

'I Was Prisoner Of Korean Reds'

By Rev. Eugene J. Conroy, S.J.

... (NC) — Red efforts to force China's Catholics into Korea are failing.

The Communist-controlled Independent Catholic Church movement, begun in 1951, gradually has been falling away to nothing.

Following Pentecost services, its members were sharply criticized by Party officials in Peking for their empty churches at a time when "unco-operative, non-progressive churches" were filled to overflowing.

The Salvation Fathers offered two Masses in their chapel in Peking on Pentecost, but found it so crowded that they followed them by three outdoor Masses to accommodate all the Catholics who wanted to hear Mass.

At Mass, peace congresses and parades earlier this year no persons in religious garb were seen. As a result, Communists have been showing pictures of cheering arms taken in 1951 as if they were part of the 1953 celebrations.

(Continued from Page 1)

had ordered all American women and children to be evacuated by boat from Inchon, we knew the trouble was true and serious.

The next day we were told that we should be in front of the Banto hotel by two o'clock when all remaining foreigners would be taken by bus to Kimpo airport and evacuated. By this time Korean civilians seeing the Americans leaving, began to flee the city themselves.

The thought of leaving the city never occurred to Bishop Byrne, just as he had remained in Japan all during World War II. It seemed natural for him to be with the Korean clergy and Catholics in their hour of need. I asked Father George Carroll, my superior and representative for Bishops' War Relief, if I might stay with the Bishop. He gave his permission.

When I told Bishop Byrne that I was staying, he did not say anything. But he shook my hand, and I could read the gratitude in his eyes.

On Wednesday the Reds poured into Seoul with little resistance. That story has already been written on the pages of history, and there is no need to go into it here.

OUR FIRST contact with the Reds was when a group came and confiscated my jeep. A short while later some more arrived at the Delegation to "borrow" the Bishop's car.

"Look here," said Bishop Byrne. "Suppose some general comes along and wants my car. What will I say to him if it is gone?"

The Reds were nonplussed by this reply and left. They were back in half an hour with an official order and the car left with them. I guess they "borrowed" every car in Seoul. Later when we were arrested and carted off to jail, the "paddy-wagon" was the NCWC War Relief jeep, which had been borrowed from Father Carroll's garage.

Then came the fifth columnists who had been planted in the city. They began pillaging the houses, stripping it of everything movable. Bishop Byrne and I got together the vestments and sacred vessels to be taken to the mountains. The Bishop sent word to the nearest Korean police to come over and take them to safety.

Father arrived with a publisher and a couple of Catholic boys. He loaded the art with the vestments, vessels and Mass wine. The Reds who were looting the house tried to stop Father. They forbade him to take anything away.

"Why not?" demanded the priest. "Aren't we all under the People's Government now? These things belong to us as much as they belong to you."

THE REDS couldn't answer that and they watched the brave little priest walk away with his publisher.

The loyalty of the Korean priests and Sisters is something I shall never forget. It was a Korean priest who kept us hidden for the next two weeks. During this time, the Sisters sent food into us every day by an orphan. When finally our own courtesies in allowing the Reds to see us brought our arrest, Father Ryan of the Cathedral staff volunteered to come to jail with us so that he could help Bishop Byrne as much as possible.

AFTER our first imprisonment in Seoul, when we were taken to North Korea, Father Byrne was kept behind. What has happened to him I do not know. But I do know that there are military prisons in Korea holding the remains of brave Korean priests and Sisters who professed loyalty to Christ to the end of their lives. The reward for such a choice was a bullet in the back of the head.

Our first prison in Seoul was near the cathedral. It was a two-story building with a courtyard. We were taken there from the Banto hotel.

north to Pyongyang and interned in a schoolhouse outside the city. Although food was bad here, at least we were not made to witness the torturing of Korean civilians and we did have room to move around. It was at Pyongyang that our group came to full strength.

BISHOP BYRNE and I were the only American priests, but there was one American business man and some Methodist missionaries. Besides diplomatic officials and civilians of other countries, the captives included many other priests and Sisters. There were three Columbian Fathers of the Irish province: Monsignor Thomas Quinlan, Columbian superior who had been taken off the altar by the Reds while he was saying Mass; Father Canavara, who was to die of pneumonia after the terrible Death March; and Father Crosby, an Australian, who was generously to shoulder much of the back-breaking work in our many prison camps.

There was a large contingent of men from the Paris Foreign Mission Society. Father Paul Villenot, 83-year-old chaplain from Seoul. He was to make the Death March only to die at its conclusion. Fathers Antoine and Julien Gombert, brothers, 76 and 74 years of age, who just a few days before being captured had celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their ordination. They were to die a day apart after the Death March.

Two other brothers died first and Father gave him the last rites in one of the most touching ceremonies I have ever witnessed.

"Do not worry, Brother," Father Julien said when he had finished. "I will be with you soon."

Among the Sisters that were brought in was Sister Beatrice, superior of the St. Paul of Chartres convent in Seoul. Her bones today are somewhere in a ravine in North Korea. She was shot to death on the Death March. With her came her companion, Sister Eugene, who was to give us all many lessons in unspoken humility for the days ahead. There were also five Carmelite Sisters, three French and two Belgians. One of them was totally blind.

PFYONGYANG WAS the headquarters for Maryknoll's work before World War II. I know the area well having been Maryknoll superior here. Our territory ran clean to the Yalu River and Manchuria. Before the war with Japan we had a flourishing mission here with large groups of new Christians being received into the Church every year. Ever since the Japanese had retreated and I had been despoiled of these when I and other priests and Sisters could go back to Pyongyang.

New a large contingent of us went back to North Korea. But we had come in a way in which I never imagined. I had left North Korea as a prisoner of the Japanese. Now I was back as a prisoner of the Communists.

Next week, Father Booth tells of two of the most heroic men he ever met—Bishop Byrne and Monsignor Quinlan. Watch for the second installment of this interesting and authentic report.



Rockaway Beach, N. Y.—Five-year-old Nancy Glock shares her ice cream with Sister Paulita Marie during an outing at Rockaway's Playground Amusement Park here. The girl was one of 76 youngsters from the Lavelle School for the Blind, Bronx, N. Y., who spent the day at the playground accompanied by eight nuns. (Religious News Service Photo).

Legion Of Decency Leader Succumbs

New York —(NC)— Requiem A. Scully of Albany.

Mass was offered here for Magr. Born in New York City February 2, 1910, Monsignor Masterson secretary of the National Legion of Decency who died unexpectedly recently at the age of 43, following a heart attack.

Celebrant of the funeral Mass, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoody, Yonkers, N. Y. He was Coadjutor Bishop Williamordan died June 8, 1935.

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Until a few years ago Father Takla was a separated Coptic priest. Back into the true fold, he is now pastor of a small village in Egypt. There is no school, no church. We should like to see in his parish activities like those you see above. But his chapel hasn't even been started. His parish of 100 families, also separated Copts until two years ago when they came into the Church, gave a small piece of land to the bishop and begged him for a school and a priest to instruct their children. Father Takla was sent last year but lack of funds has tied his hands. Won't you help him. Earnest hearts of the poor will bless you.

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Our REFUGEE children are always wearing out their CLOTHES. Your waste efforts and last year's models are blighting to our old and young orphans from Palestine. Send them to our warehouse at 52-15 Flushing Ave., Maspeth, N. Y. A FOOD PACKAGE for \$11 feeds a refugee family for several days.

OH! BROTHERS

Yes, we know of no man braver or more valuable helpers for our work in the missions than our brothers. We must find more help for the novitiate in India or the superiors will be forced to close it. Without their future help the missions will suffer a terrible setback just when Communism is menacing India more and more each day. Have you an aim for this essential work?

GOD'S OWN WANT AIDS

The happy, healthy smile of the children tell a beautiful story of the heroic dedication of the Daughters of Charity. It is their NEW FOUNDLING HOME in Beirut. Daily these noble ladies gather in thousands of orphans. They are fed, clothed, and given their first steps. They are taught to read and to write. They are given the Christian faith and the devotion of the Sisters. God to labor faithfully, they can't carry on without your help. Won't you add your share? We are always looking for the Holy Cross Sisters in Trinidad and hope to build a HOSPITAL for them. Give them an aim in your hearts for the wonderful medical facilities we need. Write these year to our love. 51 West 11th St. 510 enclosed a list.

MARY HOLY QUEEN!

Mary's eyes look fondly down JUST ACROSS THE JORDAN where we hope to erect our new TRINITY CHAPEL to spread Her glory in another New East land. She will never forget your token of Love.

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Under the stars, a boy with the name of Silvera in his name, your help for the youth center of our low years training, etc. Can you give her this youth center in any town? We provide the staff and the building upon a kind of...

IT'S GEORGE

He is an Indian lad just starting his six years' training for the priesthood. Recently indicated opposition to foreign missionaries shows the need of native clergy. Can you give him in any installation the \$10 he needs each year for his training?

MONSIGNOR KIRK has a request.

Hundreds of refugee priests called from their native Romania are dependent upon you for almost everything. Spain has taken them in but his task is their support. Your Mass offerings do his only report.

Near East Missions

100 East 11th St. New York 17, N. Y.

Blind Girl Gets Highest Marks At Catholic U

Washington—(NC)—Highest mark in the comprehensive examinations of the National Catholic School of Social Service of the Catholic University of America has gone this year to a student who has been blind since the age of eleven.

She is Miss Eileen Patricia Noone of Philadelphia, who received her master's degree in social work at commencement exercises here.

Miss Noone lost her sight gradually through optic atrophy and became totally blind while she was attending Blessed Sacrament parochial school in Philadelphia. In spite of her handicap, she finished Immaculate Conception High School there in 1944 and went on to win a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania in 1950.

FOLLOWING graduation from college she worked for a year as a medical secretary at the Pennsylvania Hospital, taking dictation by machine and using Braille.

She then won a scholarship from the American Foundation for the Blind for two years' work at Catholic University.

During those two years she has been a familiar figure on the campus here along with her constant companion, her seeing-eye dog Trudy.

SHE WAS HELPED in her studies by fellow students of the School of Social Service who read to her, and particularly by a group of Benedictine seminarians from St. Anselm's Priory, Carmelite seminarians from White

Oceania's Martyr Miracles Studied

Vatican City — (NC) — Reputed miracles attributed to the intercession of Blessed Peter Louis Chanel were examined here by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in connection with the canonization cause of the Martin priest who ranks as the first martyr for the Faith in Oceania.

Born near Lyons, France, in 1803, Blessed Peter was martyred at the age of 39 on the Island of Futuna in the Tonga Archipelago on April 28, 1841. He was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1888. Blessed Peter had been a diocesan priest for some years when he joined the Marist Fathers and was sent to the mission field.

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