

14 Years To Hear Story's End

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
Society of St. Columban

London — (NC) — A story I had heard in frozen Manchuria nearly 14 years ago was contained in a leafy book.

From gray-haired Father Joseph Hermanovich of the Marian Fathers, who was a prisoner in Siberia from 1948 to 1955, I picked up the threads.

There were threads dark with sorrow and threads bright with heroism.

One evening in December, 1948, I slipped into the St. Nicholas school for boys run by the Marian Fathers in Harbin, by way of central Manchuria. Father Hermanovich was one of the four.

The Chinese communists raised Harbin and the rest but turned up to test Siberian and Korean borders. Soviet Russia, while officially recognizing the Chinese Nationalist government in Nanking, was obviously in close contact with the Chinese Communist regime in Harbin. The Soviet hammer-and-sickle flag flew over the offices of the Tung Pui Eho Pao (North East Daily), the official Chinese Communist paper.

Harbin was a partly Russian city. Many of the boys attending the St. Nicholas school belonged to refugee families that had fled to Harbin after the Russian revolution of 1917. A large number of these families had false Soviet passports during the days of hopeful illusion that followed the war's end in 1945. Chinese boys also attended the school.

Some high Communist officials, Russian and Chinese, came to the St. Nicholas school for their sons.

I found the Marian Fathers free, active in their work of education, but conscious of their danger. They follow the Discipline Ratio. They had their chapel with its iconostasis, a partition with doors, adorned

with icons, which separates the sanctuary of a church from the choir or nave. Their superior was Archimandrite (Abbot) Andreas Chito, then in his 50s.

We were careful to give the local regime no grounds for complaint. But as we talked that dark December evening, it was clear that the shadow of suspicion hung slowly over us and his little community.

Now, under a summer sky in London, I have heard from his colleague, Father Hermanovich, what followed.

Less than six years later, Archimandrite Chito was dead in a Soviet concentration camp in the Irtysk region. He died a lonely death, on February 11, 1953, with no priest by his side, without medical care.

He could have saved his life by accepting a Soviet proposal. Like Father Hermanovich, he was a well-known Belorussian. He was invited to become head of a schismatic, non-Communist "church" for Belorussia, the Soviet republic bordering on Poland. He refused and died, a neglected 60-year-old prisoner.

The three other priests of the Harbin community were arrested with Archimandrite

San Antonio — (RNS) — True "steady Catholic" Catholic teenagers, surveyed by St. Mary's University here, said the major problems connected with "going steady" were the moral hazard and a restricted social life.

Findings of the survey on dating habits conducted in 43 put "a tendency to be taken Catholic elementary and high schools in San Antonio, and the boys ranked "steady" third among freshmen in 12 U.S. Catholic colleges, were reported in the 27th annual convention of the National Catholic Family Life Bureau here by Brother Gerald Scherpp, Ph.D., university vice-president for operations.

The bulk of the 14,552 young people surveyed were between ages 14 and 18 and came the girl than for the boy.

Brother Gerald said the girls took steady dating, relationships more seriously than boys because they tended to marry at an earlier age. He added that the encouragement of an intimate relationship that might result in pregnancy and jeopardize the interests of alien ideologies and to devise a new pattern for the family based upon Christian and American principles.

"We Catholics," he said, "have for the past 25 years been preparing to meet this challenge. There is our vigorous family and other movements, we have formed a new generation of Catholic-American families conscious of their high vocation."

Financial Crisis
Warsaw — (RNS) — Typical of the various being created by the desire of false liberal-

Family Meet Protests Govt. Intervention

San Antonio — (RNS) — Delegates to the National Catholic Family Life convention here put themselves on record against "an excessive tendency toward government intervention" in family life.

They criticized the recent White House Conference on Children and Youth for "eccentric thinking" which they said would have the government take over functions that can be effectively performed only by the family.

In a conversation address, Alphonse H. Clement, director of the marriage counseling center at Catholic University of America, said the challenge facing American Catholics was "to give the Vatican the decision of false liberal-

He urged Catholics to arrest it in action. It renders for help.

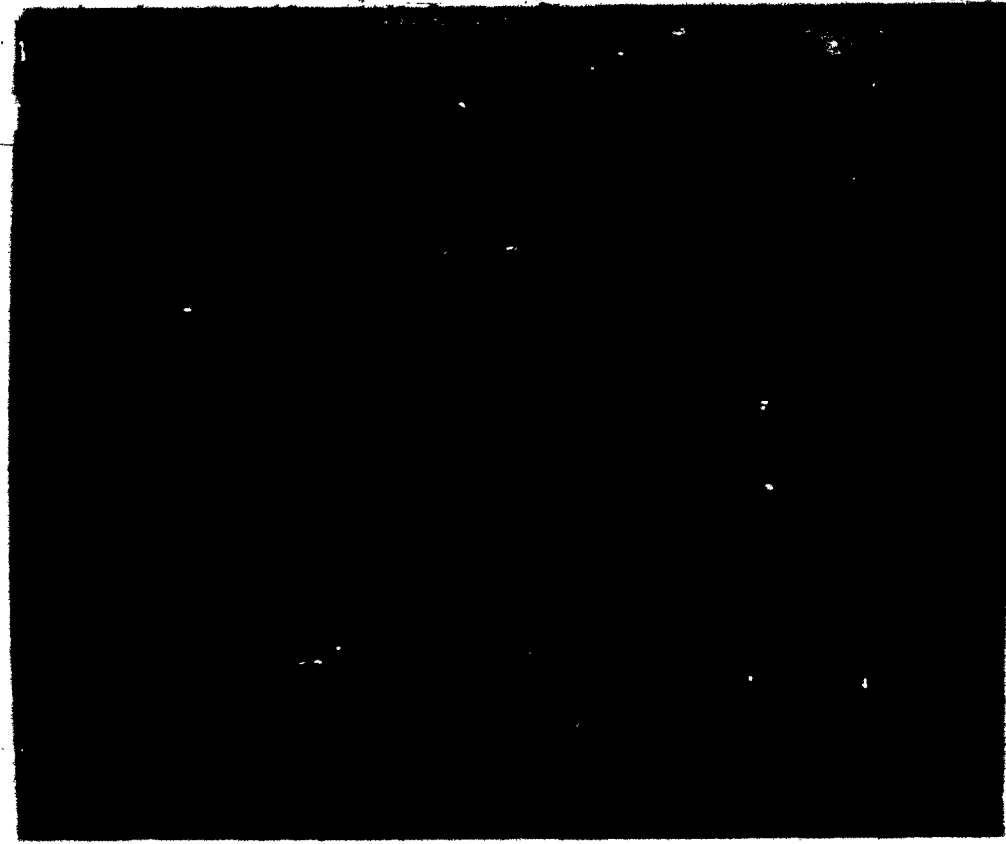
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Polish Loyalty To Faith

Warsaw — (RNS) — Hundreds of thousands of Polish Catholics publicly displayed their loyalty to the Faith on the Feast of Corpus Christi, which commemorates the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday. Carrying church banners and chanting prayers in honor of the Eucharist, the faithful converged on the Church of St. Anne and on St. John's Cathedral, where Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, led separate services, assisted by other members of the Polish hierarchy.

Flower Carpet Honors Eucharist

Commun M House — (NC) — carpet of color. In less than 24 hours, the people of this town at the hour — the quarter-mile-long parade of flowers on a long street is transformed into thousands of them — for the flower parade.

When the pattern is completed, a priest carries the Blessed Sacrament down the full length of the street to the cathedral below. The copies of the priest and his two assistants are observed to not to disturb the delicate design. All three are careful not to walk on the most complex details of the flower pictures.

The townpeople of Commun have been creating their daily work of art for three centuries. Ever since 1795 when the custom was begun, the people of Commun have passed down from father to son their designs and the right to certain sections of the street.

Work with the flowers does not begin until about 7 p.m. on the first Sunday after the Feast of Corpus Christi. The procession had been transferred to Sunday to permit more visitors to see the flower carpet.

Before the flower painting begins, the designs are chalked out on the cobblestones of the street. Planning of designs, choice of colors and selection of flowers are worked out by the various families and organizations the previous winter.

The street is divided into 16 or 17 sections. A central committee reviews and approves the designs and is careful to alternate the geometric designs with those with faces and figures so that a pleasing variety is achieved.

Remembering Kanchura's letter December, I could guess what that journey meant.

"At the Siberian frontier we were held for half a day as a week, expecting to be killed. A few days later, the Chinese communists were holding us until the Russians agreed to pay for us."

Inside Siberia — Soviet territory — the prisoners were "free" and condemned by Russian judges for crimes allegedly committed in the Chinese territory of Manchuria. Father Hermanovich was condemned as "a spy of the Vatican." Father Chito was found guilty of being "at sole of international espionage."

The priests were kept in a Siberian prison for 11 months and then moved to a concentration camp. Archimandrite Chito was separated from the others. In prison each received only one gram (about one third of an ounce) of food a day. In the concentration camp the sick received 12 grams and the laborers 27 grams. Even the sick tried to do heavy labor, for they knew they had no chance of surviving on the 12 grams a day.

"I worked in the forests, on farms and in factories," Father Hermanovich, now aged 78, said.

The two lay professors from the St. Nicholas school died in Siberia.

Everything religious — prayers, icons, etc. — was taken away from prisoners. Father Hermanovich knew of 26 other Catholic priests in the same camp, which held thousands of captives. There were three Dominican monks in the women's section.

After Stalin's death conditions became less severe. Father Hermanovich was liberated and sent to Poland in April, 1955.

The Japanese prisoners were the first to be released, then the East Germans, followed by the Czechs, Hungarians, Bulgarians and Poles, he recalled. Religious faith lived among the prisoners in spite of the harsh repression, he said. He said he told to members of the Orthodox Church and other denominations, including Baptists, who refused to give up their belief in God.

"Archimandrite Chito carried an altar and hospital table, while a prisoner," he said.

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