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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.  
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.  
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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1. After February 1948, the following churches existed in Slovakia:

- a. Roman Catholic,
- b. Greek Catholic,
- c. Russian Orthodox,
- d. Evangelical (according to the Augsburg Confession)

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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In the spring of 1950, the StB arrested Bishops VOJTASSAK and BUZALKA. On 15 January 1951, both were sentenced to life imprisonment. As of February 1952, Bishop BUZALKA was confined in Leopoldov Prison in Leopoldov [4827N-1747E] and Bishop VOJTASSAK in Kartouzy Prison in Kartouzy [5027N-1523E]. Bishops LAZIK, NECSEY, POBOZNY and GARSKY were placed under house arrest by the StB in the summer of 1951 and were not allowed to leave their homes until February 1952.

6. After Easter 1951, all monasteries in Slovakia were closed. This included cloisters belonging to the Franciscans, Jesuits, Redemptorists, Dominicans, Piarists, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brothers of Mercy, and Premonstrants. The Capuchin order was not included in the ban at first, but Capuchin cloisters in Bratislava and Pezinok were closed in March 1952, and the monks were taken to an unknown destination.
7. The closing of Slovakia's monasteries was, for the most part, carried out at night, when members of the SNB forced their way into monastery buildings. All those inside had to dress immediately and get into trucks. They were not allowed to take any of their personal belongings. All property at the monasteries was confiscated. In towns like Trnava and Sastin [4838N-1709E], for instance, the monasteries were converted into office buildings, casernes, and places for Communist youth activities.
8. The monks from the various cloisters were placed in cloisters at Pezinok [4817N-1716E], Benadik, Jasov [4841N-2059E], and Beluaska Slatiny. Those who did not want to cooperate with the regime, mainly Jesuits, were sent to Podolinec [4916N-2059E], where they were placed under heavy guard and put on a starvation diet. Ordained priests who did not accept the regime's idea of church subordination to the state were interned in Muceniky, near Nitra, where they were forced to attend political indoctrination courses. Those who accepted the idea that the church must be subordinate to the state were released and allowed to return home; the rest were taken to court in Bratislava, tried, and sentenced to long prison terms in Leopoldov Prison in Leopoldov.
9. Those priests who were released were not allowed to return to the parishes which they had formerly served. As a result, many churches had no priest at all. The Slovak State Office for Church Affairs sometimes assigned to a parish a priest who had been through the indoctrination school and had accepted the doctrine of state domination over the church.

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10. Meanwhile, trials took place every day, but one rarely heard of verdicts in the cases of priests, and nothing appeared in the newspapers. [redacted] a group of priests [redacted] were apprehended and sentenced to 25 years at hard labor. Some were sent to work in coal mines, such as those at Handlova /4844N-1846E/ [redacted]
11. In early 1952, a large number of monks who had been confined at Pedolinec were taken to Bohemia and placed in forced labor camps, in Ostrov /5018N-1257E/ near Karlovy Vary, and Osek /5037N-1342E/ near Duchcov. Old and sick monks were placed in the spa town of Belusske Slatiny on the Vah River in Slovakia, but were later all assembled in Hronsky Svaty Benadik in central Slovakia.
12. In the summer of 1951, all nuns were placed in camps, such as those at Modra /4857N-2203E/ and Semerovo /4801N-1821E/. In the spring of 1952, these nuns were transported to work in plants in Bohemia and Silesia, e.g., the textile mills near Sumperk /4958N-1658E/. Most of the nuns working in hospitals were allowed to continue in their work. [redacted] two hospitals where the nuns were removed; these were the former insurance hospital in Bratislava and the hospital in Vysne Hagy. Many of the nuns continued their religious and social welfare functions in civilian dress in order not to be recognized.
13. All seminaries for the training of priests were closed. Only one theological school was left open in Bratislava and only those professors who cooperated with the regime were allowed to remain as faculty members. As a result, very few theology students attended the school. [redacted]
14. In the spring of 1951 all Catholic orphanages and old people's homes were taken over by the state and their properties confiscated. All church properties and lands were taken over by the state. All Catholic schools had been taken over by the state in 1945.
15. A special State Office for Church Affairs (Urad pro veci cirkevni) was created in the spring of 1948 to handle all Church matters. It was under the direction of Minister Zdenek FIERLINGER, in Prague. The Office for Church Affairs for Slovakia was set up under Ladislav HOLDOS. He has been under arrest since 1951, however, and was replaced by Stefan GAZIK, former prison guard at the Regional Court in Bratislava. [redacted] Note: As a result of the recent reshuffling of the Czech Government, FIERLINGER is no longer head of the Office, which has been placed directly under the nine-man Praesidium. /
16. The Slovak Office for Church Affairs had a representative in each diocese headquarters and there were always at least two StB men in the office of each bishop. The bishop was escorted by StB men wherever he went. All visitors and correspondence had to be screened by the representative of the Office for Church Affairs. Any meeting of bishops or high church officials had to be attended by an official of the Office for Church Affairs. The assignment of priests, church celebrations, and processions could take place only with the permission of the Office for Church Affairs.

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17. Upon the death of Bishop Dr. Andrej SKRABIK, of the Banska Bystrica diocese, the Office for Church Affairs appointed a priest, Father (fnu) DECHET of Ivanka /4811N-1716E/ administrator. He was elected capitular vicar by the canons of the Banska Bystrica diocese and ran the diocese with an iron hand. Those who dared to oppose him were arrested. The Slovak Office for Church Affairs also appointed their own capitular vicars to the following dioceses: Trnava -- Dr. Leopold ADAMCIK; Nitra -- Dr. (fnu) BENO; Spisska Nova Ves -- (fnu) SCHAEFFER; Roznava -- Zoltan BELAK;

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18. The Office for Church Affairs named as canons those priests who best suited their Communist purposes and would best obey them, often over the bitter protest of the bishops concerned. For example, those named as canons in the Trnava diocese were so-called "patriot priests"; some were not even Slovaks, e.g., the Hungarians

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19. The Slovak people are deeply religious. Churches were still filled to overflowing most recently by people from the working classes. The people had no faith or confidence in the "patriot priests". The population openly and physically protested the arrest of their priests. For example, in the village of Dolna Krupa /4829N-1733E/ in 1951, there were actual exchanges of gunfire between the population and the SNB; one citizen was killed and two SNB men were wounded. Many people were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms as a result of this skirmish.

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20. Religious instruction was seldom given in the middle schools, but young people attended church services in large numbers in the early morning before school. Religious services were sometimes conducted among youth groups by intelligent, young people and by former Catholic scouts. The whole religious and church life was centered around the family, however. Almost all the families in Slovakia were bound together by a deep religious feeling, and the religious training acquired within the family had much to do with a child's future behavior.

21. There is no doubt that the strongest opponents to Communism were the peasants and farmers in small towns and villages. They have been the most stalwart in defying Communism, and have been the victims of ruthless police organs. The guns of Communism were turned upon the peasants and farmers after the rest of the country was firmly under control, because the Communists knew that these people would be the hardest to convert, chiefly because of their strong religious convictions.

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22. With the closing of all monasteries and seminaries in Slovakia after Easter 1951, all Catholic book-publishing houses were closed and publications stopped. The only publishing concern allowed to continue to operate was that of the Saint Vojtech Society (Spolok Sv. Vojtecha) in Trnava. This society had been in existence for 75 years and had a membership of over 400,000. It formerly had over 7,000 subscribers to religious literature among Slovak Catholics, today, it is barely able to exist. The Society was allowed to print only a few prayer books in specified format, some Bibles, and a limited number of hymnals. All of this material was examined and censored by the state. Some church hymns, such as "O Suffering Mary" (O Maria Bolestiva), "O Lord, What Thou Hast Wrought" (Boze Coz Racil), and the Papal hymn, which were formerly extremely popular, are now banned. Material used in catechism instruction was also censored. The traditional greeting of children attending catechism class, "praised be the Lord Jesus Christ" (pochvalen bud' Pan Jeziz Christus), was banned. Calendars, which members of the St. Vojtech Society received each year, were returned by the members because they were decorated with Communist-type slogans and photographs of Communist leaders. The church newspaper, Katolicke Noviny, now strongly pro-Communist, was being published in Bratislava by the St. Vojtech Society as of 1951. As of April 1952, the Society also published The St. Vojtech News (Svatovojtesske zvesti) and another newspaper for the clergy. This paper was also Communistic in its editorial policy. Most of the articles in these publications were, in fact, anti-Catholic propaganda. One often read, for instance, child-like references to "Grandfather Frost" (Deda Mráz), instead of to St. Nicholas, who traditionally brought gifts to children on the 6th of December. Bishop Josef CARSKY had been chairman of the St. Vojtech Society, but was removed and replaced by Vojtech HORAK, Minister-in-charge of Posts, assisted by so-called "patriot priests" (vlastenecke knazi). The Society's publishing facilities were nationalized, after having been established some 29 years ago with the aid of Slovak Catholics in the United States. The Society had 14 bookstores throughout Slovakia. After the closing of the seminaries and monasteries, these bookstores were not allowed to sell any school supplies. Their usefulness became very limited; some had to close their doors.
23. Priests were often forced to deliver their sermons from material prepared for them by higher church-state authorities. This sometimes included agitating for acceptance of, and collaboration with, farm cooperatives, etc. The people often got up and left the church when such a "sermon" was being delivered.
24. StB agents attended all church festivals and celebrations and priests were often arrested for what they said in their sermons on these occasions. Large numbers of people usually attended these celebrations, but the state took steps to limit transportation facilities to and from places where such events were to take place. This happened, for example, in 1948, when Dr. Ambroz LAZIK, of Trnava, was elevated to the office of bishop. Trains and buses to Trnava were curtailed, so that the minimum number of people could attend the celebration. People came by bicycle, on foot, and in horse-drawn vehicles, however.
25. All stores selling Catholic devotional articles were closed and organized into a single "church cooperative" (chramove družstvo), with headquarters in Bratislava. This cooperative sold devotional articles for all faiths and churches. The head of the cooperative was (fnu) CEPICKA, brother of the Czech Minister of Defense, Dr. Alexej CEPICKA.

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26. No religious societies or organizations, other than the Society of St. Vojtech, were permitted. Only the following religious holidays were observed: Christmas -- two days; Easter -- two days; Saints Cyril and Methodius -- one day; All Saints' Day -- one day; and Whitsunday -- two days. All other religious holidays were abolished. Members of the Armed Forces were not given furloughs home on Christmas or Easter, but were given extra doses of anti-Church propaganda during these holidays.
27. Students applying for entrance to colleges and universities were rejected if it was discovered that they had strong religious convictions. This was usually determined by asking, during the entrance examinations, "do you believe in a God?" The answer "yes" meant certain rejection. In order to discourage students and the general population from attending church services on Sundays, everyone was urged to participate in so-called "voluntary work brigades". Attending religious instruction in middle school was "voluntary", but students were required to attend Soviet movies during the same hour.
28. Most members of the Catholic secular clergy and theology students were put in labor camps for unreliable persons or inducted into one of the military services. They were forced to perform very strenuous physical labor in the labor camps. Such groups included those at Kamenica nad Cirkou /4856N-2200E/, Handlova, and Novaky /4843N-1833E/, in Slovakia, and one at Ostrov in Bohemia, near Karlovy Vary. Those released from military service were required to work in coal mines for a minimum of three years. Members of the clergy who were allowed to remain relatively free were required to attend regular "peace demonstrations" (mierove manifestacie), which were also attended by Minister FIERLINGER. Those priests who went along with the regime's policies received salaries from the state; those who did not were few and had to get along as best they could on support from the people. In these cases, the people also contributed labor to maintain the church buildings and property, since they received no state support. In some instances, the state used soldiers to repair church buildings for propaganda purposes. The so-called "patriot priests" told their congregations that the Communists were not against religion. In their own political indoctrination courses, however, these priests were told to agitate against the church among the younger generation. In April 1952, the subject of marriage was widely discussed among the "patriot priests". Many had been living with mistresses for some time. Good Catholics took pride, however, in being able to say that such priests were morally derelict and represented only a very small percentage of the priests of the country.
29. As early as 1945, Catholic officials, e.g., doctors, university professors, directors of schools, businessmen, and railroad officials were removed from high positions. Those in educational positions were removed because the school system in Slovakia was in Communist hands as early as 1945. The following Catholic professors were removed from various teaching faculties at the University of Bratislava in 1945:
- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Prof. Karol MATULAY, M.D.       | Prof. Ludovit KNAPPEK, LL. D. |
| Prof. Frantisek SVEC, M.D.      | Prof. Jozef SKOTNICKY, M.D.   |
| Prof. Anton WEISS-NAEGL, Ph. D. | Prof. Dr. Ladislav BOLECK     |
| Prof. Ludovit NOVAK, Ph. D.     | (Fau) DRAGULA, M.D.           |
| Prof. Alojz CHURA, M.D.         | Karol HOLOMAN, M.D.           |
| Prof. Emanuel FILO, M.D.        | Prof. Jan FRIDRICHOVSKY, M.D. |

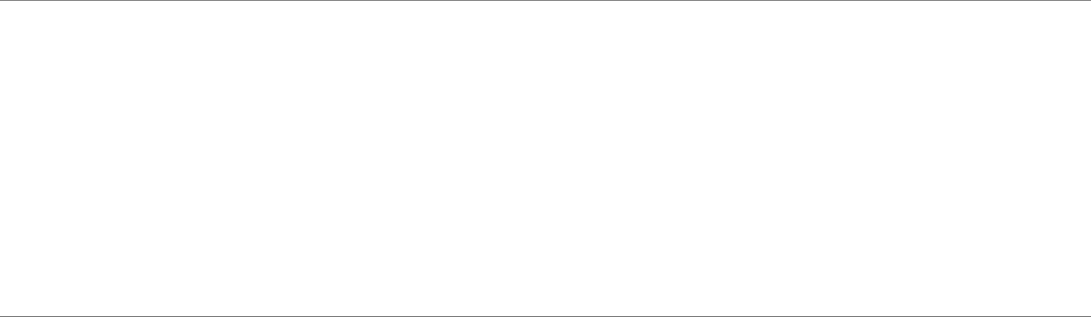
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The Greek-Catholic Church

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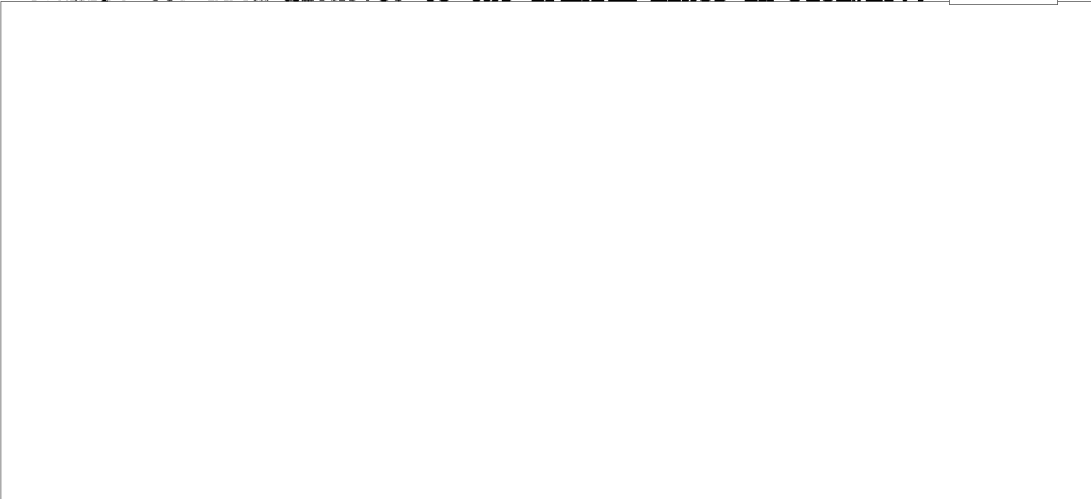
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32.

After the Communists came to power in 1948, they seized the opportunity to abolish the Greek-Catholic Church. On 28 April 1950, a specially hired mob broke into the bishop's palace and urged the bishop to join the Orthodox Church. The bishop refused, whereupon he was seized and imprisoned. On 15 January 1951, in Bratislava, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Leopoldov Prison, and the government simultaneously outlawed the Greek-Catholic Church. Bishop GOJDIC was still in Leopoldov Prison in February 1952. Those priests who were not willing to join the Orthodox Church, including suffragan Bishop HOPKO, were confined in an old castle in the village of Hlohovec /4826N-1748E/ near Leopoldov in the western part of Slovakia. During the spring of 1952, many of the priests were transported from Hlohovec to the uranium mines in Jachymov.

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35. After the establishment of the independent Orthodox Church, Greek-Catholics who belonged to the intelligentsia and held important state positions were dismissed and sent to perform physical work in industry. The Orthodox Church was striving for the complete Russianization of eastern Slovakia, and was thus serving old-style Russian imperialism. The greatest threat to the eastern portion of Slovakia was that the USSR might choose to annex that section, which is something Russia wanted to do even before World War I.

The Evangelical Church

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37. Leading Slovak Communists were recruited from the ranks of the Evangelical intelligentsia, large numbers of whom were cooperating with the Communist regime. Some of these included Vladimir CLEMENTIS, Ladislav NOVOMESKY, Ivan HORVATH, Julius HORVATH, Dr. Daniel OKALI, Dr. Andrej PAVLIK, Michal HORVATH, Ingr. Dobroslav CHROBAK, Jan KOSTRA, Milan LAJCIAR, university professors Dr. Dionyz BLAZKOVIC, Dr. Ivan STANEK, Dr. Jozef CERNACEK, and Dr. Andrej MRAZ, Minister-in-charge of Information Pavel KLOKOC, Dr. Jan PONICAN, Michal POVAZAN, Andrej BAGAR, Dr. Ivan KUSY, Margita FIGULLI, and Zora LESENSKA, chairman of the women's organization, "Zivena". But despite the large numbers of Communists, the overwhelming majority of Evangelical Church members, including the priests, were strongly opposed to the Communist regime. Many were sentenced to long terms in jails and labor camps.

38. The Communist regime did not foresee strong opposition from the Evangelical Church, and therefore did not take the ruthless measures against it that it did in the case of the other churches, most probably because the head of the Evangelical Church was not in another country, such as the Pope in Rome, and was therefore more "controllable".

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40. Other religions than those mentioned, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, were banned in Slovakia.

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