

Bishop of Byzantine Diocese, Opposed by Priests, Resigns

PITTSBURGH, Dec. 22 (AP)—The Bishop on the far-flung Byzantine Catholic diocese of Pittsburgh, opposed by conservative priests, has resigned after a year in what he called his exile in Rome.

A brief announcement by the Vatican today gave no reason for the resignation of the Most Rev. Nicholas T. Elko, Ruthenian-rite Bishop of Pittsburgh.

It added to the mystery surrounding his long absence from his diocese, stretching from Pittsburgh to Alaska with 120 parishes and 220,000 parishioners.

Pope Paul VI elevated Bishop Elko to titular archbishop of Dara and ordaining prelate of the Byzantine rite in Rome, replacing him in Pittsburgh with the Most Rev. Stefan Kocisko, Ruthenian-rite Bishop of Passaic, N.J.

Bishop Elko, 58, was called to Rome Dec. 9, 1966, following complaints made by 35 of his 148 Byzantine priests. They reportedly objected to

his attempts to liberalize the traditions of the Eastern rite church.

The Ruthenian-rite recognizes the Pope as head of the church but has its own non-Latin customs and liturgies.

The church has never given a public explanation of the charges against Bishop Elko, and forbade him to communicate with his parishioners and priests. But the Vatican said he didn't stand in disfavor.

In a recent letter from the bishop to a friend, he wrote: "It was a miserable thing to be here away from the United States and asked not to communicate with the priests as well as the faithful. It did not seem to belong to this century."

Pope Paul appointed a three-man commission of a cardinal and two bishops to look into the complaints. Its findings haven't been disclosed.

A statement issued in Wash-

ington by the office of Apostolic Delegate Luigi Raimondi said a pontifical commission in Rome "has concluded that it would be inopportune" for Bishop Elko to return "because of the existing special conditions."

Bishop Elko's "spiritual and priestly integrity... never was a matter of doubt or discussion," the statement said.



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... bishop resigns

