

**Behind Iron Curtain**

**A Hazard to Look for a Priest**

(This article was written by a member of the NC News Service's Rome bureau following a trip through Iron Curtain countries in November.)

By PATRICK RILEY  
(NC News Service)

Within eight hours of entering Bulgaria I was in the hands of the police.

The interrogation lasted about an hour, including a 15-minute wait for someone who spoke French, and revolved around my reasons for coming to Bulgaria.

Before leaving town next morning for Sofia I had to fill

out a form in triplicate giving such information as my wife's maiden name and the names and birth dates of my children.

Twenty-four hours after being released from the police station I discovered and confronted a plainclothes agent who was following me in Sofia, hundreds of miles away.

All this official interest in me apparently stemmed from the fact that I was looking for a Catholic priest.

Here is how it happened.

The train that brought me from Romania crossed the

Danube into Bulgaria at noon. My first destination was a small town not far from the border as the crow flies but eight hours away by the sauntering backcountry trains that service the agricultural towns of northern Bulgaria. I had to change trains three times, and while waiting at the second station I was approached by a married couple who engaged me in conversation in French.

The husband, a middle-aged teacher who had studied abroad, asked me where I was going, and then suggested that we travel together until my next stop,

where he would tell me which train to take.

When we had gotten settled in the train he asked me solicitously if I had the exact address of the person I was visiting.

"No?" he exclaimed. "But it's a big town. What is his name?"

Fortified with this information he got up and asked other passengers if they knew the person I was seeking. He came back without results.

"That is a Catholic town," he said. "You might go to the Catholic priest there and ask him where this person lives. Almost all the Catholic priests here speak some foreign language, and they are all very helpful."

I had not mentioned to my acquaintance that the man I was seeking was a priest, nor did I volunteer the information.

After a little while a young man approached and spoke to the teacher.

"He's from the village you're going to," said my acquaintance. "He says he knows the man you're looking for. Your friend is the local priest." A pause. "Did you know that?"

I replied that I had known he was a priest but had not known whether he was functioning as a priest.

Soon afterwards the teacher announced the train was arriving at the station where I would change trains for the last time. He put me in the hands of the young man, who stayed with me throughout the hour or so we waited at that station.

Not long after we got started on the last leg of my journey, a uniformed policeman entered the carriage and made straight for me. He sat down beside me and launched into a long series of questions in Bulgarian. I showed him my passport, which he puzzled over briefly and handed back, shrugging his shoulders at my

companion in a gesture of incomprehension.

We then sat in silence until the train pulled in to my stop, where we three — the policeman, the young man and I — got off together. The policeman motioned me to follow him.

At the police station I was ushered into a tiny room furnished with a desk, two chairs and a bed. Behind the desk sat an officer of the police and on the bed sat a man of about 30, prematurely gray and in muffled clothing. The officer directed me to sit in the remaining chair, and began to question me in Bulgarian. All I could do in reply was to hand him my passport.

After further fruitless attempts to make himself understood, the officer gave instructions to someone outside. Then he gave a quarter-hour wait which was terminated by the arrival of the priest.

With the priest acting as interpreter, the policeman asked me my profession and why I had come to Bulgaria. I replied that I was a journalist looking for people who had known Pope John when he was the Holy See's representative in Bulgaria and had visited all its Catholic regions.

He questioned me closely about where I planned to go in Bulgaria, who I knew there, who I wanted to see, and the like.

After this detailed questioning, he pointed out that my visa had expired, something I had not noticed because of the Cyrillic script and had not expected because the visa had been granted me just a month before. However he said that could be taken care of in Sofia. (In fact a clerk at the travel office in Sofia simply endorsed the visa, saying it was a routine procedure. The expiration of my visa could hardly have occasioned my interrogation by the police since the agent who approached me could not then have known it had expired, and handed it back to me without pointing to any date. Also, the matter was raised only at the end of my interrogation.)

The police officer made a phone call to another town, and then told me I could stay with the priest that night.

Later, while I was eating eggs

and fish in the priest's kitchen, he came to say I could stay as long as I wanted, but must inform him when I would leave and must go direct to Sofia. I replied that since there was no one in town who had known Pope John when he visited the region (information I had already gleaned from the priest), I would leave next morning. I was told I would have to visit the municipal hall next morning to fill out a questionnaire, which proved to be detailed in the extreme.

The journey to Sofia lasted from early morning to nightfall. At the government tourist agency in Sofia I was given a room in a private apartment and my visa was extended. The clerk mentioned that my room was not far from the center of the city, near a big monument to the Soviet Army. And in passing that tall tower, floodlighted and standing in the center of a big square, I formed a plan to discover if I was being followed.

Shortly after putting my suitcase in my room I went out and made straight for the monument. The approach to it was up a long wall with flower-gardens and some trees on either side. I went up to the foot of the monument and turned around to find the mall empty, except for one man who walked slowly toward the monument.

I went behind the monument for a few moments and then returned to see the man approaching more quickly. While I stood in full view he changed direction and began walking obliquely toward a street on his right, Tolbuhin Street. When he gained a path leading from the monument itself to Tolbuhin Street I followed him, drew right beside him, and turned to look in his face.

Although Bulgarians, as I was to learn, are universally eager to offer assistance to strangers, he studiously ignored this approach. While I continued to look at him he stared fixedly ahead, walking on and clasping a rolled-up portfolio behind his back with both hands.

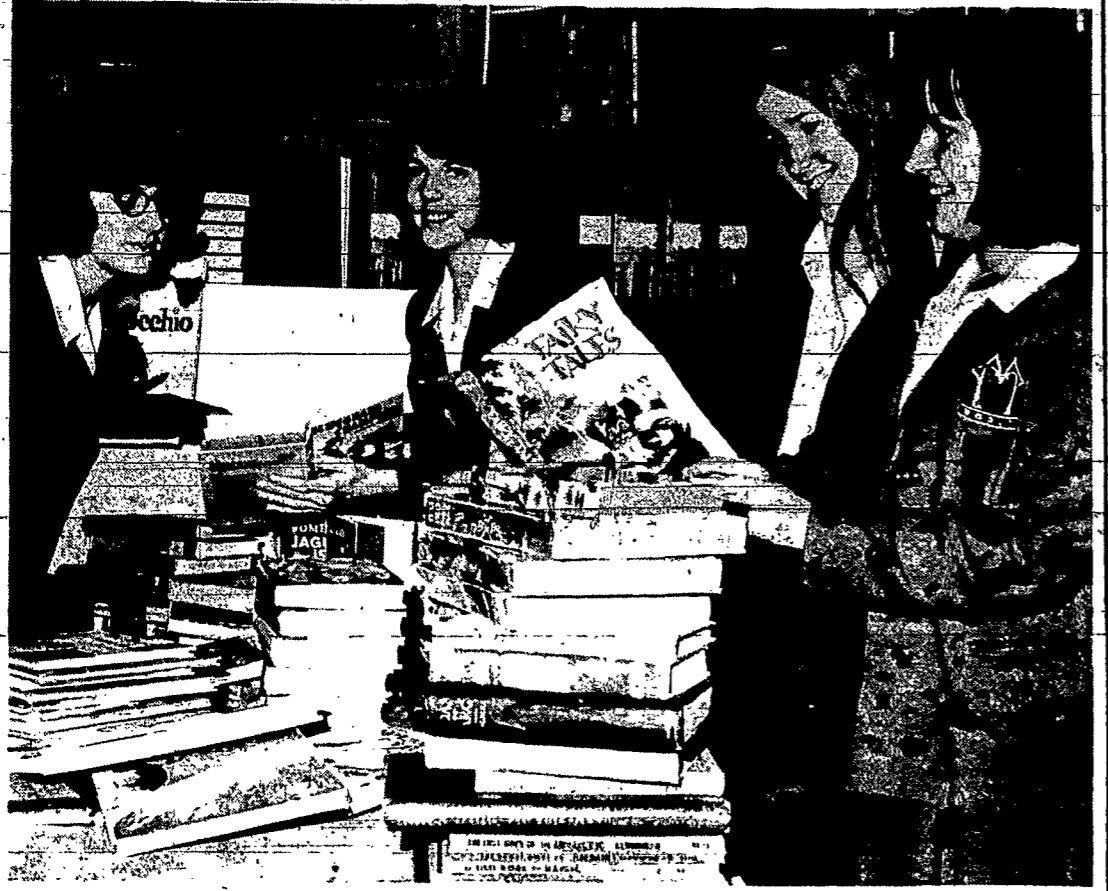
Later I recounted this incident to a communist intellectual. He laughed and remark-

ed: "We call those fellows baby chicks because they follow like chicks after a mother hen. But he's just doing his job."

My account of those first two days in Bulgaria drew a different response from a Bulgarian

Catholic. He nodded his head gravely and said: "You have seen the whole situation at a glance."

COURIER-JOURNAL  
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**'Involvement Today for Tomorrow'**

Books from the entire student body of Cardinal Mooney High School have been collected to build a library for the youngsters who frequent the Joseph Avenue Center staffed by the Sisters of Mercy. With the help of C.S.M.C. funds book shelves were purchased and a thousand books sorted and stamped. Students active in the project were Patricia Ferry, Karen Roland, Norma Ring, chairman, and Kathy Bojara.

**Book Week To be Marked At Aquinas**

Students of Aquinas Institute will join with students from all parts of the United States and Canada in celebrating National Catholic Book Week from Feb. 19-25, 1967.

Theme for the week, according to Father John R. Whitley, C.S.B., librarian at Aquinas Institute and member of the high school advisory board of the Catholic Library Association, is "Involvement Today for Tomorrow."

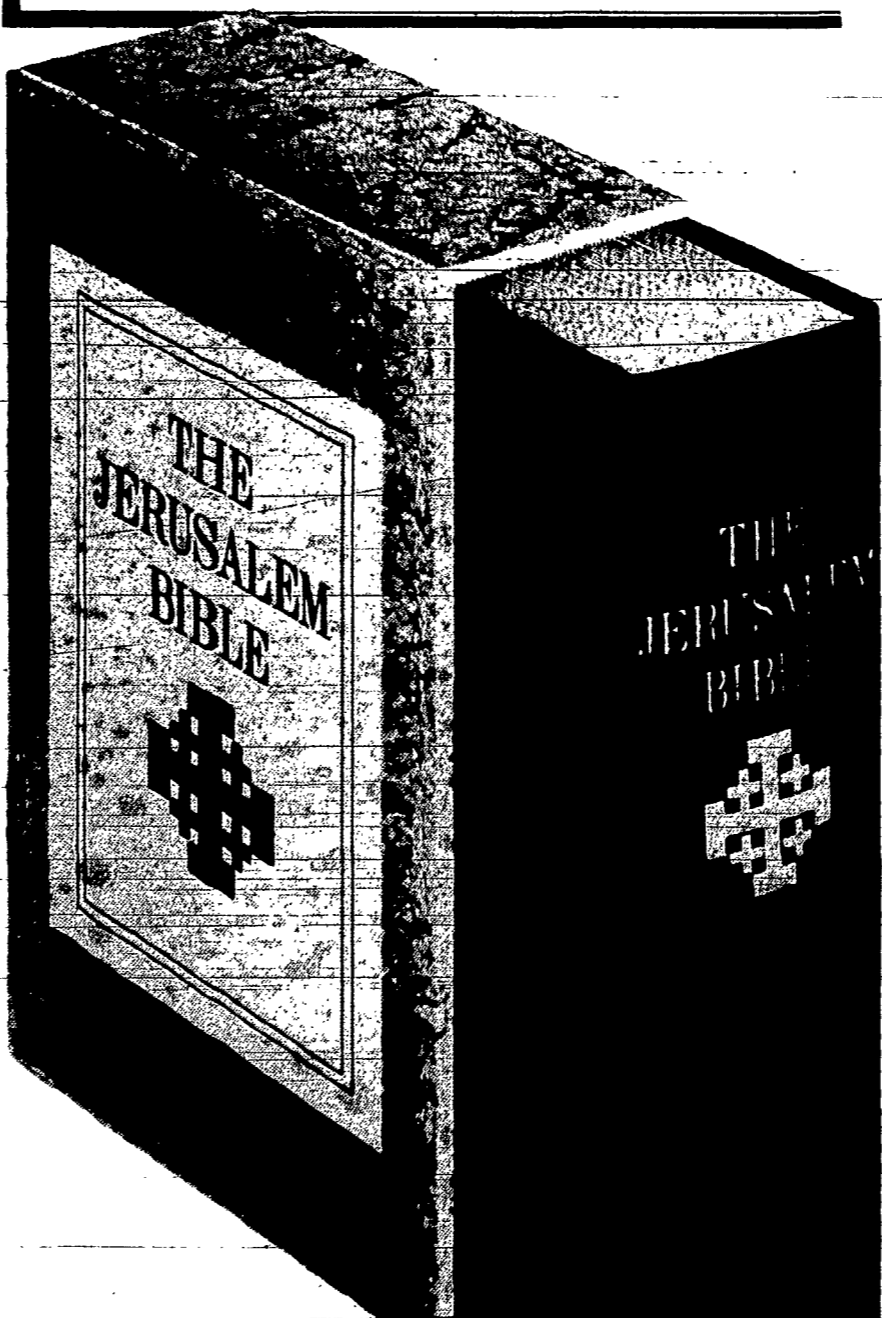
dinal Newman Library Club have prepared corridor and classroom displays carrying out the theme of the week.

Highlight of the week at Aquinas will be a faculty coffee hour to be held in the school library on Friday, Feb. 24. New books will be on display for examination by the teachers. The evening program will be presided over by John Petrie, president of the Cardinal Newman Library Club.

According to Father Whitley, ever since its inception 27 years ago by the Catholic Library Association, Catholic Book Week has been designed to focus attention on good books, not only good Catholic books but all good books.

Cosponsoring Catholic Book Week with the Catholic Library Association this year are the National Council of Catholic Men, the National Council of Catholic Women and the Catholic Press Association.

This Easter, give your family the Bible for which a new generation has been waiting... "the best Catholic translation into English now available"



The description in the headline, from *Saturday Review*, sums up much of the unprecedented critical acclaim for a publishing event that promises, in the words of the noted Biblical scholar, Father Ignatius Hunt, O.P., "to introduce a new age in capturing the timeless and vital message of the Bible."

The extraordinary praise which has greeted THE JERUSALEM BIBLE has not been limited to Catholic sources. Scholars of every denomination have been enthusiastic in their endorsements. *As Time Magazine* reported: "The first complete translation of Scripture from the original languages into English ever made by Roman Catholic scholars... is Catholic only in its sponsorship; scholars of other faiths wholeheartedly admire it."

"There is no translation guide so good in English." — *American*

The translators of THE JERUSALEM BIBLE drew upon the enormous groundwork of research and scholarship which was climaxed in France, eleven years ago, with the publication in one volume of the *Bible de Jerusalem*. But under the direction of editor Father Alexander Jones, THE JERUSALEM BIBLE was independently translated from the original Greek and Hebrew sources, using the insights and interpretations of the *Bible de Jerusalem*. The President of the Society of Biblical Literature, Father J. L. McKenzie, S.J., describes the result as "really monumental... There is nothing like it in English, and I will not live long enough to see anything like it." As magnificent as the translation is, many early readers of THE JERUSALEM BIBLE believe that it achieves something equally important by making Holy Scripture accessible to the reader — through superb introductions, notes, cross-references, and indexes.

"The introductory essays to the major books are superb." — *American*

The introductions set the various books of the Bible firmly in context, discussing their authorship, content, and relation to historical cultures. In the words of the Most Reverend Frederick Cogan, Archbishop of York and Primate of England, "we have here something more than a new translation. We have something in the nature of a commentary as well, and that, in one volume, is an achievement."

"The footnotes are brief and clear; the cross-references abundant." — *American*

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