News Background

CATHOLIC CHURCH IN YUGOSLAVIA

Munich, April 10 (Stankovic) -- Even though the Yugoslav Communist regime has insisted on a "significant improvement" in the relations between the Catholic Church and the state, it seems that the Yugoslav Catholic bishops are not of the same opinion. According to a report by the Rome correspondent of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (April 7 issue) the Catholic bishops of Yugoslavia consider that the relations between the Catholic Church and the state "have reached a dead point". The German journalist quoted Vatican sources.

In the meantime the Yugoslav Government published a section from the September 1960 memorandum of the Catholic bishops handed over to the regime in the beginning of October 1960. (See News Background No. 1033 of 29 March 1961 — "Church-State Relations in Yugoslavia"). At the April 7 session of the Yugoslav National Assembly's Committee for the Organization of Authority, Miloje Dilparic, Secretary for Religious Affairs in the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council (the government) gave a rather favorable report on the relations between the Catholic Church and the state in Yugoslavia. For the first time Dilparic quoted several paragraphs from the memorandum of the Catholic Bishops in which the following is stated:

"First of all, the Episcopate on its part would encourage the clergy and faithful to be loyal to state authorities and to consciously perform their duties as citizens. In this connection the Episcopate would do its utmost to see that the clergy and faithful love their land and people from the bottom of their hearts; to devotedly make efforts to further public good and general welfare; to help with full vigor the construction of a better people's future and to avoid everything which would harm both the material and moral interests of national community. In turn the Episcopate expects that civil authorities would persistently and liberally implement the state Constitution and the Law Concerning the Legal Status of Religious Communities vis-a-vis the Church and its representatives..."

Dilparic further said in its answer the government "positively appraised the efforts made by the Episcopate" adding that "possibilities exist" for the "normalization of relations" between the Catholic Church and the state. Some problems can be solved immediately, while some others must be further discussed. However,
Dilparic said, "new talks (between the Catholic Church and the government) have not yet taken place because the Bishops have not yet received approval by the Holy See for these talks".

**Church in A Stable**

According to the above-mentioned "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" report from the Vatican, the Archbishop Seper (pronounce: Sheper), the successor to the late-Cardinal Stepinac, was compelled to consecrate a stable near Zagreb "because the Yugoslav authorities have forbidden the consecration of a house to serve as a church". Moreover, the Yugoslav Communists "have forbidden the cutting of a window in the stable so that light enters only through the door". In conclusion of its report the Frankfurter paper said:

"The office of the Zagreb Archbishop stated thereupon that the relations between the Catholic Church and the Yugoslav State have reached a dead point".

End 17.5.1957