

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



We certainly were saturated with news from China during President Nixon's recent trip there — including his innumerable toasts and dinners with chop-sticks.

Many Americans grew weary of China and preferred to return to the tried-and-true American cat and dog-food commercials, a revealing commentary on our openness to the world and its varied people.

Despite the hazard of so much apathy to Asians, I'd like to add a footnote to the China chapter.

During the years before Vietnam became page one news in America, a tall, thin, almost always smiling missionary priest, Columban Father Patrick O'Connor, was over there watching the stream of refugees, most of them Catholics, pour out of North Vietnam into the hoped-for freedom and security of South Vietnam. No one can estimate how many of them later became innocent victims when American forces swept their huts with napalm and flame-throwers in search-and-destroy missions against "suspected" Viet Cong hideouts.

Father O'Connor kept up a steady stream of reports, which were published in most U.S. Catholic newspapers.

This month's Columban Mission magazine puts Father O'Connor back into print in a report he makes about his interview with Chou En-lai twenty-five years ago.

Chou at that time was one of three members of a committee set up by U.S. General George C. Marshall in his efforts to avert civil war in China. The effort, of course, ultimately failed, setting the stage for war that ended with Chiang Kai-

shek's flight to Taiwan with a million other Chinese.

As I watched Nixon and Chou together, I thought back to that other picture of 1947, not recorded by any camera but only in the words of the missionary priest. These two pictures show both the gap and the bridge, the paradox of all relationships. In one we see the priest and the communist, and in the most recent picture, the president and the communist.

In both cases, an interpreter was present, although, as Father O'Connor reports in his article about Premier Chou, "He speaks English well." Newsmen with the President last month noted that Chou sometimes corrected his interpreters.

There is the paradox.

He opened the door to welcome the priest and President but denied each fully entry by continuing to speak a language neither could understand.

How often so many of us do the same thing — opening a door to welcome and seek understanding, and almost at the same moment closing the door and rejecting the opportunity to understand. Such behavior was revealed in our own response to the press, radio and television coverage of the President's trip. We were at first mildly interested but quickly lost our interest.

Marshall McLuhan, the communications expert, in his strange little book "The Medium is the Message," says our attention span is decreasing, due in large measure to the frantic pace of life today. We ask ourselves if we want it to continue to deteriorate, and, if not, we must discipline ourselves, to be open to others attentively, even as we expect them to be attentive to us.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



The day before The Storm of 1972 was Friday. I decided it was time to get some information about the Courier-Journal sponsored Tour to the Holy Land. Now, it is my practice to have one objective; and on the same occasion to cover other bases. So at 10 a.m. I phoned Father Meng at Holy Rosary, Rochester. "Please put on an extra plate. I'll be up for lunch." During a pleasant lunch (mushroom omelette) with Pastor Meng, assistant Father Sasso and visiting Father Pat Doyle of Watkins Glen, we discussed the Church, the mutual love of all priests: In mid-afternoon I phoned the Courier and C-J secretary Susie, who has a voice with a smile, said: "No Mr. Costello is out. Why don't you go to the Travel Bureau people? They should have the information."

Father Meng spent two years as a Catholic Relief Director in Africa, and as a gracious host was escorting me out when a parishioner came in: feminine, trim, blunt. Said Fr. M.: "Have you met Father C? He is a well-known columnist for the Courier. Undoubtedly you've read his articles." In cool detachment the lady replied: "Oh, I know the column. Rarely read it though; and when I do, I seldom agree with it." Then, as an afterthought, she added: "Well you DO want me to be honest, don't you?" I admired her clarity and conciseness, as she represents a people whose enthusiasms are rarely sympathetic with my own. So with this discharge tingling in my soul, I drove to the Travel Agency, and left there about 4 p.m.

Next stop was at Blessed Sacrament to see Father Lane, who has been convalescing from a mild stroke since Thanksgiving; and was with our beloved classmate, Father Hester, when he died in Spencerport last December. Both Father Lane and Father Norris were out; but young Father Latus, a reader of books, invited me for a cup of coffee. We discussed Teffler's book, "Future Shock," a kind of sociological Orwell's "1984." Before moving on to Macedon I phoned Father Heisel at St. Margaret Mary's whose efficiency makes me wish I had had a German grandparent, and whose fraternal concern always gives me a lift.


At 5:15 Father McFarland at Macedon brought me up to date on the diocese, Macedon and the Universal Church; and informed me of Palmyra Father Healy's heart attack. After supper the next stop was at Newark where Fr. McDonnell who was just ready for Lenten Services, said: "Father Healy is going home tomorrow." So, off to Newark Community Hospital.

A young nurse rushed forward with a big smile. "Father Cuddy!" "Georgette!" It was little Georgette Forjone, whose family I knew well in Clyde. Georgette was a wonderful little girl, and in a recommendation to Miss Whalen, the director of Geneva Hospital School of Practical Nursing, I had written: "Georgette is a prize. She has a great heart, and an eye which sees people's needs." As we recalled mutual friends and our Clyde days, I recalled Miss Whalen, a fellow Auburnian, and grinned: "Did Miss Whalen train you like a Marine sergeant?" G. laughed. "Yes, Father, but now we see why she was so strict, and we are proud of our training." Father Healy hasn't looked so well in years. Eight days in the hospital plus the Sacrament of the Sick made him look ten years younger.

It became 8:35, so off to Wayne Infirmary. The entrance was dark but I know my way to the second floor. At the Nurses Station I asked to see Mrs. Alice Garnett, who was our wonderful cook at Clyde, first for Father Curtin, Father Adamski and me; later for Father Gaynor. We all were devoted to her. She came to us at 83; stayed five years; is an invalid in the infirmary and is now 93. I visit her when I can, remembering the words of the psalmist: "If I should forget you, may my tongue cling to my palate." To me one of the strongest evidences of a decadent Faith is to be ungrateful to those who have served generously.

At 9:20 I let myself out of the Infirmary; drove through Clyde and Savannah remembering the people I loved so much. Near 10 o'clock I opened the door of Montezuma rectory where Father Kress was pounding out his Sunday bulletin. He was not expecting me, and stepped forward with a resounding Grues Gott! (God be praised!) Friday was nearly ended.

Dear Friends of the Missions,

You are cordially invited to join us for the Mass celebrating  the 150th Anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park, on Thursday, the sixteenth of March, Nineteen Hundred Seventy-Two at 5.30 o'clock in the evening. Most Reverend Joseph L. Hogan, D.D., S.C.D. Principal Concelebrant and Homilist

We take this occasion to welcome our National Director, Most Reverend Edward T. O'Meara, D.D., S.C.D., ordained to the Office of Bishop by our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's Basilica on February 13, 1972.

Your Missions Office Staff: Father Joseph F. Reinhart, Diocesan Director, and Associates: Josephine Bartolomeo, Mary Mitrano, Vera Trabold, Carmel Barone, Francis E. Mathis

150 years of "love without frontiers"