

**ACTA  
ECCLESIASTICA  
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**21**

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**DNEVNO ČASOPISJE  
O DUHOVNIŠKIH PROCESIH  
NA SLOVENSKEM 1945-1953**

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## KAZALO

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Kratice in okrajšave .....                                      | 11 |
| Viri in literatura .....  | 12 |
| UVOD .....  | 15 |
| I. Karakteristika časopisov .....                               | 16 |
| 1. Ljudska pravica .....  | 16 |
| 2. Slovenski poročevalec .....                                  | 16 |
| 3. Vestnik – Večer .....  | 17 |
| II. Problematika poročanja .....                                | 17 |
| III. Vprašljivost sodnih postopkov .....                        | 21 |
| IV. Zgodovinsko ozadje obdobja 1945–1953 .....                  | 23 |
| 1. Med obema vojnama .....                                      | 23 |
| 2. Okupacija .....  | 24 |
| 3. Revolucija .....   | 25 |
| 4. Vloga škofa Rožmana .....                                    | 26 |
| 5. Leto 1945 .....  | 31 |
| 6. Ločitev Cerkve od države .....                               | 36 |
| 7. Procesi .....  | 37 |
| 8. Obdobje 1948–1953 .....                                      | 41 |
| 9. Cirilmetodijsko društvo .....                                | 42 |
| 10. Zaostrovanje in odjuga v odnosih država – Cerkev .....      | 43 |
| PROCES PROTI ŠKOFU ROŽMANU .....                                | 45 |
| Začetek sodne razprave .....                                    | 49 |
| I. Obtožnica .....  | 51 |
| 1. Italijanska okupacijska oblast .....                         | 54 |
| 2. Slovenska zaveza, vaške straže, Straža in domobranstvo ..... | 58 |
| 3. Nemška okupacijska oblast .....                              | 62 |
| 4. Narodni odbor, Jugoslovanska armada .....                    | 64 |
| 5. Nadaljevanje in zaključek obtožnice .....                    | 65 |
| II. Zasliševanja .....  | 68 |
| 1. Zasliševanje Leona Rupnika .....                             | 68 |
| 2. Zasliševanje Ervina Rösenerja .....                          | 72 |
| 3. Zasliševanje Milka Vizjaka .....                             | 73 |
| 4. Zasliševanje Lovra Hacina .....                              | 74 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| III. Izpovedi prič, branje dokumentov . . . . .   | 75  |
| 1. Izpovedi prič . . . . .  | 75  |
| 2. Branje dokumentov o Rožmanu . . . . .  | 77  |
| 3. Branje dokumentov o duhovnikih . . . . .   | 80  |
| 4. Odločba o ugotovitvi zločinov okupatorjev in njihovih pomagačev . . . . .                                    | 84  |
| 5. Priča Stane Mikuž . . . . .  | 89  |
| IV. Zaključni govori, sodba . . . . .   | 92  |
| 1. Zaključni govor vojaškega tožilca . . . . .  | 92  |
| 2. Zagovor Rožmanovega branilca Alojzija Vrtačnika . . . . .  | 93  |
| 3. Sodba . . . . .  | 94  |
| V. Ostali članki o Rožmanu . . . . .  | 96  |
| 1. Članki ob procesu . . . . .  | 96  |
| 2. Proces proti Friedrichu Rainerju in soobtoženim . . . . .  | 99  |
| 3. Ostali članki o Rožmanu . . . . .  | 101 |
| ČLANKI IN PROCESI PROTI DUHOVNIKOM, REDOVNIKOM IN VERNIM LAIKOM . . . . .                                       |     |
| I. Članki in procesi proti škofijskim duhovnikom . . . . .  | 107 |
| 1. Proces proti predstavnikom tiska . . . . .   | 107 |
| 2. Božični proces . . . . .   | 110 |
| 3. Proces v Novem mestu . . . . .   | 119 |
| 4. Proces proti vodstvu denarnega zavoda na Jesenicah . . . . .   | 123 |
| 5. Razprava proti generalnemu vikarju apostolske administrature Prekmurje Ivanu Jeriču in soobtoženim . . . . . | 124 |
| 6. Proces proti Črtomirju Nagodetu in soobtoženim . . . . .   | 128 |
| 7. Lanišče . . . . .  | 130 |
| 8. Razprava proti članom Katoliške akcije . . . . .   | 132 |
| 9. Razprava proti predstojnikom semenišča v Kopru . . . . .   | 133 |
| 10. Članek proti Francu Močniku . . . . .   | 135 |
| 11. Proces proti Stanislavu Leniču in soobtoženim . . . . .   | 137 |
| 12. Proces proti Mirku Bitencu in soobtoženim . . . . .   | 140 |
| 13. Proces v Črnomlju . . . . .   | 146 |
| 14. Proces proti župnikoma Francu Ramšaku in Alojziju Tometu . . . . .  | 150 |
| 15. Proces proti Jožetu Kraglju . . . . .   | 151 |
| 16. Proces proti Francu Veseliču in soobtoženim . . . . .   | 153 |
| 17. Tolminski proces . . . . .  | 154 |
| 18. Šolar-Fabjanov proces . . . . .   | 157 |
| 19. Proces proti Karlu Gnidovcu in soobtoženim . . . . .  | 159 |
| 20. Ostali članki in procesi proti duhovnikom . . . . .   | 160 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| II. Članki in procesi proti redovnicam in redovnikom ter vernim laikom . . . . .  | 187 |
| 1. Cistercijani . . . . .   | 187 |
| 2. Frančiškani . . . . .  | 190 |
| 3. Jezuiti . . . . .  | 192 |
| 4. Kapucini . . . . .   | 199 |
| 5. Minoriti . . . . .   | 200 |
| 6. Salezijanci . . . . .  | 201 |
| 7. Šolske sestre . . . . .  | 202 |
| 8. Trapisti . . . . .   | 204 |
| 9. Usmiljenke . . . . .   | 205 |
| 10. Ostali redovi . . . . .   | 208 |
| 11. Proces proti Narteju Velikonji . . . . .                                      | 209 |
| III. Tuji procesi . . . . .   | 212 |
| 1. Proces proti Alojziju Stepincu . . . . .                                       | 212 |
| 2. Proces proti kardinalu Josephu Mindszentyu . . . . .                           | 221 |
| OSTALI ČLANKI O CERKVI NA SLOVENSKEM . . . . .                                    | 223 |
| I. Dogodki v letih 1945–1953 . . . . .  | 225 |
| 1. Spomenica duhovnikov ljubljanske škofije . . . . .                             | 225 |
| 2. Pastirsko pismo . . . . .  | 227 |
| 3. Škof Anton Vovk . . . . .  | 232 |
| 4. Škof Maksimilijan Držičnik . . . . .   | 238 |
| 5. Duhovniki, redovniki in laiki, ki so bili naklonjeni povojni oblasti . . . . . | 240 |
| 6. Cirilmetodijsko društvo . . . . .  | 244 |
| 7. Bogoslovje . . . . .   | 252 |
| 8. Zakon o pravnem položaju verskih skupnosti . . . . .                           | 256 |
| II. Dnevnik o določenih problemih, povezanih s Cerkvijo . . . . .                 | 260 |
| 1. Ločitev Cerkve od države . . . . .   | 260 |
| 2. Agrarna reforma . . . . .  | 267 |
| 3. Vzgoja in Cerkev . . . . .   | 271 |
| 4. Ostale teme . . . . .  | 274 |
| III. Vatikan, Primorska, Koroška . . . . .  | 277 |
| 1. Vatikan . . . . .  | 277 |
| 2. Primorska . . . . .  | 285 |
| 3. Koroška . . . . .  | 293 |
| SKLEP . . . . .   | 301 |
| Angleški povzetek . . . . .   | 303 |
| IZBOR ČASOPISNIH ČLANKOV . . . . .  | 323 |
| Imensko kazalo . . . . .  | 769 |



# CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations . . . . .   | 11 |
| Sources and Bibliography . . . . .  | 12 |
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .  | 15 |
| I. The characteristics of newspapers . . . . .  | 16 |
| 1. "Ljudska pravica" . . . . .  | 16 |
| 2. "Slovenski poročevalec" . . . . .  | 16 |
| 3. "Vestnik – Večer" . . . . .  | 17 |
| II. The problems of reporting . . . . .   | 17 |
| III. The questionableness of the juridical procedure . . . . .                          | 21 |
| IV. The historical background of the period 1945–1953 . . . . .                         | 23 |
| 1. Between the World Wars . . . . .   | 23 |
| 2. The Occupation . . . . .   | 24 |
| 3. The Revolution . . . . .   | 25 |
| 4. The Role of Bishop Rožman . . . . .  | 26 |
| 5. The Year 1945 . . . . .  | 31 |
| 6. The Separation of Church and State . . . . .   | 36 |
| 7. The Trials . . . . .   | 37 |
| 8. The Period 1948–1953 . . . . .   | 41 |
| 9. The Ciril-Metod Society . . . . .  | 42 |
| 10. The tension and Reconciliation between State and Church . . . . .                   | 43 |
| THE TRIAL AGAINST BISHOP ROŽMAN . . . . .   | 45 |
| The Beginning of the trial . . . . .  | 49 |
| I. The bill of indictment . . . . .   | 51 |
| 1. The Italian occupying government . . . . .   | 54 |
| 2. The Slovene Covenant, anti-Communist militias, "Straža" and the Home Guard . . . . . | 58 |
| 3. The German occupying government . . . . .  | 62 |
| 4. The National Committee, the Yugoslav army . . . . .                                  | 64 |
| 5. The continuation and conclusion of the bill of indictment . . . . .                  | 65 |
| II. The examination of the accused . . . . .  | 68 |
| 1. Leon Rupnik . . . . .  | 68 |
| 2. Erwin Rösener . . . . .  | 72 |
| 3. Milko Vizjak . . . . .   | 73 |
| 4. Lovro Hacin . . . . .  | 74 |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| III. The depositions, the reading of documents . . . . .   | 75  |
| 1. The depositions . . . . .   | 75  |
| 2. The reading of documents about Rožman . . . . .   | 77  |
| 3. The reading of documents about the priests . . . . .  | 80  |
| 4. The ruling concerning the ascertainment of felonies of the occupier<br>and their helpers . . . . .                          | 84  |
| 5. The witness Stane Mikuž . . . . .   | 89  |
| IV. The final speeches, the judgement . . . . .  | 92  |
| 1. The final speech of the military prosecutor . . . . .   | 92  |
| 2. The advocacy of Rožman's defender Alojzij Vrtačnik . . . . .  | 93  |
| 3. The judgement . . . . .   | 94  |
| V. The others articles about Rožman . . . . .  | 96  |
| 1. The articles on the trial . . . . .   | 96  |
| 2. The trial against Friedrich Rainer and the codefendants . . . . .   | 99  |
| 3. Other articles about Rožman . . . . .   | 101 |
| PRESS ARTICLES AND TRIALS AGAINST PRIESTS, MONKS<br>AND BELIEVING LAITY . . . . .  | 103 |
| I. The articles and trials against diocesan priests . . . . .  | 107 |
| 1. The trial against representatives of the press . . . . .  | 107 |
| 2. The "Christmas trial" . . . . .   | 110 |
| 3. The trial in Novo mesto . . . . .   | 119 |
| 4. The trial against the Directors of the Bank in Jesenice . . . . .   | 123 |
| 5. The trial against the vicar general of the Prekmurje Apostolic<br>Administration, Ivan Jerič and the codefendants . . . . . | 124 |
| 6. The trial against Črtomir Nagode and codefendants . . . . .   | 128 |
| 7. Lanišće . . . . .   | 130 |
| 8. The trial against members of Catholic Action . . . . .  | 132 |
| 9. The trial against the superiors of the Koper seminary . . . . .   | 133 |
| 10. The article against Franc Močnik . . . . .   | 135 |
| 11. The trial against Stanislav Lenič and codefendants . . . . .   | 137 |
| 12. The trial against Mirko Bitenc and codefendants . . . . .  | 140 |
| 13. The trial in Črnomelj . . . . .  | 146 |
| 14. The trial against parish pastors Franc Ramšak and Alojzij Tome . . . . .   | 150 |
| 15. The trial against Jože Kragelj . . . . .   | 151 |
| 16. The trial against Francu Veseliču and codefendants . . . . .   | 153 |
| 17. The trial in Tolmin . . . . .  | 154 |
| 18. Šolar-Fabjan's trial . . . . .   | 157 |
| 19. The trial against Karel Gnidovec and codefendants . . . . .  | 159 |
| 20. Other articles and trials against diocesan priests . . . . .   | 160 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| II. The articles and trials against nuns and monks and believing laity . . . . .  | 187 |
| 1. Cistercians . . . . .  | 187 |
| 2. Franciscans . . . . .  | 190 |
| 3. Jesuits . . . . .  | 192 |
| 4. Capuchins . . . . .  | 199 |
| 5. Minorites . . . . .  | 200 |
| 6. Salesians . . . . .  | 201 |
| 7. School Sisters . . . . .   | 202 |
| 8. Trappists . . . . .  | 204 |
| 9. Sisters of Charity . . . . .   | 205 |
| 10. Other Orders . . . . .  | 208 |
| 11. The trial against Narte Velikonja . . . . .                                   | 209 |
| III. Foreign trials . . . . .   | 212 |
| 1. The trial against Alojzij Stepinac . . . . .                                   | 212 |
| 2. The trial against Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty . . . . .                         | 221 |
| OTHER PRESS ARTICLES ABOUT THE CHURCH IN SLOVENIA . . . . .                       | 223 |
| I. Events in the period 1945–1953 . . . . .                                       | 225 |
| 1. The memorandum of priests of the Ljubljana Diocese . . . . .                   | 225 |
| 2. The Pastoral letter . . . . .  | 227 |
| 3. Bishop Anton Vovk . . . . .  | 232 |
| 4. Bishop Maksimilijan Drževnik . . . . .   | 238 |
| 5. Priests, monks and laity who were in favour of the postwar authority . . . . . | 240 |
| 6. The Ciril-Metod Society . . . . .  | 244 |
| 7. The Seminary . . . . .   | 252 |
| 8. The law regarding the juridical status of religious communities . . . . .      | 256 |
| II. Daily newspaper about specific problems connected with the Church . . . . .   | 260 |
| 1. The separation of Church and State . . . . .                                   | 260 |
| 2. Agrarian reform . . . . .  | 267 |
| 3. Education and the Church . . . . .   | 271 |
| 4. Others themes . . . . .  | 274 |
| III. Vatican, Primorska, Koroška . . . . .  | 277 |
| 1. Vatican . . . . .  | 277 |
| 2. Primorska . . . . .  | 285 |
| 3. Koroška . . . . .  | 293 |
| CONCLUSION . . . . .  | 301 |
| Summary . . . . .   | 303 |
| PRESS ARTICLES AND TRIALS AGAINST PRIESTS . . . . .                               | 323 |
| Index of Names . . . . .  | 769 |



## SUMMARY

"Ljudska pravica" (articles reviewed by Marjan Maučec), "Slovenski poročevalec" (articles reviewed by Iztok Mozetič), and "Vestnik", later titled "Večer" (articles reviewed by Branko Kurnjek), were three of the most important Slovene daily newspapers published after World War II. We made a selection of the most significant articles concerning the Church in Slovenia. We reviewed the period from the end of the war in 1945 to the introduction of the Law on Religious Communities on May 22, 1953. Many articles cover the Slovene counterrevolution in general, so we decided to take into consideration only those that dealt with the activities of the Church. Bishops and priests especially felt the pressure of state authorities, and since they were also targeted by the press, we decided to present their cases. The goal of our work was to show what was reported in newspapers and how the press was influenced by the Communist regime. It is necessary to take into account that after the war the media were not independent. We based our analysis on certain critical works and at least attempted a comparison with what was actually reported by newspapers.

### *I. Characteristics of the Newspapers Reviewed*

#### 1. "Ljudska pravica"

"Ljudska pravica" ("The People's Justice") was published from October 5, 1934, to March 6, 1936; from January to February 1941; and from January 15 to April 29, 1959. It was first a weekly, then a daily newspaper. After 1950 it was published as a weekly periodical for a time, but from 1953 on it was again a daily newspaper. In 1941 it was subtitled "Glasilo delavcev in kmetov" ("The Gazette of Labourers and Farmers"). Between World War I and World War II it was edited first by Miha Marinko, then by Tone Tomšič. After the war its chief editors were: B. Osolnik, D. Pirjevec, L. Modic, I. Bratko, D. Bole, V. Vodopivec, and T. Brejc. During the years of 1953 to 1955 the editorship of "Ljudska pravica" co-operated with the editorship of "Borba", a newspaper published in Belgrade. "Ljudska pravica" was printed by the "Delo" printing house in Sadinja vas.

From 1943 to 1945 this newspaper was printed in various partisan printing works. Later it was printed in Ljubljana. In 1959 "Ljudska pravica" merged with "Slovenski poročevalec" to establish a new newspaper titled "Delo" ("Labour"), The Socialist League of Labourers Gazette.



## 2. "Slovenski poročevalec"

"Slovenski poročevalec", The Slovene Liberation Front Gazette, was first published periodically, later as a daily newspaper. The first two issues were cyclostyled between July and October of 1938. They were published by the Communist Party of Slovenia (edited by Tone Tomšič). The newspaper was published (cyclostyled) on liberated territory (location not disclosed) from May 1941 to May 1945. After that it was published in Trieste (on May 8, 9, and 12, 1945) and in Ljubljana (from May 9 to May 11, 1945). The next issue carried the number 17. In 1941 it was subtitled "Informacijski vestnik" ("The Informational Bulletin") of the Liberation Front.

Ciril Kosmač was its editor from May 16, 1945; and Lev Modic from February 16, 1946. Cene Kranjc became chief editor in 1948, Sergej Vošnjak in 1951 (starting with issue number 27). The newspaper was first published by the Liberation Front printing consortium (starting with issue number 84 in 1952); later, from 1953 on it was published by the publishing company "Naš tisk" (established by SZDL, the Socialist Labourers Alliance); and after 1956 by Slovenski poročevalec.

"Slovenski poročevalec" had several supplements: "Organizacijski vestnik" (1945); "Začasna razvrstitev prebivalcev v potrošniške razrede" (1946); "Osnutek ustave LRS" (December 15, 1946); the monthly supplement "Najdihojca" (1952–1959); "Ponedeljska izdaja" (a weekly periodical published from January 7 to August 25, 1952, in a total of 34 issues).

The final issue of "Slovenski poročevalec" was published on April 28, 1959 (99). "Slovenski poročevalec" merged with "Ljudska pravica". The first issue of the new newspaper "Delo" was published on May 1, 1959.

From April 1, 1952 (78), to August 30, 1952 (205), a special issue was published for the northeastern part of Slovenia. It was marked with an "a" besides the number of the issue (e.g. 1.4.1952 (78a)). From June 2, 1953 on two separate issues of "Slovenski poročevalec" were published (as marked on the cover page).

## 3. "Vestnik / Večer"

The first issue of "Vestnik" ("The Bulletin") was published on May 24, 1945. It was originally titled "Vestnik: izdaja okrožni odbor Osvobodilne fronte v Mariboru." The second issue (on May 25, 1945) was titled "Vestnik mariborskega okrožja". On January 3, 1947, it was called "Vestnik: glasilo mestnega odbora OF"; a year later, from January 3, 1949, "Vestnik: glasilo osvobodilne fronte mesta Maribor"; from August 15, 1949, "Vestnik: glasilo osvobodilne fronte za mariborsko oblast"; and from September 10, 1952, just "Večer" (The Evening).

The name of its chief editor was first printed on September 1, 1945. He was Franček Majcen. The name of the next chief editor, Franc Šrimpf, was first printed on March 24, 1948. On December 7, 1949, the title of chief editor was passed on to Bojan Šinko; on September 2, 1950, to Drago Vresnik; on October 9, 1951, to Rado



Zakonjšek; on August 28, 1952, back to Drago Vresnik; and on January 2 to 3, 1953, to Milan Filipič.

## ***II. The Dilemma of Unbiased Reportage***

There were more than 30 court ordered bans of printed materials between the year 1945 and 1990. Officially censure of the press did not exist, but the Communist Party (Agitprop) actually had total control over the press from 1945 to 1952.

Daily newspapers were totally in the service of the new regime. Journalists had to write according to government guidelines. Newspaper articles were reviewed and censored. From today's viewpoint it is evident that newspaper reports were biased and that the press was definitely a tool of the Communist regime. Newspapers were a means of propaganda. It was often impossible to determine what the truth was.

The graphic design and contents of newspaper titles and subtitles could easily lead a superficial reader to the wrong conclusions and help them to form negative opinions of the accused. An additional psychological factor were the boldly printed words or sentences running throughout the text of articles. The phrase "war criminals and traitors" was often repeated alongside other derogatory terms that encouraged revulsion and hatred. Certain facts and events were constantly repeated so that they could be memorized by readers.

The articles were written as propaganda to influence people in a manner that was requested by the governing political elite: they encouraged some actions (in these cases to diminish the autonomy of the Church) but condemned others that were considered as politically incorrect (like the Church's ties to the Vatican and its opposition to the government). These daily newspapers libeled political opponents of the regime and tried to portray them as enemies of the state and the people, and verbally humiliated them. On the other side, they presented everything that was sanctioned by the political elite as the only truth that could withstand any criticism, which implied that the government was faultless.

Characteristically the accused were judged by and in the media. Certain people were accused and "found guilty" by the press, even before the legal proceedings were over. Journalists reporting directly from the court house typically called anyone on trial "a war criminal and a traitor". People were accused of treason and other war crimes. Certain documents and sworn statements were produced as proof. There is a noticeable correlation between the course of the trial and the style of reportage.

Regretably some journalists in Slovenia still don't recognize the basic principles of reportage that have been accepted in the democratic world. Opponents (including the Church) are humiliated without hesitation. Some editors print insulting letters from readers. All this has no consequences because the legal system does not always function as it should. Certain articles are still written on government request. Unwanted subjects are ignored or mentioned only in passing. For example: the newspaper "Delo" didn't cover the international historical symposium dedicated to events



that took place in 1945 which was held in Cankarjev dom in 1995. It was a big step for Slovene historiography. Slovenia does not yet effectively supervise the work of journalists. Reporters often do not respect even the most basic rules of reportage; for example, the necessity to listen to all relevant sides and that relevant facts shouldn't be omitted or downplayed.

The role of the media in any modern society is to observe and report about political and social events without bias. It could be said that the media are the fourth branch of the government, because they do have a certain influence and an overview of the main governmental functions (legislative, judicial, and executive). The media create a flow of information. They also have a certain influence on voters.

The European ethical code for journalists is based on the BBC code. The media (newspapers, radio, and television) are obliged to meticulously research and report the truth. In other words: the media must take into account facts and opinions volunteered by all parties, they must all have a chance to voice their own thoughts on a certain matter; they must take into account all documents and should not intentionally mislead the public. In Germany ("Presserat") and elsewhere, they have ethical tribunals comprised of representatives of the press, publishers, the Church, and other sociopolitical institutions. Violations of the ethical code can be reported to these tribunals. Even though such an institution is not a court of justice in the true sense, it does have considerable influence. Journalists are afraid of them. Each accusation is looked into and all parties involved get a chance to explain themselves.

Reality portrayed by the media is as much a part of a wider social reality as a part of an individual reporter's subjective reality. This media reality is structured of gathered information, selected events and facts, and a certain style of reporting.

To be informed is one of the basic human rights. Information is not merchandise. Free access to information should be available to everybody. In every democratic system there is an unhindered flow of information that enables open communication and a decision-making process that is in the interest of the general public. A journalist is obliged to report fairly and truthfully. Citizens have a right to be informed and to be informed from various sources. The media in any country can be independent only if they are guided by their own ethics centered on the individual.

A journalist's report is authentic when it is based on his free decision to report responsibly. Only so can he benefit the individual in question and society in general. A journalist's autonomy is his globally recognized right. A journalist is thus a moral authority onto himself, since no one can dictate his thoughts and opinions. There are also institutions that monitor the work of journalists so that readers can be protected from manipulation.

The basis for reportage is the respect for human integrity. This means that the media should address an individual as a person and that they should not obstruct his contact with others. A journalist's ethical responsibility towards an individual is: truthfulness and factualism. The source of information must be disclosed; the author of the text should be present at the place of the event; the evidence cited should be made public; information should be checked. A journalist's report should be such that



it is understood by the reader. Information shouldn't be distorted or falsified, and it is vital that a distinction between reportage and commentary, and between reportage and propaganda be made; errors in writing should be corrected; conflicts of certain interests should be avoided (bribery); incitement to violence should be prohibited.

In addition to the above, the basic principles of information gathering should be mentioned. Information should be collected by fair means, with respect for copyright, authorization, and an individual's right to withhold private information. Unverified accusations, attacks, lies, and humiliating slander should be prohibited. Also the rights to privacy should be observed.

### ***III. Dubious Trials***

Trials were accompanied by well-planned media propaganda that brought attention to court proceedings on a daily basis. Photographs of war victims and articles about war crimes were published. Many articles indirectly or quite openly instigated revenge. In 1945 the Committee for Uncovering the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators began collecting information and documents.

Especially between the years of 1945 and 1947, the government collected burdening evidence against individuals based on their activity during the war and their connections with emigration. These files contained a considerable amount of constructed or false material, including intimate information. Many who were imprisoned broke down mentally and physically. The material collected was used at various trials. Not everything was used in court; some of it was used to coerce cooperation with the UDV (State Security Agency) or at least to force membership in the Liberation Front (after September 20, 1949, membership in the Ciril-Metod Society). Most people who were forced to sign these documents in fact caused no harm to anyone. A few co-operated out of their own belief, but most were forced to do so by the UDV. Anyone who didn't volunteer enough information was sure to feel its pressure. In Primorska the UDV took pains to isolate the local clergy from the influence of their colleagues in Ljubljana and Maribor. By the end of 1947 the UDV ensured the co-operation of 66 priests.

The basic legal principles for any trial are:

1. Fair sentencing for the accused should they be found guilty (based on evidence) of the charges brought against them. Indictments were often far too general, especially in collective trials. In many such cases those that were in fact guilty of minor misdemeanours were sentenced as severely as those guilty of more serious crimes. The accused were leaders of certain institutions and representatives of certain ideologies, which in fact meant that these institutions and ideologies themselves were put to trial (in Rožman's case the Catholic Church in Slovenia as a whole was accused).



All this helped to consolidate the new government. The term “national traitor” does not exist in legal language.

2. The court must be independent. The legal system in Yugoslavia at that time was a tool of politics. The people attending court hearings were picked by the UDV. Tickets were distributed through major cities so that the public got an illusion of an unbiased legal process.
3. The court must review all relevant and available evidence. The court did not take into account all the evidence, especially evidence given by witnesses of the defence (in bishop Rožman's case the testimony given by Tone Tomšič's mother was disregarded). It was typical for trials up to 1953, that defence lawyers were unable to do their jobs, because they were themselves persecuted as enemies of the state.
4. In regard to sentencing, the principle *In dubio pro reo* should be applied (when in doubt the accused should be acquitted). The court should have pronounced a verdict in favour of the accused if the evidence was dubious, but this never happened during these trials.

All those found guilty as charged received sentences based on new legislation. They were sentenced in retrospect: laws that didn't exist at the time of their criminal actions were applied. Verdicts were pronounced and carried out “*in the name of the people*”, an imaginary term, since these trial were in the interest of only a select few.

## IV. Historical Background (1945-1953)

### 1. The Period Between World War I and World War II

After the end of World War I the majority of Slovene territory (Lower Styria, Mežiška dolina, Dravograd, Prekmurje and the greater part of Kranjska) became a part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (established on December 1, 1918). Most Slovenes thus appertained to the Ljubljana and Maribor (Lavantine) dioceses. Slovenes in Carinthia (annexed to Austria by plebiscite on October 10, 1920) came under the Celovec diocese. As a result of the Rapallo Treaty (on November 12, 1920) Primorska (Goriška, Trst, and Istra), part of Notranjska (district of Postojna and district of Idrija), Trbiž, Kanalska dolina, and Bela peč were ceded to Italy. There, Slovenes belonged to several dioceses: Gorica, Trst and Koper, Reka, and Videm. Porabje was ceded to Hungary after the Trianon Treaty, and the Slovene population came under the Szombathely diocese.

Before the war about 1,182,000 Catholics lived in Slovenia (in the Ljubljana and Maribor dioceses). There were 1271 priests, 987 of them diocesan, and 284 monastic.



There were 198 theologians, 41 male monasteries and 111 female monasteries. The concordat between Yugoslavia and the Apostolic See planned in 1935, which was to regulate relations between the state and the Catholic Church, was opposed by the Orthodox Church. Gregorij Rožman, the bishop of Ljubljana, organized the 2 Yugoslav Eucharistic Congress in 1935; and the 4 International Congress "Christ the King" in 1939. In 1940 he assembled an episcopal synod in Ljubljana and published "Zakonik ljubljanske škofije" (The Code of the Ljubljana Diocese) and "Pastoralne inštrukcije" (Pastoral Instructions). In Maribor, bishop Andrej Karlin suggested the beatification of bishop Slomšek and celebrated the 700 anniversary of the Maribor diocese. His successor, Ivan Jožef Tomažič, built a new theological seminary and gave the initiative for the next eucharistic congress in Maribor in 1934.

Slovenes under Italian rule soon felt the pressure of the new Fascist regime. Slovene monks had to turn over their monasteries to Italian monks. Italian bishops at first supported the Slovene population, but the growing political pressure and intimidation made them accept the persecution of Slovenes as an historical necessity. In Carinthia German priests were sent to work in Slovene parishes. On March 11 and 12, 1938, Germany annexed Austria, which meant that the use of the Slovene language in Slovene churches was prohibited.

## 2. The Occupation

The wartime history of Slovenia is rather complicated. On one hand there was the resistance movement (not only on the part of Communists), which was without doubt legitimate; on the other hand there was the revolution and counterrevolution, also both legitimate. For an unbiased understanding of our own history both sides should be considered.

On April 6, 1941, the German Army attacked Yugoslavia. The Germans abolished all Slovene cultural organizations and prohibited the use of the Slovene language in Spodnja Štajerska (Lower Styria), Gorenjska, and Zasavje. The same was done by the Hungarians in Prekmurje. By the end of 1941, the Germans had deported 366 diocesan and monastic priests. Some of them fled, mostly to the Ljubljana Province. In Štajerska only 121 of the prewar 608 priests remained. In Gorenjska and Zasavje 205 out of 260 priests were deported, 13 priests were shot, 4 died in Dachau, and 8 in Jasenovac. The clergy as well as Ivan Tomažič, the bishop of Maribor, were powerless. Help was offered by clergymen from the Graz and Celovec dioceses. The Carinthian deaneries of Mežiška dolina, Dravograd, and Gorenjska were managed by bishop Rohrachner from Celovec. Zasavje was managed by Alojz Kirch, a German from Kočevje, who was appointed by the bishop of Ljubljana.

In the Ljubljana Province the clerics were able to help the population more than elsewhere because Fascism was more tolerant of the Church than Nazism. Especially bishop Rožman often interceded on behalf of many people. Bela Krajina, the so-called "liberated territory", was managed by Andrej Ilc, a vicar appointed by the bishop of Ljubljana. The rest of Dolenjska, which was cut off from Ljubljana, was managed by



Karel Čerin. Most of the clerics, including bishop Rožman, refused to consort with the Liberation Front because of the dominant role of the Communist Party. The Communist Party's program rejected religion.

After the Hungarian occupation Prekmurje was managed by dean Ivan Jerič from Lendava. He held this function until June 1942. The next manager was the bishop of Szombathely. From April 1945 to August 1946, Prekmurje was again managed by Jerič, and then it came under the government of the Lavantine bishop.

Briefly we have to say something about the collaboration of the clergy with the occupying forces. There are four different forms of collaboration.

Neutral collaboration means: life must go on. Some people on occupied territory indirectly or directly, willingly and in their own interests collaborated with the occupying forces but did not accept their political ideology. Thus they escaped chaos and survived the war.

Unconditional collaboration means that the people who collaborated with the occupying forces also accepted and were in total agreement with the occupiers' ideology. Conditional collaboration is similar, only that the people who worked with the occupying forces accepted their ideology only in part.

Tactical collaboration means that people collaborated with the occupying forces even though they didn't agree or accept the occupiers' ideology. Their collaboration was only a front to shield their resistance. In such a way they strived for liberation while trying to preserve peace and order.

### 3. The Revolution

The Anti-imperialist Front was established soon after the occupation (on April 26, 1941). Later, after the German attack on the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941) it was renamed the Liberation Front of Slovenia (OF). On September 16 the Liberation Front declared that it was joining ranks with the Yugoslav Liberation Front. At the same time, it monopolized the liberation movement. Soon several people were executed, mostly as a result of prewar ideological conflicts, social differences, and above all clericalism. The revolution and political executions were a reaction to prewar injustices. It was constantly stressed that the Liberation Front and the Communist Party were not against the Church, that the freedom of religious determination was guaranteed, and that the partisans were free to attend mass and other religious events, but on the other hand, 32 priests were killed on Slovene territory between 1942 and 1944.

On May 1, 1942, the Liberation Front stated that freedom of religious determination was guaranteed. For tactical reasons it wasn't said that after the war the Church would be separated from the state. Many Catholics were mobilized into the Liberation Front under the influence of a group of Catholic Socialists headed by the poet Edward Kocbek. Another reason for this was the forced mobilization of Slovenes into the



German Army, as well as the occupiers' terrorism, especially in Štajerska and Primorska. On March 1, 1943, Catholic Socialists signed the Dolomiti Declaration, which determined that the various groups of the liberation movement were subordinated to the Communist Party. Because of the terror caused by Communist leaders within the Liberation Front many were revolted. Any revolution is an act of violence by definition alone. Communist violence led to anti-Communist militias, first organized in 1942 in Sv. Jošt pri Vrhniki.

In 1944 the Communist Party dominated the whole resistance movement. This revolution directed from "above" was actually a well-planned overtaking of power similar to the one in the Soviet Union. The Communist Party methodically and gradually took over all political and other institutions. This they achieved by placing their own people in key positions or by abolishing and establishing institutions as required by daily politics. Furthermore the Party gained control over the public and private lives of people by intimidation. The most effective resource of the revolution was its political militia (and also the army), which acted against all opposition. It used propaganda and political education (stressing egalitarianism and centralizing the decision-making process) in the army and in meetings within the liberation movement itself.

Our revolution manifested itself in two phases: a democratic bourgeois revolution with a Liberation Front coalition; and a proletariat revolution when the Liberation Front became a political organization of the masses and a decision-making tool for the Communist Party. The Communist Party of Slovenia went through these times quite unruffled, since it had already successfully purged its membership before the war, as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

In the spring of 1942 the Slovene Covenant was established as a result of negotiations among Slovene bourgeois parties. These negotiations started in the autumn of 1941. This action was an illegal protest with an agenda to form a union of bourgeois parties. This union rejected traitors and expelled anyone who could not uphold the interests of the nation above party interests. This was in opposition to the Liberation Front, though some plans were made to try to negotiate with them, too. The Slovene Covenant recognized the armed forces of Draža Mihailović as the only legitimate army and supported Karl Novak as his deputy.

#### **4. Bishop Rožman's Role**

Rožman rebuffed the occupiers but maintained minimal contact with them. He also did not condemn them publicly. In this way he hoped to help the oppressed nation. It is not known that he had ever used his contacts with the occupiers against Communists or anyone else.

He requested an audience with Emilio Grazioli, the High Commissioner of the Ljubljana Province, nine days after the occupation of Ljubljana. He did this under pressure from several priests, who feared that the Italians might understand their



silence as a sign of hostility. This would have been most harmful to him and his Church. Thus, on April 20, 1941, bishop Rožman, Ignacij Nadrah, the vicar general, and dean Dr. France Kimovec visited Grazioli, who in return visited Rožman the very next day. Rožman was certain that he had preserved the existing order of things which was in any case better than the lawless anarchy that was imminent. His meeting with Grazioli was of a cordial nature. A report about their meeting was written by Grazioli and published by the press commissariat, as well as by two newspapers, "Slovenec" and "Jutro", but bishop Rožman wasn't able to review the text before it went into print.

On May 3, 1941, Rožman sent Mussolini a note, saying that religious freedom and the free use of the Slovene language were being respected in the Ljubljana Province but that the same was requested in other Slovene territories under Italian rule. In this way, he had indirectly protested against the actions of the Nazis, who did not respect the above-mentioned freedoms in other parts of his diocese. Grazioli changed Rožman's statement because he was afraid to send it to Rome. His revision of the statement was printed in "Slovenec" and "Jutro".

The Italians took pains to make friends with bishop Rožman. At Mussolini's request Rožman was given a knightly decoration by the Italian king. Rožman accepted it because he had no wish to antagonize relationships with the Italian government. His attendance at social events organized by the Italians was also unavoidable.

In September 1942 a meeting of Slovene bourgeois parties was held in Rožman's presence, because the Italians had threatened to evacuate the Ljubljana Province. The bishop was asked to provide a room for the meeting in his diocesan palace and to chair the meeting so that he could take full responsibility for their action. Party representatives were convinced that the Italians would not dare to take action against the bishop should they by chance find out about the meeting. Twenty people attended the meeting and talked about what was to be done.

In a document dated September 26, 1942, written and delivered by Rožman himself, there were twenty chapters that expressed their wishes for a better legal order, for the restoration of prewar legislation, for the protection of property, and for personal, cultural, religious, and ethical freedom. They demanded the release of illegally detained prisoners (in prisons and internment camps), the reinstatement of public peace and order, adequate food supplies, a revival of business and transport, jobs and wages, a reinforced social service, support for families of prisoners of war, functional local cultural and social institutions, a raise in retirement allowances, a functional educational system, autonomy for local communities, and payment of war reparations. The High Commissioner was furious when he received this document.

Rožman helped anyone, if he could, without exception. Because of his interventions he went to Rome three times during the occupation. He interceded on behalf of priests in the German part of his diocese and in the Maribor diocese, he interceded on behalf of Slovene refugees, internees, prisoners, hostages, and even Croatian Jews.



When the first anti-Communist militias were formed in the summer of 1942, Rožman had nothing to do with them. No meeting concerning their organization was ever held in the diocesan office. These militias at first did not have an officially consigned pastorate, they were in the care of local priests. Soldiers asked their pastors to warn them against atrocities. Bishop Rožman and the curate general Dr. Ignacij Lenček tried to see to it that only good priests got such jobs, but some priests went beyond the bishop's instructions. The bishop could not be blamed for their transgressions; in fact he tried to correct their mistakes. During the summer of 1943 pastoral care in the MVAC was organized as it should have been. The Italians paid for 12 of the 16 chaplains employed.

After the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943, German forces took over the Ljubljana Province. They subordinated the anti-Communist militias and organized the Slovene Home Guard. The latter was formed for the same reason as the anti-Communist militias: for protection against Liberation Front violence and because of heavy losses in the militia ranks in Grčarice and Turjak. The Home Guard was subordinate to a high SS and police leader, general Erwin Rösener. The Home Guard was an autonomous organization for only a few days after it was assembled and in its final days (in both instances it was headed by Leon Rupnik). The Home Guard was never incorporated into the police force. Its Slovene leader was Franc Krener, and the commander of the organizational headquarters was Ernest Peterlin. The leadership of the Home Guard never meant to serve the Germans, rather they expected to have them expelled with the help of Allied forces when the moment came. They fought against Communism. Bishop Rožman himself was not involved with the organization of the Home Guard.

The Germans insisted that the Home Guard take an oath of allegiance. The Home Guard officers complied only after a consultation with Draža Mihailović, who gave his permission under the provision that the Home Guard would go underground and fight the occupying forces as soon as the Allies arrived. Rösener sent his version of the oath, which was not in accord with international law. Most of the Home Guard members rebuffed the oath but agreed to a text that was similar to Rösener's version minus the oath of subordination to Hitler. In addition the Home Guard formed its own statute. Rösener threatened to disband the Home Guard should they refuse to take the oath. Asked by Home Guard officers and soldiers, Bishop Rožman held mass just before they took the oath on April 22, 1944. No German soldiers were present. Rožman held this service because the members of the Home Guard were from his own diocese and because they had no chaplains of their own. He also reviewed the text of the oath, but did not sanction it officially. He was furthermore convinced that this oath was not legitimate because the officers of the Home Guard were still bound by their oath to King Peter. Bishop Rožman was actually in a great dilemma: he did not want the Germans to disband the Home Guard, but he also could not condone collaboration with the occupiers. He had no wish to draw attention to himself but it happened nevertheless. Western Allies reacted negatively to his role regarding the oath. At the end of the war, the Home Guard retreated to Carinthia together with the German



Army. They were sent back and most of them were executed and buried in mass graves in Kočevski Rog, Teharje and elsewhere.

The Liberation Front approached bishop Rožman at least four times to get him to join their side but at the same time it criticized him. Rožman knew about the Communist Party's influence on the Liberation Front and refused co-operation.

Some bourgeois politicians, representatives of SLS and JNS, tried to form a Slovene Army and establish a common base for national interests. First a common statement was written and delivered to bishop Rožman at the end of November or at the beginning of December 1944 by Mirko Bitenc. Later they formulated an additional statement with the consent of party representatives who signed it with pseudonyms. On May 3, 1945 a Slovene Parliament – Narodni odbor (National Committee) – was assembled in Sokolski dom in Tabor. They advocated a Free United Slovenia within the federal Yugoslavia. A temporary government was established. Peace and order was to be enforced by a Slovene National Army which would unite the forces of the Slovene Home Guard and other military groups faithful to the king and the Slovene nation. Rožman was present at these events, but he doubted that their plans would be successful.

On April 28, 1945 the National Committee asked bishop Rožman if they could hold a meeting in his diocesan office. The Committee met with Rupnik to talk about the takeover of governmental power. Rožman was present as a witness. With short observations or questions he tried to steer the negotiations back on track when it was necessary.

On November 20, 1944, and on May 3, 1945, Rožman tried to orchestrate the occupation of the Slovene territory by the Allies, because he wished to prevent the Communists from seizing power. In November 1944 he secretly sent a letter to Krek begging him to pass it on to Pope Pius XII. The letter was about the Communist regime. He begged the pope to persuade the Allied forces to occupy Slovenia.

Rožman also brought attention to crimes perpetrated by the Yugoslav Army, but it has not been established whether he had actually encouraged Slovenes to leave the country. Because of this the Yugoslav government demanded that the British hand him over. The government accused Rožman of false propaganda against its army. Rožman at first had not intended to leave Slovenia, but he was, as documents show, lured to Celovec. He traveled to Celovec by car with the priest Ferdinand Babnik, his sister, and dean Dr. Janez Kraljič. He had only packed some underwear because he had expected to be back soon.

In the trial against Rupnik in 1946 Rožman was also one of the accused. Of course, these events were also covered by the Slovene press. A book about this trial was published. The first part of the book is dedicated to showing how the press reported these events.



## 5. 1945

The term "liberation" could be used to describe the end of German occupation in 1945, but it is less appropriate for describing the restoration of democracy and political freedom after the war. The year 1945 marked the final downfall of Nazism. Thus Slovenia, too, was freed of their oppression. All functions in the government were assumed by the Liberation Front and the Communist Party. If we are to speak of freedom, certain conditions must be met: truly free and secret elections, the separation of legislative, judicial, and executive functions of the state, freedom of speech and religious belief, and a multi-party political system. It can be said that the Nazi regime was followed by a Communist regime that also did not adhere to the above-mentioned principles of democracy. For most of the population freedom did not come in 1945.

After the end of the war 275 members of the clergy left Slovenia. 185 of them left the Ljubljana diocese (among them bishop Rožman, 3 deans, 4 university professors, 10 catechists, and 66 members of monastic orders). Nine of them returned (one died). Twenty four priests from the Lavantian diocese also fled, along with 16 novices and 46 theologians. The Committee for Uncovering the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators declared 47 priests to be war criminals. Between May 1945 and January 1947, 107 priests were imprisoned. The new government saw the Church as the backbone of the opposition, because it was the only organization not connected to the Communist Party and the Liberation Front.

On February 19, 1944, the Slovene National Liberation Council (SNOS) established a Religious Commission in Črnomlje, on liberated territory. Its goal was to guarantee religious freedom and to address issues between the Slovene National Government and the Church. Members of the commission were not named until a meeting of the SNOS on September 16, 1944. Lojze Ude was nominated president of the commission. The other six members were: Dr. Stanko Cajnkar, Dr. Metod Mikuž, Jože Lampret, and Avgust Černetič (all four of them were priests); Jože Jurančič (replaced by Dr. Cene Logar after just two days) and Viktor Smolej (both laymen).

According to its statute the commission could interfere with internal affairs of the Church. After the overturn of the government, leaders of certain religious institutions were replaced, but their subordinates did not obey them. The commission anticipated some opposition to the new system from religious circles at home and abroad, therefore they reported early on that after the war many clerics would have to defend themselves before the court. The commission opened files for all priests, monks and theologians. In addition to the UDV (State Security Agency) this commission was the main tool of repression used against the Catholic Church, but it did urge the government to start with the renovation of churches and sacral objects.

On July 11, 1945, Boris Kidrič, the president of the Slovene National Government, and Zoran Polič, minister of internal affairs, held a meeting with representatives of the Ljubljana diocese. These representatives were: Anton Vovk, vicar general; Dr.



Franc Kimovec, the dean of the diocese; Dr. Andrej Snoj, dean of the Theological Faculty; Josip Šimenc, head of the Seminary in Ljubljana; parish priest Dr. Janko Arnejc; chaplain Stanko Perčič; Dr. Pavel Simončič, president of the Society of Catechists; provincial delegate Teodor Tavčar; superior Ludovik Lederhas; Stanko Dostala; inspector Ivan Špan; and provincial Lovro Sedej.

Anton Vovk read a memorandum to publicly declare that the clerics of the Ljubljana diocese were loyal to the governments in Ljubljana and Belgrade. They expressed their happiness that Slovenia had been liberated and that all Slovenes would be united within one national state. They supported the idea that it was necessary to educate people to be industrious and to help rebuild the nation. They agreed that it was necessary to defend victims of the war and the less fortunate. They condemned traitors and expressed regret for the mistakes made by some clerics and Catholics during the occupation. They also condemned violence in general. The memorandum further stated that the clerics were prepared to help the nation overcome feelings of hate and bitterness. They were also confident that the new government would allow free access to religious education, religious publications, and church weddings. They also hoped the Church would be allowed to keep its property and to use it for its own activities. The clerics expressed regret that many people fled after the war because of feeling threatened, and hoped that they would be allowed to return.

Boris Kidrič, the president of the Slovene National Government, replied that the memorandum written by the clergy should be carried out in practice, and that the government would support them.

The second important public statement made by the clerics in 1945 was the Pastoral Epistle of the Catholic Bishops of Yugoslavia. This letter severely criticized the new government for its adversity to the Church. The bishops of Yugoslavia held a conference in Zagreb from September 17 to September 22, 1945. They agreed that the letter should be read publicly in all Catholic churches throughout the country on September 30, 1945. The Pastoral Epistle was also signed by bishop Tomažič, Anton Vovk, and Jerič, vicar general of Prekmurje. The bishops expressed their gratitude that the war had finally ended, even though it had left many scars. This war was terrible because people were terrorized by the occupiers and had to endure the hatred of internal strife as well. Even though the federal government promised to restore religious freedom and to respect private property, events took a different turn. The epistle also stressed that the final decisions about relations between the state and the Church as well as matters of religious life would be made by the Apostolic See.

The work of priests was obstructed one way or another. Many Catholic printing works were shut down. Permission to print religious materials was revoked. Most educational institutions for children were also shut down and Sunday mass was not allowed. The agrarian reform also hurt the Church.

The bishops demanded freedom of the religious press. They wanted to be able to freely organize Catholic schools, to teach religion in primary and secondary schools, and to carry on with their humanitarian work. They also expected all the property that was nationalized to be returned to the Church.



After the letter was publicized, the Church found itself in an even more difficult situation. The government paid less and less regard to the demands of the Church. It was the beginning of an era of conflict between the state and the Church.

In August 1945 several representatives of the press (several of them were priests) were sentenced before the Tribunal of Slovene National Honour in Ljubljana.

The most notorious trial in 1945 was the so-called Christmas trial which took place from December 19 to December 23, 1945. Amongst others, five priests were sentenced: Alfonz Klemenčič from Metlika, Dr. Peter Križaj (a Home Guard curate), Franc Cerkovnik (the parish priest of Šentjernej), Jože Šavara (head of the Apprentice's Hall in Ljubljana), and the priest Henrik Goričan.

These clerics were accused of being among the organizers of the Slovene, Sokol, or National Legions, which were united with the Yugoslav Army under the command of Draža Mihailović. They were accused of destroying the unity of the Slovene nation with false propaganda and of sending their followers into the White Guard, among the Chetniks, and finally into the Home Guard. They were accused of collaborating with the occupiers' secret service, their police, and the Gestapo. They were supposedly responsible for denouncing and executing Liberation Front activists.

As an example of how these hearing were carried out, we will mention the testimony of Martin Žekar, a Home Guard officer, who was among the accused. He explained what the hearing of Križaj looked like. When Križaj was questioned people in the court room started to shout "Križaj to the Cross, crucify Križaj"! He tried to defend himself but got no further than to say: "Please, let it be noted ..." (he wanted his testimony to be written down by the court clerk), before he was interrupted. People continued to shout, whistle, and stamp the floor with their feet. Mayor Jernej Stante, the public prosecutor, tried to calm them, saying that they should consider the fact that foreign representatives were present and that their actions would tarnish the reputation of the court. He threatened to empty the court room and for a time this calmed them down.

Križaj and Cerkovnik were both sentenced to death. The sentence was actually carried out in March 1946.

The campaign against clerics and bishop Rožman began immediately after the war in the press – on the radio, on stages, and at political meetings, immediately after the war. Employees of the government administration were intimidated to such an extent that they wouldn't greet priests in the street, for which they would apologize to them in secret. Sermons were closely monitored. Many parish and church buildings (the diocesan palace and the Baraga Seminary) were confiscated. A financial fund in the amount of 1,500,000 lira was also confiscated. Private schools were abolished, as well as youth hostels, nursery schools, and orphanages. Religious education was slowly pushed out, and theologians were harassed. Humanitarian work was also interrupted. Nuns had to leave their posts in hospitals and old peoples' homes.

With the Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization in Slovenia (December 17, 1945) the Church lost ownership of its lands, monasteries, and other institutions along



with all the inventory, and without compensation. Establishments of historical significance were allowed to keep up to 30 ha of agricultural land, and up to 30 ha of forested land. The government did not account for the fact that monasteries also had many humanitarian responsibilities. Retired priests, monks, and nuns lost their allowances. The government persecuted clerics in many ways so that their property could be confiscated. Vovk protested against the agrarian reforms. Tito accused the bishops of trying to dodge the provisions of the Agrarian Reform by establishing new parishes.

In 1945 only a few quite isolated clerics cooperated with the Liberation Front. Bishop Tomažič prevented a meeting of clergymen from the Lavantian dioceses organized by referee Franc Šmon. On September 27, 1945, clergymen from eastern Primorska met in Ajdovščina, where they agreed to inform the government of their wish that Julijska Krajina, Trieste, Gorica, and Istra would be annexed to the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

From the end of the war to January 1946, the Slovene Church was without a representative from the Vatican. In January 1946 Joseph Patrick Hurley, an American archbishop, was nominated as the Vatican's representative in Slovenia. At the time of his departure, he submitted a report on the situation in the Catholic dioceses. The Ljubljana diocese prepared a report in Latin. Part of this report was discovered by the UDV, and several clergymen were interrogated.

## 6. The Separation of State and Church

Several events were connected with the process of separating the Church from the state. A state registry office was established. Thus the Church registry became a private matter. The Church's registry books dating back to 1850 were seized. Priests had to seek permission from state authorities to reside and work in certain parishes. All religious organizations had to be registered, but in most cases permission to work was not granted. Nuns who held state jobs weren't permitted to wear their monastic habits. Many of them went to Serbia, where there were no such laws. On March 8, 1948, they were forced to leave their posts in hospitals and other institutions. Priests were drafted into the army. The religious press was left to private initiative. Priests were taxed the same way as tradesmen. Permission had to be acquired for any money they collected, even charity gifts. The state pressured the clergy through taxes.

During supply rationing in 1946 many priests were left out. Between 1947 and 1951 many clergymen didn't receive food stamps. After February 1947, when a law on the compulsory delivery of agricultural goods came into effect, many vicars had to buy surplus goods at higher prices to be able to meet the required quota. As a result of all this, clergymen came to the conclusion that land ownership was just a financial burden. On August 27, 1946, a letter explaining this situation was issued within the Church. This letter wasn't read at mass, but the clerics were instructed to inform the parishioners in an appropriate manner. The contents of this letter was similar to a



pastoral epistle. The separation of state and Church was supported by clergymen who were active in the Liberation Front.

## 7. The Trials

Between 1946 and 1953 more clergymen were brought to trial based on similar charges to those used in 1945.

In addition to the trial in 1946, after which bishop Rožman was sentenced, other trials were covered by the press: the trial in Novo mesto (against Franc Fortuna, Leopold Klančar, Anton Kovačič, and Franc Pahulje), the trial against the managers of the Financial Institute in Jesenice, and the trial against Ivan Jerič, the vicar general of the Apostolic office in Prekmurje.

In 1947 attention shifted towards the court hearings of Catholic Action members and their leader Dr. Anton Strle; the leadership of the seminary in Koper; priests Stanislav Lenič, Josip Šimenc, and Matija Čontala. During that year Franc Močnik was deported to Italy twice. He was an apostolate administrator for the Gorica diocese, which came under the jurisdiction of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia after Primorska was annexed. In 1948 there was a major trial against Mirko Bitenc. Marjan Dokler and Vinko Zor, both priests, were also convicted. The most publicized trials in 1949 were those against Vilijem Savelli, Alfonz Jarc, Franc Ramšak, Alojzij Tome, and Jožko Kragelj.

Legal proceedings against Franc Veselič and Franc Tovornik in the second half of 1951 marked a new era in press coverage. In 1952 three trials were reported: the trial in Tolmin, the Šolar-Fabjan trial, and the trial against Karl Gnidovec. During this time more articles aimed at clergymen were printed than usually due to the rising tension between the state and the Vatican.

In 1946 Slovene newspapers extensively covered the trials against Capuchin monks in Celje, Franciscan friars in Ljubljana, and the Sisters of Mercy in Maribor. In 1949 attention shifted to the trials against nuns of the congregation of St. Francis, and the trials against the Jesuits. Among the trials against laymen the one against Narte Velikonja soon after the war was the most notorious.

In 1946 a trial against the archbishop of Zagreb (Stepinac) was held in Croatia. At the same time in the Hungary court hearings of cardinal Mindszenty were in progress.

It should be mentioned that some of these trials were held during religious holidays: the trial against Lenič took place at Christmas, and the trial against Kragelj took place just before St. Peter and Paul day.

The indictments had two parts. The first part contained general collective accusations (treason, collaboration, organization of the White Gard and the Home Guard, responsibility for deportations, contacts with emigrants, etc.) without any clear definition of the criminal action that was supposedly carried out by the group on trial (which is usually the legal basis for a collective trial). The second part contained concrete accusations against individuals. The defense lawyers were legally handicap-



ped because the court took into consideration only documents that burdened the accused parties. Witnesses that were prepared to speak out for the accused were discouraged.

Propaganda was meticulously prepared at Party meetings, in enterprises, in the press (especially in daily newspapers), and on the radio. People from the general public that were present at court hearings were selected by the UDV (State Security Agency). Prior to the hearings the accused were submitted to inhumane interrogation and were forced to sign documents. The supreme court usually upheld the decisions made in lower courts, occasionally it came up with an even harsher sentence. In comparison to the general criminal population, clergymen were sentenced rather severely. The time they spent in prison was also usually quite difficult. They were subjected to interrogations, humiliating treatment, insufficient food, unhygienic living conditions, lack of beds and blankets, virtually no medical attention, and they were prevented from attending mass and reading the scriptures. Most of them were sentenced to forced labour, be it manual or intellectual, such as copying registry books or translating.

The government stressed that the situation in Štajerska and Primorska was different. During the war there were no Slovene priests in Štajerska at all, therefore they could not have collaborated with the enemy. In spite of this fact, authorities arrested priests in Štajerska and Primorska, too, accusing them of supporting various criminal groups. After part of the Gorica diocese was annexed in 1947, 24 priests fled to Italy; 22 were from Primorska. The UDV hindered the life of monasteries in various ways: by economic sanctions (by taxes, by prohibiting the acceptance of charity donations), by administrative and political sanctions (clerics were convicted for even the slightest misdemeanours: in 1947 and 1948, 112 priests had their permission to teach religion revoked), and by establishing a network of cooperators.

## 8. The Years between 1948 and 1953

After the Communist Party assumed all government and economic functions, it started to implement a centralized political system. This meant that private ownership was abolished; the state amassed capital, introduced administrative economic planning, and centralized the government administration. This system excluded all other possibilities. Even the Informbiro could not do away with it. The Informbiro even strengthened the position of the Communist Party because of pressure from the West regarding Trieste. The Church in Slovenia had to deal with the Communist Party's attitude towards religion: religion is harmful, there is no benefit in it for the people, the Church is an outdated institution and should be expelled from public life. Circular letters bear evidence of increased taxes and a prohibition to collect alms in churches. The religious press was thwarted; it was impossible to restore church buildings or organize religious events; processions and pilgrimages was discouraged. The authorities had to be notified of any Church meetings, even choir practice and Sunday school. In 1951 all theologians were confined to Ljubljana for two months. Many were



punished for verbal offences, for disturbing peace and order, and for various legal violations concerning their registry offices and taxes. Many were under suspicion that they maintained contacts with the emigration.

On the other hand, these circular letters said nothing of the media campaign against the Church. Stories about the Church were printed in "Slovenski poročevalec" almost every day. These articles were usually slanderous or only half true at best. The public opinion that was thus formed bred hatred towards clerics. Church buildings and signs were vandalized, and people were intimidated.

The Slovene Church had no contacts with religious institutions abroad. Bishops had no contact with the Vatican, and no foreign theological literature was available. In addition to this, the Church was totally pushed out of public life in Slovenia. Anton Vovk, the bishop of Ljubljana, and Maksimiljan Držičnik, the bishop of Maribor, were both attacked on various occasions. One of the most noted was the incident in Novo mesto. Religious education was abolished on February 1, 1952. The Theological Faculty was expelled from the University of Ljubljana on June 1952.

The press repeatedly attacked the Vatican, also Carlo Margotti, the bishop of Gorica, and Antonio Santin, the bishop of Trieste. The Celovec diocese and the publishing house "Mohorjeva družba" were also severely criticized. Trieste was a separate question.

## 9. The Ciril-Metod Society

Priests that sympathized with the new government after the war were: Metod Mikuž, Jože Lampret, Franc Šmon, Stanko Cajnkar, Maks Miklavčič, Viktor Merc, Anton Trstenjak, and F.S. Finžgar. On November 4, 1948 a "Bulletin" was published by the Initiative Committee of Priests who were Members of the Liberation Front. A total of 11 issues were published. The last issue was published on September 20, 1949, just before the Ciril-Metod Society was founded. In November of the same year, the Bulletin was succeeded by a new paper called "Nova pot" ("The New Way"), which was published until 1970. At its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1959 the bulletin got a new name: "10 Years of the Ciril-Metod Society". The "Bulletin" (in the beginning also "Nova revija") was very critical of the Church in Slovenia and abroad.

The constitutional meeting of the Ciril-Metod Society of Catholic Priests in Slovenia was held on September 20 and 21, 1949, in Ljubljana. Anton Bajt, the vicar of Šmarje, was elected president of the society. At the first general meeting of the society on September 10, 1950, which was held in Ljubljana, there were already 140 delegates representing 478 clergymen that sympathized with the government. Before the meeting Bajt and Lampret were asked to leave the society. Matija Medvešček became its new president.

The Ciril-Metod Society and the Council for Public Health and Social Welfare Politics (a government institution) signed a treaty providing social security for clergymen. The second general meeting of the Ciril-Metod Society was held on October 23, 1952, in Ljubljana.



The Ciril-Metod Society was established under government protection. After the first severe critiques published in both bulletins, a moderate, more constructive attitude prevailed. In 1950 the Vatican labelled the society as *non expedit* (not suitable), but the bishops took no heed of this because they were afraid it might cause discord among the clergy. The society stayed loyal to the Church.

### 10. Tension and Reconciliation between State and Church

An epilogue to the growing tension between The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Vatican, which was further aggravated by the press, came when Stepinac was named a cardinal on November 29, 1952, and when diplomatic relations were severed on December 17, 1952.

The process of reconciliation started in 1953, first with a New Year's amnesty granted to imprisoned priests. This process continued with an audience of Catholic bishops with marshal Tito on January 7, 1953, and finished with the preparation and acceptance (on May 22, 1953) of a law determining the legal status of religious communities.

In 1952 a religious newspaper called "Družina" ("The Family") was published. A seminary was established in Vipava. This improvement of relations between state and Church was brought on by the emerging concept of self-management, by a reaction to Stalinism, by a demand to separate the Communist Party from state functions (The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), and by the non-alignment movement that was born after the events in Poland and Hungary in 1956.