

Clergy Advised On Social Security

Washington — (NC) — The Internal Revenue Service announced here that clergymen who have applied for coverage in the social security system, but who now wish to withdraw their applications, must take action before April 16 in order to avoid being included on its rolls. A written notice of withdrawal must be filed with the district director.

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Thin and undernourished after four years of harsh imprisonment under the Chinese Reds, Father Harold Rigney, first American priest released under the Geneva Agreements, talks with reporters following his arrival in Hong Kong last September. The 54-year-old missionary was rector of the Fu Jen Catholic University in Peiping until his imprisonment in July, 1951. When he arrived in Hong Kong after his release by the Reds he carried the scars of chains on his legs.

Fr. Rigney Starves In Prison

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They consisted of "kan fan" (dry, steamed rice) or "man tou" (Chinese steamed wheat flour bread) with meat soup. The meat was cut to the size of bouillon cubes. Each prisoner usually received three or four meat cubes, but sometimes none at all. In my first year in prison, I think I received at most three or four ounces of meat.

How I longed for a good meal! But how I longed for salt, too!

I was salt starved because our diet was deficient in this very important respect. Most prisoners had private supplies of salt, either purchased or sent them by relatives. I was not allowed at first to buy salt or receive any items from the outside.

A cellmate, quite a decent fellow who had his own supply, once gave me a pinch of salt in my bowl of water when no one was looking. I still recall how delicious the water tasted. A week later I asked him again for a pinch of salt, but he refused.

Later I learned it was against the rules to give anything to a fellow prisoner without permission of the chu chang (cell leader). Giving was regarded as an imperialistic way of making friends, and friendship between

prisoners was strictly forbidden. Hell is like this. There are no friendships there.

I considered salt the most important item I could buy or have sent to me during my first year in prison. Next in importance was toilet paper and the third was soap.

Our toilet paper consisted of a course paper about two and a half feet long and a foot wide. On receiving it, the prisoners tore it into oblongs 4 inches long and 2½ inches wide.

The government supplied toilet paper and soap only to those prisoners who lacked money or permission to buy anything and to those who failed to get supplies from the outside. But since government supplies were inadequate, the prisoners were on the alert for scraps of paper of any kind and for used laundry water with suds, which they reused to wash their clothes.

After a month or so in prison, I was allowed to buy toilet paper and soap. The rats, however, ate the soap and for about four months I washed my feet and hands in cold water without soap.

I remember the morning I washed my face for the first time. I had returned from a court session early enough to get a nap of an hour or so when the signal for rising was given, everybody jumped up, dressed and began to wash.

First to wash was the cell leader. He washed his face and hands in about a pint of water. Then the others followed. I was last. By that time the pint of water was full of dirt. Bathing was another problem. In my quarters at Fu Jen

Catholic University in Peiping, I bathed two or three times a day. But in prison it was different. From the time I was incarcerated on July 25, 1951, until mid-November of that year, I had only two or three sponge baths in my cell, each with about one quart of cold water.

Dirt Accumulates
During this time I accumulated layers of sweat and dirt. I was wretched. I often asked the court to allow me a hot bath, but was always told that I had to confess first. My cellmates scolded me and said I gave off a disagreeable smell and one day the cell leader shouted that he didn't like my smell and ordered me to sit in a corner. I replied that all I needed was a hot bath.

Before long I was full of lice. Later, the prisoners linked the fact that I had lice with the Communist charge that the Americans were carrying on germ warfare in Korea. During that period, whenever a cellmate found he had lice he would usually point to me and say: "These came from that American imperialist!"

Lice Hunting
Searching for lice on one's clothing becomes a daily routine. Each prisoner undressed and thoroughly examined his clothing for vermin. I always felt relieved when I discovered and killed any of the insects. The more I found, the more relieved I felt. The most I ever found in one search was nine, and I became quite expert in the technique of lice hunting.

That such an occupation could become a form of mental relief indicates how dull was prison life at Tsao Lan Tzu.

My first day in prison was spent in a court session that lasted until long after daybreak. Fatigued from my night's ordeal, I returned to my cell and lay down on the wooden kang (bed) to sleep. But my cellmates soon swarmed around me, telling me it was forbidden to sleep in the daytime.

During the court sessions that followed, the judge insisted I was a spy. I denied it. At one of the hearings during the initial phase of my imprisonment, the judge informed me that I disclosed the price of millet (about 1¢), the staple food of North China, in one of my

monthly reports to my superior general in Rome. This, he said, was economic intelligence and was as important as military intelligence. Furthermore, he declared, this economic information that I gave to the Vatican and to America, was responsible for the economic embargo that Washington had imposed on China.

I replied that I only reported to my superior general that the price of millet was going up in an effort to explain why we increased salaries at Fu Jen University. In the early days of the Communist occupation, salaries were calculated in terms of "catties," or pounds of millet.

Angrily, the judge accused me of arguing. I was not allowed to argue, he said: I was only in court to confess my crimes. But my only "crimes" were that I sent those reports to my superior general and had copies sent to Father Ralph in Chicago. I dispatched them either by mail from Peiping or via travelers bound for Hong Kong, where they would be given to the Rev. Joseph Henkel, S.V.D., to forward them to their destination.

Reports Seized
My friend was searched by a customs officer who confiscated the reports, but who assured him they would be returned in a few days.

Weeks passed and they were never returned.

The judge told me (and I am certain this was a lie) that the court had all those monthly reports. Therefore, he said, I could not hide anything from the court, but would be forced to confess everything about them. If I failed to confess about any item in the reports the court would know that I was dishonest, he concluded. He then emphasized that my reports contained economic intelligence.

Judge Stresses Points
The judge hammered on these points for the next three or four days.

Finally, I said that if the Communist government considered the gathering of newspaper

reports about the price of millet and the relay of this information to others as intelligence work, then I did intelligence work. But, I insisted, I was not a professional spy. This angered the judge. He shouted that I was a spy and that was all there was to it. Copyright, 1956, by the Very Rev. E. W. Rigney, S.V.D. All Rights Reserved. NEXT WEEK: Father Rigney is sentenced to death.

Chief Justice
Vatican City — (NC) — Japan's foremost Catholic layman, Ektaro Tanaka, president of the Japanese Supreme Court, was received in private audience by Pope Plus XII with his wife, Mrs. Mineko Tanaka, also a Catholic.

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