

LL
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NL - 284

BULGARIA

RELIGION (2800)
Roman Catholic Church (2806)
Persecution (2804)

Prosecution Of Catholic Clergy

SOURCE ITALY: Confidential source.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: End 1952 to 1953.

EVAL. COMMENT: The persecution of the Roman Catholic Church in Bulgaria has been carried out by the government on all occasions; however, the reported names and details are unknown to this office (see Item No. 13660/52.)

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A recently arrived Italian woman and her 11-year-old son state that, while living in SOFIA, their family - being Catholics - always frequented the Roman Catholic church, situated in former Tsar Boris Boulevard. All the resident Catholic priests - our source maintains - were arrested some time ago. The Holy Mass on Sundays was celebrated by an unknown young priest who was coming for this purpose from a nearby village.

At school, our little boy was derided by some of his schoolmates, when they heard that he went to Mass every Sunday. Especially the 12-year-old Maria KOVACHEVA and the 12-year-old Ivan STOYEV, did not want to leave him alone.

In the mother's native district of PLOVDIV, several Catholic priests were arrested by the police in January 1953 and never heard of since. These were:

Father Kamen VITSEV, aged 65, parson of the Roman Catholic Church in PLOVDIV;

Father PLATSKOV, his deputy;

Father Franz (LNU), aged 30, a Bulgarian.

It was Father Franz - our source adds - who celebrated the Holy Mass in PLOVDIV church, as the other two were

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old and sick. She spoke to him for the last time on 24 December 1952, when he visited her family's house. He said on that occasion, that the visit would be the last one he made, as he did not want to endanger the faithful by seeing them privately and anyway he was officially forbidden such contacts. He expected to be arrested at any moment.

The local press in January 1953 accused the arrested priests of spying. It was alleged that the police found hidden in the Roman Catholic cemetery at PLOVDIV some arms, a typewriter and documents proving the subversionist activities of the priests.

End.