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March 19, 1952 : p. 24

Red China's persecutions produce a new group of Christian martyrs

A Methodist missionary describes the 'trials' of church workers under Communist terror



Mercy. *A starving waif saved by the Maryknoll Sisters and a deaf-and-dumb class at the China Inland Mission in happier days.*

By THE REV. WILLIAM R. JOHNSON

Wasted by hunger and disease until she was "a veritable skeleton," Gertrude Mildred Cone of Geneva, Ohio, died last month, two days after reaching Hong Kong on a stretcher.

Miss Cone, a missionary of the Methodist Church in China since 1929, had sought for months, while cancer spread through her body, to leave Nanchang, Kiangsi Province, to get medical treatment.

The Communists refused to give her a travel permit until it was too late to save her life.

Dr. William L. Wallace, a Baptist missionary who served in Wuchow for many years, was known as "The Beloved Physician" because of his good works. The Reds jailed him on the charge of possessing a gun and made him do coolie work. Later, they announced that he had confessed to being a spy in the pay of the United States.

Penalty. One day he was found hanged. Officially he was a suicide, but responsible testimony indicates that he was beaten to death. He was buried under military guard without a committal service.

Sister Agnes Gruson, a French nun, recently was sentenced at Chungking to three years in prison. She was charged with killing 300 orphans. This accusation often is made by the Reds against Roman Catholics who have served the motherless and the afflicted.

The tragic cases of Miss Cone, Dr. Wallace and Sister Agnes are not unusual under the new regime in China.

The Red Campaign. Vilification, trumped-up charges ranging from immorality to espionage, carefully rehearsed public trials, imprisonment and house arrest, exile, torture and death are among the instruments of the Communists in their ruthless drive to control the churches and sever their foreign ties.

Most of the non-Chinese Protestant missionaries, who once numbered about 5,000, have left the country. Relentlessly,

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the non-Chinese Roman Catholic priests, brothers and nuns, of whom there once were about 6,700, are being forced out. Heaviest onslaught recently has been against the famous Maryknoll missionaries.

Roman Catholics, whose opposition to communism was no secret, at first fared worse than the Protestants.

Among some Protestants the Reds detected softness toward communism. Accordingly, a document now known as "The Christian Manifesto" was circulated in the summer of 1950. It stated that during the 140 years Protestant Christianity was developing in China, a "not unworthy contribution to Chinese society" had been made. But, it continued, imperialism began to show as an active force not long after the missionaries appeared.

The missionaries, it went on, came from imperialistic countries, and "Christianity consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, became related with imperialism."

Using phrases copyrighted by Moscow, the Manifesto said that imperialists, displeased by the victory of the Chinese Revolution, would seek to destroy its achievements. It proceeded:

"They may also make use of Christianity to forward their devices of stirring up internal dissension as they, with scheming intrigues, plot the creation of reactionary forces in China."

Special emphasis was placed on "American imperialism." There was a call for "autonomy and self-support" on the part of the Church in China "wherever foreigners and foreign funds are used."

A small group of Protestants, with encouragement from some leading churchmen, particularly in the United States, worked out the Manifesto in cooperation with Peking officials.

The Manifesto, giving scant attention to spiritual aims, really was a loyalty pledge to the Red regime. One could sign it or one could not. In either case, his stand became known publicly. The treatment of those Chinese Christian leaders who did not sign has furnished material for new chapters in the history of martyrs.

Some whose names appeared early on the Manifesto never had seen it; others found alterations in the text after they signed. Afraid of consequences, none of these have repudiated the signatures.

By last September, 14 months after the Manifesto was published, more than 270,000 signatures were claimed for it—about a third of the total Protestant membership in China.

The National Christian Council, meeting in Shanghai in October 1950, gave unanimous approval to the Manifesto. It recommended that the preaching of Christianity be permitted only within churches and that, during the period of land reform, all Christian activities should cease, "including Sunday services and Bible classes."

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Another step was taken last April at a National Christian conference in Peking. Lu Yung Ti, vice-chairman of the Cultural and Educational Affairs Committee of the Peking regime's Administrative Council, ranted for three hours and hurled prolonged invective against Americans. He charged that American missionary enterprise was controlled by imperialists with the purpose of hypnotizing the people and was "one of the formulas of cultural aggression."

World groups such as the YMCA, the YWCA, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches were purposely formed by the churches for aggression, Lu declared.



Charges of misconduct against prominent Christian leaders were made at the conference. Although the charges were false, delegates were worked up to such a pitch that they cried out for the execution of an Evangelist accused of adultery.

Congregations were bidden to organize "accusation meetings" to reveal "the intrigue of the hidden imperialists and spies within the Church." Instructions on how to run such meetings were published later. They read, in part:

"The accusations and speeches should be rehearsed. . . . For the grand finale, there must be powerful speakers who will awaken the audience and cause them to demand judgment on the accused."

Soon "trials" were being held in many places. They ran as long as ten hours without pause. The accused usually had to kneel throughout the proceedings. Often they fainted or collapsed. They were revived with cold water and made to get back on their knees. Spectators had to remain through the long sessions.

The Rev. Thomas Langley of Framingham, Mass., a Maryknoll priest stationed in the Wuchow diocese, was made to kneel for four and one half hours while



Before the Reds came. Poor Chinese families welcomed the ministering nuns.

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the audience shouted at him. He was called an "American spy."

Bishop G. Carleton Lacy of the Methodist Church, China secretary of the American Bible Society, a distinguished scholar and writer, was ill. He was refused permission to leave China. He died last December, reportedly of a heart attack, and was buried after dark, with his faithful cook the only authorized mourner.

The Most Rev. Adolph Paschang, a Roman Catholic bishop from Martinsburg, Mo., was twice beaten at Kongmoon, Kwantung Province, after the church refused to pay a ransom for his return.

Results. And so the record runs: inhumanity and brutality to the servant of God who comes from other lands; that, and worse, to the "running dogs of the foreigner," the converted Chinese who fail to sign "The Christian Manifesto."

The "true believers" are those who "love their nation and are good citizens loyally supporting their government." The others are those who have "suffered from the influence of the Western missionaries . . . warped . . . spies." If these "insist upon fellowship with the West, they will be eradicated," says the *People's Daily* of Peking.

The threat is real. It is being fulfilled as the Peking Red regime drives mercilessly to purge the churches and make them the docile followers of the Party line.

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