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Communists Still War on God!

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Introduction

MONSIGNOR S. SHEEHY recently visited Europe where he consulted with officials both of the Vatican and of the State Department who are studying the Communist anti-religious program in the satellite countries. "To reveal my sources of information," he said, "would be to expose to death heroic Christians." Monsignor Sheehy later had a private audience with Pope Pius XII who agreed with the gravity of the situation in the countries herewith reported on by Monsignor Sheehy.

Monsignor Sheehy, head of the Department of Religious Education at Catholic University of America, is the author of "Head Over Heels," "Six O'Clock Mass," and a new novel just published, "The Priestly Heart." He holds the distinction of being the first priest selected by the United States Navy for the rank of rear admiral and, at present, is president of the Military Chaplains Association.

Communists Still War on God!

ONE must be incredibly naive or stupid to have any doubts about the Communist attitude toward religion. In 1843 Marx said: "Religion is the opium of the people; our duty is to deliver the people from this opiate." Sixty-six years later Lenin echoed these words: "Marxism is materialism; as such it is the deadly enemy of religion."

In 1955 Khrushchev, resenting the insinuation that Communists were changing their attitude toward religion, reaffirmed the Marxian thesis: "We remain atheists. We will do all we can to liberate a certain portion of the people from the charm of the religious opium that still exists."

It is not difficult to learn the Communist attitude toward the Catholic Church. It is affirmed in the bible of Communism known as *Bloshaya Sovetskaya Entisklopediya* (Large Soviet Encyclopedia) which is constantly revised

to eliminate heresies and heretics opposed to the Communist faith:

“VATICAN — residence of the head of the Catholic Church — the Roman pope, one of the leading centers of international reaction and obscurantism . . .

A true guardian of capitalist interests and one of the centers of international reaction the Vatican appears as a fierce enemy of peace and democracy. The Papacy throughout the extent of its entire existency has carried on an implacable war with all forward and progressive things in the history of humanity. With particular frenzy, the papacy and the Vatican have striven and continue to strive against the ideology and politics of the working class, against the science of Marxism - Leninism. Enmity for democracy and communism, for the USSR and the countries of people's democracy determines the entire activity of the Vatican — an ally and instrument of the most aggressive imperialist powers.”

My recent visit to Europe was motivated largely by the desire to discover any change of tactic in the Communist subjugation of large segments of the Catholic population behind the Iron Curtain. Communism is itself a cult, and it is creating an ethic which demands of its followers a certain amount of asceticism. It seeks

to subvert to its purposes what religion has sought to develop in man's character.

Religion today, whether Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic, is the only power that Communism fears because it knows that spiritual idealism alone will return power to the people in whom God invested it.

I. Poland

THERE is no battleground in the world where Communism has unleashed more of its resources with less effect than in Poland. After ten years of Communist domination during which the Communists captured the country's political structure, the Catholic Church in Poland is a very vital factor. One explanation for the futility of the Communist attack is the stupidity manifest in centering the attack, not upon Christ or the Church directly, but upon the Mother of Christ. Even an indifferent Catholic will respond as if his own mother were being attacked by an aspersion directed toward the Jewish maiden who holds priority in his human loyalty.

Poland is a nation with an historic Catholic tradition. The Communists have realized that they must destroy Catholicism there in order to eliminate it in other Slavic countries.

The Polish people have centered their devotion in Our Lady of Czestochowa and saluted Mary as the Queen of Poland. It is not insignificant that countless Polish boys are christened "Marion . . . son of Mary . . ."

Of course, the battle in Poland has called many heroes and heroines to a living martyrdom. As Pope Pius XII stated to me, "These are indeed difficult times but such times bring forth great saints."

Here are facts reflecting the deadly seriousness with which the Reds are waging their war against religion in Poland.

According to defector Josef Swiatlo, former high ranking officer of the Polish Communist "Gestapo," MVD General Ivan Serov, one of the successors to Beria and a leader in the Soviet secret police, is the architect of the attack on Polish Catholicism. The plans against the Church in Poland were allegedly developed as early as 1944-45. As a secret police chief, Serov continues to issue orders to the Polish Ministry of Public Security and directs each of their steps, many of which are designed to break the Faith.

The Serov plan, which had Stalin's approval, called for seizure of the Catholic Church from within. The Church was not to be liquidated.

Rather it was to become an instrument of Communist policy subservient in a manner similar to the Orthodox Church in Russia today. The weapons were to be imprisonment of Church leaders and terrorization of priests leading to a "national Catholic" Church comprised of "patriot priests" and a "progressive" Catholic laity, both subject to regime bidding.

From 1945 to 1953 the outlines of the anti-Catholic drive were carefully placed into operation. By 1949, the Communists felt sufficiently secure politically to try a frontal attack. While the regime-controlled press began a violent anti-religious campaign, Church property was confiscated, Church hospitals nationalized and the influential widely respected charity organization of the Polish hierarchy — Caritas — was abolished as an independent organization.

In April 1950, Poland's bishops, aware of the mounting intensity of the campaign against them, agreed to a church-state pact in an attempt to safeguard the core of the Church's Divine functions. In exchange for a hierarchical promise not to support anti-Communist political activities, the state pledged freedom of religion and religious education. The agreement was short lived. When the Polish bishops refused to sign the infamous Stockholm Peace Appeal in

1950, the final steps of the Serov program for the Church's subjugation were called into play. Violent persecution of Catholics followed: religious orders of priests and nuns were restricted, many Catholic schools were closed, and the role of the "patriot priests" and their lay accomplices was given priority. To Boleslaw Piasecki, unsavory leader of a pre-war Polish Fascist clique, fell the assignment of directing the "progressive" Catholic movement in its drive for Communist control of the faithful. Added to this vehement campaign was the regime-controlled "Pax" publishing house in Warsaw specializing in tracts on Communist "social Catholicism" designed to "prove" the compatibility of Marxism and Christianity.

By 1953 it was evident to the regime authorities that they were failing badly. We have the authority of Swiatlo, who himself took part in the campaign, to the effect that the drive was not successful. Of 10,000 priests, for example, only some 60 had been forced to cooperate with the regime as "patriot priests" and most of these unfortunate men had had their health broken in Red prisons.

This defeat so infuriated the Communists that they took the ultimate step of imprisoning Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, the Prince Primate

of Poland, in September 1953, in the anticipation that this action would break Catholic resistance. The Reds could not have been more wrong. The reaction of the faithful was to close ranks. Popular resistance became the order of the day. Parishioners stood guard over their priests who were subject to regime arrest. A recent escapee from Poland relates how the peasants of Jaroslaw forcibly restrained dreaded UB troops from driving the nuns from the Niepokalanki Convent in order to turn it into a madhouse.

Resistance was such that the Communists feared possible rebellion and immediately sought new tactics. The new approach was mainly aimed at religious education. From 1952 on some 59 seminaries have been reported eliminated. Catholic schools were closed and religious instruction forbidden. On August 2, 1954 there was accomplished the liquidation of the theological faculties at the historic universities of Cracow and Warsaw. In July 1955 it became known that the sole remaining Catholic University—at Lublin—had canon law and theology stricken from its curriculum. Today a regime sponsored Theological Academy exists at Bielany which gives the Communists control over the numbers and activities of Polish theological students.

The current drive against the Church is ideological. "Re-educate youth," they say. "Destroy the belief in faith through instruction." This is the function of the "Committee of Clergymen and Secular Catholic Activists," a Communist device to confuse and divide.

The Vatican is alerted to this program. On June 27, 1955 the Vatican's Holy Office placed the "progressive" Catholic weekly *Dzis I Jutro* on the Index. Despite regime pressure, according to the best available information in the West, the number of churches in Poland has actually increased since 1945, the total now being over 11,000. The parishes have instituted catechism classes to offset the shutdown of the parochial school system. Religious devotion has been described by a refugee as "colossal."

In 1955 some 10,000 people participated in the famous old pilgrimage on foot to Our Lady's shrine in Czestochowa. More recently the monthly pilgrimage to the first Polish Church consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima in Turza assumed such popular devotion that the pastor was removed by the Communists.

Hardship abounds. Church appointments are state-controlled as are priestly stipends and salaries. Priests suspected of opposition to the regime are cut off from material support im-

mediately. But, despite privations, scores of such men are harbored and assisted by their people.

Perhaps the best example of Communist brutality ending in frustration is the story of the "Cathedral of Stalinogrod." Under construction for 28 years, it was consecrated October 30, 1955. How was it completed? By "socialist norms." Seminarians were compelled by the regime to work in shifts for 20 hours a day so as to provide a showplace for Communist claims of "religious freedom." But it was completed and offered by the "workers" to the glory of God in a spirit reminiscent of medieval greatness. Strangely enough, as if in reply, not five weeks later, the Holy Father addressed a letter to the imprisoned Cardinal Wyszynski urging the Polish faithful to continue to offer the "strongest possible resistance to the perfidious acts of the godless."

II. Attack in Hungary

HUNGARY has recently published a German-language publication called *Roemisch-Katholische Rundschau aus Ungarn* (Roman-Catholic Review from Hungary). Since there are only about 25,000 Germans in Hungary, this publication, printed on glossy paper at the

University Press in Budapest, is most probably intended for dissemination in Austria and Germany. Although the masthead gives no clue as to who is responsible for this Rundschau, a glance at the contents brands it at once as an expensive Communist propaganda document intended to make people, ignorant of the actual conditions of the Church in Hungary, believe that Roman Catholicism enjoys complete freedom in this Communist satellite.

One passage of an article on the veneration of the Blessed Virgin in Hungary in the October 1955 issue reads for instance: "The Hungarian Catholic Church is characterized by its unity. Its theology is uniform, the functions of the office of ecclesiastical affairs is exercised by the Holy See, the Roman Pope, who is infallible in matters of faith and morals, leads all of us safely to eternal salvation."

Without propaganda camouflage, the Communist press uses quite different words. The trade union paper *Nepszava* of July 3, 1952, wrote for example: "The Pope is constantly changing his opinion. This is quite impossible, —for if the Pope is 'infallible,' his opinion should be constant." And the Communist Youth Organ *Szabad Ifjusag* of August 26, 1952 railed: "Pius XII, father of conspirators, is said to have 'warm

feelings' toward the Hungarian people, at least this is what traitor Archbishop Josef Groesz stated: "The Holy Father is heart and soul near his beloved Hungarian people."

Another article in this first issue of Rundschau mentions that on the occasion of the death of the Austrian primate Theodor Cardinal Innitzer, a Requiem Mass was celebrated in the Budapest-Belvaros church. But A Kereszt, the weekly publication of the "Catholic Priests' Peace Committee," which was proscribed by the Vatican (June 8, 1955), attacked the same Cardinal in its January 22, 1953 issue under the headline "New Inquisitors." What this seemingly Christian article failed to say was that the Austrian diplomatic mission to Budapest had specifically requested the Communist regime to grant permission for a Mass to be offered and the Rakosi-ruled government characteristically agreed dictating that Mass be celebrated in a church under the pastorship of a "peace priest."

The October issue also devotes an article to the "Beginning of religious instructions in Budapest." That Communists do everything in their power to prevent parents from sending their children to religious classes is confirmed by the fact that the official Communist Party paper Szabad Nep of June 24, 1955, announced the en-

rollment requirements for religious instructions on the same day that registration was due. Since enrollments were accepted only on two consecutive days, not many parents were in a position to comply with the regulations because one parent had to personally hand in a declaration signed by both father and mother that they wished their child to attend religious instruction classes. Still another article of the Rundschau deals patronizingly with the plenary meeting of the regime supported "Peace Priests' Committee," held September 13, 1955. However, even the Communists do not think much of the "peace priests." For example, the provincial newspaper Zala on June 7, 1955 revealed that "no common ideology unites us (Communists) with the loyal and the so-called peace priests; especially in questions relating to the education of our youth we tolerate no compromises. Priests remain propagators of religion, regardless of their political creed: we Communists, however, propagate the dialectical, the scientific materialism, of which both ideologies compare like fire and water . . ."

The Catholic News Service (Kathpress) in Vienna describes on November 30, 1955 the "Everyday Life of the Church in Hungary" in the following language: "If someone enters the house of the parish priest, the local Communist

Party office knows about it the next day and a few days later the competent office in Budapest registers the 'case' in its files . . . 'Freedom of religion' is indeed guaranteed by the constitution. The priests can exercise their normal functions as spiritual advisors without visible restrictions. But it is an open secret among the population that to every parish is assigned a snooper, be it a member of the police or someone of the parish itself. People also know that going to church entails in many cases more or less severe reprisals."

On religious instruction, Kathpress writes: "Heads of schools were ordered to give the names of parents who send their children to religious instructions to the employer of the parent or parents. Fathers who let their children attend religious classes are subjected on their work site to an interrogation by Party officials on why and how long they intend to have their child or children attend religious classes. The consequence of this pressure is that in the towns only about 30 or at best 50 per cent of all children attend religious classes."

Regarding seminarians, Kathpress states: "Training for the priesthood is at present conducted in only five seminaries, in which about 500 students are being prepared for ordination. The lectures do not deviate from the teachings

of the Church, but bishops are compelled to permit the teaching of dialectical materialism in the seminaries.”

It is quite obvious that the current muted but even more insidious Communist propaganda assault on Western opinion following upon Geneva has now extended to a new low in deceit with attempts to wrap the cloak of religion around their anti-Christ like program.

III. Extinction in the Balkans

ONE of the least known episodes in the headlong attempt of Soviet Communism to throttle Catholicism in the satellite lands is reflected in the Balkan states of Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania. The exposure of Communist persecution of religion in this region is important for three reasons. First, the Communists adopted a technique aiming at the utter destruction of the Church as soon as possible in contrast to their more deliberate tactics in the other satellites. Secondly, the Catholic Church in southeastern Europe is in the minority, following behind the Orthodox Church and the Muslim faith. And thirdly, it was in Rumania that a courageous American priest, Bishop Gerald Patrick O'Hara, now Apostolic Delegate to Eng-

land, and Bishop of Savannah-Atlanta, Georgia served as Papal Nuncio from 1946 to his expulsion on 72 hours' notice in 1950.

Rumanian Catholicism is a rich blend of east and west where both Catholics of the Latin Rite and Catholics of the Oriental Rite (Uniates) give allegiance to the Bishop of Rome. The two Churches in union with Rome claimed a membership of roughly three million souls, the Uniates predominating.

With the consolidation of Communist control of Rumania in 1947, the Reds struck fiercely at the Oriental Rite. Its announced goal: absorption of the entire hierarchy and faithful into the Communist dominated Orthodox Church under the Patriarch Justinian, who was himself a Communist Party member. Schools were nationalized in 1948 and a new morning greeting made binding upon all school children. The students would salute the teacher each day with the words: "There is no God!" The teacher's reply: "And there never has been one!"

The Ministry of Education assumed control over the activities of religious orders. A Ministry of Religious Cults was authorized later to centralize control. Chaplains were stricken from army rolls. The 2,000 odd Uniate priests were subjected to harsh unremitting pressure from

1948 on to apostatize in favor of Orthodoxy. Edicts failing, on October 28, 1948, some 700 Uniate priests including all their bishops were arrested and their parishes turned over to the Communist controlled Patriarch Justinian. A governmental order—Decree No. 358—formally liquidated the physical body of the Oriental Rite December 1, 1948. Thereupon, the Communist newspaper *Universul* declared that priests in future must conform to the socialist spirit of the new people's democracy. Theology was to be modified so as to make it compatible with Stalinism. In 1949 all religious communities were dissolved.

Bishop O'Hara, despite strenuous rear guard action against this campaign, could hold out no longer and his expulsion in 1950 signaled the final assault on the structure of the Latin Rite. In August all property was turned over to a puppet "Democratic Catholic Church." The Vatican Radio announced at this time that some 700 priests had been killed in the drive.

Today there is silence in Rumania except for the voice of the faithless Justinian. But somehow there lives in many hearts the world over the words of the Uniate Pastoral Letter issued June 29, 1948 on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

“The ties which bind us to the Pope . . . are not of human making but are of Divine origin, and it is our duty to bear . . . outrage and blows and threats and imprisonment . . . They will prove that we desire to insure for ourselves . . . an eternal meed of renown which will be beyond weight or measure.”

In Bulgaria

Sovietization of Bulgaria began almost immediately following the “liberation” of the country from “Fascist oppression.” High on the agenda was the subversion and infiltration of the Churches as a necessary “moral” action in support of communizing the country.

Bulgaria’s Catholic population of not more than 60,000 divided into Latin and Oriental Rites, as in Rumania, exercised an important influence on public life. The Church had established excellent schools, colleges and hospitals. The Franciscans and Passionists were particularly active. Bulgarian priests and nuns numbered about 300.

In 1949 the Communists closed in literally on the eve of the signing into effect of the new Constitution (Soviet style) guaranteeing religious liberty. Contact with the Vatican was

cut off by denying entry to the Apostolic Delegate. A Bishop and 27 priests were arrested and a serious blow was thus dealt to Church organization. All Catholic institutions—schools, hospitals and orphanages—were confiscated.

A report recently reaching the West indicates the number of religious has dropped to 120 for the entire country. Catholic churches have been closed and the faithful pictured as outcasts practicing an alien faith. The alternative: subservience to Moscow.

And Albania

The 100,000 Roman Catholics of Albania were so ruthlessly persecuted and suppressed on Moscow orders that even the Albanian Communists protested. The 120 Catholic priests in Albania at the time of the Communist seizure of power in 1945 have dwindled to an estimated 20 today. No Catholic Bishop remains. Traditional ties with the Italian clergy, especially the Jesuits, have been completely disrupted. Seminaries have been closed and educational institutions secularized. As a crowning blow the regime proclaimed in August 1951 that Albanian Catholicism had repudiated all form of allegiance with the Vatican.

Today there is only the clandestine Church of the suffering. Persecution now centers on complete destruction of the remaining faithful—suspected, hunted, tormented.

IV. Czechoslovakia

ONE day in 1929 a young Communist deputy rose in the Czechoslovak Parliament and angrily shouted, "You ask what we want. Gentlemen, we want to break your necks." Today, although that deputy, Klement Gottwald, the first President of Communist Czechoslovakia, is now dead, his successors are still trying to carry out his threat which in large measure is currently directed against the smashing of the Catholic Church.

This campaign of hate typified by Gottwald's remark has been given priority attention by the Communist regime since 1945. Yet after bitter anti-religious attacks Communists themselves admit a measurable lack of success. A 1955 directive issued by the Prague regime authorities admits as much. Addressing itself to the Party committee in Brno the directive apologetically stated, "we are deeply sorry that we are forced to acknowledge our failure to smash the religious sentiments of the masses. We un-

derestimated the strength of religion . . . In spite of severe restrictions upon the church, in spite of fierce anti-religious propaganda waged by the Party and the state, relatively few people have been induced to renounce their religion."

The directive noted further:

"We know that many comrades will be disappointed with our 'retreat.' But we were forced to change our tactics because the Party was steadily losing influence while religion was at the same time constantly gaining strength among the people. We have made too many martyrs . . ."

The Communists for once spoke the truth. Czechoslovakia had become a cross of martyrdom. As a nation 73% Catholic it possessed some 7,000 priests in 1945. By April 1951 it was estimated that some 3,000 Czech priests were either jailed or were being prevented from the proper exercise of their priestly functions. "Concentration monasteries" were established into which members of religious orders were forced to live in filth and to work up to 16 hours per day under brutal guards. Reports reached the American sector of Austria in 1951 which indicated that many religious had been shipped to slave labor camps in the USSR. A State Office

for Church Affairs was created with power over Church appointments and ecclesiastical activities. The result of this maneuver ended in nearly 70% of Czechoslovak parishes being without resident pastors. The terror campaign was judged complete with the disappearance of the heroic and courageous Archbishop Josef Beran, Primate of Czechoslovakia. Monsignor Beran fought valiantly to stem the Communist advance. As a survivor of Dachau and a national Czech hero, he was considered untouchable by the Communists. The Archbishop became a rallying point for resistance and his Sunday sermons brought multitudes to Prague's famed Cathedral. The Communists simply placed him under house arrest and slowly a curtain of silence descended so that today nothing is known of his whereabouts.

This violent desecration of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia was carried on without a pretext of legal justification. The guiding principle was state control of education. For the first time in history we have the sorry spectacle of "persecution through education." It was in the name of Communist-oriented education that Catholic Action was subverted to regime use (fortunately, according to refugee sources, enticing fewer than 20 of the country's 7,000

priests to the program). It was for the same reason that in 1948 religious instruction was eliminated from all school grades except the lowest which fell into line shortly thereafter. As a substitute, the study of Communism was ordered and foreign language training was limited to Russian. Seminary courses were compelled to include in the curriculum "social science" lectures on Marxism. A major effort to communize education necessitated the elimination of teaching orders of religious—both men and women. Communist Party schools meanwhile contributed regime teachers in place both of Christian laymen and religious as the move to de-christianize gathered momentum.

All Church property including schools was nationalized in October 1949 and payment of religious salaries by the state were made contingent on individual acceptance of the regime's conditions—put another way—surrender to the Communists. Soon most of the clergy ceased to receive government salaries. The religious press was seized. One of the "justifications" for this action was publication of the Pope's encyclical on the Christian education of youth. A subservient national "Catholic" Church was fostered with very little success, its clergy composed of excommunicated and apostate priests

and opportunistic laymen. More outrageous was the regime practice, which followed on the shortage of priests due to arrest, of "ordaining" women to the priesthood in an effort to dominate the activities of religious life.

By the end of 1952 the regime had gained complete control of education and had a firm hold over the nation's churches. A concerted attempt to foster a schismatic "Catholic" Church independent of Rome had begun. With the death of Stalin, orders from Moscow indicated that a new period of atheistic "education" and schismatic propaganda was at hand.

Communist Party newspapers published a steady stream of anti-religious articles throughout 1953-54 designed to re-educate the faithful. Typical of the kind of material used are these random titles selected from Czech papers: "Progress and Religion" (*Obrana Lidu*, August 7, 1953), "Religion and Exploitation" (*Nova Svoboda*, July 11, 1954), "Marxism-Leninism and Religion" (*Rude Pravo*, October 10, 1954), "Religious Obscurantism" (*Bratislava Pravda*, July 21, 1953). In addition, the Czech Communists adopted a technique directly from their Moscow superiors. A "Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge" was constituted. Its mission was to popularize the atheistic

view of the world based upon the work of the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov. His assertion that all mental activity is nothing but a "conditioned reflex" is taken as proof that there is no soul.

At the same time "Red priests," the few who compromised, were assigned to parishes. Refugee reports indicate that such men were and are completely shunned by their flocks who sometimes go miles out of their way so as to avoid attending Church services given by regime priests. A recent report identifies the Church in Straz Nad Nezarkov as being a "Red" Church.

Resistance to purge by education has taken other forms. For example, the regime's removal of nursing nuns from hospitals such as in Cheb aroused the anger of the population because the nuns were better trained than Communist nurses. Doctors constantly contrive to retain these displaced nuns as nurses, despite frantic governmental efforts to stamp out the practice.

The fortitude of the Czech Catholic people has been enormously strengthened, refugees tell us, by the invisible "grape-vine" of knowledge about the priests in Communist forced labor camps. A former German POW who has repatriated from Czechoslovakia late in 1955 relates how word of the exemplary behavior and

excellent attitude of Catholic priests confined in Czech camps in resisting Communist brutality has spread among the population and given them the courage to continue their resistance.

Communist religious re-education has failed also. The party controlled paper *Nova Svoboda* admitted as recently as July 17, 1955 that "there has been no substantial improvement in the struggle against religious obscurantism, as may be seen from the fact that 63% of all children are still attending classes of religious instruction."

This Communist rejection is evident in the story of a nine year old Moravian boy who recently escaped with his mother to Austria. The youngster knew a great deal about Stalin, and Czech Communist idols, Gottwald and Zapotocky. He seemed fully indoctrinated—the result of careful Red training. But when he was asked about his family and religion he softened and said, "every evening I pray for my mother, my father and for all those souls suffering in purgatory, of whom no one else is thinking."

This in a boy who was born under a Communist star. What a declaration of simple faith from a youth who was described by the regime in 1955 as target number 1. "We must concentrate," said the Communists, "on the school chil-

dren. If we succeed in winning the new generation we may ultimately win the war against religion."

It is not improbable that the Communists despite their prisons, their new education, their naked force realize the hopelessness of the fight. As recently as February 29 of this year we find the newspaper *Nova Svoboda* warning "atheistic propaganda *must* be carried out . . . consistently . . ." otherwise idealistic ideas might "afflict the minds of the people." Even many Party members in Czechoslovakia, the paper admitted, still have "religious prejudices."

The Czech Communists are learning, as are others, the spirit of religion cannot be stifled.

V. The Master Plan

THE story of Communist persecution of religion in eastern Europe is a sordid drama of hate and violence. Yet even today we see and hear the naive reports of touring Westerners including, unfortunately, clergymen, who declare: "I have seen myself the crowded churches, the religious services, the priests and ministers. There is a freedom of religion under Communism."

The simple fact is atheistic Communism

cannot permit a loyalty and faith to any Divine authority. Otherwise, the basis of its materialistic philosophy dissolves into nothingness. Atheistic Communism contains no basis for giving value to man as an individual possessing an immortal soul.

Although the Soviets cannot succeed in rooting out man's yearning for God, it seeks, as we have seen, to replace religion with a secular cult dominated by Communist thought.

This attack is carried out generally in four forms. First, terror and violence are practiced on the clergy and the faithful. Second, religious groups are deprived of their papers, publications and books. Third, organized religion either is suppressed or is dominated by Communist power. Four, indoctrination of youth in Communist ideas is given top priority.

The Reds have now had close to ten years in which to suppress religion within the satellite bloc. They have practiced murder, arson, arrest, secularization, confiscation, propaganda and schism in order to weaken Church leadership. Communists have organized "progressive Catholic" movements, "national Catholic" Churches, "peace and patriotic priests" activities, "Christian Peace Movements" in order to undermine the true Church and confuse the faithful.

The Soviets have reaffirmed their determination to destroy religion. Khrushchev himself signed a decree in November 1954 setting forth the enlarged long range campaign to replace God with anti-Christ. "The Communist Party," the decree announced, "is carrying on propaganda of scientific enlightenment in the materialist outlook, aimed at constantly raising the consciousness of the working masses . . . freeing them from religious prejudices."

But despite these maneuvers religion exists, prospers and daily adds new thorns to the crown of suffering which is the role of the Church militant on earth.

From the stronghold of Communism, Moscow, comes word in *Izvestia* that religion is still an important element within the family. Parents, the paper complains, give secret religious instruction to their children. Young people are insisting upon Church weddings and baptism for their children. Feast days and religious festivals continue to be observed in spite of regime pressure.

We have the example of the young Hungarian border guard—an elite corps—who escaped from his beleaguered homeland last month. For attending midnight Mass Christmas Eve 1955 in violation of instructions he was jailed

and berated publicly by his commander. "Midnight Mass," roared the officer, "where do you think you are, in a seminary? Do you still believe in Church when religion is only a business? Did you ever see God?"

"No," retorted the boy, "and I never saw Lenin either."

"Do not draw wrong conclusions," Khrushchev has said, "we remain atheists. Communism has not changed its attitude . . . to religion. We are doing everything we can to eliminate the bewitching power of religion."

The Vatican has replied for all religions. "Do not," warns *L'Osservatore Romano*, "be taken in by Communism and its co-existence. There is no compromise. There will be no baptism of Communism."

Conclusion

Khrushchev who on November 10, 1954 urged a "more scientific approach to the anti-religious campaign" has coined a new phrase "Scientific atheist" as the objective of communist education. Never has the battle for men's minds and souls been waged more vigorously or with more ingenuity. In an interview published in the *Boston Pilot* February 8, 1956, J. Edgar Hoover

is quoted as describing Communist intrigue in America in these words:

“Today Communists are far more dangerous because they are far less crude than in their methods of former years. Today they are more subtle in their propaganda, particularly since the Geneva conference. And, unhappily, many citizens hoping desperately for peace are putting too much credence in the Kremlin smiles . . . Our Christian nation should remember and remember well, that Communism and Christianity can no more mix than oil and water . . . these 20,000 (card-carrying) are the hard core Communists, men and women who devote themselves unselfishly to the cause and who are dedicated to the proposition that the United States government must be overthrown by force and violence.”

Is not America also in the battle zone?