

# Refugees From East Germany

# Freedom Won, All Else Sacrificed

(The author of the following article is Catholic chaplain at Hanover's Friedland Transit Camp for refugees from communist-dominated East Germany)

## FATHER WILLIAM SCHEPERJANS

Hanover — (NC) — Huddled around a radio at Friedland refugee camp, a group of young Germans listen to word that East Germany's communist masters have slammed the gates to freedom.

They realize that they were among the last to slip through those gates into West Berlin.

Eyes smoulder with anger. "Declare war!" exclaims one. "Slavery," mutters another.

The day is Sunday, August 12. Only a day before, the young men and women flew from their haven in West Berlin to Hanover. They came in a flight of 350 refugees. Few had more than a tiny case crammed with their belongings.

I make my rounds of the camp. "Thanks be to God," I hear from the lips of most. But for many of

the refugees, escape has meant separation from husbands, sons, brothers.

A woman comes to me weeping. "My oldest boy . . . He's 17 . . . They took him off the train at the check-point . . . Just before Berlin . . . What am I to do?"

It is a question I hear from many. "What am I to do?"

One woman with four children, aged from three to 12, approaches me. Her husband was taken off the train for interrogation and was unable to escape. "What," she asks hopelessly, "am I to do?"

I cannot answer her question. I cannot even give her counsel. Only tyranny and lawlessness have brought this suffering.

I ask many of the refugees how they succeeded in avoiding discovery. The trick, it seems, was to buy a railroad ticket for some point other than Berlin, but to route the journey through Berlin.

"We bought a round-trip ticket from Dresden to Reinsberg via East Berlin," says one family. Another person shows me a ticket from Pasewalk to Leipzig. A third paid for a journey from Frankfurt-an-der-Oder to the Baltic Sea.

All halted short of their "destinations." Yet the step they took from East to West Berlin was the longest journey of their lives.

The communists tightened the net around Berlin before they actually shut its gates. Train passengers with Berlin as their open destination were summarily hauled off the train. Others passing through Berlin were questioned searchingly.

One woman told me her 10-year-old son was interrogated for more than an hour. He told his interrogators nothing, because he had nothing to tell. His mother had kept the secret of their escape from him.

"More than a hundred men were taken off our train," another woman told me.

From all I heard stories of tension and fear,

how they trembled waiting in their seats as the communist police moved down the aisles of the trains checking tickets and asking questions.

A merchant from Pasewalk told me with a joyful smile that he had just made it.

"I did not even close my store or lock the doors," he said.

"I had business in East Berlin. I parked my car in the East Zone near the Brandenburg Gate and just left it standing there. I went with my wife to West Berlin. We had no luggage."

How did he feel about leaving all his possessions behind?

"Material things are not the most important things in life," he said. "Freedom means more. I am happy."

There they were, the Dresden banker just as impoverished as the Neuruppin housewife. They were able to save only their lives. But they have won freedom.

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# Senator, Prelate Trade Charges

## 'Compromise' Excludes Catholic School Pupils

Bones of President Kennedy's aid-to-public-schools plan stirred in their Congressional grave this week. Administration leaders patched together an alleged compromise proposal.

The compromise still leaves six million pupils in U.S. Catholic schools with nary a cent to help them in their education.

Their exclusion is quite puzzling since the proposed legislation follows administration efforts to win Congressional approval for \$20,000,000,000 aid to Latin American nations and \$13,000,000,000 aid to European, Asian and African nations — including East Germany and other Communist nations who despite millions already given them still follow Kremlin leadership.

Many Americans agree with the desire of the President to aid underdeveloped countries but fail to find the logic or sense in pouring billions out of the country while turning a deaf ear to children here at home.

The problem is not stated in all the more dubious when the aid is given to Communist nations. Catholic schools already save the American taxpayers \$2,000,000,000 annually. This continuing contribution to the country, many think, deserves more than a snub.

Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon in a speech at Philadelphia last week blamed the American Catholic bishops for blocking the President's aid-to-public-schools legislation which died in the House Rules Committee last month. The Senator told the American Federation of Teachers, staunch supporters of the aid plan, the bishops' action will stir up a "whirlwind of resentment when the people of this country learn the facts."

He failed to mention that other groups with far more political power than a miter also opposed the school aid proposal — the national federation of Chambers of Commerce and Congressmen from southern states where Catholics are a negligible fraction of the population.

Cardinal Spellman this week countered the Oregon Senator's speech with his own charge that the Morse-backed aid plan is "actually, if not intentionally discriminatory, unwittingly anti-Catholic, and indirectly subversive of all private education."

Any impartial person, the prelate said, must be disturbed by the pressures that have been exerted against Catholics to obtain their approval of the Administration bill.

"One of the most unfair pressures," he commented, "was Senator Morse's ill-conceived and ill-timed warning that continued opposition will cause a flare-up of bigotry."

Cardinal Spellman called up on the Oregon senator to advocate aid legislation which would "provide equal justice for all America's children."

However, he continued, if Senator Morse's "conviction or sense of political expediency will not permit him to do this, then we beseech him to refrain from fanning the embers of religious discord."

The cardinal went on to ask: "Are Catholics no longer free, then, to speak their minds? Are they to be persecuted for exercising their American citizenship? Are they to be penalized for asserting their constitutionally protected right to educate their children in schools which teach religion as part of their curriculum?"

Cardinal Spellman said Catholic leaders do not look upon the public schools as competitors, but as "partners in the great work of educating America's children."

However, he added, "We do not believe that the best interest of this nation can be served by making public school education a monopoly. Yet that would be the eventual outcome if federal aid is granted solely to the public schools, for the weight of triple taxation would become impossible to bear."

In the last war, the prelate noted, Catholics fought side by side with their fellow Americans and "paid a costly sacrifice on the altar of freedom."

"Shall they now be denied their own precious freedom — the right to choose religious schools for their children without incurring an insupportable financial burden?" he asked.

Describing the senator as "an old friend (who) has turned against us" the cardinal said he was reluctantly replying to his speech because "he singled me out by name among the Catholic leaders whose position he attacked."



Concrete foundations are checked by Father James Slattery at Our Lady Queen of Peace parish site, Edgewood Avenue, Brighton.



The big M at Newark means St. Michael's but pupils in the new auditorium note that it can mean their pastor too—Father Joseph McDonnell. Father James Russell, curate, can't find his initial anywhere.

## School Days Soon

Catholic schools of the Diocese open Wednesday, September 6.

Next week's Courier Journal will carry detailed information.

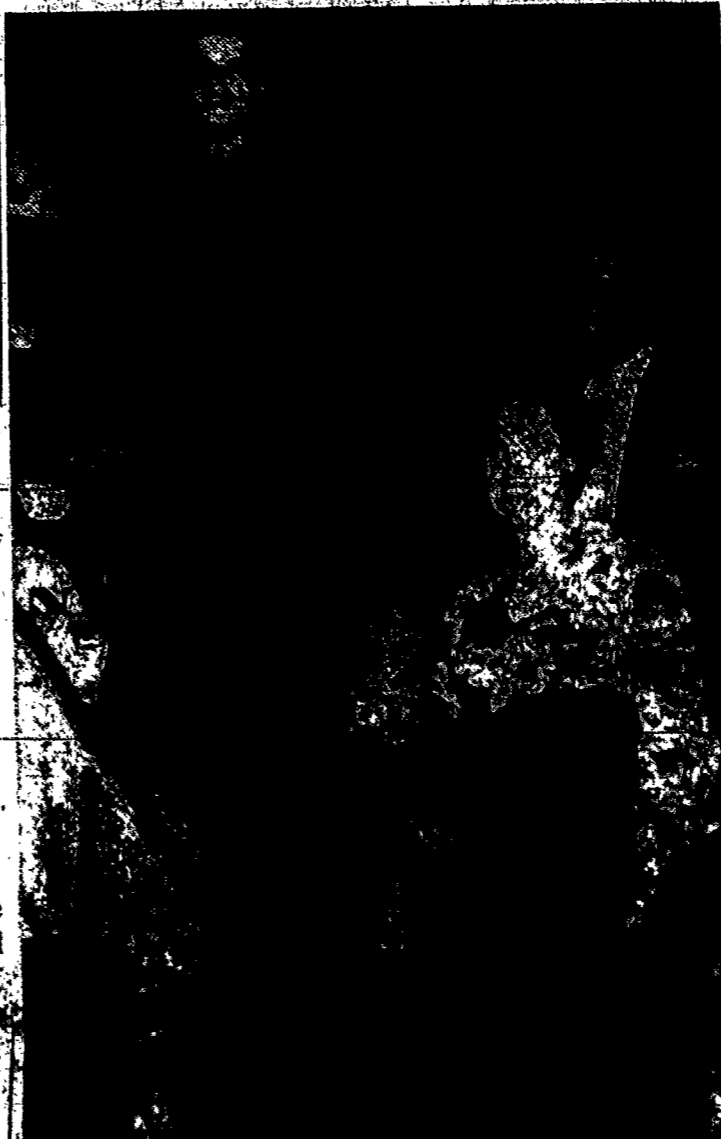
Here on this page to the left you'll see new schools under construction — one just started, another nearing completion and a third all polished and ready.

More pictures are on the first page of the second section.

## Credit Cards Keep Vow

St. Bonaventure — (RNS) — Canadian Franciscan-Friars are now carrying credit cards in compliance with their vow of poverty which calls for the avoidance of money handling.

The Franciscan's strict observance of the poverty ideals stems from the teachings of the order's founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who instructed his followers to divest themselves of worldly things in order to more perfectly serve God.



## His God The Priesthood

Boston — (RNS) — Timothy Thomas of Boston, deaf and speechless since his birth, boards a plane for a pilgrimage to shrines in Italy. Timothy, shown here with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Thomas, hopes to become a priest despite his physical handicaps. While in Italy the youth will visit the famed priest, Padre Pio, to seek the prayers and spiritual guidance of the Capuchin stigmatist. Two years ago Timothy made a similar pilgrimage. At that time, he was received in audience by Pope John XXIII who promised to pray for him.

# Jersey Cross Burning Threatens Negro Families

Bloomfield, N.J. — (RNS) — In the wake of a cross-burning in front of a duplex house about to be purchased by two Negro families, Auxiliary Bishop Walter W. Curtis called here upon parishioners of Sacred Heart church to take the leadership in "racial justice and charity."

Bishop Curtis, who is pastor of the Bloomfield church, made his plea in a statement read at all Sunday Masses and printed in the parish bulletin. He urged all parish societies, particularly the Cane Family Action groups, to bring the community's attention to Christian principles concerning such incidents.

The cross was burned in front of a two-family home here which Mr. and Mrs. Howard E.

White and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Holland of nearby Montclair intend to buy. A day after the cross-burning, Mrs. White received an anonymous phone call with the threat: "If you buy that house, I'm going to kill you, I'm not kidding." Police have been unable to determine who was responsible for either action.

"WE REMIND our parishioners of these teachings:

"1. All men are created by God to His image and likeness. Before God we are of every race and color. Catholics accept this Divine plan by granting equality of rights and opportunity to all men of whatever race or nation.

"2. Christ died upon the Cross as the Saviour of all men. Catholics will not limit His love of Christ to those of one color.

"3. Christ has called us all to spiritual unity in His Mystical Body, the Catholic Church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither white nor black, but in which all are to be one in Christ our Head. Catholics are called upon to hasten the day of this full spiritual unity by their present-day support of racial justice and charity.

"In the light of these teachings, we ask that Catholics accept with calm neighborliness the coming of families of different races among us.

"Finally we wish to make it clear that Sacred Heart parish with its societies and with its school is open to every Catholic within our parish boundaries without restrictions as to race or nationality.

"We invite the prayers of all for an ever widening charity among races and for the spread of the Catholic Faith among all the races of the world."

Meantime, the Whites and Hollands have been receiving encouraging phone calls from friends and relatives supporting their attempt to buy the house.

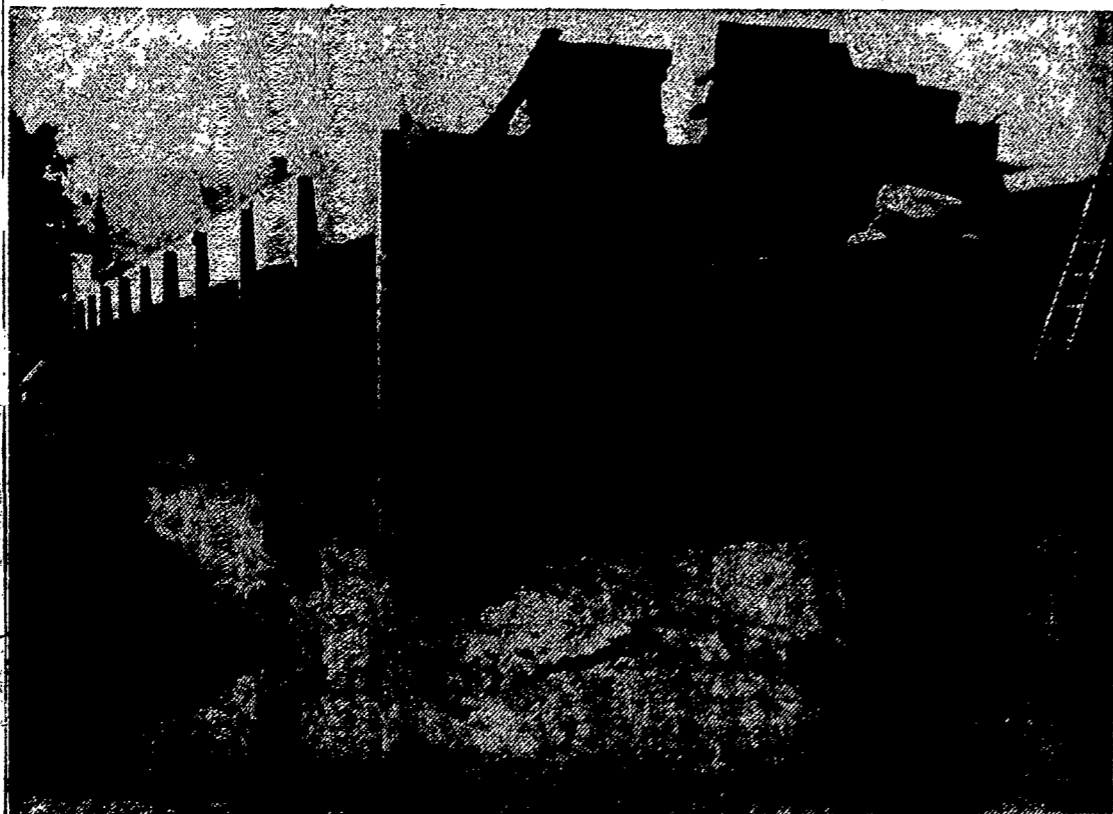
"The problem of racial justice and charity which everywhere haunts the Christian and American conscience," wrote Bishop Curtis, "last week came to Bloomfield dramatized by a burning cross.

"We call upon our parishioners to accept this challenge of the cross," he continued. "Ever since Christ, the Son of God made Man, died upon it for men of all races and nations, the Cross has stood for the fullness of love for God and neighbor. We invite all to hold high this cross by a Christian and unsegregated love.

"Although racial justice and charity are also stern chal-

lenges to our American acceptance of equality of rights and of opportunity for all citizens, at the root they are religious questions. Only the teachings of Christ accepted and lived can now create neighborhoods built upon mutual respect for those who differ from us in race, religion or nationality.

LAST WEEK'S PAID CIRCULATION 66,006



At Palmyra, Father John Neely of St. Ann's parish, leads program of new school scheduled to be blessed September 27.

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Why Aid To Foreign Nations?

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