

Religious Services Held in Peking Again

New York — The New York Times recently reported that Christian religious services are being held again in Peking after a long break during the Cultural Revolution.

Small groups of worshipers, mostly foreigners, gather every Sunday for Catholic and Protestant services conducted by Chinese clergymen.

Religion has been officially discouraged in China since the Communists came to power in 1949 and services were eliminated during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969.

According to the Times, the first service that foreigners were allowed to attend in Peking for more than five years took place last November when an old Catholic church was opened

for a visiting Italian cultural delegation to attend Mass.

On Easter Sunday this year, Protestant services were resumed and the Mass was also celebrated. Both services were attended by about 30 people, mostly foreign diplomats, but including a few Chinese.

The Catholic church belongs to the Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics, which was formed in 1957. By 1962 it had consecrated 42 Chinese bishops, none of them recognized by the Vatican.

At the Catholic Church of the Virgin Mary, the Easter Sunday Mass was celebrated in Latin by Father Wang Ki-tang, who describes himself as the vicar-general of Peking. He wore traditional vestments.



British paratroopers return sniper fire during a gun battle with members of the Irish Republican Army in the streets of Belfast. Two IRA gunmen were killed in the battle, which was fought from noon to dusk about a half-mile from the center of town. (RNS Photo)

Derry Killings 'Justified', Judge Finds

London — (RNS) — Britain's official inquiry into the killing of 13 Roman Catholic civilians by British paratroopers during an illegal civil rights demonstration in Londonderry, Northern Ireland on Jan. 30 has cleared the British and blamed the Irish Republican Army (IRA) for setting off the incident.

London reports said the inquiry, headed by Lord Chief Justice Widgery, criticized some British officers and soldiers for errors of judgment, but found that IRA snipers had fired first and that the paratroopers were justified in shooting back.

The bone of contention over

Londonderry's "Bloody Sunday" which enraged Ulster's Catholics, was the Catholic claim that the British troops had fired indiscriminately and without provocation.

Strong fears were expressed that publication of the Widgery report on April 19 would trigger a new wave of violence in the violence-racked British province.

Catholics Condemn Report

Belfast — (RNS) — Spokesmen for Northern Ireland's Roman Catholic minority reacted bitterly to the Widgery report.

Kevin McCorry, the key organizer of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, a chief sponsor of the Jan. 30 Londonderry demonstration, said the report "will have the effect of lessening still further . . . the British government's credibility."

"It comes at a very critical time," he said. "The Widgery report is the whitewash we feared it would be. The report is an attempt to excuse murder by saying that the (British) Army was provoked."

Said Tom Conaty, chairman of the Central Citizens Defense Committee, a powerful group in Belfast's Catholic Falls Road area: "I think (the report) is the best recruiting pamphlet for the IRA (the Irish Republican Army) I have seen in a long time."

Conaty said the report "destroys the credibility of anyone who says, 'Give Britain a chance. She will do the right thing'."

Ivan Cooper, a political leader in Londonderry, remarked angrily, "I have no hesitation in saying that Lord Widgery has been dishonest in the eyes of many people in this city, and he is nothing short of an accessory to the actions of the paratroopers."

Bernadette Devlin, the fiery leftist Member of Parliament from Ulster, called Lord Chief Justice Widgery, author of the report, "a liar."

Father Eamon Daly of St. Eugene's Cathedral, Londonderry, who had testified before Lord Widgery that he had personally witnessed British soldiers firing into a group of fleeing civilians, said, "I'm flabbergasted. It's a disgraceful report."

Monsignor Colgan Dies, Founder of Blue Army

Washington, N.J. (RNS) — Msgr. Harold V. Colgan, founder and national president of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima based here, died April 16 in Miami's Mercy Hospital after a long illness. He was 77.

A Mass of the Resurrection was scheduled for April 20 at St. Mary's church, Plainfield, N.J., where Msgr. Colgan was pastor for 22 years until he retired in 1968. He recently marked his 50th year in the priesthood.

Msgr. Colgan founded the Blue Army in 1947 at St. Mary's and it has spread throughout the U.S. and 57 countries. In 1968, when he retired from his pastorate, membership in the Blue Army was put at 10 million in the U.S. and 20 million overseas.

When the Blue Army was organized, Msgr. Colgan said the group "would fight atheism and foster peace with the . . . weapons of prayer, sacrifice and charity."

The Blue Army inaugurated its international center at Fatima, Portugal, in 1956. It has a 120-room center, Domus Pacis, established by Msgr. Colgan. Over the years, Msgr. Colgan led many pilgrimages to the Marian shrine at Fatima. In 1917, children there reported apparitions of the Virgin Mary who asked prayer and sacrifice for the conversion of Russia.

Prayer and sacrifice for Russia's conversion have been the central theme of the Blue Army since it was founded by Msgr. Colgan.

BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Easter Sunday came and went as Carlos Romulo, foreign minister of the Philippines, prepared to leave his hospital after a harrowing brush with death. The season and his survival moved the 73-year-old "man for all seasons" to put down some thoughts of a compelling and enduring nature.

"Easter conveys to us the lesson that life is a perpetual series of renewals," Romulo wrote to his friend Richard E. Berlin. "On the scale of Divinity, the agonies of Passion Week ended in temporary death followed by the Resurrection. Today, the risen Christ is amongst us, bearing the message of eternal life, a reminder of the endless cycle of suffering, death and re-birth which all of us must undergo in order to prove our humanity."

"On a lesser scale, each of us reenacts the scenario in the basic outlines set by the Savior. Never before has the lesson of Easter been brought home to me with such force. Nearly a month ago,

a truck hit my car, causing severe injuries to me. I have been through a thousand hells. But throughout this long ordeal, I was sustained by a surpassing faith in the power of the Lord to defeat despair and strengthen my will to live.

"Because of that faith, aided by medical expertise, I survived. Today, I have a new life, a gift of the same power who two thousand years ago provided suffering humanity the example of how to endure and, in the end, to triumph over adversity."

The former president of the UN Assembly continued:

"I feel that Easter has a lesson, not alone for individual mortals, but for nations at this troubled time in history. A new world is being born, shaped by forces not foreseen until a few years ago. If I read events correctly, it means that we are determined to use not the sword, but peace in the settlement of international conflicts."

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