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Refugee Heads Department At St. John Fisher

By FRANK KELLY

After years of fear behind the Iron Curtain, a Ukrainian scientist has finally found at St. John Fisher College the peace that he has been looking for.

The last 20 years of the life of Aleksey A. Sirotenko, associate professor of chemistry at the Basilian school in Rochester, have been far from easy.

A life that would now compel him to "immediately enlist in the Army" in spite of my age if this country ever became involved in a war. This shows how much I love my adopted country," he said.

A Ukrainian refugee from Communist Russia, Professor Sirotenko, 49, was once afraid of and hid at the sight of American soldiers. Now he would be more than willing to join them.

Professor Sirotenko, who was born in the Ukraine, the son of a middle-class farmer, in 1908. He is typical of the refugees in Eastern Europe who fled their homelands during the last 20 years due to oppression.

MILD TEMPERED and with the classical manners that distinguishes Europeans most from Americans, the professor first fled the Ukraine during the Communist purge of land-owners in 1933. His father was one of the victims of the communist uprising.

Dr. Sirotenko, who received his B.S. and M.D. degrees from Ukrainian University, first went to Poland and then emigrated to Czechoslovakia in 1943.

He lived in the town of Sarok Poland, which is in the Cracow District and was employed as a chemist, since his medical doctor degree was not recognized in Poland.

"Dying the war, I had no chance to work for the underground, since the storm troopers kept strict watch over all non-Poles in the village that I lived in," Dr. Sirotenko said.

HE ALSO worked as a chemist in Czechoslovakia and from there went to Bavaria in 1945, just prior to the end of the war.

When the war was over, Dr. Sirotenko was still in Bavaria.

"I was deathly afraid of the American soldiers at first, he related. "When they came into Bavaria, the sign on their trucks said 'U.S.' Because of my ignorance, I thought this meant Union of Soviet and it was only after a couple of weeks that I found out that it meant the United States."

A short time later, Dr. Sirotenko was hired to teach at the United Nations University in Munich. At the same time, he took courses at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich, from which he received his Ph.D. degree in chemistry.

In 1947, he applied for admission into the U.S., but it took two years for him to get here, due to red tape. In 1949, he arrived in New York with his wife, Alice, a refugee from Latvia.

Hired by Fordham Jesuit University and Columbia University to do research work in micro-chemistry, he also became associate professor of chemistry for the New England College of Pharmacy in Boston, Mass., before coming to Rochester in 1957.

A MEMBER of the Greek Orthodox Church, Dr. Sirotenko was hired by the Basilians because of his outstanding reputation in the field of chemistry, in spite of being a non-Catholic.

The school was looking for the best man available in the chemistry field. Since he was the best qualified applicant, Dr. Sirotenko was hired.

Dr. Sirotenko has some definite ideas on the difference between American and European students.

"American students are about two years behind their European contemporaries on the high school level. This is due to the difference in curriculum in all the American high schools. In Europe, all the high school students take the same course in America, this is not true in the majority of cases," he said.

DR. SIROTENKO, like most Europeans is a linguist. He can speak Ukrainian, Russian and German fluently and has also partially mastered Polish and Czechoslovakian.

"My English is not so good," he said. "This, your reporter doubts, since he had no trouble at all understanding him."

All Dr. Sirotenko dreams about now is the new chemistry building that is being put up at St. John Fisher College this Spring. He related to the news that a 12-year-old child, counting the cherished toy he wanted for his birthday.

"I was overjoyed at the news. Now I will be able to teach my students in the best possible circumstances with the best facilities available. My students will not quit that meant the United States profit endlessly from this move," he said.



Pre-Cana Course Opens In Auburn

A MARRIAGE PREPARATION Course for engaged couples opened at Auburn Knights of Columbus Home under the sponsorship of the Cayuga Deaneery Council of Catholic Women, Monday March 3; Other sessions will be held March 10, 18, and 24 at 8 p.m.; Photo taken on opening night; (from left): Rev. William J. O'Brien, moderator, pastor of St. Patrick Church, Moravia; Miss Catherine Burns, president; Mrs. James E. O'Donnell, chairman, Russell G. Nolan, and Joan May, who are engaged to wed April 12, in Holy Family Church, one of the many couples who registered; and Rev. Albert Shamon, member of St. Andrews Seminary faculty, Rochester, speaker.

Daily Mass League Gets Recruits

Membership in the Daily Mass League has risen more than 300 since inauguration of a daily Mass crusade at the beginning of Lent, league promoters reported this week. It now totals nearly 4,200.

Application blanks are being made available to diocesan parishes. Harold J. Coleman, one of the league's leading organizers, declared he is confident that there are no diocesan meetings or offices and no promises.

ANY PRACTICING Catholic who has a genuine desire to attend Mass daily -- even if unable to do so regularly because of particular circumstances -- is eligible. Membership requests may be mailed to the Daily Mass League, c/o St. John Fisher College, 1000 North Ave., Rochester 1, N.Y.

The Rev. Edward F. Callens, S.S.C., league director, pointed out that excessive indulgences have been granted to Catholics of the Rochester Diocese for enrollment in the league.

Cooperation in the current league crusade has been extended by the Rochester Neocathal Adoration Society, which has mailed pamphlets and enrollment blanks to its 2,500 members.

Many new applicants have been received from readers of the Catholic Courier Journal, league promoters said.

Head of the promoters is John A. Moore, assisted by Leo Zeller, Matthias J. Kuebel and Edward Principe. E. James Heisey is in charge of the league's speakers' bureau. Angelo DiNunzio is secretary, with George Munch as acting secretary and Martin Gulien as acting treasurer.

Purpose of the broadcasts the station said, was to let the faithful know what the Communists are after and what life would be like under their rule.

Marxism Exposed On Vatican Radio

Vatican City -- (RNS) -- The Vatican Radio stated a series of broadcasts on Communism and Marxist ideologies and aims for Catholic listeners.

Speech Gravity—Dr. Aleksey Sirotenko, associate professor of chemistry at St. John Fisher College, checks the specific gravity of a liquid in one of the laboratories at the college. Dr. Sirotenko is head of the chemistry department and is a refugee from the Ukraine.

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Federation Sets Buffalo Seminar

Lake Erie Region of the National Federation of Catholic College Students in cooperation with the Newman Clubs of Buffalo will present a seminar on "The Foreign Student and the Catholic Student" at Buffalo State Teachers College Sunday, March 9, at 1:30 p.m.

The agenda will include the Invocation by Rev. Bernard A. Weiss, regional moderator of N.F.C.C.S., keynote speech by Edward R. Calhoun, New York State chairman of Foreign Student Relations from Cornell University, and a panel of four foreign students from the various colleges.

Following the panel, the meeting will be broken down into buzz groups for individual discussion. The seminar will close at 4:30 p.m. with a prayer by Rev. Raymond Ash, Newman Club chaplain at University of Buffalo.

Students from Nazareth College, Rosary Hill College, Ganon College, St. Bonaventure University, Canisius College, Niagara University, D'Youville College and Mercyhurst College will attend.

The participating Newman Clubs are University of Rochester, University of Buffalo, Erie County Technical Institute and Buffalo State Teachers College.

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