

Last Sunday At War

Guns, Shells Roar, Soldiers Kneel At Mass

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
(Correspondent, N.C.W.C. News Service)

On The Western Front in Korea—It was the last Sunday of the shooting war but nobody knew it up here in the Marmoset sector. Sure, there was armistice talk in the air. But the shells in air seemed much more real and much closer.

"This is Okinawa heat," said Sgt. "Craw" from Philadelphia, a veteran of the Pacific war. He meant the enemy artillery.

Late Friday night several thousand Chinese Communist troops attacked "Bouler City," a front-line hill held by men of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment. The Marines kept the hill but suffered heavy casualties.

"I made 15 trips last night, each time with four wounded," said Sgt. Virgil Mims, a Marine from Baltimore, who drove one of the litter jeeps between the Third Battalion and the regimental aid station.

"Crackerboxes," meaning large ambulances, and jeeps also brought wounded.

"THERE ARE TWO terrific Catholic chaplains up there," said Bill Hartigan, a television newsroom man. "They took turns going out in a weasel (tracked personnel carrier) to pick up the wounded. The two were Father (Lt.) John Moore, a Paulist from Los Angeles, and Father (Lt.) Robert Breggartner of Youngstown.

Saturday afternoon I went by jeep from the Munsan neutral zone to the Marine sector. At "Baser Med," meaning B company medical battalion, the afternoon had brought a lull after long hours of work with the previous night's wounded. Father (Lt.) John B. Conlon, a Dominican, attended the wounded here continually over the weekend.

I HITCHED jeep rides through the darkening rainclouded valleys, rebusing with artillery units. I halted outside a small bunker with a red cross in front. This was the Second Battalion aid station of the first line regiment which was relieving the Marmoset.

Seventh Father Breggartner had taken off their helmets and suggested over the field phone blessed themselves. One young Marine then asked me to cover the other aid station while I could cover this. Talking in the rain, I discovered he was the son of a well known

Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Frank Long, a graduate of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, and Protestant Chaplain Samuel D. Chambers of Easton, Pa., well-known me.

I was finishing my Breviary by candlelight in a tent on the hill when the artillery took a different note. This was coming, not going. Showered dirt fell on the tent. That round landed pretty close. I blew out the candle and ran up the dark, muddy hill faster than I thought possible and took refuge in the air bunker.

THE HOURS went slowly. A few wounded arrived, not critical. One Catholic Marine on his eyes injured by a blast but wouldn't lose his sight, the doctor said.

Two doctors, Lt. Walter Thomas, who in civilian life teaches surgery at Marquette University, Milwaukee, and Lt. Thomas Hardy of Richmond, Va., Chief Frederick Beurlein of Lawrenceburg, Tenn., and Ocean-side, Calif., and about ten corpsmen staff the aid station. Two litter jeeps bring wounded from the front line. Marine doctors, like chaplains and marine corpsmen, are all navy personnel.

At about 1 a. m. a litter jeep halted in the rainy darkness outside the bunker. It brought two Marines killed in action the previous morning. It was impossible to recover their bodies until after dark. One was a Catholic boy. The second was a Scottish lad who emigrated to America and wasn't even a United States citizen.

THE BODIES WERE covered with ponchos (rain capes) and taken on litters to my tent. I said a prayer over them in the darkness. A couple of Marines took off their helmets and suggested over the field phone blessed themselves.

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American Catholic family formerly in Shanghai. I had last seen him when he was repatriated as a child on the Gripsholm in New York in 1942.

"We doze but never close," said a sign outside the air station with literal truth. At about 2 a. m., we began dozing, one on the table, one on the floor and some squatting. I lay back on piled blankets near a box containing human blood packed in ice.

No more wounded came that night. The artillery thundered but for five hours I heard nothing.

IT WAS A FAR different story with the other aid station. It was kept busy all night with more than 1,170 wounded.

Monday I learned that the demarcation line for the armistice had been fixed by an agreement two days before the Chinese attacked the Marines' position. The attack, which brought wounds and death to many, was made by the Reds knowing it could not change the final line.

I said my first Mass on Sunday at 1 a. m. in a mess tent below the air station. Chief Beurlein served. About 55 Marines attended, reciting the Rosary during Mass.

Chaplain Chambers drove me to dog company at 3:30 a. m., where Lt. Robert Murphy of Jersey City, a graduate of St. Peter's College, assembled about 35 men for Mass in the open. Cpl. Arthur Cooke of Allendale, N. J., served.

At five o'clock I offered another Mass for Fox Company

Lt. Terence Allen of St. Louis served. Another 35 were present. A light rain began so I called for four volunteers to hold a canvas shelter over the altar. I got four immediately for this arm-straining task. No shells fell anywhere near during any of the Masses.

ABOUT 75 Communists were received at the three Masses. Each time a familiar scene that never loses its impressiveness was repeated. Men lining up in the open for Confession, kneeling unashamedly beside the priest in a muddy field, praying with reverent concentration during Mass and coming up muddy and but unshaken but resplendent with faith to receive Holy Communion.

All this is a daily occurrence which the chaplains experienced across the Korean front in the past three years. It testifies to the power of God's grace, Catholic home influence, Catholic education, parish life and the magnificent work of the chaplains.

I was packing my Mass kit after the third Mass when helmeted men on the way back up the hill said: "Father, news has come over the radio that an armistice will be signed tomorrow."

Along the 155-mile front the word was spreading. Some were in the dusk a chaplain finished the fast Sunday Mass of the 37-month Korean war.

Oxnam Hearing Text Published

Washington, D.C. (RNS)—The magazine United States News and World Report published the entire text of the recent 10-hour hearing of Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam before the House Un-American Activities Committee here.

The 67,000-word text occupied 35 pages of the magazine. Editor David Lawrence said the publication printed the text because no other newspaper or magazine in the United States had done so and because the board of editors thought it of transcending importance and of great public interest.

An informed source estimated that it cost the magazine \$20,000 to carry the text to its 62,000 readers.

INSTITUTE STUDIES VOCATIONS



New York—Monsignor Aloysius F. Coogan, a Vice-Chancellor of the New York Archdiocese, greets five nuns who spoke at the third annual Institute of Religious and Sacerdotal Vocations at Fordham University here. The institute, attended by some 1,200 priests, nuns and brothers from the U.S. and Canada, discussed ways of recognizing, fostering and guiding the religious vocations. (RNS Photo)

Solon Promises To Bare Data On Reds In Church

Washington—(NC)—A promise that the House Un-American Activities Committee would soon make public testimony that Communists have plotted in this country "to infiltrate the church, regardless of faith," has been made here by Rep. Kit Cloud of Michigan.

The congressman had previously said that the committee possessed and would print testimony that the Communist Party will send observers to see what goes on.

However, the congressman added, the committee probably will make public before the testimony showing Communist infiltration of the church, and destroy all religion. He said the ultimate aim of the Reds to destroy all religion. He said the Communists have made little headway, but their efforts can't be ignored.

A Stormy, Name-Calling Session

Methodist Pastor Denies Role In Communist Party

Washington—(NC)—The first public appearance of a minister, as a witness under subpoena, produced one of the most tumultuous sessions in the history of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The witness, the Rev. Jack Richard McMichael, a Methodist pastor of Upper Lake Calif., denied knowing three witnesses who previously had told the committee that the minister had Communist connections.

The hearings was marked by name-calling, gavel-banging and verbal exchanges that sent tempers soaring.

One committee member told Mr. McMichael that his interruptions of committee members verged on contempt of Congress. Rep. Kit Cloud of Michigan told the minister that if he had been in court as he had before the committee he "would have been put in jail." "You are the most obtuse witness we have ever had," he added.

REP. DONALD L. Jackson of California interrupted proceedings at one point to object that Mr. McMichael had "brought in the Almighty unnecessarily."

Mr. McMichael was described as the first minister to appear publicly before the House Un-American Activities Committee in response to a subpoena. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of the same committee a Methodist church had appeared few days before, but he himself had requested the opportunity to appear.

It also was said of Mr. McMichael that he was the first minister to appear publicly to be questioned on direct charges of Communist membership. It was brought out that Mr. McMichael previously had appeared before a Senate committee.

Also, at the time of Mr. McMichael's appearance, the committee made public testimony given before a subcommittee behind closed doors in Los Angeles on Sept. 12, 1951. The witness was identified as the Rev. Stephen H. Friedman, a Los Angeles Unitarian minister, and it was reported that he had refused to answer questions as to whether he was a member of the Communist Party or organizations all alleged to be Communist fronts or questions about associations with individuals connected with these organizations. He refused the committee said, on the grounds of his

privilege under the Fifth Amendment.

THE THREE EARLIER witnesses who confronted Mr. McMichael during his appearance before the House committee were Manning Johnson, middle-aged Negro and one-time Communist who was FBI undercover agent leader, and John J. and Martha N. Edmiston, husband and wife, moving in Communist circles in Ohio in 1940 and 1941.

Mr. and Mrs. Edmiston told the committee that they had met Mr. McMichael in youth congress activities which were Communist directed in Ohio.

Mr. McMichael vigorously denied to the committee charges that he had been a Communist. When told of the earlier testimony of these three witnesses, said he did not know them by he denounced his accusers and names. Perhaps, he said, if they were brought forward and he could see them, he might be able to tell whether he ever saw them before.

LATER, WHEN Mr. Johnson stood within a few feet of the witness, Mr. McMichael told the committee: "I don't know him."

Confronted with Edmiston, Mr. McMichael said: "I don't recognize him. I wouldn't say I don't know him." A little later, asked directly by Representative Gordon H. Sreer of Ohio, "Are you sure you don't know him?" Mr. McMichael said: "I don't know him."

When Mrs. Edmiston came forward, Mr. McMichael said: "I don't know her, sir, I don't know that I've ever seen her. I don't recall that I ever met her."

Saturday Night 'Carousing' Scored

San Antonio—(NC)—Closing a four-day annual convention here, the Catholic Central Verein of America adopted resolutions condemning "the frightful barbarism of atom bombing"; the "widespread misuse" of Saturday nights and Sunday mornings for "partying and carousing," and the "hasty and perfunctory attendance at Sunday Masses."

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