

'I Was Prisoner Of Korean Reds'

General MacArthur Troops Almost Rescued Missionaries

By REV. WILLIAM R. BOOTH, M. M.

This is the third of an exclusive NC series of articles in which Father William Booth, a Maryknoll Missioner from Brooklyn, recalls some of his experiences as a captive of the North Korean Communists. Previously he told of his early imprisonment and described his fellow prisoners, among them two outstanding men: Bishop Patrick Byrne and Monsignor Thomas Quinlan.

One of the most tragic events of the whole Korean war could have been avoided. I am referring to that terrible procession of suffering that has become known as the Death March.

When General MacArthur made his famous landing behind Red lines and went on the counter-attack in the south, he threw the North Korean army into complete confusion. The Americans started for the Yalu and came fast. The North Korean forces, caught off balance, were quickly eliminated and wiped out. We had been moved back into the mountains, but with the end of the war in sight even our guards deserted us.

We set out looking for the liberating Americans. We must have been very near them. If our Army had known where we were, or if we had known where it was, we would have been freed. But instead of liberation we found the Chinese Communists pouring over the Yalu and imprisonment again.

Our new commander was a North Korean major whom we nicknamed "The Tiger" because of his cruelty. He ordered us on a forced march of eight days to get us safely away from the Americans. The Tiger hated us because we represented countries which had snatched victory from his own and delivered one of the most smashing military defeats in history. His ambitions and dreams were shattered and there was no mercy left in him.

THE DEATH MARCH was made in winter weather. It took us eight days to travel a hundred miles through the mountains. It was a procession of suffering that cannot be even imagined. Part of the time it snowed, and always the weather was freezing. The wind screamed around our heads. And always at our side was a North Korean guard, his rifle ready to be used on anyone who fell out of line. The other nights we were herded into houses sometimes so tightly packed that we could not even move.

Picture the procession of misery. There were 725 of us, many of them wounded, all of them weak, some with bare feet. There was a group of foreign diplomatic officials, then we 50 civilians—men, women and children. All of us starving, practically all wrecked by diarrhea and dysentery. The fillings were falling from our teeth from malnutrition. We were skin and bones, having lost on an average of fifty pounds apiece. I did not weigh even a hundred pounds.

Picture a bleak mountain pass. Watch this procession of sick and starving, struggling up the steep trail. The cold wind made its victims numb. The swirling snow blots out some of the misery ahead and behind, but not enough to conceal what is going on. On the snow-streaked frozen slopes bare feet leave a trail of blood. Bare arms and we plod on. The aged and the young receive the same treatment.

I SEE THE LITTLE band of Carmelite Sisters before me. They tiny saracina statures with the blood of their bare feet. Pitifully they struggle on, clutching their few possessions—their blanket aprons and their bowls and spoons. One Sister is blind and has to be guided along. Another is wrecked with the cough of tuberculosis. Still another is ready to collapse from the most acute diarrhea.

Sister Beatrice, superior of St. Paul of Chartres convent in Seoul, can hardly stand. Sister Eugenie, her companion, and others try to drag her along. But her suffering and her 70 years are too much. Her weight drains the last remaining strength from her helpers. Their strength quickly ebbs, and she tumbles and falls by the roadside unable to get up.

A North Korean guard comes up. There is the explosion of a gun. Sister Beatrice's body is pushed off the side of the trail. It starts to roll down a steep slope and with a dull thud lands in a ravine at the bottom of the mountain. And over the rust of the wind the laughter of the North Korean guards echoes down the line.

That was the Death March. On the day Sister Beatrice died, 21 GI's also fell out of line and were shot. So was one civilian woman, a White Russian. The procession was a procession of death. Over the eight days 38 American soldiers died.

And even when the march came to an end, the weakness that it left brought about deaths.

FATHER PAUL Villenot died the day after it ended. Father Antoine Gornert the next day. Father Julien Gornert the next day. Bishop Patrick Byrne, Father Joseph Cadars, Father Joseph Billeau, Father Canavan, More Sisters, More civilians. And many more GI's.

The like of those months of suffering between the invasion of South Korea and the end of that first winter has seldom been equaled. Death was on every side. Of the thirteen members of the Paris Foreign Missions Society arrested by the Reds, only one was to be alive to be repatriated more than two years later.

I have been asked how human beings, even though Communists, could allow other human beings to suffer the way they did on this march. The answer lies in the materialism of Communist paganism.

"The soul of a human is no different than that of an animal," said a guard to me on this march. "In fact a reactionary idea is lower than any physical thing on earth."

Agnostic's Search For God Follows Path To Priesthood

Moorehead, Minn. — (NC) — It took some Presbyterian missionaries, the prayers of his Lutheran mother, and the Masses of a Jewish-converter priest. But the youth who was an agnostic has at last become a priest of God. As Father Augustine Comiers, O.S.B., he is now working among Mexican Catholics in the United States.

It isn't easy for Father Augustine to trace his path to the Church. An intricate background, prayers by people throughout the world and God's mysterious graces make a complex pattern.

BORN IN Vienna in 1916, he was baptized a Lutheran. But in his youth he became an agnostic—a "passive kind" but still a youth with no belief in God. Then came Hitler's troops and the youth's career would become filled with danger. His brother had been an active anti-Nazi. And one of his grandpater's had been a Jew.

As the Nazis took over Vienna, his mother urged him and his brother to flee. Father Augustine recalls: "She always wanted for us that freedom which the United States represents."

The boys then left Austria, knowing that their mother was praying their way to freedom.

It was in Venezuela in 1940 that the young agnostic received the news that his mother had died suddenly. For the first time he wondered: "Is there an after-life?" and hoped: "If there is, then death does not end everything."

HE THEN started a search. In Venezuela was a group of American Presbyterian missionaries, "very wide-eyed people" who believed in helping other men and believed in God.

The young man joined them, throwing himself into youth work. But his search wasn't over. In New York a relative of his met Father John M. Oesterreicher, former convert from Judaism, and told him of the young man who was looking for freedom and for God. Father Oesterreicher promised to pray for the young man, remember him in his Masses.

Red Cross Receives \$10,000 From Pope
Geneva, Switzerland — (NC) — A gift of \$10,000 was received here by the International Red Cross Committee from His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

Accompanying the donation, the committee announced, was a letter from the Vatican Secretariat of State which said the Holy Father "in spite of the innumerable burdens laid upon the Holy See, wished to give tangible token of his good will towards the International Committee."

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These Hear Christ's Call To Follow Him



THE HOLY HABIT—Climax of the impressive reception rites of the Sisters of St. Joseph shows young novices returning to the Chapel, having exchanged their bridal white for the holy habit of their religious calling. (Courier Staff Photo)



BRIDES OF CHRIST—Attired in bridal white, 27 young women march in procession to Nazareth Motherhouse Chapel for solemn ceremonies on Thursday morning, marking their reception as new members of the Sisters of St. Joseph. (Courier Staff Photo)

Rocket-Traveling Priests Forecasted

Rome — (RNS)—A new area may be opened to missionaries with the advent of rocket travel, according to Observatore Romano, Vatican newspaper.

Science has progressed so fast in this century that rocket trips to the moon and other planets may be made in the near future, the paper said. And when such trips are attempted "a priest will certainly accompany the space pioneers."

Had Trouble 'Blowing A Fuse' Colloquial Speech Stumps Young German Visitor

Titonka, Iowa — (NC)—Alfons Knauth's year in America has taught him a lot—but one of the things it took longest to learn was the difference between literary English and colloquial American.

A 17-year-old resident of Kuernbach, in the state of Baden, Germany, Alfons has spent a year on a farm here under the auspices of the National Catholic Welfare Conference's German office.

Young Knauth, who has lived with Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Orthel—helping about their farm while attending Titonka High School—says when he first arrived he could hardly understand what people were saying.

When somebody warned him about "getting into a jam," all Alf could picture was a conserve to spread on bread, and it all sounded sticky. "Blowing a fuse" gave him trouble too, and when Mrs. Orthel said one day she'd "give him the dickens," he couldn't figure out why it wasn't "the stalin," "the hitler"—or else some English author a little more difficult than Dickens.

Ex-Counterspy Disputes President On 'Red' Books

Cincinnati — (NC)—Matt Cvetic, who gained fame as a communist counter-spy for the FBI, took issue here with a suggestion made by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his published diary that "the books"

should be read by students. Cvetic said this is the same as having students go to the library to learn about communism, espionage and robbery from books.

STUDENTS SHOULD learn about communism, not just from books by communists, Mr. Cvetic said. He added: "These people are carrying out a murder and have millions of slave labor camps. Communism is not just a realm of ideas. It is a conspiracy plotted to our destruction. It is the enemy of our government and of our boards of education. It will tell the truth about communism, its aims and its methods."

Chinese Priest Serves In Austria

Vienna — (NC)—Austrians have been used to seeing and have welcomed, priests of foreign extraction in their midst.

But what has happened now is unique in the history of the Church in Austria. A Chinese, Father Paul Lue Kao Tung, has been named assistant to the parish priest of Bramberg, in the archdiocese of Salzburg.

Father Tung a native of South Shantung, was received into the Church at the age of 12. After completion of his studies at a theological seminary in China he was ordained in 1950.

Diamonds of Quality at Low Prices: Budget Payments. William S. Thorne, Jeweler, 318 Main St. East, Ham. 5631—Adv.

St. Joseph Sisters Receive 27 Young Women Into Community

Twenty-seven young women received the religious habit of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and became the community's newest novices at the impressive reception ceremony held yesterday, the Feast of the Visitation, in the Holy Family Chapel of Nazareth Motherhouse, Pittsford. His Excellency, the Most Reverend Lawrence B. Casey, D.D., presided at the ceremony.

The group of young women, as "Brides of Christ" in long white gowns and veils, presented themselves to the Bishop and asked for the habit of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

AFTER HEARING their earnest request, Bishop Casey blessed the habits, veils, cinctures and rosaries they were about to don, and then sent them forth to exchange their bridal finery for the black habit which the Sisters of Saint Joseph have worn for more than 300 years.

The newly garbed Sisters reentered the chapel, minutes later, as the Novitiate choir sang the hymn "Veni Sponsa Christi." They were then given the new names by which they will be known in religion.

THE 27 NEW Sisters who received the religious habit and their names in religion are: Miss Helen M. Weber, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Weber of Holy Redeemer parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Marcella.

Miss Mary E. Ford, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cleslie Ford of St. Paul's parish, Oswego, will be known in religion as Sister de Chantal.

Miss Elizabeth Ritzenthaler, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Ritzenthaler of Blessed Sacrament parish, will be known in religion as Sister Edna.

Miss Joan E. Cox, daughter of the late Mr. Austin Cox and of Mrs. Austin Cox of St. Charles Borromeo parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Madeline.

Miss Marion E. Greer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Greer of St. Aloysius' parish, Auburn, will be known in religion as Sister Frances.

Miss Beverly J. Twomey, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Twomey of St. Mary's parish, Auburn, will be known in religion as Sister Joseph.

Miss Anne K. Michalko, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony F. Michalko of St. Cecilia's parish, Elmira, will be known in religion as Sister Clare.

Miss Carol J. Hartebeck, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Philemon Hartebeck of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Cecilia.

Miss Theresa M. Balley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Balley of St. Mary's parish, Oswego, will be known in religion as Sister Therese.

Miss Mary Ann Riley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Emery J. Riley of St. Anne's parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Jamesine.

Miss Ruth Ann Olsoway, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Olsoway of SS. Peter & Paul parish, Elmira, will be known in religion as Sister Eucharist.

Miss Gloria Massarella, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Massarella of St. Francis Xavier parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Veronica.

Miss Ann M. Weaver, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Weaver of St. James' parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Perpetua.

Miss Mary F. Whalen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard F. Whalen of St. Louis' parish, Pittsford, will be known in religion as Sister Judith.

Miss Barbara L. Ferchle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Ferchle of St. Ambrose parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Vincent.

Miss June A. Burley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Burley of St. Charles Borromeo parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Mellita.

Miss Patricia A. Gouse, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Gouse of St. Augustine's parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Winifred.

Miss Patricia A. Neary, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Neary of Holy Redeemer parish, Rochester, will be known in religion as Sister Petrus.

Miss Bernadette Love, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Love of St. Casimir's parish, Elmira, will be known in religion as Sister Casimir.

Miss Annette J. Truby, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Truby of St. Patrick's parish, Mount Morris, will be known in religion as Sister Gonzaga.

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