

Moment of Freedom

A rare picture showing Cardinal Mindszenty as he was freed by "Freedom Fighters" of Hungary who staged a short but abortive revolution in 1956 against the Communist regime. He had been removed from prison in 1955 but held in house arrest. His freedom was short—Russian tanks were called up to crush the revolution. (RNS)

The Story Behind Cardinal's Release

Rome — (RNS)—The arrival in Rome of Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty following 15 years of exile in the U.S. legation at Budapest — ends a long period of diplomatic negotiations between Hungary's Communist regime and the Vatican.

Hungary announced that the cardinal's departure had resulted from "arrangements" with the Vatican.

The 79-year-old prelate had long refused to live his native country as a person convicted (in 1949) of anti-state activities by a Communist court. He said he would continue his voluntary confinement in the U.S. legation until the government dropped its charges.

As recently as June, following a visit to the Hungarian Primate by Cardinal Franz Koenig of Vienna, the government let it be known that the prelate was quite free to leave the country whenever he decided to go. But the government refused to comply with his conditions.

Church-state contacts in Hungary have been improving since 1964 when Archbishop Agostino Casaroli of the Vatican Secretariat of State negotiated a protocol with the Hungarian government.

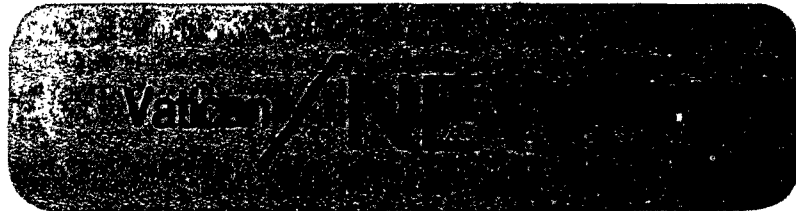
Last April, Pope Paul received Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter in a private audience. The talks were seen as a breakthrough for the Vatican in developing better relations with all Communist nations.

Cardinal Mindszenty was convicted of "treason and anti-state activities" in 1949 and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was freed by Hungarian "freedom fighters" during the brief 1956 uprising and took refuge in the legation.

Besides asking the Hungarian government to admit he was illegally convicted, Cardinal Mindszenty had also demanded the Communist regime agree to recognize him as Archbishop of Budapest; free to nominate his successor — along with Rome — and to remain in the country in honorable retirement.

Despite reported efforts by Cardinal Koenig and Archbishop Casaroli to persuade the Hungarian prelate to leave asylum and go to Rome, Cardinal Mindszenty was said to have been "quite resolved" to live out his days at the legation.

It has been said in some diplomatic circles that the resolution of the "Mindszenty case"



would result in full diplomatic relations between Hungary and the Vatican. The Communist-ruled nation has a population of 10 million — 8 million of them Roman Catholics.

In addition to Cardinal Mindszenty's "conditions" for leaving asylum, which the Hungarian government would not accept, the government long ago set down its stipulations for a "pardon." The government said the prelate must not speak or write about his imprisonment or exile and avoid Hungarian affairs in general after leaving the country.

The cardinal reportedly had

said he could accept neither condition because he felt compelled to speak out on the condition of the Church in Hungary. He also said he would not accept a pardon for a crime he did not commit.

In 1969, the Vatican appointed an Apostolic Administrator for Esztergom, Cardinal Mindszenty's primate See. This implied a recognition of the cardinal's continuing position as Primate, since the announcement identified the archdiocese as "impeded," meaning its rightful occupant is prevented from carrying out his duties by circumstances beyond his control.

Pope's Life Called 'Daily Martyrdom'

Vatican City (RNS)—Vatican Radio, in marking Pope Paul's 74th birthday, extolled the pontiff for his perseverance, declaring that each day he must undergo a "martyrdom" of harsh accusations and criticism as he carries out "his universal paternal responsibility."

"Eight years of the pontificate is no holiday," a special broadcast noted.

(United Press said Vatican Radio reported that Pope Paul had no intention of resigning upon reaching 75.)

Vatican Radio said "the responsibilities of the Vicar of Christ are already sufficient in themselves to wear out the energies of a person in normal times" but that Pope Paul "... with watchful responsibility ... had fulfilled the task of mediator between Christ and man which was entrusted to him at a particularly difficult moment."

The broadcast said "every day movements, parties and contrasting factions invoke and solicit his authority to serve their own aims."

Vatican Radio said the Pope is accused of everything, "from dealing with capitalism, to sym-

pathy for communism and progressive modernism, to obtuse conservatism ..."

"Paul VI listens to, examines and scrutinizes the accusations and admonitions, and then discerns and welcomes what can be of use to ecclesiastical and civil progress ..."

The broadcast said the Pope "balances by his constancy" the conflicts and counter-positions of peoples, classes and "ideological turns" and remains faithful as a witness and custodian of the revealed truth. "He guides the Church and promotes its renewal."

Meanwhile, Pope Paul, speaking at his weekly general audience to faithful gathered at St. Peter's Square, made no reference to his birthday but called for increased loyalty and love for the Church.

Mission Sunday

A date to mark down and remember — Oct. 24, Mission Sunday. On that day, through Sunday collection at your church, you will be able to help the most deprived people on

Wednesday, October 8, 1971

Cardinal Mindszenty: A Reluctant Refugee

Rome — (RNS) — Whether Cardinal Mindszenty's one-man holdout against communism in Hungary was a success is a matter for historical interpretation.

His refusal to leave his homeland drew admiration but also criticism. Over the years he had been called "implacable" or "intransigent" or "stubborn," implying harmful effects from his actions.

But back in 1944 when the Nazis controlled Hungary these very same characteristics were considered virtues. He was indeed "implacable, intransigent and stubborn" in the face of the Nazi onslaught. He attacked them from the pulpit and wound up in jail.

He played no favorites. In 1949 he also was thrown into another ideological prison when the Communists could find no other way to combat his toughness.

Last week, Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty, 79 and frail, reportedly suffering from tuberculosis, walked to the entrance to St. John's Tower in the Vatican Gardens to meet a Pope he had never seen.

Pope Paul embraced him, reached down and took his own pectoral cross and placed it around the neck of Cardinal Mindszenty. Expressing concern for the old man's health, the Pope had appealed to the cardinal to leave his asylum in the U.S. legation in Budapest. Mindszenty, who had vowed never to leave Communist Hungary until the state withdrew its conviction of him for spying and "anti-state activities," had agreed to come to Rome, saying it was a "sacrifice" he would undertake for the good of the Church.

After 15 years — in only four days of which he had known freedom, having briefly been liberated by the Freedom Fighters who were gunned down by Soviet tanks — he was

in Rome, almost certainly never to return to his homeland. For several of those 15 years he had resisted overtures from the Vatican and from the Hungarian government. He had told a papal emissary many times of his stand — "rehabilitation" must come from the regime before he would stir from the U.S. legation.

Released from prison in time, he was restricted to life in apartments in convents, out-of-the-way religious establishments, barred from working as a bishop. When the Freedom Fighters' movement was crushed in 1956, he took refuge at the U.S. legation in Budapest.

For 15 years most of the coverage of his life concerned his health, the visits of Cardinal Franz Koenig of Vienna who urged him to go to Rome, an infrequent story on how he spent his days. During that time his courage was saluted by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Members of Congress in the U.S. cited him for holding out against the wishes of the regime which wanted him out of the country at any terms — short of "rehabilitation."

It was revealed here that the transfer of the cardinal from Budapest to Vienna to Rome had been arranged Sept. 5 at a meeting of a Vatican aide, Msgr. Giovanni Cheli, with Hungarian officials.

On Sept. 28, Msgr. Cheli, along with Hungarian-born Jozsef Zagen and Archbishop Opilio Rossi, the Vatican's Papal Nuncio in Vienna, waited outside the gray stucco legation on Budapest's Freedom Square. Then Cardinal Mindszenty, accompanied by U.S. Ambassador Alfred Puhon, walked to the curb where they entered a car that took the prelate to Vienna.

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