

Fr. Rigney Placed In Fetters, Given Death Sentence

This third chapter of the compelling, shocking, story of the imprisonment of the Very Rev. Harold W. Rigney, S.V.D., is presented here in the Courier-Journal through the courtesy of the Chicago Sun-Times Syndicate.

The first 60 days and nights of my trial in a Peiping "People's" court were a terrible ordeal. During them, I admitted that my relaying of the price of millet in Chinese markets to my superior general in Rome might have constituted economic intelligence. But I steadfastly denied I was a spy.

Then I spent about two weeks in almost continuous day and night sessions in court. During that period, I admitted having written, in one of my monthly reports to my superior general, of my efforts to prevent a strike of students at Fu Jen Catholic University in Peiping, where I was rector. The court called this an act designed to sabotage the progressive movement in Communist China.

I also admitted having relayed rumors to friends who were in the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and in the U.S. consulate in Peiping. The court continued intelligence work. Under compulsion, I agreed reluctantly that by the court's definition of intelligence work, it could be construed that I had engaged in such work in relaying the rumors. But denied again I was a professional spy.

After those two weeks, I told the judge I had no more to "confess."

He pounded the desk furiously and shouted: "Are you an OSS or a State Department agent?" "I am an agent of neither," I replied, "although I reported intelligence to them as I have admitted."

Placed in Irons
The judge then directed the Sepo (Chinese Security Police) guard to put fetters on me. The guard ordered me to sit on the floor with my legs outstretched. He then proceeded to put the irons on my legs. He fastened them with an iron bolt that he hammered into place with loud clanging.

The guard then took me to the drill grounds, where I was obliged to walk back and forth for 15 minutes until my ankles were raw and bleeding from the fetters.

Then I was returned to the court, where I was ordered to stand at attention before the judge, who asked me again: "Are you an OSS agent or a State Department agent?"

I repeated I was an agent of neither. Roughly, the guard seized me and handcuffed my hands behind my back. As the cuffs had no chains, my wrists almost touched. The handcuffs were rough and dirty and soon cut into my skin.

Again, the judge asked if I were an agent of the OSS or the State Department. Again I gave the same reply.

Sentence Of Death
Then he picked up a sheet of paper, wrote on it and looked at me steadily.

"You are condemned to death," he said. I was stunned but calm. "I die a martyr to the truth," I answered. "You die an imperialist spy!" he shouted and motioned me to leave the courtroom. Slowly, I walked to the door, dragging my shackles. There I turned and said to the judge:

"Since I am going to die, I want a priest. I am a Catholic and I want a priest before I die. You say you guarantee freedom of religion; therefore, you must allow me to see a priest."

"There is no time for such! Get out of here!" he shouted. As I left the court, I heard a bugle blow and saw a number of military guards rush out of their barracks. The firing squad, I thought, as I slowly walked toward the drill ground with an armed guard bringing up the rear.

It would be better, I mused, to die standing up than in the traditional way of kneeling and having a bullet shot into the back of my head.

I said my act of contrition and offered my life for the conversion of China, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of my relatives, benefactors and friends, and, lastly, for the spiritual welfare of my persecutors.

Sense Of Peace
I felt a deep sense of peace and even joy at the thought that, as a missionary bearing testimony to Christ, I was to die a martyr, as countless missionaries and apostles had done before me.

I had read much about the heroes who died for Christian virtue, usually faith. Now I was to join that noble group, a martyr for another Christian virtue: the Truth.

The world might be deceived by the lies of my Communist executioners and consider I died a spy. But God would know that I died a martyr and that was all that mattered.



Condemned to death, Father Rigney stumbles out of the courtroom door, dragging his chains and followed by the guard holding a rifle to his back. He thought he was about to die a martyr, a martyr to Truth.

old Manchu physician, refused to join in torturing me, but the chu chang (cell leader) ordered him to participate in the "tou cheng."

"A tou cheng is a means of mental torture employed by newly converted pro-Communist prisoners against an anti-Communist cellmate. The pro-Communist would shout at, insult and accuse the prisoner for hours on end in an effort to break down his resistance and make him confess his 'crimes.'"

Told To Move On
On reaching the drill grounds, I saw two bare walls. I did not know before which wall to stand and I tried to my guard for instructions. But he said angrily: "Tou! Tou! (Go! Go!)"

"Well," I thought, "I am not to die now, but later, most likely this afternoon."

I was returned to my cell. As soon as I entered, with my hands chained behind me and my legs in irons, my cellmates hurled abusive language at me and forced me to kneel.

Crimes Not Mentioned
No one is told what are the "crimes" charged against him, either at his arrest or at his trial. Yet, he must confess to the crimes with which he is charged.

Goes On For Hours
It was brought to a halt when I was called back to court. Not long after the opening of the session, I gathered from the judge's questions that I was not to be shot. The death sentence he had passed on me was only a bluff.

Obviously, the judge had hoped, when he ordered my execution, that I would beg for my life and confess that I was a spy.

His plan backfired, but at almost every court session in the

next two years, the judge threatened to have me shot.

Repeated Statement
I was told that over and over again, with long and full explanations, by the judge, the chu changs and my cellmates.

The differences follow: In the courts of the "imperialist" lands, prisoners are punished for what they confess, not for what they do not confess.

In the courts of the "people's democracies" — such as Red China — prisoners are punished not for what they confess, but for what they do not confess.

Just confess your crimes and you will be forgiven, so I was told.

The torture was abated only when he confessed something. But if the court deemed his confession inadequate, he was subjected to more torture.

This went on for six months. Later I was told that he made a confession that "stood up" in court and he was finally sentenced. But I have a feeling that the venerable old gentleman is still rotting in one of Peiping's many prisons.

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NEXT WEEK: Delirium, confession, and the plot to kill Red Chinese Premier Mao Tse-tung.

leap year rule so that the same situation would not occur again. **SO FEBRUARY 29** has been a "curiosity" among the dates of our years. It is the birthday of nearly 100,000 Americans, who are thus placed in the odd position of having an authentic birthday only once in four years.

The common law provides that they are entitled to observe February 29 as their natal date in non-leap years. This procedure is based on a royal proclamation made by Henry 3rd in the year 1236.

Rossini, the musical composer, was born on February 29, 1792. Seventy-two years later he celebrated what he called his 18th birthday with a festival, where he declared his intention of turning over a new leaf and disregarding "the frivolities of youth and the indiscretions of a teenager."

Church, Hornell, and deal of the wrong about its being his 18th birthday, for the year 1800 was not a leap year, so the festival celebration occurred on what was really his 17th.

One of the little-known facts about leap year is its connection with playing cards. Historians say that playing cards, as we know them today, are probably a development of small one-week Egyptian card-calendars, which originally were combined into a pack of 52, to make a complete calendar for one year. The 53rd card, now a joker, was provided to take care of the odd 366th day in leap year.

Apostleship Of Prayer
The general intention recommended to the prayers of all Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer for the month of March is "All the Intentions of the Holy Father."

This intention has been selected in observance of the birthday and election anniversary of the Pope which is observed on March 2.

The intentions included by the Holy Father in his prayers are: reparation for sin, the relief of those who are suffering, the triumph of the Church in the world, and the salvation of all men.

A detailed explanation of the March intention is published in the current issue of the "Messenger of the Sacred Heart" official magazine of the Apostleship of Prayer.

Churchmen Back Released-Time Bill

Phoenix, Ariz. — (RNS) — Protestant and Catholic leaders in Arizona are backing a bill introduced in the Senate calling for a released-time religious education program in the public schools.

Support of the measure has been announced by the Catholic Diocese of Tucson.

The Rev. Fred Crumb, chaplain of Maricopa County's Christian Institutional ministry, has been named chairman of a Protestant committee to work for passage of the bill.

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A PHOTO A TRAITOR A MARTYR!

Rev. Andrew Solo, C.M.F., a heroic Claretian Missioner, defies the persecutors of the Church ministering to the faithful of Leon, Mexico, as in the catacombs of old. A chance photograph catches him administering First Communion. That picture wins for the underground Apostle the martyr's crown. On April 25th, 1927 Fr. Solo was arrested and shot, dying a victim of religious hatred and persecution. In his long agony he prayed: "My Jesus, mercy . . . O Jesus, I die for Thee, O Jesus, I die for love of Thee."—His cause of beatification is nearing conclusion.

Won't you help us to replace this great Missioner (and 236 other Claretian Missionaries, murdered in Spain). Then in your noble generosity establish a purse (\$2,500.00) or help to complete one in memory of the Claretian Martyr Rev. Andrew Solo. Your help is **URGENTLY** needed. God wills it! Today!

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Leap Year Every Four Years Girls Have Their Turn

Open season for bachelors is here again. It's 1956. In other words, it's Leap Year! For unmarried women from 16 to 60, restraint and convention will be let out the door and female proposals will fly—go the leap year legend goes. But is it really just folklore?

FACT AND FABLE are strangely mingled in the history of leap year. You'll be surprised to know that this once-in-four-years proposal privilege for women is not merely an unofficial tradition but based on actual legislation, enacted in at least four different countries several hundred years ago.

It is said to have all started in Ireland by St. Patrick in the fifth century.

In the year 1288 there was an act passed by the Scottish Parliament in which "it is statute and ordain that for every year known as lepe yeare, every mayden ladie, of both high and lowe estate, shall have libertie to bespeke ye man she likes."

A few years later a similar law was passed in France. Then in the 15th century, just before Columbus sailed for America, the tradition was legalized in Italy by the governments of Genoa and Florence. In England the custom had become a part of the common law by 1600, when the legal books defined it thus: "As oft as lepe yeare doth return ye ladies have ye privilege of making love to ye men, which they doe either by wordes or by lookes, as to them seemeth proper."

In old England, a man who refused a leap-year proposal had to pay a silk gown as a forfeit.

Why do we have leap year, with its extra day? Who started it? How necessary is it?

LEAP YEARS we shall always have, because they are a mathematical necessity. The extra dividend of one day which Father Time pays us in 1956 is a device of the astronomers to keep our years in step with the sun and the seasons.

The reason for leap year is found in the astronomical length of the year.

A year is the time it takes the earth to circle the sun—and the astronomers have worked this out as approximately 365.2425 days, or 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds. So we have a calendar with 365 days in ordinary years, and every four years we add a "leap day," which picks up the extra frac-

tion and keeps our calendar in step with the seasons.

This still isn't quite exact enough, so we omit leap day in "century years" three times in four centuries. The rule is — only century years divisible by 400 are leap years. Thus leap year days were omitted in the years 1700, 1800 and 1900. The year 1600 was a leap year and again 2000 will be a leap year.

FOUNDER OF leap year was Julius Caesar, who is the grand father of the calendar we now use. He got the idea from the Egyptian astronomers, who had long before suggested the insertion of an extra day every four years but had been unable to get the Egyptian people to adopt it. The Roman emperor put it into his calendar in 45 B.C., but it was so much of a novelty and so poorly understood by the Roman authorities that for a generation they mistakenly made

Hollywood? No, not the movie capital, but a Scottish monk of the 13th century named John of Holywood. He made a sensational discovery. He proved that the Julian calendar was currently seven days behind the real data calculated according to the sun. He pointed out that Julius Caesar's leap year rule was at fault, and started a propaganda campaign to correct it. But it was not until three centuries later that his campaign bore fruit.

Then Pope Gregory fixed the things up, dropping ten days out of the year and amending the



Attorney General At Fordham

New York — (NC) — Attorney General Herbert Brownell Jr., receives the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws of Fordham University from the Very Rev. Lawrence J. McGinley, S.J., university president, in a ceremony preceding the 50th anniversary luncheon of the Fordham Law Alumni. Father McGinley described the Attorney General as having a "just claim upon the nation's lasting gratitude by reason of the determined steps which he has taken to bring to justice those whose subversive activities have posed a threat to the very life of our republic."

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