

# U. S. FILES PROTEST ON SOFIA'S ARREST OF 15 CHURCHMEN

## State Department Calls Action 'Blatant Terroristic Effort' to Intimidate Protestants

### BULGARIA REJECTS NOTE

## Foreign Minister Announces Banning of Papal Missions— Terms Vatican War Agent

By **BERTRAM D. HULEN**  
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23—The United States has protested to the Bulgarian Government against the arrest of fifteen Protestant churchmen on charges of espionage, treason and currency operations, the State Department announced today. The arrests were termed a "blatant terroristic effort."

The note was delivered on department instructions by Sidney E. O'Donoghue, the United States Chargé d'Affaires at Sofia, on Monday. It was promptly rejected by the Bulgarian Foreign Office, which returned the note,

[Bulgarian Foreign Minister Vassil Kolarov attacked the Vatican in a speech to Parliament and announced that no papal mission henceforth would be allowed to work in Bulgaria.]

Mr. O'Donoghue also requested that representatives of the United States Legation be permitted to attend the trial. Whether this also was rejected was not clear from the reports received here.

### Charges Called "Ludicrous"

The protest declared that the charges against the churchmen—that they were involved in their alleged activities with United States Government officials formerly on duty in Bulgaria—were "unfounded and ludicrous." The officials who were members of the legation staff previously had been assigned to other posts in ordinary course.

The note also reserved all rights of the United States under the Bulgarian peace treaty, which commits Bulgaria to observe human rights, as in the case of Hungary, where the United States has protested and denounced the trial and conviction of Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty.

The text of the note from Mr. O'Donoghue was as follows:

On instructions from my Government I have the honor to refer to the published indictment against fifteen Protestant pastors in Bulgaria, who are charged with "espionage, treason and currency operations" involving United States Government officials formerly on duty in Bulgaria.

Such charges are unfounded and ludicrous. My Government can only consider their formulation a blatant terroristic effort, in cynical disregard of the facts, designed to intimidate the small, respected Protestant religious denominations in Bulgaria and to discredit their sincere religious leaders.

In the circumstances, my Government reserves its rights under the treaty of peace with Bulgaria, and requests that facilities be made available for representatives of the United States Legation to attend the trial.

The note was rejected orally by the Bulgarian Foreign Office at once. Then within an hour the office sent for Raymond F. Courtney, second secretary of the

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United States Legation, and gave the note back to him for return to the legation.

While this was abrupt action, the State Department said that it was not unprecedented for a note to be returned when it was rejected.

It was not clear whether the rejection of the note also meant refusal of the request for members of the legation staff to attend the trial. Mr. O'Donoghue previously had made that request orally of the Foreign Office, so the question might or might not still be open, it was said.

Officials still have under consideration the matter of protesting to Hungary under the human rights clause in the case of Cardinal Mindszenty or appealing the case to the United Nations.

## Chapin Due This Week

A decision may not be reached, it was suggested today, until Selden Chapin, who was recalled for consultation from his post as Minister to Hungary after the Budapest Government had declared him *persona non grata*, has arrived here and conferred on the situation. He is due to reach New York on the Queen Mary late this week.

The clause on human rights in the peace treaty with Bulgaria is contained in Article Two, as follows:

Bulgaria shall take all measures necessary to secure to all persons under Bulgarian jurisdiction without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and of the fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, of press and publication, of religious worship, of political opinion and of public meeting.