

Red Persecutions Of Church Still In Full Force

(Continued from Page 1)

prived of their hearing. Never again would they be able to listen to the teachings of evil men. Now two Viet Minh (Communist) guards went to each child and one of them firmly grasped the head between his hands. The other then rammed a wooden chooped chopstick into each ear. He jammed it in with all his force. The stick split the ear canal wide and tore the ear drum. The shrieking of the children was heard all over the village.

Such torture is incredible. But it is true. The tortures of communism, however, have been tortures of the mind more than of the body. But they are no less diabolical.

THE CURTAINS of bamboo and iron make it virtually impossible to get more than a fragmentary picture of true life under totalitarian communism, particularly of the 60 million members of the Silent Church. But what glimpses are available add up to this:

In northern Vietnam there is open season on the Church. Hundreds of priests and laymen in this area that was a bastion of the Church in southeast Asia are rotting in jails. The Reds delight in desecrating churches and tabernacles, and the Catholics are forced to attend blasphemous lectures mocking their most cherished beliefs.

Some 633,000 Catholics have fled from the Red rule, but many who remain have dared show their resistance to the godless master. The communist government itself admitted in early November that Catholic villagers were revolting in Nghe An province. The rebellion was short-lived, however, and the Red regime commented that when government troops moved in to quell it, "a number of persons were killed or wounded."

The situation in China is little brighter. The 5,000 Catholic missionaries from abroad—who once labored there have almost all been expelled or have died. Seven foreign missionaries—five Americans and two Koreans—are still in Red Chinese prisons, and other foreign missionary priests are still free—communist style. A small group of Sisters is free to conduct a school for children of foreign diplomatic officials in the capital at Peking.

OF THE NATIVE clergy, about 600 are under arrest, the other 1,400 carrying on "under severely restricted conditions." The heroic Ordinary of Shanghai, Bishop Ignatius Kung, was arrested with hundreds of his priests and faithful in 1952, and still languishes in jail. Some native Bishops and priests who have been imprisoned have not been heard from by their flocks for years.

Father Harold Rigney, Divine Word missionary who was in a communist jail for five years, holds that the only hope for the 3,500,000 Catholics and 500,000



CARDINAL STEPINAC
Yugoslavia

Protestants of China is a miracle wrought by prayer to save "these noble people from the wicked Chinese communists."

In the Soviet Union, the picture somewhat varies, from a false facade of religious "freedom" for some subjugated peoples to the grim repetition of "the horrible and criminal sacrifices which are repeated and increased every day against God and the souls of the innumerable population" which Pope Pius XI protested against more than a quarter-century ago.

But the signs are that the age of brutal persecution of religion is being abandoned as impractical. The Kremlin knows that millions, even among the young, are steadfast Christians despite nearly 40 years of such persecution.

The new tack is the "patience" one, which may well prove effective. It is the disbanding of the long-run. The communist youth organ, Komsomolskaya Pravda, recently summed it up this way: "No one wants to hurt the feelings of believers... (But) the battle against religion must be carried on."

It may well be that in actually releasing some bishops, priests and faithful from forced labor camps and jails, the Reds are carrying out the strategy of this "battle."

Among those the communist propagandists say have been released are Auxiliary Bishop Francis Ramanauskas of Telšiai and 102 other Lithuanian priests. And Bishop Theophilus Matullonis of Kalsedorys, once thought dead, is known to be alive at 83, and is said to be living in his native land after years in jail. Outside of Lithuania and Latvia, the hierarchy in the Soviet



ARCHBISHOP BERAN
Czechoslovakia

Union is to all effects extinct. The Byzantine Rite Catholics of the Ukraine and of the annexed areas of eastern Poland live in the underground.

THE OLD RUSSIAN Empire counted some 3,300 Catholic churches. Today, as far as is known, there are only four churches in all of the Soviet Union outside Lithuania and Latvia. These are in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Tbilisi.

It is in the communist states of central and southeastern Europe that the status of the Church has changed the most in 1956. In Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania, the Church, never strong, has been virtually liquidated.

The last member of the Albanian hierarchy, Bishop Bernardine Shkaku of Pulati, died in early November.

It was confirmed at the Vatican just before Advent began that the last free bishop in Bulgaria, Bishop Cyril Kureff, Apostolic Exarch for Bulgarian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, had been arrested in Sofia.

IN RUMANIA, the old stronghold of the Catholic Church in the Balkans, only two bishops are free to do limited work among the country's 11 Sees. Reports of unrest recently indicated that as in the other satellites, the population's seething hatred against the communist oppressor is increasing. But the blackout

on news of the Church is virtually a complete one.

IN YUGOSLAVIA, the hand of the dictator Tito weighs no less heavily on the people. The symbol of the persecution of the Church is the Primate of Croatia, His Eminence Aloysius Cardinal Stepinac, now in his 11th year of being barred from his ecclesiastical duties. Arrested in September, 1946, the Cardinal Archbishop was duly convicted and sentenced under communist justice, but was released and confined to his tiny native village of Krasic five years ago. There he remains.

In the past year, the arrest of priests for such anti-state activities as referring to St. Joseph as "the patron of the workers" has been stepped up. In August, the Red regime ordered the Catholic seminary at Split closed for an eight-year period, leaving only four seminaries—all under close surveillance—in the whole country.

IN HUNGARY, the situation of the Church prior to the people's fight for freedom appeared one of improvement. Even before the ouster of the Stalinist communist boss, Matyas Rakosi, in mid-summer, the Reds had granted more freedom to the Church. Archbishop Jozsef Groesz of Kalocsa, who had been imprisoned in 1951, was released and allowed to return to his post—the first Ordinary behind the Iron Curtain actually permitted to resume his Church duties. A number of priests were free from jail, and there were even pleas from avowed communists that the propagandists "old empty commonplaces about religion" be dropped and that the regime enter into genuine discussions with the churches.

In the chaotic state which has followed the Soviet bloodbath against the popular rebellion, the status of the Church is in the balance. His Eminence Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty, the Prince Primate, is on the free soil of the U.S. Legation in Budapest, but unable to communicate with his flock. Nonetheless, the Bishops and their people—constituting two-thirds of the population—seem to have more religious freedom than they had a year ago.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA has remained a stronghold of orthodox communism despite its proximity to the valiant Hungarians and triumphant Poles. The spiritual leader of the Czechs and Slovaks, Archbishop Josef Beran of Prague, has been interned since June of 1949, and there is

no sign that the Reds plan to set him free.

Ten million out of Czechoslovakia's population of 14 million are Catholics but, as is the communist norm, there is no free Catholic press and Catholic education is suppressed. However, unlike the situation a few years ago, Sisters now venture on to the streets. The people crowd their churches for Mass—even on weekday feasts. But the only free Bishops were forced to take

an oath of allegiance to the communist in 1951, and even they are under constant surveillance.

The Church in the Soviet Zone of Germany has been subjected to increasing pressures from the communist regime. The Reds have stepped up their campaign to replace the sacrament of Confirmation with pagan youth initiation rites glorifying the communist state.

Last spring, shortly after the Bishops of East Germany had

joined their brethren of the Federal Republic in a joint pastoral letter warning of the "monstrous danger" of atheistic materialism, the Reds in Berlin made new moves against religious instruction. They banned all religious teaching in the high schools, and made it virtually impossible for elementary school children to attend religion classes.

THE BARRAGE spot in the old Stalinist empire is Poland: With the nationalist revolt in October that brought Wislawa Gomułka to the helm of the Polish communist hierarchy, a seemingly genuine thaw set in. The groundwork was laid on August 26, when at least a million Poles journeyed to their national shrine to Our Lady in Czestochowa in a spontaneous demonstration of

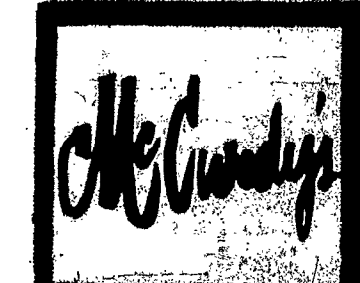
their faith after ten years of Marxist repression. Some 180,000 persons received Holy Communion. Whether symptom or cause, the government ruling the nation whose population is 90 per cent Catholic was in for radical changes within two months.

His Eminence Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, Archbishop of Gdansk and Warsaw and Primate of Poland, was released after three years' imprisonment. The government has agreed to restore religious instruction in the schools. At least three Catholic publications are being restored to the Church. The Cardinal Primate has virtually a free hand in the filling of Church posts.



Christmas is a child's day. A day to cherish and to remember all of a lifetime. It's the red and white striped taste of peppermint. It's the first tart-sweet bite of an apple from the top of a stocking. It's the scent of pine and holly, of gingerbread and sugarplums, of painted toys and tinselled dolls, and the unmistakable air of happiness that comes out of great boxes and from behind closed doors.

It's the swish of a new dress and the uncertainty of new ice skates. It's cold snow and warm fire. It's young voices and old hymns. It's the treble laughter, the rushing footsteps, the earnest belief, the almost unbearable expectancy on upturned young faces. If there is no child in your family or if yours have grown up... find one to give to. There's no richer, no more rewarding way to celebrate the birthday of another child born in Bethlehem centuries ago.



There's Christmas Magic in a gift from

GOD LOVE YOU!

By MOST REV. FULTON J. SHEEN

WE ARE THINKING of a word, but no reader of this column knows what it is until he is told. As soon as I say the word "May" you know the word I was thinking of, namely, the name of the Mother of Jesus. Now that the word is written in this column you know it because the "word was made flesh."

We could never know what God's thoughts are unless He told us; some of these thoughts He revealed through the prophets and the writings in the Old Testament. But we could never know the Mind of God in a more thorough manner, unless He appeared in this world and lived amongst us. Such is the meaning of Christmas: "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us."

Our Lord who is the Son of God had two generations or what we might call "propagations". One was eternal in the sense that without beginning He is co-eternal with His Father. As the vase and its reflection on the mirror are simultaneous, as in an earthly family a man does not begin to be a father until he has a child, so in Heaven, the Father did not precede the Son nor the Son the Father. The second propagation or generation was in time, when the Word or the Son of God took on Himself something he never had before, namely, a human nature. Hence Our Lord is called both "Son of God" and "Son of Man".

But there is another Propagation added to the Eternal in the bosom of the Father and the Temporal in the womb of Mary and that is the Propagation of the Faith which is the Holy Father's own society to extend the blessedness of the first two propagations to the 1,400,000,000 pagans who know not this mystery.

For all you have done to aid our missionaries, for all your sacrifices which have more closely united you to the Cross of Our Lord, for all your love of the pagans who are stumbling in the dark toward the light of the world, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in the name of the Eternal Generation or Propagation of the Word, and in the name of the Temporal Generation or Propagation of the Word made flesh, wishes you a Blessed Christmas in Christ Jesus Our Lord!

GOD LOVE YOU! to N.J.W.Jr. "Enclosed is \$10 that I was saving toward a bill due. After consideration I figured the Golden Rule would be of more benefit to you. I'm sending this to you to use for the Missions." to R.M.Z. "I was going to buy a Bethlehem Stable at school but I'm sending this dollar to you so that some person can have it. Maybe it will make someone's Christmas a little better. I am eight years old and I'm in the third grade." to E.W.H.E.S.T.M. Everyone Who Has Ever Sacrificed For The Missions in this year of 1956

In 1957 resolve to pray to Mary daily on the **WORLD MISSION ROSARY** for an offering of \$2 sent to our **ORDER DEPARTMENT** you will be able to keep at least one New Year's resolution for we will send you the World Mission Rosary upon request.

Cut out this column, pin your sacrifice to it and mail it to the Most Rev. Fulton J. Sheen, National Director of The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 336 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y., or your Diocesan Director, Rev. George S. Wood, 50 Chestnut Street, Rochester 4, New York.