the streets of Belgrade.

"At a time when the Yugoslav Army had already capitulated and the war between Yugoslavia and Germany was at an end, I had to look after the spiritual welfare of the Catholics in what remained of the old Yugoslav Army and in the new Army of the Independent State of Croatia. The State had collapsed, but the soldiers of the Army remained, and we had to do our duty towards them.

"I was far from being *persona grata* either with the Germans or with the *Ustashe*. Much less was I myself an *Ustasha*. I did not take the oath of allegiance as did some of your officials who to-day sit here in this Court. But I felt I should have been a despicable man had I not understood the beating of the heart of the Croat people who were slaves in the former Yugoslavia.

"A Croat could not get promotion in the Army or enter the Diplomatic Service unless he changed his religion or married one

of the other faith. Such was and is the practical basis of all my sermons and Pastoral Letters.

“Everything I said of the right of the Croat people to their national freedom and independence is in full agreement with the moral law, and no one can make reproaches to the Croats because they want that. Nor would it be against the principles laid down by the Allies at Yalta and in the Atlantic Charter. The Holy See has many times solemnly emphasized that the small nations have the same right to be free as the big ones. Do you really think that a Catholic Bishop and a Metropolitan should never so much as mention this subject? If we have to perish, well, then we shall perish while doing our duty.

“If you think that the Croat people are satisfied with their present fate, I challenge you to give them once more the opportunity of expressing freely their own will. Let there be no doubt about my own attitude: no difficulties will come from my side. I have always respected, and still do respect, the will of my own people if that will does not contradict the principles of the Catholic Church.

“You accuse me of being an enemy of the State and of the people’s authority. Do tell me, please, which was the lawful authority for me in 1941? Was it the Shimovitch Government which, as you say, put in a king illegally, against the Constitution? Or was it the ‘traitorous,’ as you call it, Government-in-exile in London? Or was it the Government set up in Palestine? Or was it Mihailovitch, who was not known at that time? Or was it your Government, functioning ‘in the woods,’ which did not even exist then?

“Is it possible to serve two masters at the same time? It would be against the moral law and international law. We could not ignore the Government in Zagreb, though it was an *Ustasha* Government. You have the right to question me and to make me answer for my deeds since May 8, 1945, only!

“As to my so-called ‘acts of terrorism,’ you have no proof, nor will anyone believe you. If Lisak, Lela Sofijanetz and others came

to me under assumed names, and if I received a letter which I never read—then, if it be a ‘crime’ because men came to me, I shall accept the verdict with equanimity.

“It does not trouble my conscience for issuing a certificate of free movement to Rev. Fr. Maritch, for I did not do so with the purpose of creating disorder. For such a ‘crime’ I should go to the other world with my soul at peace.

“Whether you believe me or not, does not matter. The accused Archbishop of Zagreb knows not only how to suffer, but also how to die for his convictions.

“Premier Bakaritch (of Croatia) himself acknowledged to Rev. Fr. Milanovitch: ‘We are convinced that the Archbishop stands behind these acts, but we have no proof.’ That is for me sufficient acknowledgment of my innocence.

“And now, what is the core of the controversy and of our vicissitudes? And why has not a peaceful solution been reached? The Public Prosecutor has many times asserted that nowhere else is there such ‘freedom of conscience’ as there is in this State. I shall give you a few facts showing just the contrary.

“Again I declare: between 260 and 270 priests have been killed by the National Liberation Front. There exists no civilized country in the world where so many priests would have been put to death for such ‘crimes’ as you have brought up against them.

“Thus, for example, the Parish Priest of Podravska Slatina, Rev. Fr. Buerger, as a member of the *Kulturbund*, should have been sentenced to, at the very most, let us say, eight years imprisonment. But no, you killed him because he, in fulfilment of his sacred duty as a dean, had saved the sacred vessels of a national shrine.

“The Rev. Fr. Povolnjak was killed like a dog in the street, without any trial at all. The same must be said of the accused Sisters. There is no civilized country in the world where these Sisters would have been tried, sentenced to death and executed.

“You committed a grave error, a great miscalculation, when you started killing the priests. The people will never forget it, and will never forgive you for it!

"Now look at our Catholic schools. We built them in difficult times and with great personal and national sacrifices. You have thrown us out and taken them away from us. Had not American friends sent us this year seventy tons of various materials, we should not have been able to re-open the work in our provisional seminary, since we can no longer use the original one. And who are the seminarists? Capitalists? No, they are children of our poor peasant population.

"You have looted the seminary of all its furnishings, of all its property. You have done no less damage than the Gestapo, who robbed the seminary of its farmlands at Mokritza. Why have you done all this! We are not against agrarian reform—the Holy See has issued many Encyclicals on social reforms—no, but we say that reforms concerning Church property ought to be made in agreement with the Holy See. Is it not manifestly scandalous to uphold that nowhere does the Church enjoy so much 'freedom' as here?

"All our Catholic Press is destroyed. All our Catholic printing plants have been taken away from us. We have no longer a Press of our own. That Press which you have so savagely attacked here in this Court exists no more.

"The Dominicans gave a spiritual book, which I had translated from the French, to be printed at a cost of 75,000 dinars. But they never received these books. How much damage was sustained? Is that your 'freedom of the Press'?

"The St. Jerome Society has ceased to exist. It is a grave offence against the whole people thus to treat their greatest and oldest cultural institution.

"Look also at our Catholic orphanages and institutions for the poor. You have liquidated them. Not the buildings, but those who gave help and consolation there. Our nursing Sisters in the Catholic hospitals must bear untold miseries and hardships. And yet you have the temerity to say that the Church is nowhere so 'free' as in Yugoslavia.

"You have reproached me for the work of my *Caritas*. But I



tell you here in this Court: *Caritas* has performed untold services for our people and your own children.

"Then there is the question of religious instruction in the schools. You have laid down the rule: in the higher grades of the schools religious instruction is forbidden, and in the lower grades it is according to choice. How can you give to children the right to determine for themselves when they have not grown up, while those in the higher grades who are capable of deciding for themselves are not allowed freedom of choice?

"Against the overwhelming opposition of the people you have introduced civil marriage. Why did you not interpret this freedom in accordance with the mentality of our people? In America—where rules a wise Republic—one is free to choose either civil or religious marriage, and that is wiser.

"We do not deny to you some control over marriage. But it grievously pains our people when they must first enter a civil marriage before a religious marriage. If you had come to us, we would have given you suggestions on this matter.

"Buildings of some of the religious in the Bachka have been confiscated. Some churches in Split—I do not know whether it is still the case—have been converted into granaries. Church lands have been seized without agreement with the Holy See. It is because of this sort of agrarian reforms that the people refuse to take those lands.

"No, the material question is the least of our problems. The sad thing is this: not a single Bishop, not a single priest, in this country knows in the morning if he will be alive that evening, and knows at night if he will see the light of dawn.

"Bishop Shrebrnitch was attacked in Sushak by youngsters at the instigation of influential persons. For three hours they tormented him and even penetrated his room, while your police and militia merely looked on.

"And I myself experienced the same in Zapresitch when I was attacked with stones and revolvers.

"Bishop Lach, who was to administer Confirmation across the

Drava—even though this purpose was known—was sent back and held the whole night in prison at Koprivnitza. In fact, your own men who were 'in the woods' came to me and declared: 'This is unbecoming conduct. We shall protest to the authorities.'

"Stones were hurled through the windows of the house where Bishop Buritch was staying while on a Confirmation tour.

"Bishop Pushitch, as I heard, was recently the target of rotten apples, eggs, etc.

"Such 'freedom' we consider to be an illusion. And we do not want to exist like outlawed slaves. We shall fight, with all just means, for our rights—and right here in this State!

"Here are—so that you may understand why we fight—some three or four more examples of your 'freedom.'

"In the class-rooms it is officially taught—in defiance of all historical proofs—that Jesus Christ never existed. Know you then: Jesus Christ is God! And for Him we are ready to die! And to-day it is your teaching that He never actually lived. If a teacher dared to teach the contrary, it would be certain that he would be cast out.

"I tell you, Mr. Public Prosecutor, that under such conditions the Church is not 'free,' but will be annihilated in a short time.

"Christ is the foundation of Christianity. You have concern for the Orthodox Serbs. But I ask you: how can you conceive of Orthodoxy without Christ? How can you conceive of the Catholic Church without Christ? That is an utter absurdity!

"In the school books it is stated that the Mother of God is an adulteress. Do you not know that both for Catholics and Orthodox the Mother of God enshrines the holiest of thoughts and affections?

"You have ordained, as the official doctrine, that man originated from the apes. Perhaps some people may have that ambition. But why order that as an official theory when to-day no scholar of world renown holds to that belief?

"According to your understanding, materialism is the only worth-while system. And that means erasure of God and of

Christianity. If there is nothing but matter—then thank you for your 'freedom'!

"One of your men of highest influence once boasted: 'There is no one in this State whom we could not bring to Court and sentence.'

"To these outrageous charges whereby you place us among murderers and friends of terrorists, I tell you that not all the evil deeds in the former Independent State of Croatia were perpetrated by the *Domobrantzi* and the *Ustashe*.

"It was not easy for the Church, and many difficulties had to be overcome.

"Let no one think I want a conflict. Let the present authorities come to an understanding with the Holy See. The Church does not recognize dictatorship, but she is not against honest understandings. If that could be achieved, then the Bishops will know what is their duty and there will be no need to seek out priests to point out their (the Bishops') guilt, as was done here.

"Finally I want to say a few words to the Communist Party, which is my real accuser. If you think I have taken the present stand because of material things, you are wrong, for we have remained firm, even after you have made us poor.

"We are not against workers realizing greater rights in the factories, for this is in the spirit of the Papal Encyclicals. Nor are we against reforms.

"But let the leaders of Communism allow us to say: if there shall be freedom to spread materialism, then let us have the right to confess and propagate our principles. Catholics have died and will die for that right.

"When you ask for our loyalty, then we are obliged to ask you to respect the least of our rights.

"I conclude: with good will an understanding can come about. The initiative lies with the present authorities. Neither I nor the Episcopate are the ones to enter this basic agreement. That is a matter between the State and the Holy See.

"As to myself and the verdict, I seek no mercy. My conscience is clear!"

Mgr. Stepinac's counsel were allowed to call twenty witnesses, including several Canons of the Zagreb Metropolitan Chapter. The President of the Court refused, however, to hear the fourteen principal witnesses for the defence without giving any reasons. And the Public Prosecutor strenuously objected to those who were called.

The testimony of these witnesses was constantly interrupted by the audience. So was the closing speech on October 8 of Dr. Politeo, who had to appeal to the President of the Court to maintain order.

"There is a hostile audience," Dr. Politeo declared. "I base our defence on truth. Our defence is difficult, but not because of the charges against the accused."

Dr. Politeo, tearing the unfounded allegations to pieces point for point, declared:

"Mgr. Stepinac has acted throughout the occupation in accordance with international law and the law of the Church."

For the first time during the "trial" there was light applause when Dr. Politeo, concluding his defence, exclaimed:

"Under the oppression of the enemy, the people had to do what they were told, and millions all over Europe—clerics, judges, townspeople, country people, people of all kinds—under that force were working for the occupiers.

"How can anything be said against Mgr. Stepinac, who was forced to maintain some correct formal relations and who did it only for the good of his people?"

"I should like to see who could have stood up during the occupation and done much against Hitler and Mussolini—strong men that they were at that time. The greatest heroes were certainly those who went 'into the woods,' but not all of us could go 'into the woods'."

The final speech of the Public Prosecutor clearly revealed the real purpose of the "trial":

"This trial has shown once again what were the plans of international reaction and of the traitors to our country. The just sentence which you, Comrade Judges, will hand down will break the bastion of reaction and of those criminal foreign agents who sought to hide themselves behind religion and the Church by setting up the infernal cry of persecution of the Church and the faith.

"This trial, Comrade Judges, is the last opportunity for those who have strayed to get back on the right path, to comprehend the full gravity of the crime of Stepinac and of all terrorist organizations, and to return to their people.

"Finally, this trial is an invitation to all those who have seen what Stepinac has done in the past to come closer to the people, to refuse to permit themselves to be any longer misled by the enemies of the people, and to fight from this time forward for religious liberty and tolerance. It is precisely of those precious benefits for which our people have struggled victoriously that I maintain my accusations in their entirety, Comrade Judges, and that I demand that all the accused be punished according to their deserts."

The President of the Court then announced that the verdicts and sentences would be pronounced on October 11.

\* \* \*

While more than 4,000 people crowded into the Cathedral at Zagreb, while all the other churches in the city and throughout the country were filled to capacity, while the peasants in the fields ceased work and knelt with crucifixes in their hands, all praying for their Archbishop, the sentences on the 19 accused were pronounced on the morning of October 11, 1946:

Mgr. Aloysius Stepinac—16 years forced labour;

Dr. Ivan Shalitch, his secretary—12 years forced labour;

Fr. Lambert Margetin, O.F.M.—13 years forced labour;

Fr. Modestus Martinchitch, O.F.M., Provincial of the Croat Province—5 years forced labour;

Six Franciscan friars were sentenced to varying terms of forced labour. The other three friars were found "not guilty" and acquitted.

Colonel Eric Lisak, Chief of the Political Police of the Independent State of Croatia—death by hanging;

Pavle Gulin, member of the *Ustashe*—death by hanging;

Josip Simotzki, member of the *Ustashe*—14 years forced labour;

The other three accused laymen were sentenced to varying terms of forced labour.

All the forced labour sentences were accompanied by loss of civic and political rights for a further five years, and confiscation of all property.

The carefully selected crowd, packing the Court room, cheered and clapped when the sentences were read. Mgr. Stepinac looked straight ahead and showed no sign of emotion whatsoever when the sentence against him was pronounced. In the face of this calm bearing the President of the Court remarked:

"You see the accused Stepinac is guilty by his long silence."

Mgr. Stepinac had 48 hours in which to appeal to the National Assembly of Croatia, but he did not do so. During the "trial" he had declared that he asked for no mercy and would take whatever sentence they gave him.

## *The Voice of the Vatican*

ON October 5, 1946, His Holiness Pope Pius XII, in an address to the members of the Sacred Roman Rota, whom he received at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, rejected the accusation of "forced conversions." After quoting the pertinent canonical rules regarding conversions, the Holy Father declared:

"If, therefore, a few days ago, according to news appearing in the Press, the Public Prosecutor in a most sad trial asserted that even the Pope had approved of the so-called 'forced conversions' and moreover—what would be even more serious—that he had done so for reasons of national imperialism, We have the right and the duty to reject such an unjust accusation.

"In order that Our assertion may not be wanting in due documentation, We think it opportune to read to you a memorandum of Our Secretariate of State, dated January 25, 1943, in reply to a request of the Yugoslav Legation to the Holy See on the movement of conversions in which the said Legation expressly recognized that neither the Holy See nor the Catholic Hierarchy in Croatia had had any part. Here, therefore, is the text of the memorandum:

" 'Referring to the Note of the Royal Yugoslav Legation to the Holy See, Number 1/42 of January 9, 1942, the Secretariate of State of His Holiness has the honour of informing the same Legation as follows:

" 'According to the principles of Christian doctrine, conversion must be the result not of exterior constraint, but of the adherence of the soul to the truth taught by the Catholic Church. For this reason the Catholic Church does not accept into the Church those who request to enter or to return to the Church, except on the condition that they are fully conscious of the meaning and consequences of the action that they desire to take.

“Consequently, the fact that, all at once, a large number of Dissidents in Croatia request to be received into the Catholic Church cannot fail to give lively concern to the Croat Episcopate to whom it falls to defend and protect Catholic interests in Croatia.

“Far from taking official cognizance, whether explicitly or implicitly, of this fact, it become a duty to recall formally to the lawful authorities the requirements that the return of the Dissidents should allow for complete liberty on their part and, at the same time, to insist on the exclusive competence of the ecclesiastical authorities to give orders and directives in regard to conversion.

“If an Episcopal Committee has been so promptly constituted, with the charge of considering and deciding on all questions concerning this matter of conversions, this has been done precisely for the purpose of seeing to it that the conversions were—in conformity with the principles of Christian doctrine—the results of convictions and not of constraint.

“The Holy See, on its part, has not failed to recommend and to inculcate the exact observance of the canonical prescriptions and of the directives given in this matter.”

\* \* \*

Some Press reports from the “trial” mentioned a “letter” which Mgr. Stepinac allegedly had written to the Holy See on May 18, 1943, and in which he allegedly had sought the Holy Father’s blessings for the Independent State of Croatia and the Pavelitch régime. Other Press reports declared that in the “letter” produced by the Public Prosecutor Mgr. Stepinac had allegedly stated that Croatia was the battleground between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church.

On October 10, 1946, *Osservatore Romano*, semi-official Vatican daily, published the following statement which was also broadcast over Radio Vatican:

“In a session of the Zagreb trial on October 2 the Public Prosecutor produced against Archbishop Stepinac the Croat



translation of a letter that the Archbishop is alleged to have sent to the Holy See under the date of May 18, 1943.

"We are authorized to declare that after an investigation in the archives of the Papal Secretariate of State only a few papers were discovered bearing the date of May 18, 1943, the contents of which corresponds only in part to the summary given out by the Public Prosecutor.

"Moreover, in contrast with all the letters sent by the Archbishop to the Holy See, the alleged document—to which no reference was ever made thereafter—is typewritten on paper without a printed letterhead; it is written in a form not employed in correspondence with the Holy See; it is without the Archbishop's seal; and, what is more significant, it is without signature."

The spurious character of these pages, Vatican circles declared, was immediately recognized and they were never given the slightest attention, since they were anonymous and evidently not authentic. Additional confirmation in that respect was seen in the fact that Mgr. Stepinac was received in audience by the Holy Father on May 31, 1943, and that, consequently, he had no occasion to write to the Holy See.

\* \* \*

On October 14, 1946, *Osservatore Romano* published on its front page in Latin and Italian the following declaration by the Sacred Congregation of the Council:

"The judicial action by which the Most Excellent and Most Reverend Aloysius Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, was arbitrarily thrown into prison and wrongfully condemned by a Yugoslav Civil Court has profoundly disturbed the whole Catholic world and the civil society of Yugoslavia.

"The Church, especially by three provisions of the Code of Canon Law, protects the holy Pastors and their dignity and freedom, threatening *excommunicatio ipso facto* to those:

"1. Whoever shall bring a Bishop without due permission of the Church before a Secular Court, especially an Extraordinary Court (Canon 2,341);

"2. Whoever shall lay violent hands on the person of an Archbishop or Bishop (Canon 2,343, Paragraph 3);

"3. Whoever shall directly or indirectly obstruct the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction or authority both *pro foro interno et externo*, having recourse for this purpose to any secular authority whatever (Canon 2,334, Section 2).

"All excommunications in these matters are reserved according to the occasion, in a simple or special manner to the Apostolic See.

"Therefore, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, which is entrusted with the discipline of Christian priests and people, the aforesaid offences having been deemed in no way to have seriously mitigating circumstances (Canon 2,205, Paragraph 3; Canon 2,229, Paragraph 3) but having rather aggravating circumstances, particularly on account of the high dignity of the Most Excellent and Most Reverend person offended (Canon 2,207, Section 1), hereby declares all those who may have shared, either physically or morally, in committing the aforementioned crimes, or who have been essential co-operators in them (Canon 2,209, Paragraph 1-3) to have incurred the excommunications described above, and to remain subject to them until they have sought and obtained Absolution from the Holy See.

"Given at Rome, on the fourteenth day of October, 1946.

F. CARDINAL MARMAGGI, Prefect  
F. ROBERTI, Secretary."

## *Non-Catholic Opinion*

**C**HRIStENDOM was moved to its core by the outrageous sentence on the Primate of Croatia by the Communist tribunal at Zagreb. Following his arrest and the beginning of the "trial" thousands and thousands of messages of protest poured in to the Holy See from every country all over the world, from Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Parliaments, public bodies, associations and individuals among the great body of the faithful.

Though *Osservatore Romano* devoted every day for weeks two columns and more of its front page to a record of these protests, it had to restrict itself to giving just a list of names of those protesting.

The world-wide indignation over the iniquitous procedure against the Archbishop of Zagreb was not, however, solely a Catholic affair, but was shared by non-Catholics everywhere, Protestants, Jews and Orthodox alike, as is shown by the following few selections. They could be multiplied if space permitted.

"I have been asked if I would be willing to make some comment or statement about the trial of Archbishop Stepinac, and I shall.

"It necessarily cannot be specific. What I should like to say is that we have been for a long time concerned about civil liberties in Yugoslavia. You will recall at the time we recognized the present Government of Yugoslavia, we drew their attention to what we thought was the undesirable situation in that field and reminded them of their undertaking under the United Nations Charter, in which all of these matters are specifically dealt with, and urged that the matter be rectified as soon as possible.

"We have since recognition unhappily had to take up a very considerable number of cases with the Yugoslavia Government

where we felt that trials of our own citizens were unfairly conducted.

"It is this aspect of the Archbishop's trial which I am now able to say concerns us. . . .

"It is the civil liberties aspect of the thing which causes us concern, aspects which raise questions as to whether the trial has any implications looking towards the impairment of freedom of religion or worship. The aspects of it which indicate at least to the reporters who reported it from the spot that the actual conduct of the trial left a great deal to be desired. . . .

"It is this aspect of the thing, on which one can have no final evidence until a record and detailed report are available, which causes us concern and deep worry."

U.S. Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson at a Press conference, October 11, 1946.

"Conditions in Yugoslavia are sinister and melancholic. . . .

"The whole country is being as far as possible converted into a Communist area. Communism is being taught in schools, and every effort is being made to create a Soviet Socialist Republic in closest association with Moscow . . . .

"The circumstances of the trial and condemnation of Archbishop Stepinac have created widespread regret . . . .

"The Catholic Church and clergy in Croatia are being persecuted with the greatest severity, and the strictest measures of a police government are being applied against political dissensions. . . ."

Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons, November 1, 1946.

"This trial was prepared in the political sphere. It was for the purpose of dividing the Catholic Church in Croatia from its leadership at the Vatican. Tito has openly expressed this purpose. The strategy, which comes definitely from the Kremlin in Russia, is to break the leadership of religion. It should be noted that opposition to atheism is stronger when

there is an outside leadership. I refer to the Pope.

"The trial was not based on justice, but was an outrage on justice. Tito's régime has no interest in justice. It seeks only to stifle opposition. . . .

"I see only martyrdom for Archbishop Stepinac if the sentence of the Tito Court—16 years forced labour—is carried out. May God help him to keep his spirit high and to endure, that through his courage Christianity may win!"

Bishop Dionisije Milivojevitch, Head of the Serb Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada, October 25, 1946.

"I no longer feel that I can belong to such a mockery of Government. . . .

"My decision was prompted by the unjust trial and execution of General Drazha Mihailovitch, the killing of American pilots over Yugoslavia, and finally the infamous trial of Archbishop Stepinac, an innocent man, beloved in Yugoslavia. I am an Orthodox Serb, but I think the accusation and sentencing of Archbishop Stepinac is very unjust, as was the trial and execution of General Mihailovitch, and I sincerely hope that proper steps will be taken to liberate Archbishop Stepinac."

Basil S. Rusovitch, Yugoslav Consul in New Orleans, upon his resignation, October 12, 1946.

"The NCCJ (National Conference of Christians and Jews) feels obliged to protest the persecution not only of Archbishop Stepinac and his co-religionists, but of Orthodox Christians and members of other religious groups. . . ."

Unanimous resolution of the Bronx Round Table, NCCJ, October 13, 1946.

"This great churchman has been charged with being a collaborator with the Nazis. We Jews deny that. We know from his record since 1934, that he was a true friend of the Jews, who were beaten into the earth by Hitler and his hench-

men. He was one of the very few men in Europe who stood up against Nazi tyranny when it was difficult and dangerous for him to do so. . . .

"This man, now the victim of a sham trial, all during the Nazi régime spoke out openly, unafraid, against the dreadful Nuremberg Laws, and his opposition to the Nazi terrorism was never relaxed. He also cried out against the infamous 'yellow tag' system, contending it violated the dignity of man, and he is credited with being the main force in having it abandoned. . . ."

Louis S. Breier, Programme Director, American Jewish Committee, at the Bronx Round Table, NCCJ, October 13, 1946.

"Archbishop Stepinac stood for decency and was the symbol of a freedom which we have in America, and which we had hoped other people would have at the close of the war. . . ."

William L. Chenery, Publisher, *Collier's Weekly*, at the Bronx Round Table, NCCJ, October 13, 1946.

"The credibility of the assurances that Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac had been given a just trial is to be determined by the fact that such an announcement comes from a country where Mihailovitch is dead and Tito is alive. . . ."

"The Serb General's chief crime was that he had the courage to oppose the substitution of one tyranny for another just as ruthlessly. . . ."

Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain, U.S. Senate, and Pastor, Foundry Methodist Church, Washington, October 13, 1946.

"We, the Methodist Ministers' meeting of Philadelphia and vicinity, join our Catholic brethren in protest over the persecution and imprisonment of Archbishop Stepinac by Communist elements. A wedge driven into any one of the several segments of Christianity serves only to weaken the whole Christian Church. We cannot sensibly condemn Nazi atrocities and keep

silent against this sort of persecution by representatives of godlessness.”

Unanimous resolution of nearly 100 Methodist Ministers, October 22, 1946.

“No intelligent Protestant will rejoice in the misfortunes that have overtaken the Roman Catholic Church in Yugoslavia. Experience has established that when one portion of the Christian Church meets with reverses, it is a setback for all Christians. . . .

“Many American Protestants are upset by the circumstances of the trial and the atmosphere of the court room, both of which would appear to render impossible a fair and impartial trial. . . .

“Christianity in all its branches ought to present a united front to the evil forces that to-day seek to divide and conquer. . . .”

Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell, Minister, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 13, 1946.

“The trial of Mgr. Stepinac is of interest to members of all faiths, for he was convicted simply because he had the courage to stand before forces that would destroy our world—our way of life. . . .”

Dr. Willard S. Soper, Pastor, Huguenot Memorial Church, Pelham, N.Y., October 13, 1946.

“The propaganda trial of Archbishop Stepinac in Zagreb has no more relation to justice than that of General Mihailovitch.

“The defendant is only a target through which the poisoned arrows of the prosecution are aimed at a larger objective. As the Mihailovitch 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.

"Archbishop Stepinac has been tried and convicted in Tito's slave Press. No one outside of Yugoslavia doubts that the verdict of the four-men Court, at once Judge and Prosecutor, is already signed and sealed. But the churchman, dragged to the bar, is proving more formidable than when he was free. He is unafraid, unbroken, and seems careless of the fate reserved for him. He refuses to defend himself as an individual, but defends his right to exercise his ecclesiastical functions among his flock and bestow the blessing of the Church on all its faithful. Not since Cardinal Mercier, Roman prelate 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 armour of his conscience.

"The Communist dictatorship will not tolerate among the masses any influence it cannot digest and use for its own nutriment. It will acknowledge no control over men's minds other than its own. The Catholic Church, especially powerful among the Croats, is the strongest bulwark against Communism in Yugoslavia to-day. Therefore it must be crushed. Murders of priests by the secret police have failed to crush it. The trial of Archbishop Stepinac is the heaviest weapon against the Church Tito has yet rolled out. If the lessons of history mean anything, he is merely making a martyr, whose spirit and influence he cannot kill."

Editorial, *The New York Times*, October 3, 1946.

"The trial of Archbishop Stepinac was clearly political with the conviction foreordained. . . .

"The Croat Prelate's trial and conviction violate Yugoslavia's pledge to the United Nations to respect human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. . . .

"Archbishop Stepinac has been convicted and will be im-



prisoned as part of a campaign against his Church, which is guilty of unfriendliness towards Communism. . . .”

Editorial, *The New York Times*, October 13, 1946.

“The attempt of the Yugoslav Government to make it appear that a fair trial was given to Archbishop Stepinac on charges of ‘crimes against the people’ seems, at this distance, distinctly feeble. Most prejudicial of all events of the trial was the public statement by Marshall Tito, a dictator, at the outset, that he personally knew the Archbishop to be guilty. It is hardly conceivable that any Yugoslav Court, after that, would have acquitted him.

“Cabled reports from the trial were fragmentary, but there is nothing in them to indicate that convincing proof was brought of the Archbishop’s guilt of any offence that would be considered a crime in what Americans know as a democracy. . . .

“The defence was limited in the number of witnesses it could bring after the prosecution had protested that any testimony in his favour would be ‘blasphemy.’

“In 1943 the United States Office of War Information reported that Archbishop Stepinac had defied the puppet Government by asserting that ‘air attacks on German cities were provoked by the Germans, who first used their Air Force against civilian populations.’ Thus the opinions of the Archbishop, like the arms of General Mihailovitch, his predecessor as victim of Tito’s ‘justice,’ were used in the Allied cause.

“Archbishop Stepinac’s real ‘crime,’ like that of Mihailovitch, was to have opposed the Government of Tito. Unlike Mihailovitch, he never had taken arms against the Communist leader. Either this fact, or a belated fear of world opinion, led the Yugoslav court to spare the Archbishop’s life. Sixteen years at hard labour is a terrible sentence, but at least

it can be corrected by a subsequent pardon or commutation. Justice may yet reassert itself in Yugoslavia."

Editorial, *The New York Herald Tribune*, October 15, 1946.

"Even if he was a Monarchist who supported the *Ustashe* and collaborated with the Nazis, he is entitled to a fair trial. But he was convicted in Tito's Press before he went on trial, and by the mobs shouting demands for his death in the court room. He was convicted by exactly the same Soviet justice that murdered Mihailovitch. To his credit be it said that he faced his tormentors with unbroken spirit and rare courage. . . .

"When the Nazis occupied Croatia, Archbishop Stepinac risked his life to aid the Jews. With his aid hundreds of Jews were smuggled out of Yugoslavia. He obtained the repeal of an order that all Jews must wear a yellow tag. He denounced the Nazi race laws. He worked with the International Red Cross to rescue Jews in other countries. He concealed Jews under his own roof, and many of his priests did likewise. That, according to Tito's henchmen, is collaboration with the Nazis. . . ."

Editorial, *The New Leader* (Liberal Labour Weekly), New York, October 12, 1946.

"The petition of the Catholic War Veterans and of the National Conference of Christians and Jews filed with the United Nations on behalf of Archbishop Stepinac and of the thousands of victims of Soviet persecution, provides the test of the ability of the United Nations to function according to the good will and high principles of the overwhelming majority of its members. . . .

"If the United Nations hopes to have the good opinion of the civilized world, or aspires to be a force for humanity and justice in international affairs, it cannot evade or ignore these appeals. . . ."

Editorial, *New York Journal-American*, December 10, 1946.

"The sentencing of Archbishop Stepinac to 16 years of forced labour is a piece of diabolical cunning shown by the Yugoslav totalitarians. . . .

"If the Archbishop had been sentenced to death he would have become a martyr, to haunt the Tito régime to the end of its days. At the same time, his sentence is actually worse than death. . . .

"The trial, a sounding board for Pan-Slavic Communist propaganda, serves notice that religious freedom has followed political freedom down the drain in Yugoslavia. . . ."

Editorial, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, October 14, 1946.

"It is clear that the Archbishop of Zagreb did not receive a fair trial. His judges were not judges, but prosecutors. In totalitarian nations vengeance has taken the place of justice, and the secret police the place of the judge. . . ."

Editorial, *Ottawa Journal*, October 14, 1946.

"The attacks on American airplanes over Yugoslav territory, the closing of the American library at Belgrade and the trial of Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac of Zagreb are all part of the same general plan. . . .

"The indictment of Archbishop Stepinac is a symptomatic event in the relation between Communism and democracy. This is the first time that one of the so-called non-democratic Governments dares to arrest an Archbishop.

"Obviously, Communism considers the hour of reckoning with the Catholic Church has arrived and Tito probably feels strong enough to proceed with the liquidation of the Church in Yugoslavia, one of the main obstacles forestalling the Communist thrust toward the West. . . .

"However, Tito's decision demonstrates not so much his strength but rather his confidence that the democratic Powers will react in a way that apparently does not endanger him. . . ."

Editorial, *Basler Nachrichten*, Basle, October 2, 1946.

"The sense of justice is aroused over the conviction of Archbishop Stepinac. . . .

"The Catholic Church, which is much older than a thousand years, outlived Hitler's twelve years and will continue to outlive other régimes. . . .

"The trial of Archbishop Stepinac will not tend to weaken, but will only strengthen the Church. . . ."

Editorial, *Die Tat*, Zurich, October 14, 1946.

## *A Perversion of Justice*

**S**HORTLY after Washington had learned of the condemnation of Mgr. Stepinac, the U. S. Acting Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Acheson, stated at a Press conference that his Government felt "concern and deep worry" about the "civil liberties aspect" of the Archbishop's "trial." A few hours later the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington, Mr. Sava N. Kosanovitch, called a Press conference and, attacking Mr. Dean Acheson's statement, declared solemnly that Mgr. Stepinac had been given "a fair trial."

What value may be given to Mr. Kosanovitch's declaration in particular and those of other Yugoslav representatives abroad in general on the "trial" of Mgr. Stepinac is strikingly demonstrated by the following incident:

A few hours earlier, immediately after the news of the sentence had arrived in the U.S. capital, American Press representatives called on the Press Attaché of the Yugoslav Embassy in Washington to obtain information about the "trial." They were told by him that the Embassy had not got anything on the "trial" through regular diplomatic channels and that "all we know about it is what we read in the papers here . . . ."

That the "trial" given to Mgr. Stepinac was neither "fair" nor "impartial," but a complete perversion of justice, is clearly demonstrated by the following facts.

Mgr. Stepinac was tried with co-defendants who were accused of acts which had no legal connection whatsoever with the alleged acts of the Archbishop. As in the case of the Prince Bishop of Ljubljana, the Archbishop of Zagreb was made a co-defendant with undoubted war criminals who had no connection whatsoever with the Church. Mgr. Rozman was tried with Dr. Lovro Hatchin, Chief of the Political Police in Slovenia during the Axis occupation, in order to create the impression that their activities during the war were similar. Mgr. Stepinac was tried

in company with Colonel Eric Lisak, Chief of the Political Police in the Independent State of Croatia, in order to make it appear that he was responsible for all the excesses of the Pavelitch régime.

The President of the Court, Zharko Vimpulsek, and the two other Judges, Ante Chireneo and Ivan Poldrugatz, were patently prejudiced. They showed an unfriendly attitude and obvious hostility toward Mgr. Stepinac, attacked him in a most aggressive manner and attempted to bully, browbeat and ridicule him. They did not even try to appear impartial. Their functions were not at all different from those of the Public Prosecutor.

Witnesses for the prosecution were admitted without any verification and without any possibility of cross-examination by counsel for the defence. I shall give but one example: on one of the rare occasions when Dr. Politeo attempted to cross-examine Fr. Martinchitch, he extracted some damaging admissions. At once the Public Prosecutor intervened, and the President of the Court put an end to the cross-examination without giving any reason.

Evidence for the prosecution was introduced which had no connection whatsoever with Mgr. Stepinac's responsibility. Thus, to give again but one example, on the massacre at Glina. Not only had he no responsibility at all for it, but he had solemnly protested against it in a letter to Pavelitch, of May 14, 1941.

A forged document—the alleged letter of May 18, 1943, by Mgr. Stepinac to the Holy See—was admitted as evidence in spite of its lack of signature and Mgr. Stepinac's denial of its authenticity.

The testimony of co-defendants who stood in danger of severe sentences was admitted.

Canon Penitch was rejected as a witness for the defence on the alleged ground that he was a "Fascist." Yet, three witnesses for the prosecution, former members of the Croat puppet Government (Defence Minister Marshal Kvaternik, Foreign Minister Alajbegovitch and Finance Minister Kosak), themselves awaiting

trial for being "Fascists," were admitted to testify against Mgr. Stepinac.

Most of the documentary evidence proposed by counsel for the defence was arbitrarily excluded. The President of the Court did not argue its admissibility in court, but merely announced that it was either not pertinent or not important.

The President of the Court rejected arbitrarily, without giving any reasons, the fourteen principal witnesses for the defence. But all the witnesses for the prosecution were admitted and heard, no matter how suspect and irrelevant their testimony.

A grossly disproportionate amount of time for presenting his case was given to the Public Prosecutor, while the defence lawyers were given the barest minimum. When on one occasion Dr. Politeo attempted to speak, he was accused by the Public Prosecutor of trying to prolong the "trial" unduly. His answer was both courageous and revealing: he simply pointed out that up to that time the Public Prosecutor had spoken for a total of 48 hours, whereas the two counsel for the defence had spoken for a total of hardly 20 minutes!

Statements by some of the witnesses in preliminary examinations were falsified and, though openly challenged by them, adduced before the Court.

The proceedings were recorded by Court stenographers in shorthand. After their notes had been transcribed, they were taken to a mysterious Court official for "correction." The word-for-word reports in the Yugoslav papers showed important omissions and distortions of what had actually been said in the court room, especially of everything favourable to Mgr. Stepinac.

The hostile audience in the court room was carefully chosen by the Communist Party and admitted only by tickets, which were distributed by OZNA. Apart from the places allotted to the Press and to a few official observers, only about ten tickets are known to have gone to people friendly to Mgr. Stepinac. Leaders in different sections of the court room gave signals to cheer the sallies of the Public Prosecutor and the President of the

Court, or to jeer and hiss the answers of the accused. All who took the stand were under the influence of this organized mob: witnesses were cowed and intimidated, defendants were confused and their counsel disorientated.

The purpose of the "trial" was political indoctrination rather than attainment of the ends of justice. Both the Public Prosecutor and the President of the Court wearisomely repeated such terms as "Fascist," "reactionary," "clerico-Fascist," "foreign imperialism," "international reaction," etc.

Mgr. Stepinac's counsel and those who might have desired to communicate with them were intimidated. From the time of his selection as counsel for Mgr. Stepinac, Dr. Politeo was under the closest surveillance by three OZNA agents stationed outside his house by day and night.

The "trial" was merely a *coup de theatre*, for it was not a trial by a Court, but a trial by the "Government," that is the Communist Party. Mgr. Stepinac's conviction and sentence had been decided upon outside the Court and long before the "trial" had opened. While the "trial" was still in progress a Communist highly placed in the Government declared:

"We cannot shoot him as we would like to do, because he is an Archbishop. But he will go to prison!"



## *Message to the World*

**D**URING the "trial" of Mgr. Stepinac the Catholics of Zagreb flocked to the Cathedral and other churches of the city in such vast numbers that OZNA prohibited the gathering of more than five people in front of the churches.

Faced with the prospect of being answered by the ballot box, to which devout Catholics would make their contribution, Tito tried hard to mollify predominantly Catholic Croatia.

In a typical election speech at a "People's Front Election Rally" at Zagreb on October 31, 1946, which was given the greatest publicity in the Press and on the air, he attempted to deny his persecution of the Church.

"Accusations are levelled against us throughout the capitalistic world. A campaign is on foot in the United States and in Britain about something of which we are not guilty. It is alleged that we are against the Church. I declare from this place: it is not true that we persecute the Church. We simply do not tolerate that certain people serve with impunity foreign interests instead of the interests of their own people. . . .

"We are accused of wanting to deprive Stepinac of his freedom in order to get rid of him. When the Pope's representative, Mr. Hurley, came to see me, I approached the question of Stepinac, and I told him: 'Take him away and relieve him of his duties, for if you do not do this, we shall arrest him; we have to arrest him . . . .' I told Mr. Hurley of many hostile things which Stepinac had done against our country. I gave him a whole book of these crimes. We waited for several months, but there was no reply, so we arrested and tried Stepinac, and we shall deal in the same way with whosoever acts against the people. . . .

"I think that the overwhelming majority of the people fully agree with our measures. But nobody could reproach us

with being against the Church because of these measures. No. We firmly reiterate that we are not against the Church, and that we only demand that our priests be with the people. Let them carry out their religious functions, but let them not become estranged from the people or serve foreign interests. Let them serve instead the interests of their own people, and let them be the people's priests. That is what we demand, and nothing else. Shall we allow agents of foreigners and enemies of our country to be established in our Church? We shall not suffer this. . . .

"We need not fear any campaign. They will shout to their hearts' content, and then the storm will abate, because they will weary of it. . . ."

But Tito is wrong in this prophecy. A prominent political personality in Yugoslavia expressed the judgment not only of the great masses in his own country, but of the great masses all over the world, when he declared:

"Archbishop Stepinac went on trial as the spiritual shepherd of the Croats and left the Court room as the universally acknowledged national hero of his people!"

Mgr. Stepinac will take his place among the many great Popes and Bishops who, for the sake of Christ and His Church, have defied the persecution of evil governments.

During the twelve years of his activity as Archbishop of Zagreb, Mgr. Stepinac has accomplished many great things. But he has never before been so effective in his mission as he is to-day. Then he aroused a nation against the evils of totalitarian government; now he has aroused a world. Then he was an inspiration to his fellow-countrymen; now he is an inspiration to all of us. To-day, in every country where free men live, his name is known and honoured and loved, his person considered the symbol of all the persecuted peoples in Eastern Europe.

Mgr. Stepinac has taught the whole world a lesson: he has taught us to despise all forms of totalitarian government, be they of the Left or of the Right; all forms of government which crush the souls and bodies of men; all forms of government which degrade free men to the level of slaves; in a word, all forms of government which are not based on the moral law.

## Index

- Acheson, Dean, 90  
  opinion on trial, 81  
Alajbegovitch, 58  
Andrus, Dr., 54  
Archbishop's Palace, 5  
Bachitch, Canon Stjepan, arrest, 54  
Bakaritch, Dr., 43, 68  
*Basler Nachrichten*, editorial protesting trial, 88  
Bauer, Archbishop Dr. Ante, 6  
Bonifachitch, Bishop, of Split, 53  
Bonnell, Dr. John Sutherland, protest on trial, 84  
Breier, Louis S., protest on trial, 83  
British Ministry of Information, 15  
Bronx Round Table, protest on trial, 82  
Buerger, Rev. Fr., 68  
Buildings, religious, seizure, 70  
Buritch, Bishop, 71  
Caritas, founding of, 6  
Caspar, Cardinal, 8  
Catholic Church, inability to own property, 34; present status in Yugoslavia, 37  
  orphanages, 69  
  press, 69  
  Printing Society of Ljubljana, seizure of, 32  
  schools, changes in, 69  
  Welfare Agency for Emigrants, 45  
Chenery, William L., protest on trial, 83  
Children, Stepinac's aid to, 25  
Chireneo, Ante, 91  
Churchill, Randolph, 47  
Churchill, Winston, 47  
  protest on trial, 81  
Communism, Joint Pastoral Letter concerning, 29  
  in Yugoslavia, 27  
  Stepinac's answer to, 72  
Croat Orthodox Church, 18  
Croatia, state of, 15  
*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, editorial protesting trial, 88  
*Die Tat*, editorial protesting trial, 89  
Excommunication, reasons for, 78  
Forged evidence used in trial, 77  
Frank, Dr. Josip, 11  
Frankovitz, 11  
Garitch, Mgr. Josip Stejepan, Bishop of Banjaluka, 40  
Glina, 17, 91  
Grahovitz, 66  
Gulin, Pavle, 75  
Harris, Dr. Frederick Brown, protest on trial, 83  
Hatchin, Dr. Lovro, 90  
Hochstetter, Leo F., 52  
Holy Mass made difficult to attend, 32

- Hrvatski Glas*, suppression of, 57
- Hrvatski Narod*, 22, 56, 57
- Hurley, Bishop Joseph P., 55, 60
- Jewish acknowledgement of Stepinac's aid, 23
- Joint Pastoral Letter, 33, 43  
concerning Communism, 29  
concerning deaths of priests, 30
- Kaptol, 5
- Karageorge Star, 6
- Kasche, SS General von, 44
- Katichitch, Dr., 54
- Katolichki List*, 55, 57
- Korchula, 14
- Koroshetz, Mgr. Dr., 7
- Kosak, 91
- Kosanovitch, Sava N., 90
- Krashitz, 5
- Krek, Dr. Miha, trial of, 48
- Kuresh, Vlado, 20
- Kuresh, Voda, 20
- Kvaternik, Marshal Slavko, 63, 91
- Lach, Bishop, 70  
arrest, 53
- Latzokovitch, Dr. Stjepan, 24
- Lisak, Col. Eric, 50, 75, 91
- Ljubljana, trials at, 48
- Marcone, Right Rev. Abbot Giuseppe, 57
- Margetin, Fr. Lambert, 74
- Maribor, 32
- Maritch, Rev. Fr., 68
- Marriage under Tito, 32, 70
- Martinchitch, Fr. Modestus, 75, 91  
trial of, 49
- Matchek, Vice-Premier Dr., 7, 15
- Matchek, Dr. Vladko, 49, 63
- Mazhuranitch, Dr., 7
- Melcher, Geoffredo, 46
- Mercier, Cardinal, 60
- Methodist ministers, protest on trial, 83
- Mihailovitch, General Drazha 82
- Milanovitch, Rev. Fr., 68
- Milivojevitch, Bishop Dionisije, protest on trial, 82
- Mokritza, 69
- Mostar, 32
- Mussolini, Benito, 46
- National Printing Press, seizure, 32
- Nedelja*, 22
- New Leader*, editorial protesting trial, 87
- New York Herald Tribune*, editorial protesting trial, 86
- New York Journal-American*, editorial protesting trial, 87
- New York Times*, editorial protesting trial, 84, 85
- Non-Catholic opinions on trial, 80
- "Nuremberg Laws," promulgation in Croatia, 20
- Opera Rafaele, 45
- Orthodox Serbs, Stepinac's aid to, 16
- Osservatore Romano*, 77, 78, 80
- Ottawa Journal*, editorial protesting trial, 88
- OZNA, 43, 53
- Pacelli, Mgr. Eugenio, 9
- Pavelitch, Dr. Ante, 11, 15, 17
- Penitch, Canon, 91

- People's Courts, legal procedure in, 58  
 Podravska Slatina, 68  
 Poldrugatz, Ivan, 91  
 Politeo, Dr., 54, 91  
     closing speech at trial, 73  
*Politka*, 59  
 Pope Pius XII comments on "forced conversions," 76  
 Povolnjak, Rev. Fr., killing of, 68  
 Press, Catholic, campaign against, 32  
 Priests, killing of, 30  
 Propaganda used against Stepinac, 43 ff, 52  
 Protestant refugees aided by Stepinac, 12  
 Protests about trial, 80  
 Pushitch, Bishop, of Huar, 53, 71  
 Radio Belgrade, 59  
 Radio Vatican, 77  
 Rajhenburg, 66  
 Rapopetz, Captain, 18  
 Rauch, Fr., 6  
 Refugees aided by Stepinac, 11  
 Relief Committee for Refugees, establishment, 11  
 Religious ceremonies and teaching, suppression of, 35  
     instruction, fate of, 70  
     teaching, fate of, 71  
 Rozman, Mgr. Gregory, 27, 40, 90  
     trial of, 48  
 Rusovitch, Basil S., protest on trial, 82  
 St. Jerome Society, 69  
 Salis-Sewis, Bishop Franjo Baron, arrest, 54  
 Sarajevo, 32  
*Saturday Evening Post*, 52  
 Senj, Province of, 19  
 Sentences imposed at Stepinac trial, 74  
 Serbs, attempts to eliminate, 15  
 Shalitch, Dr. Ivan, 74  
     trial of, 49  
 Sharitch, Mgr. Ivan, Archbishop of Sarajevo, 40  
 Shibeniak, 32  
 Shimrak, Mgr. Dr., 7, 40  
 Shimrak, Dr. Janko, 31  
 Shiroki Brijeg, priests killed at, 30  
 Shrebrnitch, Bishop, 70  
 Simotski, Josip, 75  
 Slamitch, Mgr. Ante, arrest, 54  
*Slobodna Dalmatziya*, 59  
 Slobodna Jugoslavia, 16  
 Slovenes aided by Stepinac, 24  
 Soper, Dr. Willard S., protest on trial, 84  
 Sotzialne Tjedne, 10  
 Spoloteo, Duke of, 56  
 Sporazum of August, 1939, 10  
 Stara Gradishka, 39  
 Stepinac, Most Rev.:  
     answer to charges at trial, 66  
     arrest, 42, 51  
     church work, 10  
     defense speech at trial, 65  
     early life, 5  
     efforts to aid Jews, 19  
     house arrest, 22  
     indictment against, 55  
     indictment read at trial, 61

- nomination as Archbishop, 6
- physical attributes, 8
- political desires, 10
- propaganda used against preceding trial, 52
- rebuttals to indictment against, 56
- sermons during war years, 15
- speech in own defense at trial, 65
- Tito's propaganda campaign against, 43
- trial of, 60
  - non-Catholic opinion of, 80
  - Vatican opinion of, 78
  - war-time activities, 16
- Stojadinovitch, 7, 10
- Tito, 42
  - mollification efforts after trial, 94
- National Liberation Front, 27
- Partisans, 16
- persecution of Catholic Church, 40
  - propaganda campaign against Stepinac, 43, 52
- Trial of Stepinac, 60
  - procedure used in, 90
- Trials organized by Tito, 48
- Tsarevitch, Mgr. Josip, Titular Bishop of Aristium, 40
- Ujchitch, Mgr. Dr. Josip, 17
- United States Office of War Information, 16
- Ustashe, 11, 15
- Varazhdin, trials at, 48
- Vatican, protest on trial, 78
  - validity of trial evidence questioned by, 77
- Victims of Tito's persecution of Catholic Church, 40
- Vimpulsek, Zharko, 91
- Vjesnik*, 44
- Voelkischer Beobachter*, 56
- Yugoslavia, present status of Catholic Church in, 37
- Zagreb Fair, 44
  - German occupation, 15
  - trials at, 49
- Zapresitch, 43