



In a prison cell with

Archbishop Stepinac

By C. L. SULZBERGER

Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac, the leading Roman Catholic prelate of Yugoslavia, said in an interview with this correspondent on Nov. 11, in a cell at Lepoglavo Prison that it was a matter of complete indifference to him whether he was liberated or not. The Archbishop said he was content to suffer on behalf of his church and that his future depended not upon Marshal Tito or his Government but only upon the Holy See.

Five days ago Marshal Tito, the Yugoslav Premier, said that it was possible Archbishop Stepinac might in the future be removed from Lepoglavo, where he is incarcerated following his conviction on charges of being a war criminal, and that he might be sent to a monastery within Yugoslavia or, possibly, be permitted to leave the country if it were judged useful to the national interest. The condition imposed by Marshal Tito was that the prelate should never return to Yugoslavia to function as a priest.

We spoke in French, which no one else in the room understood. The Archbishop apologized for his French,

saying he was far more fluent in Italian and German. Nevertheless, he has mastered the language.

"Monseigneur," I said, "could you tell me what the state of your health is?"

He replied, still standing: "I feel well. I am in no way, ill. I have lost no weight since I came here four years ago."

I then asked the Archbishop how he occupied his time. He said he devoted many hours to prayer, contemplation and, at the moment, to the translation of a work on the lives of the saints. He is studying church history. He showed me the work he was engaged in examining: A Latin tome on the Franciscan order by an Irish prelate named Wadding.

I asked whether it was difficult for him to receive reading material. My three escorts stood silently by and I am convinced they understood not one word of the conversation. As for the Archbishop, it became evident as the interview progressed that he could not care less.

He told me he received books continually. Most of them are brought

by his sister, who visits him every month, he said. He complained, however, that all the reading material, even ecclesiastical, was first scrutinized by the prison censors. He said he had no access to newspapers; that he especially missed *l'Osservatore Romano*, the journal of the Vatican, which he described as "prohibited."

I asked him if he was in touch with the world outside the prison walls. He replied, "Letters are not strictly forbidden. But they are subjected to censorship. Therefore I do not write."

I then explained to the Archbishop what Marshal Tito had said to me concerning the possibilities of his release either to a Roman Catholic

monastery within Yugoslavia or to exile—on condition that he should never return.

He stood there silently for a moment, dressed in his black clerical garb, one hand upon Wadding's ecclesiastical history, absolutely motionless.

Then, in a calm and quiet voice he replied: "Whether I go to a monastery, or whether I remain here, or whatever should happen to me, I am utterly indifferent."

"Such things do not depend upon Marshal Tito. They depend only upon the Holy Father, the Pope, and upon no one else."

-- Crusader, Nov. 18, 1950

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