

North Vietnam Reds Step Up Pressure Against Faith

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
Society of St. Columban

Saigon — (NC) — Catholics in north Vietnam continue to stand firm against the antireligious pressure of the communists. But the pressure has increased. It takes more and more effort for Catholics to stay faithful.

That much is clear, but details are hard to glean. The only travelers who come openly to the south from the north are cautious members of the International Control Commission. Communications exist between Hanoi and Phnompenh (Cambodia) and between Hanoi and Paris, but letter writers dare not be outspoken. The Hanoi radio, entirely communist, is easily heard.

The pressure against the Church has been exerted more slowly and less crudely in north Vietnam than in China.

One reason is that Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues are extremely anxious to annex south Vietnam. They want to win sympathizers, or at least lessen distrust, in the south, where Catholics are an important 10 per cent. Many of these Catholics fled in 1954-55 from the northern communists, who have been protesting ever since that the refugees had no reason for fleeing.

Another reason for the slow pace of the persecution is the compactness of the Catholic groups in the north. They number only 750,000 souls at most in a population of some 15,000,000. But most of them have been living in cohesive village communities. They cherish a strong tradition of martyrdom, associated with their own localities and, for many of them, with their own families. There is the "land of 100,000 martyrs," whose memories live in nearly every Christian village.

So foreign travelers still see churches open and well attended, even crowded, in north Vietnam. Archbishop Joseph Trinh-Nhu-Khue of Hanoi and the eight other bishops in the north are apparently free, living in their own residences. Priests celebrate Mass and preach to their people. Catechism may be taught inside the churches. At Christmas the government authorities officiously insist on decorating the outside of the churches.

A hard reality of planned persecution lies beneath these appearances. The bishops may not travel around their

dioceses to confirm or perform other functions without a permit; the permit is no longer given. Two bishop-designates, Msgr. Vincent Pham van Dan of Langson and Msgr. Pham Tan of Thanh-Hoa, are held under virtual house arrest, forcibly kept from receiving episcopal consecration.

A priest may not go outside his village to offer Mass in another, or to attend a sick call, without a police permit. The permit is withheld or given several days later, when the sick person has died. Every time a priest preaches, at least one spy listens for the least hint of a reference to government policy.

Every Catholic school has been taken over by the government, with the exception of the seminary, major and minor, in Vinh. (In 1955 professors and students of this seminary at Xa-Doai tried to go south. Communist obstruction and the weakness of the International Commission team kept them from leaving.)

Under what restrictions the seminary is now operating, one can only surmise.)

The seminary in Hanoi had to close down in 1960. The government would allow it to remain open only if Marxist doctrine were taught in it.

It is typical that the large Sainte Marie school for girls, which the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres conducted for generations in Hanoi, has been taken by the government. About a dozen Sisters remain, living in poverty in a small house in the school yard.

The Imprimerie Ste. Therese, the Catholic printing press, was taken over in 1958.

All bishops, priests, Brothers and Sisters now in north Vietnam are Vietnamese. The last foreign missionaries were expelled in 1960. The charge d'affaires of the Apostolic Delegation had been expelled in August, 1959.

Some priests are in prison. Nobody can say exactly how many.

Father J. B. Nguyen van Vinh of the cathedral parish, Hanoi, was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. While he was serving that sentence, another three years were added to it. Father Laurent Pham van Quy of Hai Phong was imprisoned in October, 1960.

Meanwhile, Marxist lessons are drilled into the children in every school and into the adults in the long evening study sessions. "The Lao Dong party (the name of the Communist party in Vietnam) orders its members to assume closer leadership in the schools," the party organ, Hoc Tap (Instruction) said in June, 1961. "Marxist-Leninist doctrine must occupy a prominent place and determine all educational activities."

Since March, 1955, the communists have been fostering an "Association of Catholics Loving the Fatherland and Peace." About 15 fellow-traveling priests and a few hundred layfolk have identified

themselves with this front organization and the regime. The priests, at least, seem to have recruited no additional clerical comrades. They took over a church in Hanoi, which the people promptly shunned. They publish a weekly paper which attacks "a number of superiors at high levels in the church . . . who should devote attention to establishing more sincere relations with the people's government."

The second congress of this association, held last October, brought about 200 "delegates" and seems to have been no larger or more impressive than the first, held in 1955. Two Hungarian priests, one of them an "Administrator Apostolic," were either weak enough or confused enough to come for the occasion.

The system of "cooperative" farms launched in 1959 has been particularly distasteful, apparently, to Catholic peasants. It seems to involve violation of family life, violation of elementary property

rights and extreme regimentation. Catholics feared that they would not be free to go to Mass, for instance, because of forced Sunday work.

The Communist authorities have claimed lately that they had 70 per cent of the Catholic families in the north in cooperatives. The authorities have been complaining, meanwhile, of failures of cooperatives to carry out the planned program.

The most serious deficiency for Catholics in the north is in the number of available priests. While one-half of the Catholic population of the north fled south, two-thirds of the priests came. Some who remained were already old. It is estimated that about 70 of them have died. Others have become infirm. The number of priests now active in the north is little more than 300.

Every Catholic who has lived under the communists in north Vietnam insists on the need to pray for those who remain.

First graders in a Boston public school listen to their teacher Miss Kathleen Coughlin read a passage from the Bible to begin day's classes. Practice was ruled out for New York State. Other states reflect confused situation on religious practices in public schools following U.S. Supreme Court decision against a N.Y. Regents recommended prayer.

Paradox of School Bible

OK in Russia Nyet in New York

Soviet Russia's school children were told to study the Bible this week.

But Bible reading in New York State's public schools was said to be "against the State Constitution."

The paradox of Soviet recommendation and American prohibition of Bible reading in schools is an added chapter in the world-wide battle between people who believe in spiritual values and those who don't.

The Soviet program does not represent a change in that nation's official atheistic position.

And the New York State decision does not mean this country has abandoned its religious heritage.

Komsomol Pravda, the most influential daily paper for youngsters in Russia, said Bible study will aid the Communist war on religion.

The article admitted that sermons in churches are more effective than most atheistic programs in education. A compulsory and modernized course of atheistic indoctrination was announced in the paper's same issue—a course which high school students have to pass or face dismissal from school. Part of the course will include reading portions of the Bible to "expose" its "unscientific" attitude.

The New York State ruling against Bible reading is the result not so much of any government antipathy to the subject but because Americans are religiously divided.

"If you read the Protestant Bible, Catholics don't like it. If you read the Catholic Bible, Protestants don't like it. If you read the New Testament, Jews don't like it," said Charles A. Brind, counsel for the State Department of Education.

His comments followed a ruling which approved use of the fourth stanza of the song "America" or other religiously oriented excerpts from government documents as substitutes for prayers in public schools. A twenty-two word prayer authorized by the State Board of Regents was ruled "unconstitutional" earlier this year by the U.S. Supreme Court and raised the question whether all religious practices were also banned.

The Court's ruling on the New York State prayer has left most public school officials puzzled as to what is now legal or not.

In New Jersey, five verses of the Old Testament will continue to be read daily and the Lord's Prayer is permitted but not required. The District of Columbia will continue a similar practice but reading may be made from the New Testament also. Massachusetts and Florida public schools will also follow this practice "until such time as the Supreme Court makes a final determination of the issue."

It well might happen that Soviet youngsters will find faith and a new hope for freedom by their reading of the Bible in classes of atheism—the compelling power of the life of Christ has an impact hard to resist, and New York's children grow Godless because their elders are locked in denominational bitterness.

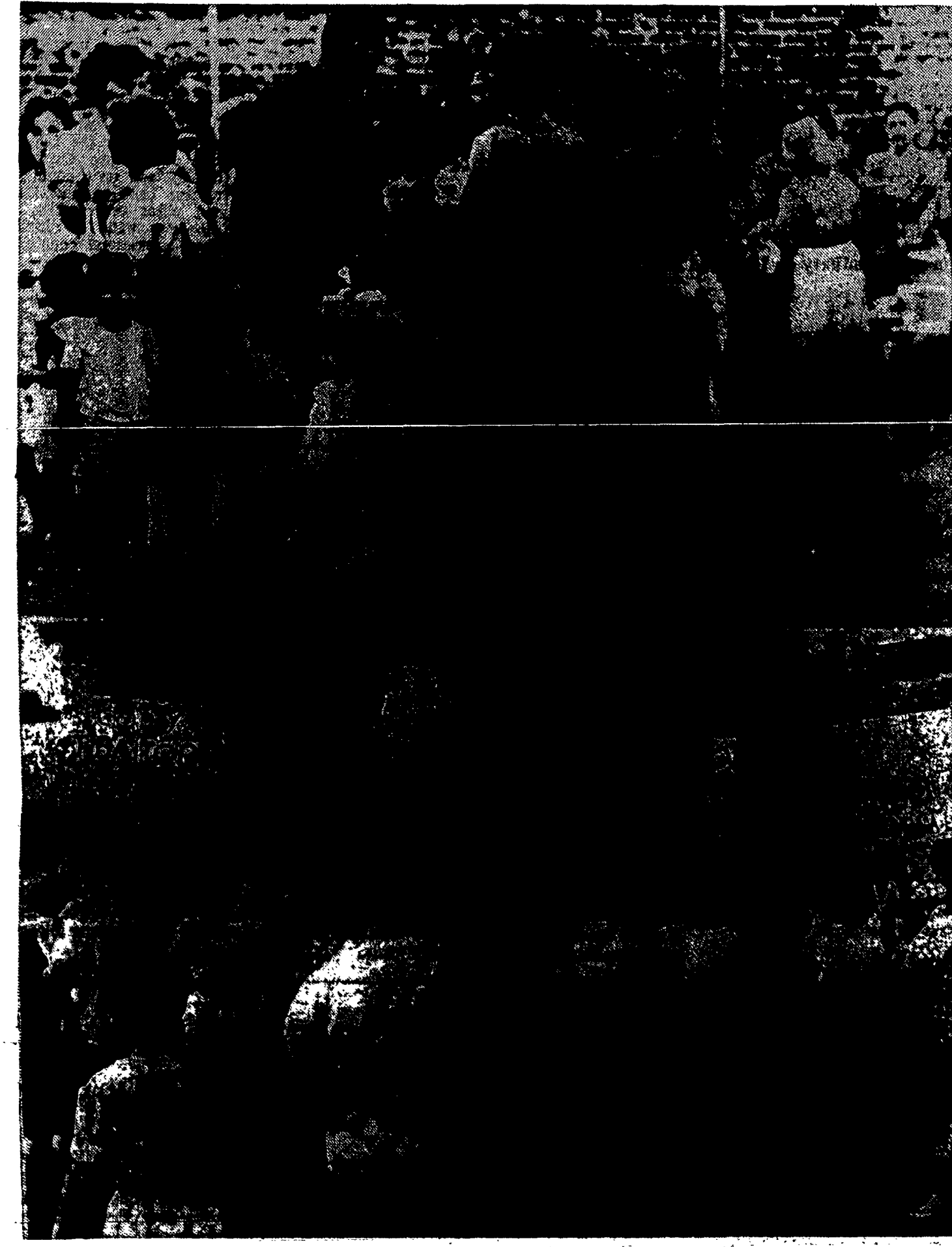
Saints 'Battle' On Air Waves

Cochabamba — Inconsistent electric current usually goes unnoticed by the people here, but not long ago it caused a row between two Maryknoll radio stations.

Both stations, San Gabriel in La Paz and San Rafael, in Cochabamba, founded to educate the rural Aymara and Quechua Indians who inhabit the mountain villages, operate on the same wave length.

Recently, Father Leo J. Sommer, M.M., of Roxbury, Mass., visited a rural village to check the reception of Radio San Rafael. In the middle of a lesson, the booming voice of Radio San Gabriel came in drowning out San Rafael.

The jumbled, doubled reception prompted one bewildered youngster to remark: "Listen, papa, St. Gabriel and St. Rafael are fighting!"



Extremists Mar Integration Progress In South

The ugly American is a crowd of southern Catholics who hooted and heaved rocks at newly integrated parochial schools. Pickets milled about in front of home of New Orleans Archbishop Cody to hear excommunicated Mrs. B. J. Gaillot claim the Bible is against integration. They all deserve a resounding thump where naughty little brats are usually thumped.

ed. Upper photo shows Father George Julian, rector of St. Louis Cathedral, as he escorts a Negro child past resentful whites. Despite outbursts such as those sparked by extremists as in lower photo, thirty schools in New Orleans archdiocese and others elsewhere in previously segregated areas admitted Negro youngsters without major incidents.

Reapings At Random

Lay Apostolate More Than 'Helping the Priest'

By GERARD E. SHERRY
Editor, Central California Register

I want to discuss this week some thoughts on the term Lay Apostolate.

How do we define it?

While the Lay Apostolate has been defined as the participation of the laity in the Apostolate of the hierarchy, originally, in place of "participation" the term used was "collaboration." And we have it on the authority of Antonio Cardinal Caggiano, Bishop of Rosario, Argentina, that the emphasis should be on the word "collaboration" rather than "participation." At the first Lay Apostolate congress in October of 1951 the Cardinal said:

"Collaboration" was first used, then later the word, "participation"; today the term "collaboration" is preferred . . . many have used the word "participation" so freely and inexactly that it has been a source of grave errors. The use of collaboration is sufficient and avoids possible errors . . ."

This collaboration of which we speak is neither passive nor weak. It is the fullness of the Faith expressed in the whole of life under the guidance of the bishops and priests.

One of the problems for Lay Apostles is in not understanding that strict discipline is required of the laity in relation to the work of the hierarchy. By the command of Christ there are in the church the teachers and the

taught, the sanctifiers and the sanctified, the governors and those who are governed.

This means that lay people by themselves and without the bishops and the priests do not possess the power to realize what The Prince of the Church called, "a legitimate and efficacious apostolate . . ." Therefore it is important to stress at the very outset that the layman is not independent within the church and that he has a strict obligation of obedience to the teachers (that is, the bishops) in the Magisterium of the Church.

Some people seem to have the impression that lay action is a substitute for priestly action. Nothing could be further from the truth. This because even where there is an abundance of clergy there is still need for lay activity. Collaboration in the Lay Apostolate is not a work of supererogation nor is it a luxury of devotion—it is something we have to do whether we like it or not, each according to his own capabilities.

One of the basic problems in our approach to the Lay Apostolate lies in the fact that very many of us have a false concept of the Church and confuse lay activity and secular activity. I would like to take up the first point.

We are so engrossed with building the material side of the church that we tend somewhat to accept as a matter of fact the spiritual benefits which are available through membership in the Mystical Body. We look upon the Church as a plant and we use the

term constantly in our references to the buildings and surroundings of a parish. Yet in truth these are merely externals.

If our only concept of the Church is that of an administration presided over locally by a pastor, diocesan-wide by a bishop and that the chairman of the board is the Pope, then we truly have a false idea of the Church of Christ.

Of course, the church is organized. Of course, she has a human side as well as a divine side. We might say with Bishop John Wright of Worcester, Mass., that, yes, "the church is organized, but it is more than an organization. She has been the mother of innumerable cultures, but she survives them all; she has refined and spiritualized different centuries and she survives them too."

It seems as if we must go beyond considering the Church a heritage, a way of life, a tradition, a civilization or a culture. To quote Bishop Wright again we must consider "that the church is 'a person, a living person.'" In other words we must see no difference between Christ and His Church. They are one. And if we accept this concept of the church, then we see immediately the need for religious formation, religious education—that which reveals our destiny and our part in God's eternal plan.

The laity needs religious formation, religious education, so that we may be more brought into contact with Christ—with His life and teaching, His life and the Church, His sacramental activity. We must strive to under-

stand the spirit of Christ. We must see the sacramental, liturgical and apostolic life of the Church as the life of the Mystical Christ continuing the work of the Redemption. We must cultivate a sense of security, joy and pride in belonging to the Church, working with it and being obedient to it as Christ Himself. A religious education enlightens our consciences in all our actions and strengthens us in our daily life. It forms within us a Catholic mentality which will see no separation between this life and eternal life.

But it must be remembered that this religious formation, this religious education, does not merely mean giving the laity a theoretical training before turning it into activity. Far from it. Religious formation is very practical. It is only through the practice of charity and the being of service in one's family, one's neighborhood, and one's community that we see the utter dependence upon the spiritual upon God.

The inevitable failures and disappointments of a human activity being brought home to us more fully, we see the necessity for complete unity with Christ and a greater reliance upon Him. The greater the knowledge of Christ, the greater the love of Christ. And the greater the love, the greater the activity. This unity with Christ also leads to unity with others.

We are bound anew to our fellows in society and in the church. We become truly the members of the Mystical Body—bound through Christ, the Head, to God.

We Act Like Amateurs

Rio de Janeiro — (NC) — In a small studio in the Botafogo district of this city a skilled artist keeps adding items to an exhibit that includes photos, sketches, cartoons, household objects and a mannequin dressed in rags.

As he explains his work, it is apparent from his accent that this man has come a long way to Rio. He is Vladimir Kovanco, once in the army of Poland and then for 19 months a prisoner of the Russians.

Today he lives with one purpose, to tell the world what can happen to men who fall under the tyranny of communism. But he is having a hard time getting anyone to listen.

"Christians, the only force capable of saving humanity, act like amateurs in this struggle, in addition to being disunited," he said.

Despite the evident skill in his artistic technique and the dramatic documentary evidence he has gathered—the mannequin, for example, wears the clothing he had in the Soviet camp at Pletchora near the frozen Barents Sea—Kovanco has not been able to get his work before the general public. He has had several sketches and articles published in mass-circulation magazines, however.

"I do not fear communism," he says, "but the apathy of Christians."

Now a Brazilian citizen, after living for a time in Argentina, he tells the people of his adopted country the peril they face. "Communism does not dominate in Brazil. Nevertheless an able minority, well-trained professionally and equipped with abundant funds for its work, is fully active and gains greater success day by day.

"In the opposing camp there is no effective counteraction under united direction on the part of specialists who have knowledge of communist techniques. Worse, the few who are able to act practically like amateurs. In warfare today everything is specialized, everything has the professional touch. Those who do not have full knowledge of the enemy cannot fight them successfully."

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Aid Rushed To Quake Area

New York — (RNS) — Catholic Relief Services, the overseas aid agency of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, announced here it has made available 100,000 pounds of clothing, bedding and blankets valued at \$250,000 for victims of the devastating earthquake in Iran.

The relief goods, according to a CRS spokesman, have been turned over to the Iran Earthquake Relief Headquarters in New York, the coordinating agency for American relief to Iran. Part of the shipment will go by air and part by sea.

At the same time, Auxiliary Bishop Edward E. Swanson of New York, executive director of Catholic Relief Services, said his agency had cabled a \$10,000 donation to Archbishop Vittorio Riberi, Apostolic Nuncio to Teheran, for use in aiding earthquake victims.

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