

Wyszynski's death or during the Pope's expected visit to Poland in August 1982.

### *Koran in Polish*

According to the Islamic newspaper *Preporod* in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, a Polish translation of the Koran and commentary translated and published outside Poland will be paid for by the Moroccan government. The Koran will be distributed free of charge by Muslims in Poland. They number about two thousand. The community is of Tatar origin. Apart from two Muslim vil-

lages in the region of Bialystok, the remainder of the community is dispersed throughout the country with the majority living in Warsaw. There are only two mosques, in Bohoniki and Kruszyniany. In the remaining communities religious services are held in specially prepared rooms. In 1980, the Muslim World League (Rabita) was approached for practical assistance in extending contacts between Polish Muslims and the worldwide Muslim Community.

GRAZYNA SIKORSKA

## Croatian Controversy

A sharp dispute between the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Croatian authorities which began early in 1981 has still not died down. At a press conference in January 1981, Jakov Blazevic, president of the Croatian presidency, made a violent attack on the late Cardinal Stepinac (the wartime Archbishop of Zagreb, subsequently tried and imprisoned by the communist government), and on the leaders of the Catholic Church in Croatia today who attempt to rehabilitate his memory, and he attacked Croatian workers abroad. Blazevic, who was public prosecutor at Stepinac's trial, was launching the third volume of his memoirs, dealing with the events of the war and the fascist "Independent State of Croatia" which he accused Stepinac of helping to install.

Church leaders reacted immediately. Mgr Stankovic of the Zagreb archdiocese, who is director of spiritual care for Croats abroad, protested at the insulting references to Stepinac and at the attacks clearly aimed at Cardinal Seper, prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith and a Croat, and Archbishop Kuharic of Zagreb. Stankovic's statement was broadcast by Radio Vatican's Croatian service and published in Zagreb by the Catholic news agency bulletin AKSA. Cardinal Seper made a dignified and temperate statement, referring to the long years during which he had known Stepinac and recalling the witnesses called by the defence at his trial who were not allowed to give evidence. This statement was also broadcast in full by Radio Vatican and published by AKSA. The following day Archbishop Kuharic preached a sermon at the Mass on the anniversary of Stepinac's death. He refuted Blazevic's accusations point by point, giving docu-

mentary references, and concluded by saying that he had no wish to embitter relations with anyone and would not have raked over the past in this way unless he had been forced to it. AKSA reported the full text of the sermon and Radio Vatican broadcast recorded excerpts from it.

It is unlikely that Blazevic's outburst at the press conference had been agreed in advance with other members of the government. Blazevic has a notoriously rough manner, and as an old Partisan still occupying a leading position feels free to say whatever he pleases. However, other leading members of the government in Croatia may have felt that the matter could not be allowed to drop after the Church had reacted, and a number of them entered the fray including Jure Bilic, president of the Croatian assembly, and Dusan Dragosavac, secretary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Branko Puharic, a member of the presidium of the Socialist Alliance (Popular Front) and director of Zagreb Radio-TV, referred to the excellent relations between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, based on the protocol signed in 1966 which established a framework for relations between the Church and the State, and accused "some reactionary individuals within the Church" of trying to revive "Stepinac's Church" and make it a focus of political opposition and a tool of Croatian nationalism. He brushed aside the polemics about Stepinac as irrelevant, but said that if anyone tried to "take Stepinac out of political mothballs" the authorities would say exactly what they thought of the late archbishop. The theme was followed up by Zlatko Uzelac, Minister of the Interior of Croatia, who accused the hierarchy of looking increasingly for sup-

port to the clergy working among Croats abroad, especially those who had links with the hostile emigration. The national press commented widely on the affair, and a leading Split daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* (*Free Dalmatia*) hoped that the Vatican was not behind these attempts to worsen relations with the Catholic Church.

Blazevic's initial attack on Stepinac was intemperate but may have been triggered off by the increasing fervour of Archbishop Kuharic's sermons each year on the anniversary of Stepinac's death. The authorities may have decided it was time to hit back and to put the Church on the defensive by accusing it of attempting to become the focus of a political opposition. There is no evidence that the hierarchy wants anything of the sort, but there is a strongly nationalistic element among the clergy, and the celebrations of the 1300th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Croatia and the unbroken links since then with the Papacy were bound to rouse nationalistic fervour. The authorities have also to keep in mind the feelings of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian minority in Croatia who still, unfortunately, identify Stepinac with the mass slaughter and mass conversion of Serbs during the last war by the Croatian *ustasa* government. It is understandable that the Church wants to see Stepinac rehabilitated, but tactically their insistence may have given a handle to the communists for the sweeping attack on the Catholic Church.

It seemed at one moment that the hullabaloo might be dying down, but fuel was unexpectedly added to the fire by the reported appearances of the Virgin to six children in a remote mountain parish in Hercegovina, and the resulting rush of between 20,000 and 30,000 people to this inconvenient site, drawn by religious fervour or simple curiosity. (*See the article on pp. 4-9—Ed.*) When comparisons with Lourdes and Fatima began to be made the authorities cracked down hard. Other minor incidents took place; a new mosaic put into a church in Slavonia was alleged to include a likeness of the late Cardinal Stepinac, and a small shrine on the Dalmatian coast was bulldozed by the local authorities. The church claimed that notification had been perfunctory and inadequate, the local authorities

said that they had warned the church in 1971 and again last year that the additions to the shrine infringed local planning regulations and the overall UNESCO plan for the development of the coast, and that they had deferred destruction until after the recent eucharistic congress when they had given the church every assistance with traffic control. etc. (*See p. 80 for further details—Ed.*)

The Yugoslav Catholic Bishop's Conference issued two statements during the course of the year, denying that they were trying to interfere in politics when they defended the right of believers to confess their faith without hindrance or made moral judgements of questions of basic human rights; they protested against unfounded accusations made against the clergy who were given no right of reply, and they noted sadly that marxist atheism was taught to children in school as the only world view, and religion and the history of the churches were presented in a distorted, unscholarly way. This provoked the retort in the communist press that the bishops were putting themselves above criticism and were trying to alienate believers from "self-management socialism".

In the meantime relations between Church and State continue to be frequently discussed at party meetings, conferences and gatherings of the Socialist Alliance, the broad popular front organization. Every effort is made to distinguish between the general body of believers, who are assured that they are not second-class citizens and encouraged to co-operate in the building of socialism, and reactionary church leaders who encourage "clericalism". At the same time "sectarianism" within the ranks of the Party i.e. a hard-line approach to religion, is severely discouraged. A new and encouraging initiative has been a two-part symposium on religion, in which Marxist sociologists, Catholic theologians and representatives of several Protestant churches took part; it was arranged by Sarajevo TV and carried on all the major broadcasting stations. (*See p. 78-9 for further details—Ed.*)

Polemics in the national press still continue, and it is difficult at present (February 1982) to predict when and whether they will die down.

STELLA ALEXANDER