CARMEL

AND THE

KOREAN DEATH MARCH

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WRITTEN AND TRANSLATED

by

THE CARMELITE NUNS OF SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Edited by the Carmel of Flemington, New Jersey

To

the American Servicemen and their families
who so generously helped the Carmelites of
Seoul in their hours of greatest need.

CHAPTER I

From France to Korea
1939 -- 1950

"Let there be nothing which we know would further our Lord's service, that we dare not undertake with the assistance of His grace." said the great St. Teresa of Avila, foundress of the Discalced Carmelites. This spirit has always been a part of the heritage of her Carmelite daughters, so when the Carmel of Aire in France was told that a missionary father had been praying for forty years that a Carmel be founded in Korea before he died, they at once accepted the Bishop of Seoul's invitation to come. After much prayer Mother Marie Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament and Sister Marie Madeleine of Mercy were chosen as the first two to go. They would be followed later by three more, Sister Marie Henriette, Sister Marie Bernadette, a lay sister, and Mother Therese of the Child Jesus who with Mother Mechtilde would one day lie unshrouded in the frozen ground of a Communist land without even the blessed shadow of a cross to mark their resting place.

Mother Mechtilde and Mother Therese were both Belgian. Mother Mechtilde was born in Bruges, Belgium, in 1889. She entered the Belgian Carmel at Ypres in 1906 but was forced to flee with her companions during the German invasion of 1914. Rather than wait until the Carmel of Ypres could be reestablished she joined the Carmel of Aire in 1917. In 1919 she had gone to Smyrna in Turkey to help a struggling Carmel there and once again saw her monastery destroyed by shells and flames in the Greek-Turkish war of 1922. She then returned to the Carmel of Aire and remained there until chosen to go as Prioress to the new Carmel in Seoul, Korea.

Mother Therese of the Child Jesus was born in Luxemberg, Belgium, in 1901. During World War I her parents were part of a British spy ring but were caught by the Germans and imprisoned until freed by the armistice. Mother Therese, then only seventeen, carried on their spy activities until she too was caught and imprisoned, but only for three weeks. When peace came she was decorated with the Belgian Croix de Guerre and the "Chevalier" of the British Empire. She entered the Carmel of Virton in 1919 and on her Clothing Day, when she left the Chapel to take off her wedding dress and put on the Carmelite habit, she placed both medals at the feet of the Infant of Prague. In 1940 she volunteered for the missions feeling that our Lord was calling her to a distant vineyard, and was sent to the Carmel of Seoul where she was elected Prioress just before the Korean invasion at the end of Mother Mechtilde's term of office.

The first two, Mother Mechtilde and Sister Madeleine, left Aire in April of 1939 and arrived in Seoul in May just three months before World War II broke out, and were welcomed by the Bishop of Seoul and the Mother Provincial of the St. Paul de Chartres teaching sisters who gladly gave them shelter until they could find a house of their own. Before leaving France the Carmelites had been given a large sum for their new Korean foundation

and had been planning to use it for the construction of a permanent monastery. Alas this gift was completely swept away in the war and they were left penniless. Then too, during the war all communication with Europe was severed so that they could receive no aid from their Carmel or friends. To make matters worse, there was not a grain of rice in Korea that year due to crop failure, and the Bishop, who had his hands full trying to feed two seminaries could not help them. Once again the St. Paul Sisters came to their rescue and in addition to many supplies gave them a tiny house. Shortly afterwards the second group, Mother Therese, Sister Henriette and Sister Bernadette, arrived having managed to get passage on the last steamer leaving Marseille for the orient and we were at last together and could settle down to the regular life as cloistered Carmelites.

Since the Discalced Carmelite Nuns do indeed lead their strictly cloistered life on the missions and never leave their enclosure, many persons wonder why missionary bishops are so anxious to have them when the more pressing need would seem to be for the active sisters. It is because the missionaries realize so well the urgent need for powerhouses of prayer in pagan lands. The life of a Carmelite is a hidden one but the radiation of its prayer warms the whole world. United to Christ her prayers and sacrifices become humble seed which the Master scatters left and right according to His good pleasure. The harvest is greater in the lands where the contemplative orders have been established and the missionaries feel strengthened in their labours.

Many fervent young girls applied for admission. Soon we had five Korean postulants and the house could no longer hold us. The kind Bishop Larribeau decided to build us a house at the expense of the mission as the end of the war seemed still far off. The site was very small and the construction of a solid building was hindered, not only by the lack of funds, but also by the Japanese refusal to permit the necessary dynamiting for the foundations which in this case was absolutely necessary as the house was being built on solid rock. We were warned to plan for a permanent monastery as soon as we could but at the time were very grateful for the small building, no matter how insecure.

All Korea was suffering from wartime privations. The strict rationing imposed by the Japanese government, whose subject Korea was then, was far from giving us even what was most necessary. It was not until the end of the war when American help was extended that our life became somewhat easier.

We can never forget the first gift of food made by an American soldier on the evening of October 7th, 1945: seven sacks of rice and three sacks of beans. They were brought into the recreation room and we were all speechless. This was the beginning of the three years during which we received something almost every day from the soldiers. A kind sergeant deprived himself of his share of candy in order to give it to his friends behind the grille. An army chaplain spoke about us to other soldiers who in turn wrote to their families begging them to send something for us. How could their mothers at home have refused to give us whatever they could spare? Some of the mothers and sisters of the soldiers sacrificed a new dress in order to send us a package; others gave up movies and other pleasures, etc.. The letters we received were very touching and the articles in the packages were so carefully and thoughtfully chosen that they answered all our needs.

One day an American officer came to the speakroom. As he spoke French

fluently the conversation was easy. He was most interested in our way of life and Mother Prioress was telling him how Heaven watched over us and explaining how she prayed to different saints for our various needs. "If we need firewood, for instance, I would turn to St. Joseph," she said, "but if we need rice, I ask our Blessed Mother, etc...." The officer who was listening attentively said, "To whom do you turn if you want some chocolate?" Mother Prioress promptly answered, "To the American soldiers!"

Thus our life became normal again thanks to American generosity and our concern for our daily bread disappeared in the sunshine of such charity. We only wish that we knew all the names of our benefactors, but should any of them happen to read these lines we would like to tell them how gratefully and lovingly we still remember them. We have only our poor prayers with which to repay their generosity but these we send heavenward every day begging God to bless them and their dear ones. Could they only have been with us when the packages were opened, they would have been repaid for their pains by our cries of admiration and gratitude at the sight of each new article. But we know that Our Lord will not leave those who gave "a cup of water in His name" without recompense and His blessing. Surely Christ must have been thinking of our benefactors when He said, "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for Me."

Despite the privations, postulants continued to arrive and in 1946 our temporary house was again too small. It was then, clearly by Divine Providence, that an American army doctor by the name of Janquet came to our assistance. He brought us lumber from a building which had been torn down and the other materials necessary to build what we call St. Joseph's house. We were delighted with our little annex and its very ceiling always brings to mind our American friends as it is made of American relief goods boxes!

The hardest time was now over. We were able to organize the means of earning our livelihood and our Carmel became known and loved. Best of all we were able to give the Carmelite habit to several of the Korean postulants and then later, as time went by, to admit them to their final Profession. They would be the foundation stones for other Korean Carmels composed entirely of native Koreans and we rejoiced to see their number grow.

CHAPTER II

From the Outbreak of War to our Arrest
June 25 - July 15, 1960

The American troops were withdrawn in 1948. From then on South Korea lived under the threat of a communist invasion. In Carmel we placed all our cares in the hands of God and like children, happy and trusting, did not worry about the future. Life went on as usual. We contined to receive numerous applications for admission to Carmel and we were even considermaking a second foundation so as to be able to accept them.

In the distance, however, the storm was quietly brewing, but before it struck God in all His goodness gave us the happiness of celebrating the golden jubilee of our chaplain and benefactor, Father Antoine Gombert, who shared the joyful occasion with his brother, Father Julian Gombert. The brothers had been ordained on the same day and had come to Korea together. A celebration to fittingly honor these two old and zealous missionaries took place both at the seminary and at Carmel on June 24th, 1950. The next day war broke out.

It was Sunday, June 25th about four o'clock in the afternoon when our Father Gombert came to inform us that war had started. He then gave us Benediction and as we knelt before the Blessed Sacrament our prayers and entreaties became more fervent. We entrusted everything to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and our Immaculate Mother, the Protectress of Korea and Queen of Carmel.

We knew only too well the inadequacy of the South Korean army. In case of aggression America had promised to help but would the reinforcements arrive in time. Seoul was only twenty-five miles from the dividing line between the communist North and free South Korea, and by the evening of the 26th we could distinctly hear the roar of cannon sounding like thunder in the distance.

On the morning of the 27th the Maryknoll Bishop Byrne came to speak to Mother Therese who had recently been elected Prioress. Father Coyos, his assistant was with him. "The last plane for Tokyo is due to leave," the Bishop said. "Do you wish to go? You have ten minutes to get ready. Bring nothing with you." Mother Prioress asked, "Will the plane also take the Korean Sisters?" "No, the Europeans only." Mother Prioress assembled the European nuns hurriedly and gave us the message while the Bishop and his companion waited in the speakroom. Our Mother told us that we had absolute freedom of choice. She would not even let us know her own decision for fear of influencing ours. Silence fell and we all knelt in prayer, each one well knowing that she held her fate in her hand. Taking the plane meant liberty but only God could know what future suffering lay ahead for those who chose to remain. Yet had we not foreseen this ever since the departure of the American army, and had we not come to our decision then? So after a few moments, without discussion and in great peace, we gave our unanimous answer: "We will stay with our Korean Sisters."

When Mother Prioress returned to the speakroom with our answer, the kind Father Coyos insisted, "At least the blind Sister must leave." Our Mother answered: "She is the Novice Mistress. If she had to abandon her novices she would die of grief." In fact Sister Madeleine had lost her sight as a result of overtasking her eyes trying to learn the Korean language so as to be able to teach her novices. Bishop Byrne seemed pleased with our answer. After his departure Mother Prioress summoned the Community and told the Korean Sisters of our decision. They wept, but what else could we have done? The shepherd does not flee when his flock is in danger. Also did we not have before us the example of the Carmelites in Sofia and China who remained at their posts in order to maintain centers of prayer in communist territory?

The noise of gunfire came closer by the hour. While we were in Choir saying Matins in the afternoon because we had no light at night, Father Coyos came to tell us that the North Koreans were at the edge of the city

and that our location was dangerous because their guns were aimed in the direction of Carmel. He advised us to go to the convent of St. Paul. But to abandon the monastery was to leave it at the mercy of the pillagers, so it was decided that eight of us would remain to guard the buildings and the rest would find shelter with the Sisters of St. Paul. However, the situation was actually just the reverse. It was their convent and orphanage, situated in the heart of the city, which were under gunfire from the nearby mountains. The uproar was frightful and the building trembled, while the sisters who remained behind at Carmel could hear the whine of the shells as they passed overhead. Before long, Father Gombert always alert where the safety of his Carmelites was concerned, came to lead the remaining nuns to the cellar of his own nearby house from where it was easy to watch our Carmel. In the deep, solid cellar were gathered some professors and students from the major seminary and the Blessed Sacrament was already exposed. Everyone was silent and the presence of the Master calmed our fears. At dawn on Wednesday, June 28th, Father Gombert offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with perfect serenity and impressive slowness.

When we came out of the cellar to learn what had happened we found an indescribable tumult. Detonations of shells followed one another very rapidly and already fighting was in progress in the streets. Everywhere the North Korean tanks were doing their work of destruction and the South Korean army was at the end of its resistance. One young soldier passed by us crying and showed us his empty cartridge belt saying, "What can we do?" At eight in the morning the communist army paraded victoriously through the streets to the cheers of the southern communists who, unfortunately, were all too numerous.

On Thursday the battle continued in the outskirts of the capital but by Friday, the 30th, we could no longer hear the heavy gunfire which was an indication that the communists were advancing southward without difficulty. No sooner had they seized Seoul when they killed the wounded soldiers in the hospitals, pillaged banks, threw open the prisons, and assembled people every day in all sections of the city. At these endless meetings a representative from each family was ordered to attend. One of our extern sisters was our representative. She came back not only tired but also disgusted because the majority of the persons there were not from the North, but were South Koreans living all around us who suddenly revealed themselves as ardent friends of the new regime.

News, sad but only too true, reached us. The Bishop's house had already been ransacked and the Sisters of St. Paul had been given only three days in which to leave their convent and orphanage. We spent our time trying to hide valuable objects such as vestments, books, etc., so as to save them if possible. Our cloistered life had ceased with the outbreak of hostilities and we had thought it wisest to take off our beloved habits and dress like Korean women which meant putting on loose trousers and a short tunic. Several days thus elapsed without incident at Carmel. The victors appeared to be ignorant of the existence of our monastery. We could hear the communists yelling their songs in the streets and the rumble of trucks carrying munitions. At these times we trembled with fear and intensified our prayers.

On July 11th we learned that Father Villemot, the chaplain to the

Sisters of St. Paul community had been arrested; also the French Consul, Mr. Perruche and his Vice Consul, as well as the British Consul and Vice Consul in complete violation of the international law protecting diplomats. That same day a battalion occupied the major seminary which was not 200 yards from our Carmel. From there they noticed our building and immediately the questioning and searching began. Officers came to the monastery and after knocking violently at the door, entered without waiting for an answer. Each of us was questioned several times, the interrogators taking turns, but the basic questions were always the same and were essentially superficial, such as our names, where we came from, when and how we had arrived in Korea, etc.. Sometimes our answers were not very well understood because our vocabulary was limited to words used only in Korean Catholic circles. The interrogators would then look at each other wide-eyed and perplexed. As they were taking down our answers word for word, they wanted to know how these unknown words were written in Chinese. We had to call on Father Gombert, our chaplain, and his brother whose perfect knowledge of the Korean language enabled them to give the necessary explanations. In the speakroom where the European nuns were being questioned these interrogators were decent and respectful without using any violent or offensive words; however, to our young Korean Sisters who were kept apart from us in the Community room and to whom the soldiers must have felt superior, they were more threatening. The officers reproached the sisters for having followed so passively these Europeans who had come to eat the country's rice and live useless lives, whereas as married women they could give soldiers to the country.

At first the officers were content to make quick inspection tours through the monastery, but one day one of their soldiers disappeared and they suspected that he had taken refuge with us. On their next visit, to surprise us, they left their shoes outside the door and, guns in hand, approached our cells like wolves. Each room was carefully searched, the soldiers looking under every bed in the hope of finding their missing comrade. They left angrily but returned the same evening, and calling us together in the yard, gave us an indoctrination speech on Communism. The sisters all had to listen "respectfully", but our Mother Prioress, knowing this to be only a device to clear the way for a more thorough examination of the cells, took her place at the end of the line and, after a few moments, slipped unnoticed into the monastery. She found three of the soldiers going through all the rooms one by one, but they finally gave up apparently disappointed at the poverty of the building.

On the 14th we were told that all European Catholics were to gather the following day at the Bishop's house. Mother Prioress sent the five postulants, whose families lived in Seoul, back to their homes. While looking for shelter in the homes of other Catholic friends for the rest of the Korean Sisters, we each prepared a small package containing some money, food, and clothes. The last night was spent in intimate conversation intermingled with tears and we ended it in one long moment of prayer. Once again we placed all our trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On the morning of the 15th Father Gombert and Father Coyos celebrated Mass in our Chapel. All the postulants who had left the night before returned to attend. In order to prepare us for the coming long and sad trial during which we would be deprived of the Eucharist, our Lord gave us once

more the consolation of remaining together around the tabernacle and of offering ourselves at the Elevation.

The news of our departure had spread and that morning many Catholics came to Carmel asking that we give them whatever we wished for safekeeping. Each one left well loaded. The soldiers who were guarding the monastery let the first ones pass, but as the procession lengthened their suspicions were aroused. They detained the rest, releasing them only after they had surrendered everything.

The officer from the seminary returned twice that morning for further interrogations. On their second visit after a period of questioning, we suddenly received the order: "You must leave here at once. Come! Come now!" Hastily we changed into our religious habits again. Although we wanted to take our small, individual packages, they stopped us saying, "We are only taking you to fill out some formalities. You will be back here by evening." So we had to follow them empty handed as if for a short walk. Our future was dark, but we knew it would be the way of the cross, and we wanted to walk it as true Carmelites, whose only joy is to follow in the steps of Christ.

Our little Korean Sisters gathered sobbing in the corridor. Recognizing the voice of Sister Elizabeth, our blind Sister Madeleine said; "My child, this is the moment." The young Korean nun answered in a voice full of faith; "Mother, if this is the will of Jesus, it is for the best." Then, leading the blind sister by the hand as far as the door, she continued firmly, saying to her young companions, "Don't let them see you weep." We had reached the end of the corridor and seeing that we were really leaving, our Korean Sisters cried out with indescribable sadness, "Mother, dear Mother, bless us." Our Mother turned and made a big sign of the cross in the air, while Sister Madeleine said to Sister Elizabeth, "We are leaving the monastery to you. You are the eldest child. You will take care of your little sisters in our place." One last embrace, one last "In God always," and that was the end. Would we ever see our beloved Carmel again?

CHAPTER III

Imprisonment in Seoul
July 15 - July 19, 1950

Two cars were waiting for us at the foot of the hill, each with two armed soldiers. Father Gombert and his brother, Father Julian, Father Coyos and Sister Henriette rode in one of them, while Mother Mechtilde, our Mother Prioress, Sister Madeleine and Sister Bernadette had to get into the other. In the center of the city we were told to get out in front of a large building, probably a hotel, which had been transformed into what they pompously called, as we later learned, the "Camp for the Preservation of Peace". On the first floor two very young civilians were waiting for us. After repeatedly questioning us about our nationality, date of arrival in Korea and profession, (we answered these more than fifty times with-

out exaggeration,) they spoke of imperialism, capitalism and their personal opposition to the Pope, the Scriptures, etc..

They seemed to know the evangelical counsels better than most Christians. One of them claimed that while he had read "Do not trouble yourself as to what you should eat and wear..." in St. Matthew, he had found great stores of provisions in a Benedictine monastery they had pillaged. This was evidently greatly exaggerated. The Fathers Gombert told them that this monastery gave large quantities of alms and food to the poor living in the neighborhood. Then they attacked the Vatican and spoke of the Pope with burning hatred. To justify their own doctrine, they referred to French literature: Victor Hugo's Les Miserables, and especially the works of Andre Guide for whom they had unbounded admiration. The Fathers were able to reply effectively to their comments about Victor Hugo, but as Guide's works are condemned by the Church, they were not sufficiently familiar with them to reply to the interrogators minute questions and the Communists were able to win an easy victory. Their mocking laughter expressed their contempt for this ignorance.

Afterwards we were taken to another room and, as we were by ourselves, we seized the opportunity to say our prayers, supplying for Matins of the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by reciting "Our Fathers", as we had no breviaries. At the outset of our life of suffering we needed more than ever the protection of our heavenly Mother.

Towards six o'clock we were told to go down to the basement where we were pleasantly surprised to meet Bishop Byrne, his secretary, Father Booth, and a Korean priest, Father Youn. The Apostolic Delegate (Bishop Byrne) had been arrested at the Bishop's House with Father Youn who had refused to leave him. The Bishop welcomed us with his kindhearted affection and gave us a small bottle of coca-cola to cheer us. The daily menu in the prison camp consisted of two patties of barley, but Father Youn had permission to get extra food supplies for the Bishop. This accounted for the drink and also for the small slice of ham which he passed us to eat with our barley patties that night.

By eight o'clock the room was filled with about one hundred Korean civilians who had probably been denounced as enemies of the regime. They sat on their heels and passed the night in this uncomfortable position. Their meal was the same as ours: - one bowl of barley without any kind of condiment. The cook came to ask them mockingly if it was tasty, to which they had to reply collectively "Yes.". After the meal a soldier made a roll call: "Kim, Pak, Song, etc.." Each one had to stand up and answer "Present." Sometimes the soldier became confused over the long list of names. We could not help laughing secretly - this was our evening recreation. Poor people! Time seems eternal when one cannot sleep, and how could one sleep without being able to lie down or even stir.

Among those with us in this room were a German and a Turkish lady, both of whom had divorced their Korean husbands; also a young girl, Helena, whose father was Korean and whose mother was Dutch. We often wondered about her and her presence among us. The investigators questioned her as if she had been an American spy, but the questions they put her more closely resembled a farce, and certain attitudes she displayed made us think that she had been charged to spy on us and to get us to talk. However, she did not remain long with us.

When night came we tried to sleep. Although the room was very large when Bishop Byrne and Father Booth were the only ones with us, it had now become impossible to find a place to lie down on the cement floor. The two Gombert fathers lay down side by side, arms interlocked, as if to affirm the deep union of their hearts. In this serenity of faith and fraternal love they began their life as prisoners. Then, in November, after a brief separation of twenty-four hours, they would be reunited in the eternal union and glory of Heaven.

Silently our thoughts and hearts were hovering over the little Carmel which we had so recently abandoned. Our love for it seemed to have been intensified by our sufferings. What would become of our children in religion? We knew that the Communists, drunk with victory, were capable of doing anything. What would they do? This anguished question, which we repeated to ourselves thousands of times during our long imprisonment, was to be left unanswered for thirty-three months.

Before our arrest the Americans had announced over the radio that on Sunday, July 16th, several hundred planes would fly over Seoul without dropping any bombs. Without a doubt they wanted to impress the people by this show of force and to demonstrate to what the capital would be exposed if the war continued. They did precisely what they said they would do--the huge birds came in from all directions and the roar from the motors was terrific; however, this did not make our guards any more accommodating. We were told to squat down on our heels and remain quiet without moving. The room was suffocating. Despite the extreme heat the windows were kept tightly closed. Fortunately we were able to get a little air through a broken windowpane. We also had to fight against hundreds of flies that gave us no rest day or night. A terrible thirst seized us. We were given a small amount of water each day for all of us, but since we were so numerous there was very little for each. There was no point in even thinking about washing ourselves; the bath of perspiration in which we continually lived had to suffice.

In the afternoon we were questioned again, each of us having his own interrogator. All of them appeared excited and when they spoke of the Vatican in Rome their anger turned to rage. Mother Marie Mechtilde was attacked the most severely: "It is you who perverted the Korean girls," thundered the officer with his fist raised threateningly. The more he spoke the angrier he became, but Mother Mechtilde, knowing little Korean, kept silent which finally forced him to stop his shouting.

While Sister Madeleine was answering numerous questions, a comrade came and spoke softly to the interrogator; "The priests and nuns tonight," he whispered. Indeed the guards' imaginations never remained inactive: a loathsome comedy was about to begin.

That night when the room was again filled with new prisoners, one of our guards pretended to open a "people's court". His discourse was given in a furious tone to which he added menacing gestures saying; "You see these women. They are parasites. They are Sisters of Carmel who do nothing for the people. By sending packages to their families they have impoverished our country. Do you think they should live?" Immediately--for evidently all was arranged beforehand--hands were raised and amidst the clamor we could hear; "We must make the nuns from Ca-ra-mel disappear." Knowing their scorn for human life and also their feeling towards us, we

believed our last hour was drawing near and, renewing our vows, we prepared to die as best we could. Within the solitude of our souls each of us sent a fond adieu and a last embrace to all those we held most dear. We offered our lives for all the intentions of Holy Mother the Church, for Korea and for our beloved little Carmel. The joy of going together to our Blessed Mother, Queen and Beauty of Carmel, on this her great feast day, calmed our natural fears and we waited in peace. Despite the presence of priests confession was impossible but Father Gombert gave us absolution. Outside numerous gunshots broke the silence of the night. One of our guards argued at length with Father Coyos about the celibacy of the clergy. A soldier said in a loud voice to his chief seated at the desk, "Tonight we need 120 victims." Then they began to call the Korean prisoners who left one by one. After each one had left we heard gunshots in the yard. The room was growing empty; our turn arrived. In order to see our faces better a bright light was switched on above us. One hour passed, then two. Each time the door opened we thought we were going to be called. When it was almost dawn the light was turned off again. Another day was beginning and both priests and religious were still alive. They had only wanted to frighten us!...but we regretted a little having missed such a beautiful opportunity of giving our lives to God.

On the morning of the 17th Father Villemot of the Foreign Mission and chaplain to the Sisters of St. Paul, Mother Beatrix and Sister Eugenie, both Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, arrived. It was a happy moment for us. Naturally we would have preferred knowing they were free, but since they were also to be imprisoned we were glad that it was to be with us.

Of his eighty-two years, Father Villemot had given fifty-seven to the mission fields of Korea. Tall in his youth undoubtedly, but now shrunken with age, he still gave the impression of vigor and a strong will. Mother Beatrix, Vice-Provincial of the Sisters of St. Paul, was also advanced in years. Tall and slim she had a very distinguished way of walking and her face immediately aroused sympathy because of her gentle and kind expression. Sister Eugenie, Novice Mistress of the Sisters of St. Paul, was forty-nine years old. Her beautiful blue eyes revealed the ardent and generous nature of her soul. The Korean Sisters from the convent of St. Paul had insisted that the European Sisters take the plane to Tokyo--the same one we had refused. However, they too would not abandon their sisters in religion and the many orphans in their care, and had only sent one old and very ill sister on the plane.

Fr. Villemot who was suffering from a bad case of dysentery and had been sent home for treatment by the officers, was called back to prison as soon as he showed signs of improvement. The French Consul protested the arrest and brutal treatment of this old priest in vain. No mercy was shown him.

In the afternoon there was another sensational arrival, that of Bishop Quinlan of the St. Columban Society, who was Prefect Apostolic of a district north of Seoul. Two of his missionaries were with him, Fr. Crosbie, an Australian and Father Canavan. Bishop Quinlan was a giant of a man who gave the impression of great strength and good health. His face was as fresh and rosy as a child's and his smile revealed his immense kindness. He was always trying to help others. In this prison since the nights usually passed without sleep, one afternoon Bishop Byrne who was very tired,

lay down to rest on the floor. The numerous flies buzzing around us would have prevented him from sleeping had not Bishop Quinlan knelt beside him for almost three hours and fanned them away. Later in the camps, in spite of the hard and continuous sufferings caused by near starvation, he was always the first to volunteer for any hard work. We never saw him lose courage or his bright, good humor with which he greeted us on that first day in prison when he showed us a bundle of bedding and said smilingly, "Look, this is all the Communists have left me."

Fr. Crosbie had red hair and well developed muscles which gave him the appearance of always being ready for a fight. He had been in Korea near the North border for several years and knew the people well. In our various camps he was a hard worker, continually trying to make our poor habitations more comfortable with what little we had. The young Fr. Canavan, an Irishman, did not have the strength of the other two missionaries and to our great sorrow was not able to withstand the many privations that awaited him. He had brought his books with him and, determined not to lose a minute, with Fr. Crosbie as teacher plunged into the difficulties of the Korean language.

Large numbers of civilians were frequently brought to the hall to sign papers swearing that they would practice no religion whatsoever, that their children would never be baptized nor would they allow them to ever set foot inside a church. For this they received money and tobacco.

The torture chamber was on the second floor. We distinctly heard the cracking of a whip and the thud of a club which resounded through the building. Everything within us seemed to suffer--body, heart and soul, but God sometimes gave us the comfort of a smile. One day Sister Madeleine was waiting her turn to reach the faucet in the corridor when she recognized the heavy tread of a soldier. She drew back to let him pass but he slowed down and said softly in Korean, "Praise be the Lord Jesus Christ." (This is the greeting between Catholics in Korea.) The presence of a brother in this hell was so unexpected that he received no reply as he had already gone some distance before the blind Sister recovered from the surprise.

The guards, without wasting any time, again prepared for nightfall. It may be well to note here that people of such a vicious nature find the means of living without sleep. From the time of our imprisonment in Seoul up to the last day of our liberation their offices and the officers' quarters were lighted all night and we could see them bent over tables writing continuously even though there was, supposedly, a shortage of paper. The devil likes to work nightime.

During the whole afternoon we could hear them pounding and shifting furniture above us. What was to be the outcome of this commotion? It is useless to ask Carmelites, who in their cloistered life are far from up-to-date concerning modern machinery and the sound it makes, to explain what was to follow. We only know we heard between nine and ten that night the names of our little Korean Sisters being called on the floor above us; "Teresita, Agnes, Michaella, Gabriella, etc.. Ordered to apostasize, some consented while others refused; the latter were tortured. We heard the noise of the torture instruments and the moans of the Sisters, always in the same manner. Next Fr. Lee, a Korean priest who had been our confessor for two years and Dr. Pak, a fervent Catholic whose daughter had

been with us for the last three months, were called. Both signed their profession of faith. Our houseboy's turn was next and we heard him being questioned at length. The last to be called was a student from the major seminary. He made a magnificent profession of faith, saying that he believed in God and would remain a Christian forever. Then the torture mingled with mockeries began. "Is your Father in heaven coming down to free you?" We could hear a series of gasping sighs, inarticulate pleadings and groans which lasted a long time. Suddenly we were frozen by a horrible cry of suffering. We wondered in anguish whether it was a tragic reality or whether our captors were continuing their ghastly farce in order to break our spirit. To add to our uncertainty, the words which reached our ears were not audible; some were partly understandable, but the end of the sentences faded into murmurs. With their refined cruelty the soldiers had arranged everything so as to keep us in a state of gnawing doubt and confusion. We learned later that it had indeed been a farce and on that tragic night our young Korean Sisters were still sheltered at their dear Carmel.

On the 18th about five o'clock in the afternoon, the officer in charge asked a soldier to get five lances. He then called five soldiers and spoke to them in a low but purposely audible voice: "You have to kill them tonight, but not right now, wait until around one in the morning. Each one of you will kill one of them, but before you pierce their hearts you must chop off their fingers and ears. Don't be afraid; you are working for the welfare of the country." One of them full of zeal exclaimed: "May I kill two of them?" "No," answered the officer, "only one for each of you. Be courageous."

They actually did come early in the night and sat down near us, lance in hand. Every now and then they would discuss their plan. "Isn't this the moment?" one would ask, but there was always a good reason to delay. In the morning they left without having cut off a single thing.

On Wednesday the 19th we suddenly received the order to leave, but it was not for all. Fr. Youn who had devoted himself to Bishop Byrne, was to go to the Bishop's House while the two Sisters of St. Paul were to remain in prison. Where were we going? Some whispered Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. We were told to get into a truck which was comfortable enough. While crossing the city we looked about wide-eyed in the hopes of seeing a friend. There was nothing to comfort us, however, only pictures of Stalin and Kim, President of the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea, which were displayed practically everywhere on trees or pasted on walls.

When we arrived at the railroad station we were told to sit on our heels alongside the tracks. Immediately a crowd of both children and adults gathered to stare and snicker at us. The guards, speaking both Russian and Korean, introduced us as "exploiters of the people." A soldier came to tell us, "Those of you with money from South Korea may change it for North Korean money and buy fruit." Fruit! After four days in confinement, feverish and thirsty, what a God-send! Fortunately our Mother Prioress had brought some money with her in her pocket when we had set out empty handed that first morning.

When the train arrived we were told to get on board a freight car which was exceptionally high and which intrigued us a bit. Seated on a thin layer of straw each would have had enough place had we boarded the car alone, but

a large number of civilians also got on. Why were they with us? Apparently they had come just to make our trip more uncomfortable by crowding us or else they were spying on us. Some of them who understood French wanted to speak to us and to see how we would react to the adventures that were to follow.

The fruit finally arrived and it was to give us our first lesson in Communism! We were told in effect: "In communist countries all people are the same. Consequently, those who had no money to buy fruit will eat some as well as the others." And to make this rule of justice better understood, the guard gave two pieces of fruit to those who had made the purchase, and four to those who had not.

There were also soldiers on our train, but only one guard was on duty in our freight car. He was not over seventeen or eighteen years old and was standing in a corner, very upright with a gun on his shoulder. He stayed in that position all night. The joy of humiliating these Europeans, enemies of the regime, seemed to lessen his fatigue. The Fathers spoke to him a little. We remember this statement which, at least, was frank: "In North Korea we all think the same, and those who do not are done away with. There you are, that's how easy it is."

It was now night and the train started moving. After it had been going for a few minutes the atmosphere suddenly became suffocating. They were sending us a terrific heat wave from the locomotive. It did not last long but it did give us a warning. Some weeks before we had had read to us in the refectory an article on the "Infernal train", a Russian invention. The article, after having mentioned hot steam, an attack on the train by robbers, a bombing, and simulated wrecks, added; "We now understand why the car in which we were crowded was so high. All the mechanism was beneath us." The hot steam treatment made us realize that it was now our turn to have the questionable privilege of experiencing the antics of this "Infernal train." However, forwarned is fore-armed and a man who is warned is worth two and if a woman, maybe four so we had no fear of what was going to happen.

The farce continued according to schedule. We suddenly heard shots and more shots...thieves, brigands!...noise of panic and crazed running. In the complete darkness into which we had been plunged, we could smile at ease. Soldiers came furtively with flashlights to stare at us and to enjoy seeing us frightened, but nobody seemed afraid.

Second Act: The roar of planes, motors on all sides, exploding bombs, a rain of projectiles, one big uproar; an actual bombing could not sound any different. Although he had not read the article Bishop Byrne understood and, wanting to reassure us, circulated the message: "Do not fear, Sisters. All this is being done to scare us humans only."

Quietly we waited for the third episode--that of the train wreck. It came in due course. We were ready, but nevertheless it was a disagreeable feeling. The train was travelling at a good rate of speed and we were being given a bit of respite, but not for long. Through the quiet of the night we heard voices saying: "We should soon be on the bridge. Yes, in a few minutes. Is all ready for the drowning? All is ready... Then we may advance." The train continued and a current of fresh air made us aware that we were approaching a river. Once more they repeated, "Is everything ready?" "Yes, go onto the bridge." The train advanced, slowed down, and stopped in the middle, then after a moment started again without any drown-

ing whatsoever. As it was nowhere near daylight the guards had to stay busy and their tormenting continued. We heard heavy articles being moved and near us guns were loaded. "Who will be the first?" one asked. "Coyos", answered another, while a third mentioned someone else. The only result was that we were not able to sleep. In fact it was the fifth night that we had gone without sleep.

In the morning one of the priests who was imprisoned with us, tried to make us more comfortable. For breakfast we had just consumed a few drops of water which remained in the bottom of a bottle. This caused us to be insulted by one of the civilians; "Aren't you ashamed to drink while the other passengers have nothing?" The priest, seeing our plight and as he still had a little evaporated milk filled a cup and tried to pass it over to us. It was a difficult route because it had to pass by the one who had just insulted us. He took the cup and drank it up. Without feeling discouraged the priest filled a second, thinking that this one would be more likely to reach us, but this attempt did not succeed either. The second cup followed the first into the stomach of our communist friend who had abused us. Shortly after this a young nurse offered her services and attended to the sores that were shown her. She left with a smile, very satisfied with herself.

The train stopped at a large station. Many civilians boarded the part of the car which we had been forbidden to occupy, no doubt because it was reserved for them. Now followed a series of talks, all against us. The Korean is master of the art of saying nothing in many words. The orator pours out words and the public listens patiently. But this time there was a new twist. It would be necessary to stigmatize these women who lived behind their walls like the idle rich, without rendering any service to humanity; also these men of propaganda (the priests) whose talks were against progress. The conclusion was that we would have to leave the train and get a bowl of rice, but for the evening meal fewer bowls would be needed, "Since you will be here no longer," they said as they watched us. We were then ordered to sit at some distance from the station and were given food; a bit of dried fish with rice.

It was very warm, but it was restful just the same to be able to inhale fresh air and to have enough room for all to stretch. Our guards did not relax. They walked back and forth in front of us, armed and businesslike, discussing in half tones where they could find a favorable spot in which to execute us. And this place was without doubt, very difficult to find, for at six o'clock instead of receiving an order to stand against the wall, we were told to our great surprise to go and wash ourselves. Wash! How we needed it! We were all so dirty. There was a fountain in the public square and it was there that we assembled. Naturally a large number of curious people gathered to enjoy the scene. We did the best we could, remaining decent, while the civilians took pictures of us. Seeing that the spirit of panic did not exist among us and annoyed because of this, the guards looked around for something else. Their fertile imaginations soon found a scheme for a disgusting spectacle.

Night was falling and there was no question of more or less bowls of rice as the evening meal had been dispensed with. We had to board the train once more, this time in a car with double seats. However, the signal to depart was not given for a long time as a tragi-comedy was starting behind us. First there was an odious little drama aimed at our vow of chastity

(no doubt because the purity of consecrated souls excites the hatred of the devil.) Here it is impossible to tell all. Someone dressed as a young nun was called forward and consented to lose her virginity. Before she did this, however, she was told to repeat the formula of our sacred vows, as much as the soldiers remembered of it from looking through our books in Carmel. It seemed to us that their entire attitude placed the sanctity of our vows in full relief, showing that they well understood what a redoubtable obstacle the vows were against the malice of the devil.

The beast in them was unchained and mud was stirred up by the handful. Among the Carmelites only Mother Prioress and Sister Madeleine knew enough Korean to understand and they wished fervently that they could not. The Fathers followed this odious conversation and twice Father Gombert's voice shouted; "Have courage! Have courage!" Finally the drama ended, the train started rapidly and that was the end of that episode.

We arrived at Pyongyang at seven in the morning of the 21st of July and were quickly led from the station to the courthouse. Pyongyang was a beautiful city of six to seven hundred thousand inhabitants. With its wide avenues and its big boulevards the city appeared much gayer than Seoul. Those whom we passed en route gazed at us with sympathy.

In the large hall where we were scheduled to pass the day, magnificent paintings of Stalin and the president of North Korea, Kim, adorned the walls. Both were larger than life. We were seated at small desks like students in a classroom and were not allowed to move, let alone leave the room. Silence settled over us as each turned to her own deep thoughts. It was the 21st of July and the same question was running through our minds, "And now where are our Korean Sisters?"

To make certain we would not get out of practice the guards continued to question us. At one o'clock and again at five we were served a bowl of good rice and a strengthening soup. Two heavy bombings by the Americans indicated that they were not losing any time. The entire room we were in shook and we were ordered to lie flat on the ground. Were we going to be killed by our own defenders, we wondered.

Toward ten that evening we left by truck. These trucks we speak of were old vehicles destined to carry bags of cereals. The soldiers packed us in so tightly that it was impossible to move. Sometime after eleven o'clock the truck dropped us off in the open country near a rice paddy. The moon had not yet risen and it was completely dark when we were made to walk on a narrow slope that served as a path. At this time of the year the rice paddies are filled with water. Those who could not keep the path fell in, which is exactly what happened to Sister Henriette. We fished her out immediately, but she lost one shoe and had to continue the walk barefooted.

After walking several miles we arrived at a rather large opening where we begged the soldiers to let us spend the night as we were worn out with fatigue. There was no hope of rest. We were told to continue the difficult march. After some time we saw a light in the distance. It was our destination. We were dead tired, but the first bit of comfort consisted in a long talk which none of us understood since we were so terribly sleepy. The soldiers then gave us each a thin cotton blanket which was already well worn, (a few of us were privileged to get a sheet), and we

were led to another building about a hundred yards further on, an unused primary school which was quite dilapidated. The men were directed to one side, the women to the other. It was now about two o'clock in the morning.

Three young women were already occupying the room which was also to be ours. They were American Methodists from Haisung which was on the border between North and South Korea. Miss Bertha, the oldest of the three, was very good and amiable. Miss Nelly, whose gigantic physical appearance was most striking, afterwards became the head of our women's ward, while Miss Helen became our devoted infirmarian. These three women, accustomed to American luxuries, had been arrested on June 29th and like us, had not been permitted to bring anything with them. They welcomed us kindly and were happy to learn that we had a pair of scissors with which they could trim their nails. These scissors served us all. Both men and women came to borrow them, and even the guards liked them so well that when we changed camp it was impossible to get them back. Luckily Sr. Henriette had another small pair. These we kept until the end.

In an adjacent room men were talking softly which worried Mother Mechtilde. We were to find out the next day that our neighbors were the French Consul, Mr. Perruche, the Vice Consul, the secretary from the Consulate and a journalist, Mr. Chanteloup. The latter represented the French press in Japan and had come to Seoul to participate in some news conferences. He was interned fifteen days later.

We slept stretched out on the floor. In the morning the guards led us out into a small court where we were able to wash ourselves. A big, grey stone pot was full of water for us and we were given three basins in which to wash. A few days later we were given a piece of soap. The Consul, Mr. Perruche, who had heard of our situation, gave us a large towel which we cut into five sections so that each might have a piece.

Compared to the place in Seoul this camp seemed comfortable to us. The room was large and well lighted by large windows. There was an opening into the corridor where the guards set up their permanent post so that day and night we were under observation. Life in camp became organized. We were awakened in the morning by the soldiers running down to a nearby stream to wash all the while singing communist songs very loudly. At six the men went in groups to wash and when they had finished it was our turn. There were three meals a day, that is if you can call a bowl of water in which turnips had been boiled, and a handful of rice, a meal. The rice was of good quality and well cooked, but there was not enough and the men were dying of starvation. The cook, a Korean civilian, was well aware of this. One night he came and said to the guard, "These people cannot survive on so little. If you don't give them more I prefer leaving." This man had a kind heart and he really did leave, but our rations were not increased. When a colonel came to visit the camp one day, the potato soup was delicious. The following day the juice from the boiled turnips was back on the menu.

We were forbidden to leave the room and each time we needed to go to the washroom we had to ask permission. Sister Bernadette, resourceful as usual, began to make little excuses to go out, at which time she would gather purslane and make it into a salad which we ate with delight.

It was not long before new arrivals came to occupy the room with us. The first to join us were Mother Beatrix and Sister Eugenie, the two Sisters

of St. Paul who had been with us in the Seoul prison. What a joy it was for them to find us. A few days later, Sister Marie Claire, an Anglican nun, Madame Martel, the mother of the Consulate secretary and her daughter, Marguerite, arrived.

Sister Marie Claire was the superior of the Anglican Korean Sisters' community in Seoul, and she was the only European among them. Her daughters in religion had obtained permission for her to bring a suitcase filled with treasures: coffee, chocolate and biscuits, which she generously distributed to all her room-mates. Mrs. Martel, strong and vigorous in spite of her 73 years, was soon called "Mother Martel" by all, not only because of her white hair and advanced age but also because of her kind and motherly heart. She was a German married to a Frenchman living in Seoul, and had been a widow for some years. She had also brought a suitcase with her and generously permitted us to share her wealth: thread and needles. Up to that time we had had one needle between the five of us and had gotten our thread by unravelling our old blankets.

Mme. Martel had a daughter with her whom we called Miss Marguerite. She was gay and full of spirit. The guards could not understand why she was not married. One day, bored with their questions, she answered: "If I am not married it is because I did not find someone I wanted to marry." This did the trick. They did not trouble her anymore with questions.

We regulated our hours of prayer, recreation and the recital of Holy Mass. For the latter we sometimes substituted psalms that we knew by heart, but most frequently we recited the "Our Father." For exercise we walked around the room as we prayed. The guards did not object. They even asked the American women; "Why don't you pray like the nuns and why do you have long hair while theirs has been cut?" We also sang, especially on Sunday morning, hymns instead of Mass. In the afternoon we sang as though for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament with our souls and hearts turned toward the tabernacle in Seoul. The Anglican nun who had brought along only one book, "The Spiritual Hymns of St. John of the Cross", asked us if she might not assist at our benedictions. She later told us how she appreciated it and how it improved her morale. It was also on Sunday at a convenient hour that Fr. Gombert walked slowly by and gave us absolution.

The fifteenth of August, the feast of the Assumption was Mother Mechtilde's feast day so we tried to celebrate it as we would have done in our peaceful cloister. Bindweeds which we had gathered in the yard made up the bouquet, but when we came to the singing our tears and emotions choked us. The guard looked at us with surprise. A few days later when we asked permission to hold a similar celebration for Mother Beatrix, he answered; "Yes, under the condition that there is no weeping. Why do you weep when you sing?"

To fill the days which seemed so long, Madame Martel taught us English and Sister Bernadette took care of the dishes. This gave her an opportunity of helping the cook who brought us our rations in such a friendly manner. Finding himself alone with her one day, he displayed a small cross hidden under his clothes and said; "I am a Catholic. My name is John." Another time a soldier approached the place where she was setting out the bowls and said to her through the window; "Pray for me." Then he traced the sign of the cross on his chest and went away hurriedly.

The wretchedness of our food was soon felt. Several white sores appeared on Sister Henriette's hands and feet which alarmed us. A carbuncle on her knee weakened her even more. In a room nearby, Dr. Kirsh, an Austrian, shared our misfortune. He was renowned in Vienna for his medical knowledge, was well educated and a good pianist. However, he was Jewish which caused him to be sent to Dachau and Buchenwald. After three years of misery friends had succeeded in freeing him. He had gone to America, then to Shanghai, and had just arrived at the Methodist hospital in Kaisung when war was declared. On the 25th of July he was arrested and after several unhappy adventures joined us. He was to die of starvation in July of 1951. He was very interested in helping his unfortunate companions and succeeded in entering our room two or three times. There was nothing he could do, however, since all medicine was refused us even to a bowl of boiled water. We spent painful nights not only because we slept on the floor, but especially because of the vermin which came through the infested flooring. In spite of our daily and minute search, plus the disinfectants which we received occasionally, we were to keep this living hairshirt for two years. The lice disappeared in July of 1952, and then the mosquitoes began to eat us alive. We actually welcomed the diversion brought about by the nocturnal questionings.

These interrogations, always the same, were not only concerned with us but also our entire families even to small nephews and distant cousins. Mr. Perruche, the French Consul, used to think up anything to make them fill more sheets of paper. In all seriousness he spoke to them of a mythical aunt who painted while on a bicycle, got married on a tandem and who, after having read Lenin, renounced realistic naturalism for accomegalism. When the interrogator said, "Excuse me, but is that right?", the Consul answered impassively, "It is a school of French art." "Ah, you are a decadent," said the official shaking his head in a gesture of pity.

Another fellow prisoner was Phillip Deane, an English journalist, who had come to Seoul to report on military operations. He was taken prisoner and was terribly tortured and that was not all. In Seoul and Pyongyang they had used pressure on him in an attempt to make him denounce American "atrocities" over the radio. In spite of the weakened condition to which he was reduced, Deane, who had great physical resistance and unusually high morale, had always refused. In an effort to force him to cooperate, they took him back to the capital on August 3rd, and put him in a hermetically sealed room, its windows blocked with thick coverings. The atmosphere was suffocating. He was placed opposite a high powered lamp and an endless monologue commenced: "You must talk over the radio. It is the only way to let your wife know that you are still alive. Why don't you want to talk over the radio? If you do not want to talk, write something against the Americans. You refuse to write? Maybe you do not know how to write? Is it true that you came here to spy? Do you know what treatment is reserved for spies?" Deane saw a small light through a crack at the top of the window. It was daybreak, Thursday morning. The torture continued. The interrogators relieved each other but the victim could neither move nor inhale one breath of fresh air, nor close his eyes for five minutes to escape the blinding light. They had started on Wednesday and on Friday Deane, who was at the end of his strength, lost consciousness. When he came to himself he was in a good bed. A Korean captain,

seated by his side, said; "You must live. All the English journalists are talking about your arrest. You must be an important man. We will build you up again." He was given eggs, coffee with cream, and coca-cola. His strength returned and with it his sense of observation as a journalist. He found three discarded radios, and taking advantage of the time when he was left alone, he was ablt to combine the parts and get one into working condition. Each time the Americans bombed the city heavily and the soldiers ran for shelter, Deane who was then unguarded listened to Tokyo. When he came back to us, he brought us not only sugar which he shared equally with all, but also plenty of good news. The city of Tai-kow, even though evacuated had not been taken. The Communist advance was definitely stopped and the United Nations' forces were preparing a counter-attack. This was a gleam of hope in our long night. When the order to depart arrived on the evening of September 5th, each of us prepared his pack in a happy mood.

CHAPTER IV
Trip and Early Stay in Manpo
Sept. 5 - Oct. 8, 1950

Two trucks came to transport us to the station in Pyongyang. We brought with us a wealthy Turkish family from Seoul, consisting of father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Sallaotin and their six children, the oldest of whom was an 18 year old girl, Saquida and the youngest a child of 15 months. We were also joined by a white Russian family named Kellin - the father and mother, Yvan and Maroussa and their three children; Olga 8 years old, Nicholas, 5 years and Georgie who was only 2.

On the train we were crowded together in an animal car. A large group of American POW's, about 750 of them, were placed in open cars which were normally used to transport coal. They were dressed in light-weight summer uniforms and most of them were barefooted. Their filth did not seem to annoy them and they all looked sad and discouraged.

We did not know where we were going. Because of the danger of being bombed we travelled by night only, with stops lasting for several hours. The Koreans had lost practically all their locomotives and our own often left us to go and haul more important cargo. We would get off about seven in the morning and go into the hills surrounding the station. These days spent in the open were restful.

In the villages where we stopped we were not too welcome since they had to feed 800 of us. Rice for the first meal was never served before two in the afternoon and the second meal usually came shortly thereafter.

On the 6th of September we received a message from the Americans who were camped about 200 yards away from us. One of them was dying and had said to the guard, "I am a Catholic. There are priests close by. I would like one to come and help me die." The guards allowed two of his friends to come over and relay the message to us, but our guards refused to let a priest go to him. However, Bishop Quinlan stood up and shouted

the absolution across to the dying soldier. Shortly afterwards we saw his body being carried away to a grave which was being dug. At the same time another dead soldier was added to the funeral procession from an incoming train so one of the officers permitted the grave to be blessed. Madame Martel gave her last few drops of holy water and we hastily gathered a few flowers from the hillside to make two bouquets. Bishop Quinlan blessed the departed while many in our camp wept and prayed, not only for the dead, but also for their families whose hearts would soon be broken.

Closer to us was a group of about twenty American soldiers whose miserable condition touched us. One was minus an arm, another a leg, while a third could only move when supported by two of his comrades. Although we were not allowed to communicate with them their plight soon became known to us. They would never receive the attention necessary to heal their wounds and thereby save their lives. They knew that their end was fast approaching and this was all they were waiting for. These living dead smiled only when the guards gave them a cigarette or two. All around the splendid Korean autumn was beginning. Nature had taken on a serene and restful beauty; a poignant contrast with the suffering which surrounded us.

The next part of our journey was marked by a moving event. On Sunday, Sept. 10th we arrived in a fairly important locality where we were directed towards a school to spend the day. A sizeable number of children and adults were escorting us, as it was a unique occasion to see the "long noses". This is the term used to signify the Europeans. Amongst the crowd there was one man who seemed thrilled at seeing the Catholic missionaries. (The Fathers still wore cassocks.) He followed us with typical Korean patience, strolling around the school for a long time before coming to us. In a touching manner he said quickly, "My name is John. I am a fervent Catholic and a catechist. There are still 15 of us Catholics in the city." We asked if he was unhappy. He answered, "No, they leave us alone. Each Sunday we gather either at one place or another to pray together, but for three years now we have not seen a priest. Oh, if only we could take advantage of your visit to make our confession. I will have them all gather together and bring them here." "No," said Bishop Byrne, "to bring fifteen persons here without attracting attention is impossible. But tonight, gather on the road leading to the station. Think of your sins, recite to yourselves the Act of Contrition and in passing before you, I will give you absolution." And so it was done. We can still see them faithful to the rendez-vous, children, middle aged men and women and old people. One old Korean when he saw us, lost all sense of prudence and made a big sign of the cross. We were choked with emotion and understood better than ever the power of the spiritual force. What barriers could ever prevent these souls from being reunited.

On Monday the 11th of September after six days of picnics and six very uncomfortable nights on the train just to go 250 miles, we arrived at Manpo, a border town between Korea and Manchuria; that is between Korea and China since Manchuria is now a Chinese province. After a stop in a once superb station, two trucks transported us to some poor Korean houses which were to become our new camp.

The first short stay in Manpo, which lasted six weeks, left us with one good memory. The abodes were miserable but we had grouped ourselves

in rooms according to our religion or nationality. In ours there were nine of us; our Mother Prioress, Mother Therese, Mother Mechtilde, Sister Madeleine, Sister Bernadette, Sister Henriette, all Carmelites; Mother Beatrix and Sister Eugenia, Sisters of St. Paul, and Madame Martel and her daughter, Marguerite. Thus we had a better opportunity to pray silently. On Sunday morning the Catholics of the camp, Bishop Byrne and Bishop Quinlan at their head, gathered at our place for the recital of the rosary followed by a few liturgical hymns.

Our room had many windows and resembled a pharmacy. We were to learn later that our new camp had served as a quarantine station where people from Manchuria suspected of carrying some contagious disease were sent. The food was normal: three meals a day including a healthy vegetable soup, rice and dried fish in good quantity. Now and then we even had meat and sugar. Those who had money could buy in the village. Mr. Perruche, who had given away his clothes and the medicines he had brought with him in his suitcase, sold his watch to buy eggs and a little wine. Dr. Kirsh was given some medicines every day and would pass by our houses crying: "Clinic." He cared for his patients with great charity.

The beautiful Yalu river was about twenty minutes from our camp and the guard would walk us there each day. We could wash ourselves and our clothes, and breathe fresh air while looking at the Manchurian villages on the other side of the river. It was there one day when there were strong winds, that Mother Mechtilde caught pneumonia which caused grave concern. In the American camp about fifty had the same illness and it usually ended fatally due chiefly to the lack of coverings and medicine.

On our side all did their utmost to save the life of the one we loved so dearly. We tried to relieve her misery as much as possible. A Korean doctor gave her some medicine. One of our brother captives gave us the last of his bouillon cubes so that we could make her a nourishing drink. The Anglican Sister brought her tea and a little coffee while Sister Bernadette did her best to produce appetizing dishes. Our Mother Prioress devoted herself to helping Mother Mechtilde. The crisis passed, but Dr. Kirsh told us that she needed to rest and relax. This was impossible under the circumstances and so two months later our dear Lord relieved her of all her sufferings and recalled her soul to Himself.

For the men in the camp the highlight of the day was to go to the water hole. To draw water and then carry it several hundred yards is not a task one would ordinarily seek, but what made it interesting was that it brought about a meeting with a certain young Korean who would also go to draw water. While all appeared to be working strenuously he would pass them information which he had received over his radio. This secret meeting initiated by one of our English friends was never discovered by our guards. It was in this manner that we learned that the Americans had retaken Seoul so quickly. That night there were songs in all the rooms. The English to express their joy sang "Venite Adoremus" which is usually sung only at Christmas.

It might be interesting at this point to note the composition of our camp before it was overtaken by death. We had a variety of nationalities: There were 19 French, some English, some Americans, one Austrian, one Swiss, some Turks, some white Russians, and a few politicians from South Korea who worked with our diplomats. As to religion it was just as varied. There were Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and other Protestants,

Schismatics, Jews and pagans. In all there were 74 persons of whom eight were children under twelve. Although our group included so many different nationalities we were all dressed in Western clothes or the habits we had on at the time of our arrest. Many of the women had dresses that would soon be too light for the Korean winter. They still kept their vanity, however, and took care of their appearance even to curling their hair, at least until our hardships increased.

At this time a very deep brotherly love existed between us. Later, undoubtedly because of our endless sufferings and long trial, the vital instinct of self preservation, "every one for himself," had top priority.

The cold comes early in North Korea. We were told that we would soon be given padded clothing. In fact it did arrive but in too small a quantity for everyone to have a complete outfit, so each was given either a jacket or a pair of trousers. Furthermore they were so dirty that at first we did not have the courage to put them on. But later when our sufferings from the cold dominated our repugnance we put them on.

Suddenly on the 7th of October we received the order to depart. We were to go to the Yalu and from there take a boat, our destination unknown as usual. It was raining. Mother Mechtilde could no longer walk but had to be carried on a stretcher by four men. That day was spent by the Yalu in a fruitless wait. We returned to camp that night and prepared supper. The heating units which had been taken down that morning, were set up again haphazardly.

The following day we were off once more. The waiting was a bit more nerve wracking this time and that night we again found ourselves back in camp. (Like Sister Anne in the story of Blue Beard, nothing came.) This could have gone on for a long time had not the French Consul suggested that we could probably make the trip by truck. Happily the guards accepted the idea and we finally left. En route we met the American soldiers who were making the trip on foot and appeared to be very exhausted. Around midnight we arrived at Kosanjin.

CHAPTER V

Back and Forth Between Kosanjin and Chosan
Oct. 8 - Oct. 31, 1950

At Kosanjin we were still on the Yalu. We arrived on an extremely cold night and were lodged in a school whose windows were broken. We practically slept in the open. The next morning Mother Beatrix, who was painfully trying to walk to thaw out her stiffened limbs, fainted in the yard. Luckily the Turks were there to help us get settled. Tireless workers, they were able to make the best of everything anywhere. They nailed and sealed up openings; converted an old oil container into a stove, and life became bearable once more.

The food continued to be adequate in quantity. Our chief guard made ambiguous statements to us and hope persisted. The daily program consisted

in a group lecture on a book of Russian propaganda and a walk to the mountain. We were told that if we remained, we would be permitted to go into the village alone. The golden age seemed to be in sight! In fact one night, to our great surprise, we were promised a hot bath the next day. Instead of a bath, we departed. The order which was received by telephone dumbfounded our guards as much as it did us. Apparently we had to leave so that soldiers could move in.

Our stay in Kosanjin had lasted 15 days. Once more we walked towards the unknown, our food supplies consisting of a package of peppers and dried fish. The strongest went on foot, the exhausted ones waited on the road for a truck which only arrived that night. The Americans followed the same itinerary.

It was late that night when we arrived in Chosan. Once more we were placed in Korean houses, but what houses! We had not yet seen any as filthy as these. The doors and windows were nothing but frames and there was no lighting of any kind. Fortunately the moon illuminated the place. A sack found on the ground was used to close up half the door. The suitcase belonging to Mme. Martel was placed in front of the window and then we lay on the ground and tried to sleep.

The following day the ingenious Father Bultaut from the foreign missions came to our aid and helped close the opening, but in spite of his good intentions he was not very successful. It will not be easy to forget those nights when, after two or three hours of early sleep, we remained huddled into a ball, sitting on our heels until daybreak.

A feeling of abandonment was spreading over the entire camp. The regularity of our meals ceased. A captain allowed us to obtain a little oil at the depot in the village, some beans and some flour. After that no one took care of feeding us. We had wood and the men with Mr. Perruche and Mr. Blane, the English Vice Consul, at their head would go daily into the mountain to cut a few trees. To insure our having a minimum of heat in our room we would go into the fields to gather dried twigs and cornstalks. Sometimes the guards disappeared entirely. Each day bands of Chinese and Korean soldiers, looking like fugitives came through the village and vanished into the mountains. What was going on? We remained in Chosan only one week.

As he was giving the order for our new departure, the Korean chief added, "Do not go hurriedly. If you walk slowly you may meet the American army." We were told to walk at the rate of one kilometer an hour. So as not to exceed this limit, the 82 year old Father Villemot was put at the head of the column. Our hopes were high, but alas, they were not to be realized.

We left about five o'clock that evening. After we had walked two kilometers it started to rain. It was only a shower but this pretext was sufficient for us to return. In this way we gained time, but it proved to be of no avail. The following day we made yet another departure but the invalids remained. "They will be carried on ox carts," we were told. Ah! those Korean carts, - plain boards on wheels: one must have gone over these impossible roads in one of them to know what that means.

The captain who was heading the column of men said to them: "Why don't some of you go and see what is going on in the South? I will give you a sergeant to go with you and if you return it will not surprise me, but if

not, always remember that I treated you well." This proposal caused general astonishment. We had our own good reasons to doubt him but nevertheless two men volunteered for this adventure. They left with a sergeant who was very good to them. "Now you will remember that I was kind to you, will you not?" he repeated over and over. After two hours of walking they came to a military post where the commander spoke at length with the sergeant. When he returned to the two men everything had been changed. "We cannot go any further," he said. "Things are not the same now. The Chinese have just scored a big victory. It would be too dangerous to cross the lines. We must return." "Return! That would be to turn our backs on our freedom which is so close," the two men protested. The friend of a few moments back bargained with them. If he went with them, would he receive some money so that he could study at the Sorbonne? "Why certainly." "Not only for me, but also for my friends?" "Certainly." The Sergeant thought a moment and then ended the discussion with the decision: "No, it is too dangerous. Let's go back." Giving up all hope the two men returned with the guard to our column which was still enroute to our new destination which proved to be none other than Kosanjin from where we had departed only a few days previously.

Those who went by ox cart also went through a nerve wracking adventure. After several hours of hard travel they stopped. The American column which was ahead of them had also stopped because one of the unfortunate soldiers way dying on the road. He was asking for an egg. But where could an egg be found on this road. There was a farm nearby. Not being able to hear anything but his pleas, Mother Prioress asked a guard to accompany her to the farmhouse. When the mistress of the house heard her plea she went to the henhouse and returned with three eggs, and knowing well that it was for an American, would accept no payment. The Korean, in general, is affable and hospitable, one of the basic qualities which the new regime had not yet taken away from him, especially in the country.

Returning to the soldier, Mother Therese handed him an egg, but one of his comrades, knowing that this help was useless, grabbed the egg and swallowed it. The second was grabbed just as quickly by another soldier. Seeing the uselessness of her efforts, Mother Therese kept the last egg for Mother Mechtilde who was still very weak and who had not eaten anything since that morning. The soldier died and then the column started to move on again.

At Kosanjin we were put up for one night on the outskirts of the village. We were told not to wander as the Chinese troops were around and it would be dangerous to show oneself. The room was too small for us to stretch out. We received a few beans for a light meal and then, since we could not go outside, there was nothing else to do but wait patiently for the morning.

Another day of travel awaited us. The American prisoners who had traveled with us were good enough to send us a bit of boiled beef which they had managed to acquire, and then we were on our way. It was a beautiful day. The ox carts jogged along but had to stop several times as one of the oxen had heart trouble.

As we left the guard asked how many we were. "Twenty-three" we answered. This had been the exact number the previous night, but as the young Russian girl who had been riding with us decided that morning to

walk with her father, we were only twenty-two when the guard counted us later on. Fury seized him. "Why did you lie to me?" he demanded. Without listening to our explanations, implacable logician that he was, he continued, "If you were only twenty-two when you told me twenty-three, you did not tell the truth; and if you were really twenty-three, someone has gone. That's it, somebody has gone. We will not leave here until the one who has escaped is retaken." After which he lay down on the grass in the ditch. One hour passed then two without change. The oxen relaxed peacefully while we rested, our bodies aching with pain because of the bumps.

Trucks passed us laden with people and packages, refugees no doubt. One young girl threw us a few rice cakes. These were Chinese wagons in good condition, which made us realize that the neighboring country was effectively in the war.

Towards three o'clock our guard, having finally digested his bad humor and without making any reference to the imaginary escapee, gave the signal to depart. This was how we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King.

It was very dark and cold when we arrived at our destination. We were in the vicinity of Manlipo in front of a roofless house. Only four walls were left standing in the middle of a mass of ruins. This was to be our shelter for the night. It would have been useless to waste time complaining. It was best just to find a place and settle down. With some wood we salvaged from old beams we made a fire, but how could we sleep seated on stone slate with our heels digging into us. About ten o'clock a soldier came with a few beans and some corn. The fire was burning so "nicely" that by midnight the little food we had was still uncooked!

In the morning those who had walked all the way arrived and despite their fatigue immediately busied themselves so that we would be more comfortable. It was at that time that the English Vice Consul, Mr. Blane, tried to escape. There was no one guarding our house so it was easy for him to slip away. He left with the intention of following the railroad tracks. At sixteen he had escaped from a Dutch prison camp and a few years later from a Spanish one. This time, however, he did not succeed so well. After walking two hours he landed in a military camp. In the morning he was returned to us, luckily without reprisal.

On Tuesday the 31st of October, we were informed that we were to be turned over to the Department of Police. The captain who had accompanied the male prisoners and had shown them some kindnesses, returned to say goodbye. He bade us farewell with these words; "In the future I will not be responsible for you. You are no longer under army supervision but are now directly under the police." Silence interrupted his speech for a few minutes, then he continued, "Yes, under police supervision. I thank you for having made things so easy for me and I beg your pardon for the dishonorable treatment which is awaiting you." He shook hands with each one and did not try to hide his emotion. We never saw him again.

At five o'clock we were called to the yard and there made our first contact with the one whom we were soon to call "The Tiger," a title unfortunately only too well deserved. "I am the commander," he said to us, showing us his three stars, "Commanding officer of the People's Army. (He did not say "police", we noticed.) You are going to walk 200 kilometers into the mountains, a forced march. We cannot stop en route but must keep

moving regardless of all costs." The French Consul said, "I must have some transportation for the children, the old and the sick." "Shut up!" shouted the Tiger, shoving the muzzle of his revolver into Mr. Perruche's chest. "It is a military order - march or die!" We were astounded. What would become of Mother Mechtilde, still convalescing and very weak. She was our main worry and yet she was so gallant in saying; "Don't worry. God will help me. I shall walk."

The police confiscated whatever tools or implements the men were carrying, raffled their knives, and the column was on its way! This was the beginning of the "DEATH MARCH."

CHAPTER VI

The Death March
Our Stay in Choongkang Jin
Oct. 31 - Nov. 17, 1950

We walked in twos, silently and with heavy hearts. The seven hundred American soldiers were ahead of us. After passing through Manpo, we came into the open country and towards ten o'clock we were told to camp in a cornfield. The harvest had been reaped and the dry foliage on the ground served as a mattress and also as coverings for us. Mother Mechtilde came through the first lap without too much trouble. We made her comfortable as possible and the good Lord, taking pity on His children in distress, sent us a little restful sleep despite the rigors of the temperature. In the morning men had frost on their beards and the frozen corpses of several Americans lay on the ground.

All Saints Day - November 1st, 1950. We later found out that on this Holy Day the Church had proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption. For us it was a tragic hour and the memory of the assassination of an American lieutenant comes back to us as if it were yesterday.

"No stragglers," the Tiger had said, "We must carry the sick and even carry the dead."

The American camp was divided into several columns, each with a responsible chief. In Lieutenant Thornton's group, several of the men were dying and he had had to leave them by the side of the road. When the Tiger arrived he demanded, "Why did you not carry those sick men until the next stop? I said they should be carried by those who were still strong. I also said that even the dead should be carried. I am the commander of the People's Army and you have disobeyed me. I have the right to kill you on the spot. That is what you would do in America. Here we do not execute anyone without judgment." Then, turning towards the Koreans who were watching, he said; "This man has not carried out the orders I gave him. May I kill him?" Cries of hatred answered, "Kill them all!" The judgment had been passed. The interpreter, one of the prisoners who had been in Korea for forty years and knew the language, begged for the man's life. The young Turkish girl unable to restrain her emotion, cried out, "No, no, don't kill him." Menacing her with his revolver the Tiger said, "If you don't

shut up, I will kill you too." The lieutenant, dignified and perfect master of himself, was waiting. What a silent drama he must have been living within his heart. We had been told that he was married and had a family. A shot rang out. The body of the victim had hardly time to fall to the ground before one of his companions rushed forward and caught it. The body was carried out into the open and covered with rocks.

The guards had told us to be well shod as the roads were going to be rough. But where could we get strong shoes? Mother Mechtilde's were adequate but Mother Therese was wearing the sandals of a Carmelite nun. Sister Madeleine had sewn rubber soles on with fine wire. Sister Bernadette had wooden clogs which she had made herself, whereas Sister Henriette was walking with one shoe and one sandal. Words cannot express what we went through during those painful days. The climb was arduous and we were practically exhausted while the Korean soldiers kept shouting; "Hurry, hurry" and poked their guns at those who slowed down. Why was it necessary to be in such a hurry unless it meant that the United Nation forces were approaching and they had to keep us away from our liberators at any cost.

Mother Mechtilde was carried more than she walked. Her limbs were stiffened by the cold and had not strong arms upheld her she would have succumbed. Sister Marie Claire, the Anglican nun, was literally bent in two with fatigue. Father Villemot, who still had some strength, did not cease in his devoted help to Father Bultaut who was about to give up. In spite of the heavy package on her back, Sister Bernadette never for a moment stopped leading our blind Sister Madeleine and saved her from all dangers. At each stop we received a little corn as our only food.

On the night of November 1st we stopped in a village and passed the night under a porch roof. It was even colder than the previous night as we were in higher altitudes. "Get very close to me," Mother Mechtilde said to her companion, "I am so cold on my sick side." But how could we warm her when we ourselves were freezing?

In the morning Sister Eugenie asked for a bowl of warm water from an old grandmother. It was intended for Mother Beatrix. The woman, an old shrew, slammed the door laughing. This house happened to be the one where the Peoples' Democracy met so the hard treatment was no surprise.

On the road we would find cereal sack and blankets dropped by the Americans who, exhausted, were discarding their precious treasures. Even we with sad hearts had left our big Carmelite rosaries in a field since we no longer wore them at our waists because they attracted attention. "Leave your packages," repeated the guards, "and save your lives." Life! How many American soldiers lost it during that tragic march. We would meet them lying exhausted on the embankment. They kept asking, "Has the car arrived?" Alas, the car that was arriving was that of death and, as the Fathers passed them, they blessed the soldiers quietly. The sergeant who was following behind with his machine gun shot them and the Tiger finished off those who were still breathing by kicking them down into the ravine. It was a horrible scene that we wish we could wipe from our memories but it is unforgettable. We counted the shots. There were fifteen on the morning of the fourth day alone. Altogether about one hundred Americans remained in those mountains which became for them a veritable cemetery.

When we arrived at our destination each evening, we had to listen to endless talks made by the Tiger, squatting down on our heels, the men bare-

headed as a sign of respect. Intoxicated by his own eloquence the commander of the Peoples' Army thundered out against the Capitalist countries which he named as the cause of all our troubles. As he spoke someone had to translate his words into English and Russian. During these talks the Carmelites and the Sisters of St. Paul, having recited so many "De profundis" and "Ave Marias" along the road, prayed the rosary..."Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Death was indeed close to all of us.

The nights of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th were spent in schools but we were so crowded and it was so cold that rest was impossible. Early one morning Mother Therese thought she saw a pile of leaves in the yard. She approached, but it was the corpses of soldiers who died during the night and which had been covered with branches.

Friday, November 3rd was another tragically unforgettable day. Prior to the departure of our column, Mr. Perruche came to tell us that he had obtained permission for Mother Beatrix, Mother Mechtilde, Father Villemot, and Sister Madeleine to go to a Peoples' Hospital to wait until some means of transport was available. To that small group we added Sister Marie Claire. The column started and those remaining behind were watching their comrades leave when the Tiger suddenly appeared. Furious because a permission had been granted by one of his officers, he shouted, "Like everybody else, walk along, walk along." The dream of a temporary relief for the sick vanished, but we must admit that for once his brutality probably had a better result than he intended, as we later realized that the "Peoples' Hospital" was probably nothing else than a quick execution.

Mother Beatrix had heart trouble and her swollen hands and face showed her exhaustion. Nevertheless she courageously departed but shortly afterwards stopped. "I can go no further," she said in her usual sweet manner and, as the soldiers kept pushing her, she repeated, "In spite of my desire I can do no more. Do with me as you wish." In full control of her senses she said to her companion, "Go, my sister, it is not necessary that there be two victims." Sister Eugenie, heartbroken, had to leave her there in the hands of the soldier. We have never seen a look so serene and a smile so beautiful as that of Mother Beatrix at that moment. Her life had always been radiant with kindness. During her fifty years as a missionary how many orphans had she not gathered to her heart and consoled in their sufferings. This tragic yet beautiful death seemed to be the dignified coronation of her apostolate.

That same day our group had another victim. One of the Russian women whose swollen ankles showed that she too was suffering from heart trouble, arrived late at the midday stop. Having time to eat, she started out again with us but never arrived at our evening halting place. We never did find out what happened to her.

At daybreak on Saturday the 4th, it was snowing and that gave us hopes for a day of rest; hopes which were soon dispersed. Cost what it might we had to leave. Snow under our feet, snow on our heads and always the winds against our faces cutting our breath. The climbs too were steeper and our throats were dry, but as we passed through the shrubs we ate small pieces of ice to freshen us a little. An ox cart passed. The first to reach it crowded on but when Mother Mechtilde arrived there was no more room. What had become of the children on the march. The older ones ran so as not to

lose the column. The Turkish and Russian mothers courageously carried their little ones on their backs. The children were crying from hunger and cold. We thought this race would never end while behind us the artillery of the United Nation forces were forever thundering.

Sister Madeleine's foot was in such bad shape that she could not see how she could continue walking. Thinking that Mother Beatrix's fate would soon be hers she prepared to die. At that moment death felt like a God-send.

We must admit, however, that we did have some guards who were more human than the Tiger and who seemed to take pity on us. After the assassination of Lieutenant Thornton, one of them who was walking near us broke the silence, "When the war is over you will return to your countries, and you will not speak about what you have seen this morning, will you?" One other time Sister Henriette, exhausted, asked a soldier to help her. This Korean took her bundle and carried it for her during the difficult climbs. Another time Sister Madeleine was given permission by one of the guards to drink at a stream and to rest for fifteen minutes. Finally on November 4th we were told that two trucks were due to arrive to take the women, the old and the sick. Only the men who were still able would finish the march on foot.

In the first group were Mother Mechtilde, Mother Therese, and Sister Madeleine. They arrived about one in the morning in the city of Choonkang Jin. The truck left the travellers on the road and it was evident that the guard did not know where to lead them. First they walked to the right and then were ordered to do an about face and go left. Mother Mechtilde fell and injured her knee in the dark. After a long period of waiting they were at last taken to a large school. The most surprised person of all was the watchman who did not want to give the guard the keys.

The following day the other truck brought the rest of the women, among them Sister Henriette, Sister Bernadette and Sister Eugenie. We slept together in twos in long, narrow boxes which were filled with straw. Discipline was strict. During the first days we were not allowed to get out of the cases that served as beds nor even to talk. The children had stolen a few turnips so as punishment we all went without one meal and the stove was not lighted.

Death continued to take its toll. On the 7th Sister Marie Claire was found dead in her bed - heart failure during the night.

We were happy to see the men arrive on Wednesday the 8th but our joy was modified because the Tiger was with them. He did not appear to have improved but rather to have gotten worse. He told us that since we had been so disobedient during the march we were to receive rougher treatment.

Each day began with a half hour of physical training at which all had to participate. Father Villemot who was in a dying condition did not come. The Tiger insisted that he be present, so the Father was brought out on a sack and lay in one corner of the yard though the weather was below zero. This was too much for him and on November 11th he uttered his last words, seizing the hands of his brother priests, and cheerfully rendered his soul to God. He had been a soul of great strength. The night before his death he had cried out during his sufferings, "Lord, how one must suffer in order to die." At last relieved of his burdens after fifty-seven years of untiring devotion and labor, he had gone to meet His Savior.

During Father Villemot's funeral the American planes bombed the large school. They undoubtedly mistook this building for one used by the enemy, not realizing that its inhabitants were brothers and friends. Those who were digging the grave had to hide in the woods. The cold was biting and it was there that Father Coyos caught the bronchial pneumonia that brought him to the edge of the grave.

On November 12th it was our chaplain, Father Antoine Gombert's turn. He was known all over the mission as "Major" to distinguish him from his younger brother, Father Julian, who was called "Minor". Father "Major" was in agony. The previous day even though he was dying, he had risen in order to help Father Villemot. A long time ago they had promised to help each other even at the supreme moment and he had kept his word. That had been his law all his life...to help others. Who can ever tell of his inexhaustible charity towards us and of his tireless devotion to our Carmel. He had never learned to keep anything for himself.

Mother Mechtilde, whom he had helped so much during the first difficult days of the foundation, could not go near him. She was overcome by emotion. Our Mother Prioress was the one who expressed all our gratitude to him, and although he could no longer speak, he understood all. His face was pale with death and all he did was to gaze at those around him. His brother who was unable to overcome his emotion spoke with tears rolling down his cheeks. "You are going to meet our Savior. Have no fear. He is reserving a good place for you up there because you have always served Him so well. When you are in Heaven obtain for us the pardon of our sins and then come back quickly and get me." The priest breathed his last without a moan. When we opened his cassock to take his missionary cross, we saw the vermin moving around his chest.

Father "Minor" was suffering from dysentery and exhaustion caused by the march, but he did not appear to be more ill than the others. Nevertheless, the following day he died happily. We decided that Father "Major", after a short sojourn in Purgatory, had been admitted to the Beatific Vision and had spoken to the Savior, and the Master of the world had hurriedly answered the request of his faithful servant.

Our stove was kept barely warm and the food, which consisted of grains of corn was half cooked. Mother Mechtilde's gums were so sore that she could no longer eat. She grew weaker day by day. The pneumonia had returned and her coughing was tearing out her lungs night and day. I do not know if there is any greater pain than to watch dear ones suffer so terribly and not to be able to give them any relief. There was a shortage of water. The well in the yard gave little and we had to use most of that to wash the clothing belonging to the sick. Mr. Perruche suggested to the guards that he go to the river a little less than a mile away with an ox cart to fill some barrels. This task was performed each day. We would go get the water, but would bring back ice, then distribute it among the 700 persons. When we were given our half bowl the question was raised; "Should we quench our thirst or wash our hands and faces?" One young American girl solved the problem. She drank the fresh water, then washed with the water in which the cabbage served for lunch had been boiled.

CHAPTER VII

Hachang Ri -- Death of Our Two Mothers
Nov. 16, 1950 - - Mar. 30, 1951

On the morning of November 16th the order was given to move into a new house. The invalids, including Mother Mechtilde and Sister Madeleine, were given permission to remain and wait for some means of transportation. Our Mother Prioress left with Sister Henriette, Sister Bernadette and Sister Eugenie. The march was not long. After a few yards they were told to go into a nearby house and were forbidden to leave. They spent the day there. Towards eleven that night the group departed. Mother Therese was soon overtaken by a terrific weariness and walked painfully, upheld by Sister Bernadette's strong arms. We covered five miles on foot that night, and finally we stopped in front of a Korean house which was to become our new camp. As always nothing was ready to receive us. The Korean prepares nothing in advance. The soldiers awakened the occupants, then ousted them. Hurriedly they gathered whatever was necessary and left for other parts. Such a task, however, is not accomplished in five minutes and for two hours we had to remain squatting on the ground in the icy cold. It was there without a doubt that our Mother caught the dreadful cold that was to cause her such suffering. When we at last entered about twenty of us were assigned to one very small room. To find space for each to sit was an insoluble problem.

What had become of Mother Mechtilde during that time. Sister Madeleine spent the day of the 16th with her and thus the two who, in 1939 had been the first to depart, happy and confident, to establish the new foundation in Korea, found themselves alone together. It was a moment of happiness for both. They recalled the past, the years spent together in Aire, and many confidences united their hearts. There were also hours of silence, still more unifying than conversation, since words had become incapable of translating all that had transpired in their souls during those hours of anguish and total abandonment. Night came. A nurse gave the sick some medicine which brought some hours of repose.

On the morning of the 17th they received a new order - they must leave on foot. Those who remained behind would no longer be fed. Mother Mechtilde said to her companion, "I will die on the way." The other answered, "I won't be able to go very far either," and they prepared to die together. Sister Madeleine asked, "Grand'mere, (we called Mother Mechtilde that after she was no longer prioress,) are you afraid of dying?" She answered, "Oh no! I have kept my faults right up to the end and yet I do not fear the judgment. I am like a child who hears his Father calling; I know that He will be very merciful to me. If you see our Mother and our Sisters again, ask their forgiveness for all the troubles I have caused them. I don't believe that you will get out of this alive; however, if you have the joy of finding

your novices again, tell them how I loved them and bless them with all my heart."

She arrived in the yard supported by two American soldiers but appeared so exhausted that the guards took pity on her. An ox cart was nearby loaded with sacks full of millet on which they placed Mother Mechtilde and Sister Madeleine. The farmer who was leading the ox cart was well aware of the horrible roads over which they were to pass and found some rope with which to secure them to prevent them falling off. They advanced slowly in the biting cold. The road was full of bumps and each time they struck one Mother Mechtilde moaned softly.

Shortly after she arrived at the new camp, Hachang Ri, Mother Mechtilde went into her death agony. We were greatly concerned because we could not understand what she was saying but she was finally able to speak a few words clearly. After that she no longer knew what was going on around her and it seemed better that way. The room was filled with the commotion of children crying and arguing and she was spared that at least. A priest from the Foreign Missions had been able to keep his breviary. Grouped around the dying one we prayed softly, recommending her soul to God. She received absolution but understood nothing and remained in a coma until eleven the following night, the 18th of November. Then, purified by this martyrdom, her beautiful soul detached itself from its mortal covering. We have the sweet hope that she went directly to Heaven to enjoy eternal peace and to be lost in infinite Love.

The next day Mother Therese complained of a pain in her side. Her fatigue increased. She had a fever and a bad case of dysentery, but what caused us anguish was that she had no appetite. At that time our only food was millet without any seasoning, not even salt. How could she regain her strength on that diet. She ate little and the pain in her side grew worse. We had no medicines with which to relieve her and our Mother no doubt felt death approaching. She spoke of it calmly, although we did not want to hear her mention it, and insisted on telling us what we should do when we returned to Seoul.

On the morning of November 28th she began to have dreadful headaches. The only relief we could administer was to place cold water compresses on her forehead. The day passed calmly enough and towards evening, at our request, she gave us her blessing clearly. But a few moments later when we spoke to her again we could no longer understand her and she seemed to be lapsing into unconsciousness. A nurse came about nine and gave her an injection, camphor oil no doubt, as it was the one medicine available and was only given to the lost cases.

We placed all our blankets, which still did not amount to much, under her and our Mother lay there without moving or giving a single sign of consciousness. Now and then we would say to her: "Mother, if you hear us, squeeze our hand," but there was no response. She was given absolution and, as with Mother Mechtilde, we had the painful consolation of praying by her side in the same noisy and indifferent atmosphere. The hours passed. The death rattle was weakening and her breathing was slower; then, without moan or complaint our very dear Mother gave up her soul to God. It was not necessary to close her eyes or mouth; both were sealed and in her Carmelite habit she appeared calm, recollected and serene. Our watches had been taken away from us a few days previously so we asked the guard for the time. It

was two o'clock in the morning of November 30th. Dr. Kirsh diagnosed her case as tuberculous meningitis but, of course, we will never know for certain.

Four men from the camp carried our Mother to the place of her final sleep. Another followed with a pick and shovel, but since the ground was frozen, the grave was very shallow. She now lies near Mother Mechtilde in the small village of Hachang Ri in the extreme north of Korea facing Manchuria. Both were a blessing to the land they loved so dearly and to which they had devoted themselves so entirely. They had given their lives to Korea little by little until the final holocaust was consumed. The departure of our two Mothers for Heaven left a huge gap in our community which weighed heavily on our hearts.

More were to follow, and that month another grave was dug, this time for His Excellency, Bishop Patrick Byrne, M.M., Apostolic Delegate to Korea. He too had contracted bronchial pneumonia during the forced march, and having no medical attention, the illness soon ravaged his body completely. In Manpo, knowing well that the representative of the "King of Christians" was not an ordinary man, our guards had wanted to put him with the diplomats. Very humbly Bishop Byrne had refused. He desired to remain with his brother priests, in fact, with all of us. His good humor and joviality boosted our morale.

Now he was taken to the hospital along with Father Canavan, Mr. Evans, an American civilian and Father Coyos. The latter was also in a dreadful condition. He was as thin as a skeleton with a fever and a cough which indicated that his former illness, tuberculosis of the lungs, had returned. Yet he still had to walk the five miles which separated Choongkang Jin from Hachang. Without the help of one of the British diplomats he never could have made the journey.

The hospital was the most dilapidated of huts! There was nothing remaining of the door but the lintel, and had we tried to close it with a sack it would have left the room in complete darkness as there was no other opening. The roof was full of holes. On the ground corn leaves covered the beaten earth in which there were fissures through which smoke poured. The sick had the choice of freezing or choking to death. This smoke was the result of the ingenious Korean floor heating system of which we shall speak later. There was no better way to hasten death for the sick. Furthermore, what could our doctor do without medicine?

Before lapsing into a coma, Bishop Byrne stated that, after the grace of his religious profession in Maryknoll, that of dying in such poverty was the greatest he had ever received. He had reached his 61st year and had been a missionary in Japan before being sent to Korea. We feared that his companions in the hospital would also die. Following a few days of hospitalization, they were returned to our camp where the death toll continued to mount.

Mr. Evans and a Swiss gentleman died a few days apart. Father Canavan thought he had escaped. He said early one morning, "Tomorrow I will go back to work." Shortly afterwards he lapsed into a coma and died within a few hours. Another priest, Father Cadars, had been injured. Normally it would not have been serious, but the infection was followed by gangrene and finally dysentery carried him to his death. He who had always wanted to spread happiness about him now went to enjoy the happiness that knows

no shadow or decline.

Death romped around us - a Russian and an Englishman were the next victims, then Father Bulteau became the last of that sorrowful litany. A missionary in Taegu for many years, he had been assigned to the new diocese of Taejon in March of 1950. He remained there until the invasion and had seen his dispensary ransacked and his best medicines stupidly thrown into the river.

During the tragic march Father Bulteau had done his work untiringly, but diabetes and dysentery had worn him out. One day one of us saw him throw away his bowl of millet. "I will do like the others," he said sadly. The following day, through the thin wall which separated our rooms, we could hear his death rattle and on January 6th, the Epiphany, the feast which the Foreign Missions celebrate with the greatest of solemnity, he entered into a yet greater celebration, that of eternity. He was in his fiftieth year.

His death made the sixteenth in our group. Three more were to die later bringing the total to nineteen, one fourth of our strength.

Each time a grave was dug Bishop Quinlan was there. Once the difficult work of breaking into the frozen soil was accomplished, and the poor corpse which had suffered so much laid in the ground, the Bishop, in spite of the subzero weather and opposition of the soldiers, recited what he remembered of the Office of the Dead.

We feared we would lose more of the Fathers. Father Booth, Bishop Byrne's secretary, who had grieved the most at the beloved Bishop's death developed a serious carbuncle on his shoulder. It caused him much suffering but he would not give in. As for Father Coyos, although he was not spared any of the privations of the daily regime of the camp, little by little he regained his health to everyone's surprise. Is it too much to utter the word "Miracle"? Dr. Kirsh, that experienced physician, said one day to those around him (and the priest overheard the remark), "Leave him alone. He will be dead tomorrow." God, in His loving designs had decided otherwise and Father Coyos lived.

We cannot pass over in silence the admirable devotion of Sister Eugenie, the St. Paul Sister, to the sick. One had to be crafty to enter the rooms in which the men patients were kept and several times the guards sent her away unmercifully. She finally obtained permission to go twice a day for a few minutes on condition that she ask each time and that she would not talk to the sick while she served them. Outside in the icy winds she washed their clothing in a broken pot she had found somewhere and in water which practically had to be stolen from the kitchen because, if not boiling, it froze immediately.

In this camp too the problem of getting water presented itself. The work of those who carried it was so hard that one of them, a Russian whom we nicknamed "the Growler", hid the only basin the women had to wash in.

The day still began with the physical exercises in the yard. Bishop Quinlan who led it tried as hard as possible to reduce it to a minimum. Near us in the neighboring houses the American soldiers, still dressed in their summer uniforms, sounded off "one-two-three-four", then returned to their sordid shelters with the pneumonia germ which was soon to carry them off. Each day we saw a funeral cortege in which four or five corpses were carried on stretchers or poles.

Sometimes we saw them half naked in their rags hanging on to the walls

so as not to fall as they walked. One day the Turkish mother upon seeing the sight, wept and said, "Their legs are no bigger than those of my six year old son. How can it be possible for men like that to pull through?"

The majority of these Americans were inexperienced soldiers who had been in Japan as occupation troops. They had been subjected to the first shock of the invasion but were in no way prepared for the hard life in a prison camp. Probably they had never imagined that such conditions of existence were possible or that the war would last this long. Hope, the essential factor needed to save them, was lacking. Death claimed 60 or even 70 per cent of them before the end. Finally the Korean commander, frightened by the accounting to which he would be subjected, made the captain in charge of the men sign a declaration attesting that the missing had gone into another village.

One day Sister Bernadette returned saddened from the store where she had been sent to receive our food supply. She had seen an American soldier, evidently not one of the most sick as he was coming to the work detail, try several times to lift a small sack of grain to his shoulder. It was useless as he had no strength. The guard, after having laughed at him and imitated his staggering walk, finally came to his assistance.

With us life became quite well organized. The head men in the Turkish and Russian families took over the kitchen duties. Of course this was not a very difficult task nor was it complicated! Sister Bernadette washed cereals twice daily for our meals. Much to our satisfaction we started receiving salt again. New Year's day we were given some good rice, pork and peanuts. From then on the meals consisted of a bowl of rice for breakfast, a few spoonfuls of millet at noon, and for the evening meal, crushed corn. This at least satisfied our hunger but it was still not adequate nourishment. Beri-beri began to make its appearance. This sickness often heard of in the Far East strikes those who lack the essential vitamins. Its main symptom is a swelling in the feet, chest and even the face. There is no suffering other than extreme fatigue then suddenly the heart weakens. An effective remedy is the soya, a bean renowned in Korea and Manchuria. By insisting for some time we finally obtained a few bags. We ground them in a mill and then made the meal into a thick milky soup which we ate with our cereals. The enormous mill-stone had to be turned most of the day. Because of the cold and the great strength needed to operate it we had to change the person who was grinding every twenty minutes. The remainder of our time in our small room we would sew our clothes as well as we could to make them last.

The temperature in the room was sufficient for those who had lost all sense of comfort. The Carmelites were easily acclimatised. The heating was done by the Korean method which is ingenious and economical. The stove is below the rooms which are slightly elevated above the ground. Trenches underground covered with flat stones hold the heat in as the smoke is carried through the trench to the other side of the house. In this way nothing is wasted, not even wood that was so necessary for the cooking. The first room is warm, the second cooler. The essential thing is to stay as close to the floor as possible. That is one of the reasons the Korean eats, sleeps and works on the floor. If he is rich he has a linoleum covering while the poor use a mat or straw bags.

We were frequently visited by the Chinese whose troops occupied the

village. They would look at us curiously then depart giggling. They were comfortably dressed: - hood, mittens lined with cotton padding, warm jacket and trousers, and a coat that covered them down to the heels. It was quite a contrast to the poor Korean soldier's uniform. We often pitied the guards on night duty who had to keep stamping their feet in order to stay warm. The visits from the Chinese brought us a painful adventure. One of them after having exchanged a few words with the Russian mother who understood them, suggested that he carry a letter to her mother as he was returning to the village in Manchuria where she lived. Madame Kellin accepted but it was a trap as her letter was immediately brought to the captain. This was followed by a stormy interview to which we listened anxiously. Madame Hoang, half Korean, had already spent 24 hours in "prison", that is, an unheated room, simply because she had said that it was not the Americans who had started the war. The Russian woman had better luck and escaped with one good slap in the face.

In the latter part of December strange rumors which were later confirmed circulated through the rooms. The liberation may be near. Koreans and Chinese made it clear to us, so much so, that when we met the usual "How are you" was replaced by a happy "Get ready." We were given new clothes. Hope grew and it was with a smile that we gave the Tiger the "thank you" he demanded.

It was at that time that we were forced to take off our religious habit and to put on instead a jacket and the Korean trousers. We were, however, allowed to keep our veils.

Christmas went by in an atmosphere of waiting expectancy. The guards had heard us speak of Christmas. They permitted us to sing until ten o'clock at night; English, French, Catholic and Protestant hymns followed one another. The guards came and listened to "The Angels in our Fields" which was cheered. Schismatics and Mohamedans also listened. The former celebrate the birth of Christ on the 7th of January. The latter do not have a fixed date for the feast of the birth or death of the Prophet as both depend on the moon. It remained that way right to the end. Each marked his religious feasts with a characteristic trait - songs, prayers and even a slight change in the menu.

In our extreme misery we were happy with very little. Sister Bernadette found a garlic plant and crushed one small onion in our bowls not only on Christmas day but also on the 28th, the Feast of the Holy Innocents which is a traditional day of gaiety in our monasteries. On the 6th of January as we had not eaten all our rice Sister Bernadette ingeniously recooked it in the shape of very small buns - seven of them so that we could draw the patron the Kings would send us according to the custom in some Carmels. It was the Christ Child who became the protector this year of our small and miserable community.

The days passed and the hope of freedom waned. We were all greatly deceived because we had really believed the rumors. Certain of the prisoners continued up to the last months to believe in these periodic farces which were so well fabricated that they always seemed real. As for us, after that first experience we looked the truth in the face and found our strength not in a mirage but in the reality, however hard, and we accepted it for the love of God. We had reached complete abandonment to God's will, an abandonment without conditions or limits.

In spite of our noisy surrounding we managed to isolate ourselves to pray, and our strength seemed to return with our submission to the will of God. We understood fully that God is in us and that suffering brings us closer to Him, and we lived by it.

Madame Martel had given an English missal to Father Coyos and each Saturday he would translate into French the proper of the Sunday Mass. Unfortunately this precious book, left in a convenient place so that an American prisoner could also make use of it, did not take long to disappear. A guard no doubt had uncovered our little game. Luckily the incident was overlooked.

It was during the winter of 1950 that Saquida, the young Turkish girl, asked to take French lessons from Sister Madeleine. She accepted this diversion with pleasure since her blindness kept her from taking part in the ordinary work. But how could this be done as there were no books, no paper, no pencils? Small pieces of paper were collected here and there and when they were dirty they were washed. They also found small stubs of pencils. Saquida was a good student, really given to studying. At 17 she already knew Turkish, Japanese, English, considerable Russian and some Korean. When Sister Madeleine left camp Saquida was able to participate in our conversations and had a good accent, but her writing was poor since she had had so little practice.

The chiefs were not wasting their time either. They wanted to re-educate us and so started a series of conferences on their doctrine. Most of the guards had not even finished primary school. Some of their remarks were amusing. One of them told Father Coyos that he would go by train to America to invade it! However they assumed an air of great intelligence, and those who had had a little Korean or Japanese education (one would almost have thought it had been Russian) expounded to us at length on the beauties of the Marxist doctrine. They even went so far as to say that they were at our disposal for additional instructions. Our replies, which said in effect that we knew as much as they and that they were small children when we had first studied this doctrine, astonished and then stupefied them. "How could you have read all those books and yet not be convinced?" they asked.

Spring came, the snows melted and our hopes began to reawaken. The happiness we had missed at Christmas was probably reserved for Easter. Our expectations increased when on February 2nd we watched from a distance the departure of the diplomats, though this made us sad. Although we had had no communication other than a few words exchanged in haste now and then, the nearness of the French Consul, Mr. Perruche, made us feel more secure. We learned later that their destination was Man Lipo where they remained until the day of liberation. Several men from our group were sent into the house they had occupied. This allowed the women to spread out into two rooms and gave us an opportunity to move around and stretch ourselves.

When we would ask Bishop Quinlan, "Will it be soon, the big trip?" his answer, accompanied by a smile was always the same, "At the end of the month." Since he never mentioned which month his prediction always remained true. Moreover, it was at the end of a month that we received the order to pack up our bundles. The happiest were certainly the proprietors of the house. We had had several visits from the old grandmother. "But after all," she had said, "is not this house mine? When are you leaving?"

We left on March 30th. The sun shone beautifully but our hearts were sad. We were leaving behind our two Mothers without ever having had the consolation of praying over their graves.

As we had guessed, it was only a move of 10 miles. The trip was like a long promenade intermingled with rests. Once more we found ourselves in Choongkang Jin but this time in a different school.

CHAPTER VIII

Sojourn in Choongkang Jin
Mar. 30 - Oct. 8, 1951

The American soldiers preceded us into camp where we were to live together for four months. Men and women were directed to their rooms. Ours was large, well lighted and well aired. There were thirteen adults and seven children. We were forbidden to speak to the soldiers. Nevertheless we ate in their mess hall and were given the same food that they prepared for themselves. It consisted as usual of whole corn crushed and blended with a few spoonfuls of rice or millet. Our work at the millstone ceased but our teeth experienced some rough treatment as the food was far from being fully cooked. Since there was no seasoning the cooks did not spare the pimento in order to make it more palatable, but this rendered the soup inedible for us who were used to the European style soup made with fat. One day the commander of the camp, no longer the Tiger thanks be to God, made a tour of the mess hall. He tasted the soup then said, "This is not soup. You must have oil and condiments." After that it was improved.

The soldiers soon noticed that we left a portion of our food. Those at nearby tables fixed their eyes on us, and when our bowls were taken away there were ten hands waiting to receive them. When we left the hall some rushed to finish what we had left at our places.

Those who worked in the kitchen looked better than the others because they were able to take care of themselves by doubling up on their portions. Needless to say it was a much desired job for which the men argued. One night the cooks were photographed playing football with the Korean soldiers. This would look good in a propaganda magazine. They did not film the living skeletons who lay on the ground in the sun in front of the infirmary, hopeful that the sunbath would help them regain some strength. Their hands and feet were frozen and swollen with beriberi. It was a yard full of living miracles where each displayed his misery and awaited death. And death came often; there were few days without its visit.

The new commander was deeply moved by these conditions and said, "I cannot see any more of them die. From now on only volunteers will go to work. The others may rest." This man had a heart. He was sick himself with tuberculosis and his own suffering made him want to help others. He had a rooster and a chicken which disappeared one fine morning but he was good enough to make no mention of it. He probably would have liked to improve the food at the camp but that was impossible. The Korean earth, ravaged and trodden down by war, could no longer feed its own children. He

tried at least to improve the fate of the sick by getting corn, flour, eggs and tobacco for them. This passion to smoke was, for some, more tyrannical than ever. We saw prisoners pick up butts thrown away by the guards and smoke them. Some preferred tobacco to food even to the point of starving themselves. They would swap their cereal for a few cigarettes. It was heartbreaking to watch them and we would have liked to help them, but there was nothing we could do.

One day Sister Bernadette prepared some food flavored with wild mint we had found during our explorations around the camp. She added some sugar which we had been given and then came into the yard with her treasure. Several soldiers were lying on the ground near our room. She handed the bowl to the first who, after having tasted it, murmured, "It is sweetened!" and generously passed it on to a comrade. The latter drank a little gratefully but then he too passed it on, and it was the third who finished the nectar. They looked so thankful for the small relief that Sister Bernadette found it difficult to keep the tears from her eyes.

Realizing that by giving to everyone at random we could help no one effectively, we adopted four of the soldiers. They were Catholics and spoke French quite well. We still have vivid memories of our protegees.

One was Hubert who had his little blue-eyed Jeanie back home in America. He was a good hunter and used to insist that we visit them in California after the war and have a meal of wild duck.

Another of our adopted children was Laurent. His greatest sacrifice was to be deprived of daily Mass. A fervent Catholic, he had no fear of death. He was engaged to a young girl he had met in France and he used to speak with emotion of her beautiful letters which he missed so much.

LeBlanc was a man with a very sensitive temperament. His eyes would fill with tears when he spoke of returning to the ranch in Texas where his old grandmother, who had brought him up, might still be waiting. He did not know how to read French as he had only heard it spoken at home but he wanted to learn and came faithfully each day for his lesson.

Our fourth soldier was Bartlet, a lively and amusing Canadian. He knew that his French was sometimes incorrect, and he asked Sister Madeleine to teach him some big words which were to him the most beautiful part of the language.

Each evening we would meet in a secluded place and gave them a part of our supper. Hubert would put his share in the bottom of his hat and Laurent his in a napkin which he carried around his neck all the time. However, even more than food they needed the affection we showed them, and as soon as their work was finished they would hurry to join us. With us, away from the watching eyes of the guards they could forget the hatred and injuries they received. This family atmosphere greatly helped their morale as well as their physical strength, and they would return to their quarters much comforted. When we were separated by a new departure we were sad as they. We hope that God spared them. We are certain that Laurent and LeBlanc kept the little handkerchiefs we gave them on their birthdays. One of these, Sister Henriette's "chef d'oeuvre", consisted of two pieces of old cloth sewed together and embroidered with a beautiful initial. They were so happy to get them. "It is wonderful to have a handkerchief when we don't even have a shirt," they said laughing.

The daily routine during our stay at Choongkang Jin was the same for

the civilian prisoners as it was for the American soldiers. All were sent out on work details which consisted of pulling up grass and removing stones from around the camp. Afterwards each was allowed to spend the remainder of the time in his own way. We Carmelites sewed a great deal either for ourselves or for soldiers who turned their clothes over to us for that purpose.

The questioning continued. The officers asked us one day if we would like to stay in North Korea after the war. They were greatly vexed when we answered "No!" "Very well then," they said, "go back down to South Korea with the Americans and you will see what will happen."

Sometimes there were "sing songs" in the open each participating in turn. Often in the evening we were invited to the movies and even to the theater, but for propaganda purposes only. In one play put on by poor Korean actors, American soldiers were depicted going into homes, killing women and carrying off young girls. The American soldiers in the audience whistled continuously and left the hall before the end.

The missionary Fathers began to do some apostolic work among the prisoners. There were some returns to God, conferences held secretly, and a short month of Mary together. The Protestant missionaries were also evangelizing on their side.

During May the men prisoners in our group were sent to a Korean house hidden in the mountains half a mile away on the other side of the river. The Russian and Turkish families soon followed them, undoubtedly because they had shown too much sympathy towards the soldier prisoners. Two or three weeks later Sister Eugenie and the German woman received the same treatment, the former because she had been discovered taking English lessons each day with LeBlanc, and the latter because she had exchanged a pocket knife for tobacco.

For those who remained there was now plenty of space in the room. We had never been so comfortable nor so quiet as we were now that the children were gone. It was at this time that our Lord sent us the trial of more illness. We were already stricken with dysentery with all its discomforts and attendant weakness, but now in addition we became afflicted with malaria and beriberi. The Korean doctors at this time did have some remedies which they had undoubtedly found in containers left by American soldiers. We were given quinine which reduced the fever but did not prevent it from returning.

Sister Henriette was stricken with seven attacks of malaria. Sister Madeleine settled for six but in addition had a bad case of beriberi. The swelling reached her chest. Her color became yellow and she grew so weak that we feared she would die.

Father Coyos, though exhausted himself, would nevertheless pass near our room in the hope that he would meet her and be able to give her absolution. Upon his return his companions would ask, "Is the blind Carmelite still alive?" She herself thought death was near and asked her companions to pardon her and indicated to whom she wished to leave her rosary and scapular and then lay waiting calmly. However the Korean doctor gave her remedies which brought down the swelling and death did not strike after all. But as the food was so lacking in vitamins the sickness returned. The doctor then had food brought for her from the infirmary but unfortunately it was no better. It consisted mainly of cabbage soup which had a bitter taste as the Korean cabbage is used only for seasoning, and always the same cereals

with the invariable corn pattie served in the evening. Fever had caused her to lose her appetite and she could eat little. Sister Bernadette obtained some flour and made gruel but each meal lasted an hour and sometimes it practically took tears to empty a bowl. Then charity made Sister Bernadette ingenious. With purslane and small mushrooms that she gathered in the fields she concocted skilful dishes. For instance she would recook the sorghum or millet and make crunchy croquettes. One day an American soldier to whom she had just given one exclaimed, "It is unbelievable what the French can think up in order to make 'bonne cuisine'." Sister Madeleine, thanks to this devoted care, began to improve little by little.

Our camp life with the American soldiers ended in a tragedy. One of them, an Air Force officer, went out early one morning to fetch some water. The spring was on the land where we were allowed to walk without special permission. A guard shouted for him to halt. Perhaps he did not hear the warning or, since he was in the right, decided to continue. He went on, a shot rang out and he dropped dead. The commander deplored the affair and told a group of American soldiers, "The guard was wrong in firing but be careful. Do not go out at night unless you have to because they are very nervous." Later we were to wonder if it was the opening of the peace conferences that had made them so nervous.

It was again the commander who roused these hopes by saying, "I am told that the sick are already worried about the coming winter, but they should not be. They will be home before the big cold arrives." That night all of the thin faces beamed with joy. No one dreamed that it would take nearly two years of laborious parleys before the preliminaries to peace could be established.

It was at this time that an American by the name of Denis tried to escape. Without knowing the Korean language and without a compass it was foolish even to start. He went into the mountains where there were several footpaths but was soon exhausted and soaked to the bone. The police caught him in a village where he was asking for food. When he was brought back to camp the commander sent him to the infirmary to rest and satisfied himself by obtaining a written statement in which the escapee admitted his wrongdoing.

On August 8th the order came to move again. We were to rejoin our former companions. But to do so we had to cross the river which had been widened by the heavy rains and had a strong and fast current. Sister Bernadette, the "Antigone" of the blind, asked with alarm how her companion would be able to manage this. Before Sister Madeleine had time to consider the problem, she felt herself seized by two strong arms and carried like a child to the other side. It was an American soldier who had come to help even though he was already weighed down by a bag of cereal. While we were thanking him profusely he left without saying a word.

We were so happy to meet Sister Eugenie and Father Coyos again and to live with them in the "house of fruit". From whence came this beautiful word? From the mountains -- for the mountains gave us shelter and food and were to remain our friends until the end of our captivity.

Our health improved in the fresh air and the mountain gave us her fruit. We arrived early enough to eat the last of the strawberries; then came the hazel nuts and grapes which had an exquisite sweetness for us though they were actually tart. Sister Bernadette, agile as a goat, climbed the rocks,

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searched for and found the mushrooms with which she improved our menu, lost her shoes, and came back to camp heavily loaded, very tired but healthfully so for a change. Moreover the food supply for the first time included potatoes. When the youngsters saw the bag arrive, they yelled to high heavens to announce the good news. To keep their grasping little hands from snatching all the leeks for which they were so greedy, Bishop Quinlan took charge and distributed them equally to the children. The men worked hard and the wood supply was soon ready for the entire winter. They also found clay which was used to repair the house. All was prepared when, as we might have known, the order came to leave on the 8th of October!

For once we were told exactly where we were going - Manpo. General satisfaction! Manpo was the big station. We thought that the diplomats were already there and that we were being assembled for liberation. The Korean officers who had come to bid us goodbye encouraged us to believe this. Sister Bernadette shed a few tears of sadness. Sister Henriette, practical as always, started to eat the grapes which we could not take with us. Sister Madeleine helped with this interesting chore and received a scolding from Father Coyos because she remained sceptical about it all.

We were pushed and crowded into the trucks once more but all was accepted in good spirit. The trip lasted three days. At night we stopped at poor inns that had no facilities for such a large group. We ate badly and slept little.

We were going in the opposite direction along the same route we had come over during the Death March. The countryside was magnificent now under the beautiful autumn sun but the zigzagging road and deep ravines appeared to our eyes to be an immense cemetery. How sorrowful we felt when we came back to the place where we had left Mother Beatrix and it was with deep emotion that we recalled those tragic days.

CHAPTER IX

Second Stay in Manpo
Oct. 11, 1951 - Aug. 12, 1952

On the 11th of October we arrived at a place within ten miles of Manpo. We had to get off the truck but found we had nowhere to go. The guards would have been glad to be able to tell us, but they looked very embarrassed as they themselves did not know. We were told later that the house prepared for us had been occupied unexpectedly by the Chinese. Believe what you will. It was certainly easier to think that, but then it would not be the first time we had been stranded in exactly the same manner due to the Korean lack of organization--and given the same excuse.

We left the road to go into the mountains. The climb was long and slow so as to make certain that we would be well hidden. At a signal we halted and waited patiently, each sitting on his bundle. To pass the time away a doctor visited us and a nurse noted the medicines we needed but never did receive. The air grew colder, night fell, and as a decision had to be reached

we were finally led towards a shelter so miserable that we remained speechless. We looked at each other dumbfounded and Olga, the Russian girl, wept on her mother's shoulder. However the only thing to do was to pitch in and settle down for better or for worse. We were given a bowl of sorghum with a few pieces of cabbage and had no doubt but that the morrow's meal would be the same. Then the rain started and we were drenched. Very tired, we slept, even on the thinnest layer of straw, clinging to the hopes of a better future.

The following day the sun shone which comforted us somewhat, but there was no change whatsoever in our miserable installation: - a hole in the ground with a roof covered with straw. We were in a Korean civilian prison and received the same treatment as the prisoners. The nearby houses which were similar to ours were inhabited mostly by political prisoners. In spite of formal prohibitions, a few words were exchanged with them and one of the unfortunates told us, "My sentence is for thirty years." "What did you do?" we asked. "I spoke against the regime." And we thought that if in free countries all those who talk against the regime were arrested, many more prisons would have to be built. There were some women prisoners also. They had been brought from South Korea with the others for re-education. They cooked, washed and sewed clothing, while the men, barefooted and in summer clothing despite the biting cold, worked outside making straw bags. Their diet, which was the same as ours, consisted of sorghum three times a day and bouillon made from boiling cabbages or turnips. During our stay there we saw several burials.

In our shelter it was necessary to open both doors and suffer a draft if we wanted light. Luckily the days were sunny and we remained outside as much as possible.

From the heights which overlooked the camp, the lookouts guarded the surrounding areas and the machine gun was always ready to open fire at a moment's notice on anyone who dared to cross the yard after seven o'clock in the evening.

The nights were cold and it was difficult to sleep. More than the cold a dreaded thought tormented us. We could see the sad, thin faces of the young Korean women prisoners and we thought of our little Korean sisters, those we instinctively called our children because God had given us a mother's love for them. Were they far away from us or perhaps very close, dying little by little from exhaustion and hunger. It was this complete uncertainty that was so hard to bear.

The fifteenth of October was the feast day of our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Avila and our hearts turned towards her as we fervently begged her for the courage which had strengthened us during the first days of the foundation years ago. Sister Bernadette succeeded in preparing a holiday dish, chopped hazel nuts mixed with sorghum. It was delicious.

The guards eventually decided that we could not remain in this prison indefinitely. They tried to fix up a house on the other side of the mountain and asked Bishop Quinlan to visit it and undertake all the responsibility for arranging the household. After first hesitating the Bishop and the few men who were left, knowing that they would never get anything better, accepted. One had to contemplate a long stay in prison to be content even in part with this new house. It consisted of one room where, for the first time, men and women would be together. It had a straw roof and mud walls which were barely

five or six inches thick with holes everywhere. At our insistence we were given enough straw to close up the openings, but in spite of this we could still feel the wind circulate around our heads. We soon realized that it was better that way because, without this ventilation, the atmosphere in the room would have been so bad that we would not have been able to breathe. It seemed better to be cold than to die of suffocation.

The room was divided into two sections by an aisle. Both sides were of cement and slightly elevated so as to receive the heat from the kitchen stove. The men settled on the right and the women on the left. We had just enough room to stretch but barely enough to move. Since the small holes had been blocked with straw, it would have been totally dark if the electric light had not been left on day and night. The temperature outside was normally subzero which meant we could no longer wash outdoors. To give us at least a little more privacy we hung a blanket between the two sections.

The soldiers had promised us a stove and it arrived:- an old oil drum which had been cut in half. Its crude installation was such that we often had to remove the coal dust with which it was loaded. We lived all winter in a state of indescribable filth. At least we did not have to worry about our clothes. They had been filthy to begin with when they were given to us. The padding was thick but the cloth was badly worn and often needed patching. Sewing at this time was a difficult chore. Because of a nearby forge where the Korean prisoners worked, the electric lamp at our house was too weak during the day to even thread a needle. We had to sew at night when the work at the forge had stopped.

Two Russian civilian interrogators from Manpo came to inquire about our situation and could not help saying as they left, "To live like this is atrocious." Certainly we needed strong wills so as not to get discouraged. The miserable reality was so far from the dream we had envisaged.

Each worked courageously within his sphere. The ingenious Father Crosbie tried to make the kitchen less uncomfortable and more practical. Sister Henriette devoted herself to her blind companion, Sister Madeleine, and Sister Eugenie was busily occupied from morning till dark with unbelievable kindnesses to all. The snow did not prevent Sister Bernadette from going into the mountains as she did not want to miss any of the hawthorne berries. Our stay in camp made us appreciate them. For a long time they were our only dessert. Made into marmalade they were also to be our Christmas treat.

The men went into the mountain every day regardless of the weather. We had left a good supply of wood in Chongkang but we found nothing here. The hardest workers, Bishop Quinlan at their head, would start out each morning. Their work was rendered more difficult because of the prohibition against cutting down trees. Most of the time they had to be content with brush. Luckily on Sundays the guards were less active and the men were able to cut up a few pine trees to feed the kitchen fireplace.

The men always returned exhausted from these dangerous trips. Sometimes they fell but none were hurt seriously, surely a sign of protection by Divine Providence. The water detail was also dangerous because of the steep ascents and descents on the frozen and slippery paths which led to the wells or streams, and it was really extraordinary that there were no broken legs.

Christmas returned with its joyous hymns and its deep peace penetrated our little Bethlehem. This was our second Christmas in a prison camp and many were the fervent prayers said in spiritual communion with the dear souls

who we knew must be in anguish over our fate.

The year ended with an evening spent together which we tried to make happy. At midnight we received soya milk and popped corn. A few days later a small event broke the monotony of our existence. The Turkish and Russian families were sent to two Korean houses about three hundred yards from the camp. They received permission to sell in Manpo the wood they cut in the mountains. This gave them some resources with which they could improve the food for their young. Poor children who knew nothing of the sweets usually so plentiful at their age. Ahmed, the youngest of the Turks, was in heaven whenever he received a little sweetened millet. Having arrived in camp when he was barely a year old he never had eaten anything better.

The first change resulting from this move was that from now on the women would do the cooking, each taking turn. And so there was to be an innovation even though we received the same cereals; with a bit of love they would be tastier. Then too the cold increased our appetite and we were all hungry. Happy sting that saved us from being disgusted with our wretched fare.

On the 2nd of February our small community joyously celebrated Sister Eugenie's Silver Jubilee, her twenty-fifth year of religious life. There was a hymn for the occasion and a culinary surprise by Sister Bernadette. We had planned all this and it made us very happy but there was also an unexpected present sent us from the Russian interrogator, "Blondy." (We called him that because of the color of his hair.) As there had been some questionings and indoctrination talks that day, Bishop Quinlan had mentioned to him the Jubilee, and his sadness at not having anything to give the sister. Immediately "Blondy" presented him with perfumed soap and a handsome colored handkerchief. Thanking him the Bishop said, "She will certainly pray for you." "I have no faith," replied the Russian.

Sister Madeleine's Silver Jubilee fell on April 17th. She prepared herself by a three day retreat trying to abandon herself entirely to God's will in this life of privation and destitution. Sister Bernadette, who had been gleaning in the bean field since our arrival, made a puree which was also served on all our big feastdays. The Turkish girl, Saquida, who joined in our celebrations, brought thin slices of bread soaked in egg something like "French toast", but without milk or sugar. What a treat! But where did this bread come from? That was quite a story. On Good Friday we received 1,000 English loaves, made with good flour but we never did find out where they came from. The entire camp was overwhelmed. Think of it, bread! What perplexed us most was the quantity. By receiving a good ration at each meal we thought we could finish it before it spoiled, but in spite of our explanations and entreaties, the guard refused to let us follow this plan. We were given bread only once a day. By placing it in the oven we could remove the mould but even so were only able to eat six bags out of the thirty-eight which had been sent us. Thirty bags of beautiful, white, nourishing, savory bread thrown away because of rot!

We were not allowed to receive anything from the Red Cross in Geneva. The Soviet Red Cross seemed to ignore us but one day we had a surprise. We were told that bundles had arrived from Czechoslovakia and were waiting for us at the station. The men left in haste while we impatiently awaited their return. The unpacking was done at the guardhouse. Bishop Quinlan was laughing a little as he distributed the goods equally, one pack to a person. There were indeed some of the most bizarre items. Father Coyos received one maroon

and one white sock. The Carmelites received for their share, one cap, a pair of small child's shoes which had been worn, a girl's dress and a piece of cloth. What were we to do with all this wealth. Sister Henriette had a bright idea: go into town and sell them. The problem was to obtain the necessary permission but the guards finally agreed and the two saleswomen left in a lightfooted manner early one morning. They took with them the merchandise, the nicest of which was the child's dress which Sister Eugenie had prettied up during the night. They had walked for half an hour when the Chief of police stopped them. The order was firm, they must return to camp. After much talking and an unpleasant discussion they were allowed to pass. At Manpo the small stores refused to buy the objects because they were not new. They were determined not to return to camp with their load and their purses empty so Sister Henriette opened the package in the middle of the road. Surrounded by a curious crowd she held an auction sale which was a great success. A father bought the small shoes, a mother the pretty little dress, and so on. Their children would be happy that evening and the salesladies also. They brought back 1,300 yen with them; a fortune which could be used to buy books, pencils, ink, tablets of paper, and soap which we had long been without, not to mention eggs with which we would be able to supplement our menu on feastdays.

Spring came and the entire aspect changed. Wild greens, garlic, onions, and tetragon, all searched for with patience and often found still hidden under the snow, were used in making tasty soups. The mountain looked beautiful under its covering of flowers: violets, clematis, lilies of the valley, golden yellow lilies, pink and red carnations, strange looking orchids. No cultivated garden could furnish such splendor. Sister Bernadette became more enthusiastic each time she went out. For the front of our section of the room we made a stand out of a piece of wood on which we kept a magnificent bouquet of flowers. We renewed it every day so our hut soon became known as the "House of Flowers."

It was not long before the fruit started to appear. Starting in early June we picked mulberries, not the bush type but the kind that grows on large trees, and is very common in Korea because of the silk industry. The unselfish example set by Sister Bernadette who generously shared all her gatherings was followed by the others. In this way our physical hunger was somewhat appeased by our friend, the mountain, but the nicest present it gave us was a deep sense of peace. In the solitude far from the camp and out of sight the soul came face to face with the infinite. Here it renewed its contact with the supernatural and oriented itself towards the eternal summits. Life appeared as it really was; a reflection of God's ineffable love, while the incidental daily menus remained what they were; nothing!

One day while walking along the zigzag roads one of us noticed some human bones lying on the surface of the ground. Searching farther we found, hidden under the thick grass, five graves lined up in the European manner. We knew that the German Benedictines from Wonsan, who had been captured in 1949, had been in the vicinity of our camp. Without a doubt we were standing before the skeletons of those monks who had died here. Filled with emotion we remade the graves, carefully weeded them, and then decorated them with wreaths made of leaves and violets.

Because of her blindness Sister Madeleine was not able to get relaxation by taking walks in the open air. She would take as much of a stroll as she could each day on level ground, but more than all the others she enjoyed "our little chalet." Father Coyos was the architect for this little house which

was made out of straw, sacks, boards and nails. Thanks to his ingenuity our chalet was really most comfortable. A bench placed in the back covered the whole width. With a covering it was transformed into a divan on which one could rest. A table and a small chair completed the furnishings while the roof, made of several straw sacks, could resist an ordinary downpour.

Once the chalet was finished, it was blessed according to the rites in the Breviary and it became "Carmel-by-the-Beach" for it stood on the edge of a brook which added to its charm and also to its usefulness. The ripple of the water falling in tiny cascades and the chorus of birds, far from troubling the silence helped to create an atmosphere of quietness and prayer.

Our little chalet served many purposes. We could wash clothes there when it was not necessary to use boiling water and we had a place to dry them. It was also our bath house; our refectory where we often had our noonday meal; and our study hall where we had our English lessons each day. Since our room at camp when it became overheated was unbearable even when we covered the floor with boards and our winter clothing in an effort to get away from its heat, we tried sleeping under the stars by the chalet. That, however meant being eaten alive by the mosquitoes so we returned to the "House of Flowers" at night and spent the day at our chalet. It was indeed our haven, but above all it was our oratory, a place of prayer. The hours spent in that shadowy and peaceful oasis were sweet and happy.

Little by little life settled down around us. We seeded a few plots here and there so that in the fall we would have better food. Father Crosbie set up an ingenious installation a hundred yards from the camp for boiling clothes and also for warm water baths. The kitchen was no longer recognizable with its levelled floor, varied utensils, and handy racks. Our roof which at the time of the heavy rains had allowed water the color of soot to run on us had just been repaired and the men planned to get wood for the winter.

Since all was going along so well, it seemed like the proper moment to leave, and that is exactly what happened! The evening of the tenth of August rumors circulated through the camp that we were not to go out into the mountain the following day and that we were to wash our clothes and prepare to move. Adieu dear Carmel-by-the-Beach. Before us opened another new unknown.

CHAPTER X

Trip and Stay in Out-Huchang
Aug. 12, 1952 -- Mar. 27, 1953

Those who wanted to appear well informed whispered, "We are going to Pyongyang; we are nearing the end of our journeys." The chief must have heard this because he told us as we were leaving, "If all does not go according to your wishes, don't lose your courage and your gaiety." Other than a few moments of bad humor--and who hasn't any of these--this lieutenant had been good to us. He would often tire himself making special trips, even at night, to get us necessary items. His efforts were frequently useless, but we could not deny his willingness to help us. Towards the end of our stay he realized that

the area where we were camped could no longer support us and that was the reason we moved.

The burning sun, the crowding, the bumps, roads that had never been maintained and were nothing more than ruts, and above all the nauseating odor of gasoline made the trip most uncomfortable. Fortunately it lasted only one day.

On the night of the 12th we arrived in the small village of Out-Huchang which was full of Chinese troops. The driver led us toward a primary school where we were refused entrance. After some hesitation we were taken to a larger building, probably a secondary school, where we were once more refused entrance. The same old comedy had started all over again. The Koreans had not made any progress in organization, but we had gained in patience so we laughingly wondered how it would all end. The solution was a Korean house where we settled for better or for worse, (it was for worse), to spend the night. The room was suffocating due to its close proximity to the kitchen and the bed bugs made rest impossible. The next two nights were spent in the yard. We stayed there three days, undoing and redoing our bundles depending upon the order which invariably contradicted the previous one.

After breakfast on the 15th we started to leave on foot, but before the column had a chance to move, a truck came to get us only to let us out a few minutes later in front of another building.

The new camp consisted of several Korean houses with enough rooms to allow four persons to each. We could not believe our good fortune - we three Carmelites and Sister Eugenie in the same room, nobody else! This had never happened to us before. The settling was done cheerfully.

There were two doors in our room, one on the south side permitting the sun to come in during the winter and another to the north opening onto a porch which had a roof and a wooden floor. Here we rested during the warm hours.

But we had not come to the end of our surprises. A representative of the People came to welcome us and to offer us a small gift: a large bottle of soya sauce and a load of wood. Then our chief officer told us that although we would still be guarded by the Koreans we were to start receiving supplies from the Chinese. On August 17th a cart arrived drawn by three mules. We could not believe our eyes as we watched the Chinese soldiers unload bags of rice, flour, fresh vegetables and a case of eggs. Bishop Quinlan ran out to receive them.

From then on, on certain dates the cart, announced in the distance by the ringing of bells, the snapping of the whip and the cheers of the children, would bring us a variety of riches. Meat was no longer a scarce item. For Christmas and New Year we were given three frozen pigs, chickens, pheasant, a good supply of sugar, apples, mandarins, and whiskey which the connoisseurs found very fine. The first time the men received tobacco, the ladies made such a fuss for equal compensation that they also got something. Each month those who did not smoke received a surprise; soap, a handkerchief, stockings, and even candy. Each object was of good quality and was stamped or marked "Communist Red Cross." Soap, good for both laundering and bathing was given to us in abundance, as were towels decorated with large Chinese letters in red which read, "Hate America, help Korea." Tubes of toothpaste and toothbrushes also arrived each month. In fact we got so many we no longer knew what to do with them. We were also given clothing of good quality. It was new, wellmade, and the shoes, most of which had pointed toes,

were given to us in such quantity that they supplied our exchange market. The presents we appreciated the most, however, were the two warm blankets each one of us received soon after our arrival.

Naturally we were forbidden to talk with the civilians but we managed to anyway despite the rigid surveillance. Whereas at the "House of Flowers" a lieutenant had been considered sufficient to guard us, here he was backed by a captain and a sergeant who, well fed, were pleasantly spending their wartime. They played cards and slept for hours and then had meetings which we all had to attend. The captain would air his griefs; "You have spoken to some Koreans. I have seen it. You have done some swapping. Your children are ill-bred, they argue with their neighbor's children. You have gone beyond the limits during your walks." To this our men would answer: "You told us that we would be on the wood detail only three times a week and here we must go every day. You promised us books and magazines which never came. Why do you stop us from going to the mountain? We had more freedom in other camps." It is said that "good stories make good friends", so after two or three hours of this each side would retire quite satisfied.

A few days after we had settled down a colonel gathered us together to tell us that in the future we would have freedom of thought and that we could practice our religion without fear. It was not difficult for the Protestants to organize a Sunday service consisting of a sermon, prayers and hymns; but for us to find the Eucharistic Bread with which to appease the hunger of our souls, we needed pure flour and unfermented wine. So our fast continued but from that day on we hung one of the Carmelite crucifixes on the wall in a prominent place. The guards saw it and some of them looked very attentively in silence at that Man elevated on the cross.

Those who deny God speak of Him with great ease. In Choongkang Jin the commander one day approached our blind nun. "It is a great misfortune not to see anymore," he said. "Don't you think that 'Hanamim' (God) made a mistake in sending you such a grave hardship?" "No," answered Sister Madeleine, "'Hanamim' never makes any mistakes," and she tried to make him understand the attitude of Christians before the mystery of suffering.

In the "House of Flowers" a young doctor had come occasionally but not to check on our health. "It is useless," he had said, "I have no medicine to give you." The real purpose of his visits had been to exchange ideas and talk of spiritual things. We had remarked that he talked very respectfully to the Fathers, and we understood the reason when he said, "I used to be a Catholic. Your doctrine is beautiful but impossible to live with."

After our arrival in Huchang a Chinese doctor came to the camp several times. Bishop Quinlan received him and his knowledge of Chinese permitted them to talk at length. One day when they were alone, the doctor bowing before the Bishop said softly, "Salve pater!" and as the Bishop looked at him in astonishment he continued, "I am a Catholic. I studied at the Aurore University which is conducted by the Jesuit fathers in Shanhai." The Bishop asked him if he could not do something for us. He answered, "Alas no, I am a doctor and I must remain only that," but at least he put his whole heart into taking care of us and gave us excellent medicines. After a few washings Sister Madeleine was rid of a persistent eczema which had made her suffer a great deal. Unfortunately Sister Henriette had to continue to endure her rheumatism for months. "There is nothing I can give you for relief," the doctor said. "The only remedy which is worthwhile is impossible to get in these times." Sister

resigned herself to her condition and each day made some effort to exercise her leg so that it would not stiffen completely.

Sometimes the Korean civilians we met on the street would ask our nationality. "We are French," we would tell them. "Ah, France--Paris! So you know Jesus Christ," some would say. This remark was made several times which pleased us greatly. At the other end of the world in the open Korean countryside, there were those who when they heard mention of France did not separate it from Christ. One day two young men said to Father Coyos, "We are Catholics and will remain so until death."

The place where we took our walks was a nice country road where we could walk two hundred yards in either direction from our house. Here we came in contact with many of the customs of Korean life so often described to us by our little Sisters. An ox with blinders on his eyes was turning an enormous millstone to make rice flour in one yard; in another a woman seated before her door was winding thirty or so cocoons into a basin of warm water and twisting the silken threads. We also witnessed the Feast of the Dead which is celebrated in September, the date varying according to the moon. The graves spread separately all over the mountain so as to prevent the spirits from quarreling, are carefully cleaned. On the appointed day, the heads of the families bring a holiday meal, not forgetting the rice and wine, and offer this food to the spirits of those whom they loved. We saw our guards themselves go and perform this ritual at the graves.

In March when the harvesting is over and the winter gone, the marriages take place just before the spring work begins. The girl is seated on a sled in a large sedan chair open in the front but with a curtain which hides the interior. She is dressed in her best attire and in this manner goes to the ceremonial place. It is considered polite to stop the cortege to greet the girl who listens and smiles but must not raise her eyes.

We saw funerals pass by also. The casket is carried on a palanquin by the family and friends all shouting sad exclamations. Before leaving the house they would burn all that had once belonged to the departed.

Sometimes trucks loaded with American soldiers passed by. Without a doubt there was a camp somewhere near. As soon as they saw us they would throw their hands up and shout a vibrating, "Hoorah", thus giving voice to the union of hearts born of a common suffering. The Chinese guards did not stop them. Seeing the emotion which seized us in meeting these unknown men, we thought "What will happen if some day we should meet French soldiers?" This never did happen.

On Sundays the road was alive with those who were going to sell their commodities in the small town of Huchang. We were allowed to buy from them but we needed money. The sale of toothbrushes and toothpaste was permitted, (we had plenty of these,) and with the secret sale of shoes we filled our empty pockets. Communist China was making capitalists out of us, and one Sunday all the people on the road were waiting for our goods. Some of our companions bought eggs, well arranged by the dozen in straw, but we Carmelites preferred to start a poultry yard with chickens and a rooster with a flamboyant tail. The chicken house was furnished by Father Coyos and Sister Bernadette. For feed she had to exchange rice which we had in quantity for corn. Of course this had to be done secretly. She went to an isolated house in the vicinity where the women were only too glad to do business. At first these good women were very frightened at the sight of a European pri-

soner and Sister's inability to speak Korean further complicated the matter. When they finally grasped the idea that all Sister Bernadette wanted was to exchange her rice for corn, their faces brightened for they had not seen rice for a considerable period of time. Sister Bernadette suffered greatly at the sight of the misery these people had to bear and so we tried to save as much as we could for this particular needy family. One day we even had shoe mufflers, paper, pencils and some sweets to give in exchange for the corn. this way their poverty was made a little easier.

Thanks to this secret trading our six chicks grew and had a regular laying season from December to March regardless of the intense cold. The rooster to tell us of his gratitude became our alarm clock. The guards did not object and such changes in our life made us hope for an early liberation, but while waiting we had to live so we organized ourselves as best we could.

Now the cooks were easily able to vary the menu and Sister Bernadette by her cheerful initiative and with that particular touch she brought to her own dishes, was unanimously accorded the "Blue Ribbon". How can one have a good dinner without coffee? She found the means to make some with soya beans and one day, towards the end of the meal, the man who was serving cried out "coffee" in a resounding voice. We all responded on the run with our bowls.

When Mr. Lord, the human loudspeaker, announced the meals in English all the family dogs arrived from all directions happily wagging their tails We kept a few little breads especially for the children whom we met on our walks. The poor little ones were dressed in rags even in the most intense cold, barefooted or in shoes filled with holes, and always hungry. They soon understood that we loved them and never missed waiting for us to pass by.

New students presented themselves to Sister Madeleine for French lessons. One was an American woman about 68 years of age. She preferred to follow her own methods: no grammar, but instead sentences consisting of small daily happenings and above all, songs. When we had repeated the same word endlessly and sung a childish round twenty times, she would be on her way brandishing her book and repeating what she had learned with unbelievable ardor.

Olga, the little Russian girl, came one morning to ask for French lessons for herself and when Saquida heard this, she suggested that Shaucat, one of her brothers, also study. This double request was cheerfully accepted. The two children were the same age; 10 years old. There were no books but the Chinese had given us good paper and we had all we needed to write. Sister Henriette and Sister Madeleine went courageously to work. They made a grammar and a speller which served as vocabulary and reading book at the same time. The young children were very attentive and intelligent. Olga had an impeccable accent and understood before the end of the explanation, which disconcerted the little boy. The two kept up a friendly rivalry and when Olga made a mistake Shaucat was jubilant while, in her turn, if he erred his little friend was exultant.

To show us his gratitude Shaucat wracked his brains to find ways of helping the Blind Sister. He called himself her "little friend". Of these three Sister Madeleine was undoubtedly the happiest. Certainly this daily lesson was the sunniest moment of her day. Arriving with a smile the students left with the same expression to go to their English lesson. Thus they did not completely waste their days, and yet there was still plenty of time for play. The singing too was not neglected and our old French tunes were honored.

Olga mimed "Sur le Pont D'Avignon" so well that she was a great success at the evening gatherings which had been organized by the Turks.

What was our morale like at this time in our camp. During the long imprisonment the elegant manners of our first days had worn off considerably. In two and a half years of living together each one displays exactly what he is, which is not always very pleasant! It seemed that the differences in religion and nationality deepened. Under our eyes we had the world in miniature with all its miseries and meaness. Some, once free, would react to this long trial by searching all the harder for comfort and pleasures. However, there were also those who knew how to profit by the purifying suffering. Once at the beginning of our imprisonment one of those who appeared to understand the least said, "We have come here to take an accounting of ourselves and of our spiritual values." (He died in November, 1950.) Mr. Lord, a colonel in the Salvation Army asked us for the Imitation of Christ and became engrossed in this book which he highly recommended to the Methodist ladies. Bishop Cooper, an Anglican, always ready to forget himself to render us services, remained vague before the explanation of our doctrine and murmured; "I wonder if I have taught errors for fifty years." In the uncertainty which smothered us some souls were strengthened but others no longer searched for the light.

Bishop Quinlan dominated them all because of his tall physical stature and wonderful morale. This giant with the heart of a child, humble and peaceful, yet with an astoundingly strong soul lived a life in camp that was radiant with kindness. Always the first in the most difficult of assignments he led the others to work. He never lost his time in criticizing or arguing and his preaching was done by example for he was utterly forgetful of himself. Furthermore he was the friend of all. His smiling kindness gained everyone's confidence and when he left us in March of 1953, it seemed as though we had lost a father, and that a bright light had been extinguished in our camp.

His influence with Saquida was deep. He well understood all the dangers which lie in wait for a young and lively girl and with a few words uttered at random when they chanced to meet, he would show her the right road. She once wrote to him in a letter, "I shall never forget you. As long as your memory remains alive in my heart I shall not fail."

Saquida! She was spring and poetry in our camp. Each of us felt our lives reawaken whenever we would see her quick, bright eyes and pigtails flying in the wind as she went quickly about her business. Tenderly affectionate with her friends, she was terrible when she became angry. Hers was a rich nature which suffering had polished and ripened. The French lessons had become long conversations in which we spoke of history, literature, etc. She opened herself completely to these new things. One day she wrote in a letter to her teacher, "I thank you for opening so many new horizons to me, horizons which I never before dreamed could have existed; and I am grateful to you also for never having said one word which could have hurt my beliefs." Certain indiscreet propaganda on the part of some Protestants had displeased her. Finding herself suddenly placed in contact with so many different religions and being acutely sensitive, she studied and compared them. Several weeks before Christmas she announced that she wanted to learn our hymns so that she could spend the evenings with us. "Me too, I can sing of Jesus," she said, "for He is for us a great Prophet." She added, "At the secondary school in Seoul I learned Protestant hymns, now I can sing with the Catholics, but my

heart remains Mohammedan." We wondered if she added these latter words so as to convince herself. The truth was that she was accepting the Catholic and western influence with pleasure. The secret action of grace which she did not understand was surely working within her. The Christmas hymns called forth many questions about the Incarnation and the Virgin Mary. The general history lessons that Father Coyos gave her and her two brothers also astonished her. One day she asked Sister Madeleine, "What do you think of my religion?" Her voice trembled a little and Sister's reply left the young girl guessing.

Winter returned with its white blanket. This time the men were well prepared as enough wood had been gathered to last until spring. The thick layer of snow did not prevent our daily walks. The physical exercise was necessary to counteract the torpor caused by the Korean heating system. It was at that time that we should have taken pictures. We looked like Eskimos, and each would laugh when looking at her companion without dreaming that she looked the same. On days when there were cold winds the walks had to be shortened because, regardless of the thick layer of cotton padding, the Siberian winds penetrated right to the bones. Some days the outdoor cooks and firestokers had their clothing covered with frost.

Christmas came and with it an atmosphere of intimate sweetness and the promise of peace. The happy eve and the holiday feast brought Bishop Quinlan and the three fathers to a gathering at our place. Never had the liberality of the Chinese been so great. Even so, because we could see no end to our imprisonment a sort of nervous sadness weighed over the camp. "Could it be forever?"

On December 28th the feast of the Innocents, it was the children's turn. Certainly on that day we had to honor those little innocents above all. We prepared an amusing auction sale of toys, a good lunch, lively songs; all were highly successful. Those young orthodox and Moslem children, will they ever be together with us in one fold? "Venite Adoremus" Saquida sang in her melodious voice as sweet as a violin. Will they ever become worshippers in spirit and in truth?

Contact with children relaxes one and makes one feel younger, so on that day we gladly made a special visit to Ahmed who was then three years old and knew how to welcome each visitor in his own language. Precocious child, he used to tell his mother that his falls were due to a lack of vitamins.

On New Year's Eve at midnight the English and Americans sang while shaking hands. For the Turks the year 1952, represented by a seedy and tired looking old man, disappeared through one door, while through another the new year made its appearance in the person of an alert and spruce-looking young gentleman. In our quiet room we Carmelites and Sister Eugenie prayerfully united ourselves to God in all that He willed to us and for our companions in suffering.

Suddenly there was a break in the monotony; interrogators arrived. The sessions were endless; the answers frank and to the point. The questioning of Sister Henriette and Sister Madeleine lasted more than three hours because Sister Madeleine had become animated when speaking of France. "You say that France is a capitalist and imperialist country because of her colonies," she said, "yet she has helped several countries gain their freedom." The officer perked up his ear and the scribe doubled his speed so as not to miss a word. "France helped America shake off English domination." "Not possible! In

what year? Under what king?" "And Belgium...." "In what year? Under what king?" "And Greece...." "Really, but what you tell me is very interesting!" The interest was so great that page after page was filled. "Enough, Sister Madeleine, stop!" whispered her companion. "Otherwise they will detain you as a professor of history."

Before this questioning started they had asked if we would like to establish a Carmel in North Korea, and would it not be possible to find grounds for an understanding between Catholics and Communists. We had refused to explain much about our life in Carmel to him, saying, "To understand one must believe in God." He listened attentively to the little we did tell him and then said, "You pray only for Catholics and for those who are good." After hearing our reply he exclaimed triumphantly, "I understand now! You have no schools or hospitals like the Sister whom I saw a while back, (he meant Sister Eugenie), "but you are the Sisters who pray for the entire world." He had indeed understood.

On March 6th we noticed that the Chinese and Korean soldiers were wearing crepe armbands, and we suspected that Stalin had died since his portrait in the captain's room had just been framed in black. A newspaper found on the street changed our suspicions to certainty and we hoped that his death would have happy consequences for us.

The next surprise came on March 19th, feast of the fatherly St. Joseph, when two special envoys arrived from Pyongyang and called for the three Englishmen. When Bishop Quinlan and his two companions came the envoys measured their hair, noses, ears, necks, shoulders and hands. The three men were so astonished that they submitted without protest. It was explained to them that they had friends who desired to see them again and that it was necessary to have a careful description! That night the entire camp laughed heartily over the adventure and even made up a song about it. But alas, on the 21st the officers reappeared to tell the three Englishmen to prepare to depart in an hour. We were all overcome with emotion as we had always envisaged a mass liberation. But was it really towards liberation that our friends were heading? After a final and moving benediction Bishop Quinlan departed with his two companions. That night few of us slept but in a short time the fever of exitement dropped and the camp once more resumed its usual existence now even more monotonous since the kind bishop's departure. Several whispered, "The French are next."

For once the prediction was correct. On the 27th of March two officers arrived. We were called but had no measurements taken. There was a brief questioning period which was chiefly concerned with our dead and which ended with these words, "This means nothing, don't get excited." We remained perplexed. What should we do. Each followed her own particular inspiration. Sister Eugenie put her voluminous bric-a-brac in order. Sister Henriette hastily finished the beautiful, small purse that we wanted to give Olga for her birthday. Sister Madeleine quietly continued with her lessons which at that moment consisted in penetrating the mystery of the qualifying adjective. "Very much long," said the young girl scanning each syllable. Miss Bertha, the Methodist missionary, struck up with "Pyrenees Mountains," the French song she preferred the most and finished with the last verse of "Beautiful Sky of Pau" for our benefit. Sister Bernadette made an inventory of her treasures: eggs, flour, sugar. "I am going to make a cake," she said, "We will eat it wherever we are and everybody will be happy."

Time passed. At five o'clock the guard came to tell us, "You are leaving in an hour; prepare your bundles." The news spread like wildfire through the camp; "The French are leaving," and everyone came to help.

The Turkish mother brought two chickens and some cakes she had baked, having had a premonition of what was coming. With a sad heart the Russian mother who could not talk to us in any language, caressed our faces and hands, repeating,"Olga!" We understood that she too was expressing her gratitude. The Turkish mother, weeping, grasped Sister Madeleine's hands and said, "Thank you, thank you for my children." Saquida was in tears. Shaucat wept too, but because he was a little man, carried bundles and wanted to help right to the end.

The truck was ready so we got on. Sister Madeleine, with hands outstretched, cried, "Saquida" one last time but the girl was unable to answer, and it was Miss Bertha's quivering voice which called out, "Au revoir."

CHAPTER XI

Second Stay in Pyongyang
March 27 - - April 17, 1953

On the truck we seven travellers remained silent and wondered where we were going. Father Coyos watched the turns because in one direction the road led to the capital of North Korea, in the other to Manchuria. The vehicle started along the zigzag roads leading to the mountains. A snowstorm started and we were very cold because we had had to leave our warm Chinese blankets in camp. Around midnight the driver stopped and led us into a police station to warm up. When the soldiers saw us come in they asked, "Are you men or women?" Indeed with our trousers and our hats worn low over the eyes, it was difficult to tell. About three in the morning we left again on a long and painful stretch through the Korean countryside. The driver wanted to make time which only doubled the bumps.

We arrived in a village about ten in the morning and were told that we would not leave until about six that night. Because of the bombings, travel during daylight hours was too dangerous. It was very evident that the bombs had not spared that poor country. How many villages we saw that had been completely evacuated by the inhabitants; the houses without roofs, the walls tumbled down, and then we understood better why they had hidden us in a miserable camp deep in the mountains. Getting down off the trucks to stretch ourselves, we tried to eat but our stomachs were too upset to take food. Father Coyos alone did justice to the chickens and the cakes. We spoke little. Each had but one thought in mind; at Pyongyang we will be two hundred miles from South Korea and two hundred and twenty-five miles from Seoul. Could it be possible that in a few weeks we would be allowed to return to our Carmel and our little Sisters. Yet would we find them there? At least we would know the truth; and tragic as it may be, that is preferable to endless suppositions that have no answers.

The next night the trip continued. Our careful driver would no doubt have preferred to travel in less moonlight!

Pyongyang! "Could it be possible?" said Father Goyos. Nothing remained of that beautiful city we had seen on the morning of July 21st, 1950. All had been razed, reduced to rubble. Here everyone from President Kim and his government on down lived in underground shelters. War presented itself to us in all its horror.

Our chief guard did not seem to know where we were to go. He stopped to telephone without success. Finally a superior officer came to talk with him and those with keen ears heard, "They are not going with the diplomats." So those from whom we had been separated for two years were here. This made us happy and more confident. We were then taken to a large public square and, as we got off, officers rushed up to assist us. One captain carried our bundles while a commander led Sister Madeleine. In a few moments we found ourselves in a comfortable room. Lieutenant colonels and colonels were waiting for us; it was a twinkling of stars. They showed great concern for our fatigue and made us sit down at a table decorated with artificial flowers. "In a few minutes you will be given a good meal, then we will conduct you to your rooms. The beds are ready." said one officer. Amazed, we wondered if we were dreaming. No, for just then some young women soldiers, alert and smiling, brought in dishes of caviar, two kinds of meat, vegetables, noodles, potatoes and biscuits. The waitresses apologized, "There is no soup, but we shall have some tomorrow." The officers, who were standing, watched us as we ate with good appetites. The meal finished, they led us to an underground shelter dug a hundred yards or so into the mountain where we were shown our bedrooms. And there actually were beds waiting for us. Oh, they consisted of planks placed on two trestles covered with straw and blankets, but as this is, in fact, the real bed of a Carmelite nun we were delighted.

Next we undressed to sleep. It had been more than thirty-two months since we had done this. In spite of the warm and humid temperature each of us fell asleep quickly, but only after a silent moment of thanksgiving to God.

In the morning we were awakened by a bugle and we saw that we were in a small cave. This martial music, as in western army camps, designated the different actions of the day even to the "lights out." Later we were to see the soldiers, ardent youths, exercise to this music after having eaten their meager meal of soup and sorghum. Our meals, however, were plentiful and as well-prepared as they were welcome. There was even good bread which we could smear with butter and tea with biscuits at four in the afternoon. Our only valid criticism was that it lacked variety.

The Koreans, vexed no doubt to see us in Chinese clothing, gave us brand new medium weight clothing and told us that they would launder our clothes when necessary. A few days later the tailor from the regiment arrived to measure us for suits. We were given a choice of a dress or trousers.

A doctor examined us closely upon our arrival and returned each day with a nurse who brought various medicines. Certainly we were well taken care of but the inactivity began to weigh on us and we would have welcomed any task whatsoever. On the first day we did a little writing. Our papers had to be put in order and we had to present a list of all French internees, other than the Consul, to the civilian authorities. We had been eleven but six were missing. To register six dead between the third of November, 1950 and the sixth of January, 1951, roughly a two month period, shamed them visi-

bly. The president of the North Korean Red Cross came to greet us and was perplexed when he saw the list of dead which spoke only too eloquently. The disappearance of Mother Beatrix embarrassed them above all. "How is it that you did not see her die?" "We don't even know if she is dead." "Why did you leave her?" "Because the soldiers dragged us on by force." "Where did that take place?" None of their many questions, let alone our answers, could shed any light on the uncomfortable problem. Nevertheless the form had to be completed. They eventually found their way out in the fact that Mother Beatrix had had heart trouble when she came to camp. They made us sign a statement saying that she had undoubtedly succumbed to a heart attack. As to the five mission fathers, following the statement of their nationality, the paper was marked, "Died a natural death." This we actually saw! They made us put our signature at the bottom of the page. The form was written in Korean, French and English.

The most difficult task was to get them to release Madame Hoang and her son, Man-Saing (which means in Korean, 10,000 lives). This thirty year old mother was born in Paris of a Korean father and a French mother. Married at fifteen to a Korean who was forty-two, she departed after her marriage for North Korea. She and her husband fled when the Russiansinvasion began. Mr. Hoang who was well educated became an interpreter and journalist for the Americans. On the 24th of June, 1950, he had left Korea by plane leaving behind his wife and son who were later arrested and taken to camp. Madame Hoang was in no way prepared for this hardship. Of limited intelligence and without strength of will, she was not able to make the necessary adjustment and shortly thereafter went into a sort of trance. Glimmerings of lucidity would alternate with terrible fits of anger. Man-Saing, big and strong for his twelve years, was known throughout the camp for his insults which spared no one. The mother, baptized at nine, had received no formal religious instruction whatsoever. Her child was a little pagan and at times would mimic the incantations of sorceresses. Poor unfortunate child, he had a violent temperament but a tender heart, and his deep love for his mother was limitless even though she whipped him daily. He grew like a wild man and wore out the patience of six professors who one after the other tried to teach him French and English. Nevertheless he had an open mind and an excellent memory but thought of nothing but play. The soldiers loved him and found in him one of their own kind. He learned Communist airs, marched the way they did, and learnt their manners so well that when he appeared before the Korean minister in Paris a few weeks later, he said quietly, "Good day, comrade." We could well understand why the North Koreans wanted to keep him. Nobody cared about his half crazed mother, but the young one had the aptitude for becoming a true communist.

A dilemma faced the unfortunate woman. It was necessary that she state in writing within forty-eight hours which she preferred, North or South Korea. This threw her into an even deeper trance and her haggard eyes were pitiful to see. With great kindness Father Coyos finally helped her to come to the decision that, once free, she wanted to go to Seoul with her son and rejoin her husband or, if that was impossible at the moment, to go to Paris to her family. That was the last difficult episode. There was nothing to do afterwards but await the peace.

Each day we were shown movies in color. The films were chiefly propaganda. There were various Russian scenes: glamorous ballets in which the dancers seemed to defy the laws of gravity and equilibrium; collective farm-

ing which produced an astonishing super-abundance and collective happiness--a veritable paradise for the common worker!

We also had to attend conferences. "The moment has come to speak clearly," said the colonel during one of these meetings. Our hearts were beating hard. Was he finally going to tell us the date of our longed for liberation. No, he wanted to make us realize that during our captivity we had been treated as well as the circumstances would permit. "You have suffered more than the Korean prisoners," he added, "because you are accustomed to more comforts than they are." The talk ended with an exhortation in which he asked us to sign a statement thanking the government for its kindness towards us. This was not an order but we all signed because basically he was right. We had seen peasants eating nothing but corn and wild vegetables. Korea was plunged into great misery and it would have been difficult for us not to have to participate. The initial wrongdoing had been in arresting us. Why did they do it? Did they think that with hostages they would be able to get more when the final settlement was reached? Did they hope to convert us to their way of thinking? We never found out. At any rate by March of 1953 the enthusiasm of the early days had long since disappeared. They had not expected three years of war with the situation becoming so uncertain for their country. They probably understood that the Chinese would certainly not leave as fast as they had come, and that it was not worth having escaped Japanese oppression to fall back into another servitude.

Surely all these thoughts modified their attitude towards us. Most of the time the general population showed us sympathy except for a few fanatics who on two or three occasions raised menacing fists at us. The country folk were curious, but polite and affable. At times a woman would slip an egg into Father Coyos' hand. One day a fisherman placed his basket of fish in front of us, then took off running. Another who was walking ahead of Father Coyos dropped half a package of tobacco on the road.

Among the military chiefs, other than the "Tiger" whose mind was unbalanced and two or three of his assistants, they had done what they could but there were so many material difficulties and lack of understanding. In the later camps the relations between officers and our men had become cordial and this feeling increased towards the end. One commander even used to have friendly discussions with us. He was from Seoul where he studied with the Communists and he recalled having seen Father Coyos at the Seoul University. He spoke like a connoisseur of French literature which he had read in Japanese translations, and recited with emotion the poems of Verlaine. "I like him best of all," he told us, "because there are between his ideas and the Korean soul several points of contact." In listening to him we were seized with emotion. It seemed to us that he had searched at random in his readings and in political discussions to find an ideal and a rule of life, and because he believed that he had found it in Communism, he gave himself up to it completely. If only this searching youth could find the real Christ would he not be more captivated by Him than by Stalin.

Another commander came now and then to sit at our table. He was particularly good to Sister Madeleine for whom he peeled apples and whose hands he filled with biscuits. "I have known you for a long time," he said. "I came to the seminary with my battalion in July of 1950 and I went into your house to do some questioning. I have often thought about you, asking myself what the life of a blind person in camp could be like." He added, "We noticed at

men and women. The nuns departed singing the "Te Deum". Miss Martel had been with them since 1949. In spite of all the attempts made by the Consul we never did find out what had happened to her. Each time we changed locations her mother, a really valiant woman who maintained her courage right up to the end, would look anxiously at all the faces she met in the hope that she would see that of her daughter. On the 17th the officer to whom she put the question answered, "The necessary inquiries cannot be made now as they would delay your departure, but they will be made and when Miss Martel is liberated she will rejoin you in France." "Eight days ago" replied the grief stricken mother, "one of your colonels promised me that she was already liberated. Whom should I believe?" Her interlocutor looked disconcerted and said nothing.

We had to listen to one last speech: "In your country be agents of peace, of that peace which we are seeking for the whole world. We love France. It is a country of beauty and artists. But why the war in Indo-China? Why out of the 450 million francs in the last French budget was 110 million set aside to continue this fight? Oh, among your people spread thoughts of peace." After that supreme injunction there was nothing left to do but to leave, and that is exactly what we did.

CHAPTER XII

Pyongyang to the Carmel d'Aire
April 17 - May 9, 1953

That night we began our trip to France in the same truck that had brought us to Pyongyang. Since the Koreans felt that some special consideration was required for the Consul and Madame Martel they, and Madame Martel's daughter Marguerite, were given an automobile. A delegate from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a colonel, a doctor, and two Russians accompanied us on the truck. This high society did not prevent the nocturnal frost, nor the fantastic bumps, nor the crowding, since several civilians took advantage of this God-sent opportunity for a ride.

At about one in the morning we reached Shinueju, a border town. We were led to the best hotel in town where comfortable rooms were awaiting us. After a few hours of rest and a hearty breakfast, the truck carried us to the customs house. The custom officers were very strict and we were searched carefully. To our sorrow we had to give up our Imitation of Christ which had been our sole source of comfort and spiritual reading in camp and had become practically a relic for us. So as not to turn it over to them, we tore it up as well as all the writings in our possession. Notes, reminders, poems, hymns, souvenirs of the feast days and, with infinite regret, two letters from Mother Therese to her family; all were destroyed.

The truck took us over the border bridge. It was a painful moment. The river was wide and we had a moment to send a fervent prayer to the two dear graves in Hachang-Ri. We begged our beloved Mothers to bless each of our little Korean Sisters. A terrible jolt lifted us then dropped us heavily.

Headquarters that the Sisters never made any claims; that struck us more than anything else, especially when we knew that one of them was blind."

On the 10th of April we were informed that important persons were to arrive in the afternoon. Around four o'clock a truck stopped in the yard. It was loaded with packages among which we recognized the French Consul's and Madame Martel's suitcases. They were the important persons and it was a great happiness to meet them again. They had been only a short distance from us in an underground shelter similar to ours but on the other side of the mountain.

The 15th of April we were solemnly told that, the French Government having asked through Soviet intermediaries for the liberation of its subjects, and the "People's Democracy of North Korea " having given this request its due consideration, it had been decided to return us to our homeland by the Transsiberian Railroad.

Our first reaction was general consternation. Mr. Perruche wanted to return to the Consulate; Madame Martel wanted to find out what had become of her other daughter and her house; while we three Carmelites and Sister Euginie had only one desire - to return to our convents in Seoul. At the thought of the thousand of miles which were to separate us from all we longed for, we were heartbroken and wept. Still the liberation for which we had waited so long deserved to be welcomed even if our feelings were not all pure joy. Once more we had to abandon ourselves to the will of God, trusting in His wisdom and love.

Several small events occurred rapidly. That night we were taken by trucks to a public bathhouse. We were given another set of clothes; the dresses could have been longer and the coats weighed us down. Each one tried to find shoes that fitted from the assortment given us. We were unrecognizable and the teasing came from all sides.

The next day the soldiers placed tea pots and plates filled with cakes and apples on the dining room tables which had been set up in the yard. We were asked to sit down and look happy and then we were photographed as if we were enjoying ourselves at a picnic.

The photographers were accompanied by four journalists, two Koreans and two Russians who questioned us for the last time. The interrogation was in English and Mr. Perruche was the principle target. One must have a great deal of prudence and an alert mind to have ready answers to so many questions. This lasted for more than an hour, and when it was over the journalists seemed satisfied. "Now may I ask you a question?" said Mr. Perruche. "Certainly," replied a journalist. "Could you tell me why, in spite of all international law, we diplomats were interned for nearly three years, and why you severed relations with our governments and our families?" The Russians as well as the Koreans had never expected such a direct blow. Disconcerted, they murmured, "We are only journalists. We cannot judge either the acts of our government or their consequences." They hurriedly adjourned the meeting so as to end their embarrassment.

Madame Martel made one last try on April 17th to obtain information concerning her other daughter, a Benedictine nun from Wonsan. In Wonsan there were two abbeys, one of monks and one of nuns. During their occupation the Russians had contented themselves with annoying the religious several times. After their departure the Koreans had gone further and had sent away the native monks and nuns and arrested the Europeans, altogether about forty

It was our farewell to Korea and something seemed to break in the very bottom of our hearts.

At Antong there were more customs; the men in one room, the women in another. Sister Eugenie had to undo her chignon to show that she was concealing nothing. Mr. Perruche struggled to get them to give him back his 260 photos which they wanted to confiscate. We remade our bundles and it was again the best hotel in the city that received us. It continued that way until we reached Paris. The colonel and the Korean doctor had said goodbye in Shinueju, but the two Russians remained and we also had as a convoy two delegates from the Peking Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The rooms in the hotel were spacious with a private bathroom and soft beds. The tea pots were filled every two hours and we were asked what kind of tea we preferred. They wanted to bring one meal up to our room, but we preferred going down into the dining room. A bus came to take us to the station where we boarded a train. A special car with beds and a sightseeing car which was used for tourists were attached to the train for our private use.

The same luxury surrounded us in Mukden where we stopped for two days. We were asked if we wanted to make a tour of the city by car. Some of our group accepted, mostly because they wanted to go shopping. Father Coyos and the Consul took care of our little shopping errands for us. With perfect taste they selected a travelling bag, blouses, black cloth for our veils so that we could be properly dressed when we arrived in Moscow, and a nice pair of black eyeglasses for Sister Madeleine. The prices were exhorbitant. The cotton blouses with rayon threads cost 250,000 Chinese dollars each and the travelling bag of canvas with a zipper that lasted no longer than 24 hours cost 175,000 dollars.

At Mr. Perruche's request the last meal taken in Mukden was completely Chinese. The tables were set for four persons and all the dishes were placed in the center. The menu consisted of rotten eggs, as we call them in France, jellied fish, tiny crabs, spinach soup with noodles, and chicken. Each ate with his own spoon from the dishes as he wished. There was plenty and it was tasty. The waitress watched, amused, as these Europeans did honor to her native foods.

In Manchuria we found ourselves in the company of a Mongol family. The mother was dressed in a long green robe cut by a large blue waist band and fine boots. Certainly the little Mongols had never used a fork. They pushed the pieces of meat from the platter onto their plates, and from the plate to the table, after which their little fingers carried them into their mouths.

This completed our journey through Manchuria. We were now to take the Transsiberian Railroad. A final bit of attention: Sister Madeleine was feeling slightly tired one evening and did not appear in the dining hall. The news spread immediately to the custom offices and a nurse with two long pigtails hanging over her shoulders soon appeared to look at her tongue and take her temperature. We had certainly come a long way since the Death March.

The two Russians and the Peking envoys now left us, and for the rest of our trip we were alone. No doubt Moscow had already given all necessary instructions to the Transsiberian Railroad personnel.

It was about seven in the evening on April 23rd when we settled down in the first class (Peoples') car. Ours was particularly comfortable. Each compartment had two bunks and one chair, and there was plenty of room to receive visitors. The dressing room was adjoining.

The train travelled at a moderate rate of speed, barely 50 miles an hour. The countryside was without variety all the way to Moscow: vast frozen wastes; birch and pine forests; agricultural areas worked over by tractors. We saw the "is-bas", tiny houses made with tree trunks caulked with mud. The interiors must be warm because geraniums were blooming behind the double windows. For several hours we went along the Baikal Lake which was still frozen. In the distance we sometimes saw domes, ancient abandoned abbeys, and cemeteries with crosses over the graves. In the big stations of Giza, Irkoust and Omsk, the half hour stop gave us time to get off and walk on the platform where women were selling bottles of milk to the travellers. We soon remarked that in the dining car there were few customers other than the French delegation, which is what we were called. Most of the other passengers carried their own food which they replenished either in the stations or in the small stores on the train. These latter were patronized by the countryfolk and villagers who climbed on board to make their purchases when the train stopped.

Along the railroad women were doing the work which is normally done by men in western countries. Everywhere from the first station in China to Moscow we saw Stalin's figure represented either in bust form or in paintings.

On the train a noisy radio which played continuously gave us all headaches. The railroad personnel had better manners, however. They served us tea at 10 A. M. and at 5 P. M.. Each time Sister Madeleine wanted to walk alone, an employee rushed to her aid speaking a language she did not understand. If she thanked him with a smile the talking would start all over again. Smart and coquettish waitresses gave us a friendly welcome when we went to the dining car and the "maitre d'hotel" came nightly to settle the details of the next day's menu.

The other passengers looked curiously at the thirteen of us passing by three times a day all in the same type of clothing. Madame Hoang refused to eat with us. She did not leave her bed and nourished herself on beer and biscuits, lovingly brought to her by Man-Saing after each meal. The roles were indeed reversed for normally the mother would be caring in this manner for her child. Poor little one! He had become presentable after Mr. Perruche had given him lessons on how to fix his tie and had bought a comb for him so that at least he would not look like a little heron. Sister Eugenie and Sister Henriette spent their time playing cards with him. This was the child's only distraction during the journey.

The train rolled on. At the various stops when we got off to stretch our legs by walking on the station platform, it seemed as if we were still swaying monotonously. We crossed the Volga and the Ural mountains during the night and finally on April 30th we were told that the train was approaching Moscow and we would be there by eleven that morning.

At the last meal on the train there was a charming surprise. The men found at each of their places a package of cigarettes, and the women chocolate bonbons which were delicious. It was a gift from the Consul. We Carmelites ate one bonbon, then with one accord, decided to keep the others for our first recreation at the Carmel d'Aire. By doing this we would also have the delight of hearing, "Mr. Perruche --- Russian bonbons" when the Turn Sister read the list of the day's alms to the Community.

The Transsiberian train stopped at last. We were in Moscow! On the platform a warm welcome awaited us. Everybody from the French Embassy was there. Indeed to us it was as though France were receiving us and it was an unforgettable moment. We tried to overcome our emotion as our stay in Moscow

was limited. At four that same afternoon a special plane was to take us to Paris, but in the meantime we were going to the Embassy. We were driven down the main avenues of the city followed by several beautiful limousines, among them that of the ambassador, while members of the Embassy staff explained the sights. Here was the Kremlin and Red Square with the black marble mausoleums of Lenin and Stalin; there the magnificent church of St. Basil, now a museum; and finally the Embassy over which the French tricolor was flying--a joy to see.

After dinner a telegram from Mr. Bideault, the French Foreign Minister was read to us and we were all overcome with emotion. Mr. Perruche also was too deeply moved to say much. Time was short and we were hastily taken to the airport only to discover that it was not possible to take off as one of the plane's motors was not working. We were told to return to Moscow and wait until we received word by phone that the plane was ready. So back we had to go. The ambassador took us to the Hotel Savoy, one of the nicest in the city, and there we waited for the call.

The next day was the 1st of May and we were not allowed to leave the hotel until evening, but from our windows we could see thousands of people passing, holding long poles with flowers at the end and stopping the march at times to dance. Later we were told about the official ceremonies that had taken place that day. There had been a military parade and also a performance by the Gymnastic Society. Wearing colored uniforms they had formed shapes of live flowers while parading to the tempo of a band of 500 instruments, and as they passed the venerated tombs they bowed with respect.

Among the flags of the foreign delegations North Korea's was there. At the hotel the Brazilian delegation made a great deal of noise. Men and women drank flaming toasts until they had emptied all their bottles, after which they clicked their glasses with nothing but water in them. In the evening Moscow looked like a fairyland with its brilliant lights and multicolored searchlights which were sweeping the sky.

Our departure was set for nine o'clock on Saturday morning. The plane took off but forty minutes later the motor began acting up and the pilot finally decided it was best to return. Churchill had given this plane to General de Gaulle. It was an English make and the parts were unobtainable locally so there was no hope of prompt repairs.

What were they going to do with us? Since it was forbidden to cross Poland by train they abandoned the idea of sending us by rail as we would have had to go via Stockholm. Saturday passed with many messages being transmitted between Paris and Moscow and ended with a happy solution. A Russian plane would take us to Berlin and from there a French plane would take us to Paris.

All these unforseen incidents prevented us from assisting at the Mass celebrated by an Assumptionist Father who was permitted by the Russians to live in Moscow so as to minister to the spiritual needs of the Catholics in the Diplomatic Corps. The Reverend Father spoke French well and had been at the station to welcome us. Since no Catholic parish was permitted he had to say Mass in private homes or at the embassies. Thus in Moscow, the Red capital, the Host and chalice are elevated toward Heaven daily in fervent supplication and who can doubt that by this prayer the seeds of a new resurrection are being sown.

At the time of our visit seventy orthodox churches had been reopened to worshippers. During their services the crowds overflowed onto the sidewalks,

and for the Easter ceremony which starts at midnight and ends at four in the morning, the seats would be filled by five in the afternoon. The choirs that accompanied each service sang with indescribable beauty. The slavic soul is deeply religious and the new regime had not yet snuffed out the aspirations of these thousands of worshippers.

Sunday the 3rd of May we took our places in the comfortable seats of the Russian plane, and after an eleven hour flight arrived in the Russian zone of Berlin at three o'clock. A Frenchman welcomed us and led us to a bus in which we crossed the city. We saw the Spree rolling along through the countryside. We passed public gardens, ruins and demolitions, and then other sections where reconstruction was well under way. At the Embassy we again rejoiced to see the tricolor floating briskly in the springlike breeze and we were greeted with as warm a welcome as that which had awaited us in Moscow.

Many members of the French colony were there to greet us with fraternal affection. We were escorted to a hotel where we found a magnificent dinner awaiting us on a table lavishly decorated with flowers. "Sister, would you like some lemonade or champagne?" "Do not let the asparagus make you forget the chicken...." "Wouldn't you like oranges now? Oh well, take them along with you," and with that they filled our pockets. Our dearest relations and friends could not have done more for us. Deep indeed and lasting, are the ties of one's native land.

Two hours later the newspapermen were still taking photographs. "Leave them alone. You are cruel," an elderly lady told them while a gentleman saluted Sister Madeleine and gallantly offered her his arm to lead her to the plane.

It was waiting for us, that dear bird from France. Being a military plane it was a bit uncomfortable, but that did not bother us in the least; for us the tricolor covering most of it stood out above all. We sat down on the steel benches. This was to be our last flight. At seven in the evening we were startled by the words; "We are over France". A moment of deep silence followed as each became absorbed in thought. Then Mr. Perruche exclaimed happily; "Let us not forget the champagne!" and he produced the bottles he had been given for this special moment.

Half past eight - - the lights of Paris! As the plane descended glistening in the lights of the airport, the crowd rushed forward in disorder. We did not know which way to turn. We were greeted and embraced on all sides. Sister Henriette's family were there as was the Carmelite Father Provincial, while tertiaries with bouquets represented the Third Order. A representative from the government was there to receive the Consul who at long last rejoined his family and we had the pleasure of meeting Madame Perruche and their children.

The Reverend Father Provincial took Sister Madeleine by the arm and tried to cut a path through the crowd with the reporters following us right up to the car that was to take us to the Carmel in Montmatre. We could scarcely believe that in a few minutes we would be back in Carmel again after all these months of hardship and wanderings. It was late when we arrived and the Community was at Matins but the Prioress and Subprioress were waiting to open the door to us and greet us with sisterly love. As we crossed the threshold of the enclosure door the Reverend Father Provincial said smiling; "I dispence you from keeping the Great Silence tonight," then added, "If I did not give

you this permission I think you would talk anyway!"

What a warmth of welcome awaited us. There were messages from our own Carmel d'Aire and Mother Therese's Carmel in Belgium and best of all to our joyful surprise, a few lines from our little Korean Sisters. They were all safe.

The black veil of uncertainty and anguish was at last lifted and our souls were flooded with unbelievable light and happiness as we read their letter. During the Communist occupation of Seoul they had found refuge with friends in Pusan, a big seaport in South Korea. Back now in Seoul they wrote that our Carmel was still standing though greatly damaged and that not only were they all together again but that they even had three new postulants whom we did not know and others were awaiting admission. With Sister Elizabeth as superior our courageous and faithful little Korean Sisters were continuing their mission of love and prayer in their poor ravaged country. Then as with tears of gratitude we thanked God for their safety, deep in our hearts we seemed to hear the tender reproach of the Master; "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

To our delight we found waiting in our cells packages from the Carmel d'Aire containing religious habits. Loving hands had prepared everything and not a pin was missing. What a joy to be able to wear again the beloved habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel! Tears flowed anew.

But the most blessed joy of all came the next morning when after thirty three months of Eucharistic fast we could once again hear Mass and receive holy Communion. To have found the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacred Host again in Moscow would have been a sweet consolation, but perhaps it was an even greater one to receive the Bread of Life when we were hidden once more in the solitude of Carmel.

With great reluctance we left our Carmel the next day at the request of the French government and the insistence of our Reverend Father Provincial, to attend a special ceremony in the golden Salons of the "Quai d'Orsay". There we met our former companions. Father Coyos had been given a cassock. Sister Eugenie and we three Carmelites had our habits on, but the Consul had not yet changed his clothing and it was on these relics of our life in camp that the Cross of the Legion of Honor was pinned a few moments later. This award made everyone happy for he certainly had showed, as the presentation speech mentioned, "a high concept of his duty".

This was our last meeting with those with whom we had shared so much suffering but even as we shared the happiness of freedom in this reunion, our hearts went back in sorrow to the unknown graves of our beloved dead. Nor did we forget our other friends in the joy of our homecoming. We had heard in Moscow that the seven American civilians interned with us had also been liberated and were now on their way to freedom. But the others, the eleven Turks and seven white Russians, what had become of them? As we write these lines we still do not know, but our happiness will be complete only with the certainty of their liberation. (See note p.72.)

At the Bon Secours hospital we were given a thorough physical examination. The long months of imprisonment had taken their toll of our health and we were told that we needed rest and good nourishment. Once again our thoughts went back to those who had succumbed from hunger, cold and exhaustion and we thanked God Who in His mercy had spared us.

Kind as were our sisters of the Montmatre Carmel, we were anxious to re-

turn to our own Carmel d'Aire. We left Paris by train and went via Dax where Sister Henriette had the great joy of once again embracing her 89 year old mother who had endured these months of sorrowful anxiety with admirable courage, and now could not believe her happiness.

It was Saturday, May 9th when we reached Aire. The little city had just finished celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of its Carmel. We had been expected to arrive on the last day of the solemn Triduum commemorating the occasion. This delay, however, in no way lessened the ardor of the friends of our Carmel or the warmth of their welcome.

The car which brought the Carmelites from the station was followed by four others filled with friends and family. The convoy stopped in front of the mayor's house where children offered us bouquets of flowers. An official reception took place in the city hall, the same one where 100 years earlier Bishop Lanneluc had received the mothers who had founded the Carmel. In an eloquent yet simple speech one of the adjutants welcomed us in the name of the mayor who could not attend because of other important business. Frequent applause interrupted the speaker. This moving reception bore no resemblance to an official ceremony, but had rather the spirit of a family gathering to honor Carmel.

To the sound of the bells from the Cathedral and the Carmel our friends convoyed us to the monastery and crowded into the Chapel. On our knees before the altar where we each had received the habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we three listened to the welcoming words of the chaplain, becoming choked with emotion when he invoked the invisible presence of those humble representatives of God and Carmel who had fallen on the Death March. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament followed at which the students of the minor seminary sang beautifully. Indeed their "Magnificat" expressed perfectly the sentiments of our souls.

The clergy escorted us to the enclosure door which opened wide to receive us. It closed behind us, then all the veils were raised, arms were extended, and unable to speak, we wept. Better than words those tears of joy to our Blessed Lord of our profound gratitude.

Austere life in camp; return to our dear religious cradle to rest in the silence and peace of the cloister! All is grace; all is a message of love! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee!

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS!

CHAPTER XIII

The Return to Seoul
Dec. 4, 1953 - Jan. 29, 1954

Little by little we found out what had happened to our little Korean Sisters since our separation. For several days they had been able to remain in the monastery hoping and praying that we would return. They were frequently questioned and the buildings were again searched several times, but they were

not subjected to any violence whatsoever. The sounds of torture and cries of suffering we had heard on that terrible night of July 17th had indeed been a tragic farce and once more a cry of gratitude rose to Heaven from our hearts. Finally our little Sisters had been told to leave the monastery and they had spent the next two months in hiding with their friends and families. As with us their greatest anguish had been their uncertainty as to our fate. Despite their many inquiries no one could tell them. When the United Nations troops liberated Seoul two months later they returned with joy to their beloved cloister only to find it in shambles. The Communists had used it as one of their headquarters and it was literally a pigpen. Piles of garbage here and there; torn habits and vestments, crumpled holy pictures, broken crucifixes, all piled up in a room. Everything in the drawers and boxes had been thrown on the floor and trampled upon. In one room, however, they were struck to find a neat pile of religious articles hidden behind some clothes and towels. Later they found out that there had been a fallen away Catholic among the soldiers and he had done his best to preserve the religious things from desecration.

Their stay in the monastery was not long. As the fighting continued around Seoul they were finally persuaded to go south to Pusan where they remained until the end of the war. There they had at first stayed with the Maryknoll Sisters until they found a house of their own where they did their best to live their Carmelite life and earn their own living.

In October of 1953 they were finally able to return to Seoul. By then they knew of our safe return to France and the death of our Mothers and they rejoiced at our safety and wept bitterly for their loss. They worked hard to restore their monastery which had been still further damaged and ransacked. After much repair work had been done they were at last able to resume their cloistered life and the Bishop of Seoul came on December 8th to bless the monastery and to re-establish canonical enclosure.

In the meantime we in France had not forgotten our beloved little Carmel in Seoul. Once a missionary always a missionary, so on December 4th of that same year Sister Henriette and Sister Madeleine sailed once more for the Orient. As the ship left the dock we recited a fervent "Ave Maris Stella" begging Our Lady's protection on the voyage.

There were several priests and religious on board. One day a Franciscan Father from the province of Bordeaux said to Sister Madeleine, "Are you returning to Korea? Surely you are not going to attempt a second adventure?" "And you, Father, where are you going?" "After thirty years in China, I found it impossible to get reaccustomed to ordinary living. I am going to Japan so that if there is an open door I may perhaps be able to return to my mission." "And so, Father, you will try your second adventure?" And both laughed heartily.

How many times during the long crossing did we not hear that sentence, "I have spent twenty, thirty years in China, and I regret not being able to go back. It was such a beautiful mission."

On Sunday, January 3rd, Japan was sighted. We were seized with emotion at the thought that we would be arriving in a few hours. Japan is so close to Korea! A loudspeaker called the passengers' attention to snowcapped Fujiyama and we were still on the bridge when we were told that two outsisters from the Tokyo Carmel and a Foreign Mission Father were waiting for us in our cabin. A Jesuit father was also there to help carry our packages. With all

these guardian angels the debarcation was effected quickly and without difficulty. We found ourselves on the Yokohama docks and two minutes later were in an automobile. We went through the Customs quickly and in no time were on our way to the Tokyo Carmel, an hour's drive away.

When we arrived the door was opened immediately and we found ourselves in the arms of the Mothers and Sisters who knew not how to tell us of their affection and happiness. During our three week stay there we were showered with every imaginable kindness.

We were called to the speakroom on January 23rd for final instructions concerning the last lap of our journey. The plane would take off on Wednesday, the 27th, at 9 A.M. and would land in Pusan at about 2 P.M.. We were given our tickets; all was in order.

Returning to our cells we could scarcely realize that our return to Korea was so close. Soon we would be in Seoul with our little Korean Sisters. Their impatience was increasing as the time for our reunion approached. The repairs had been completed, they wrote, and the walls restored. All was in readiness for our arrival. To understand the state of their souls and ours, it would be necessary to have known the 42 months of suffering which this painful separation had caused us, and to have known also our tenacious hope which nothing could weaken. The memory of all this stirred us deeply and as the hour for our reunion drew closer, a hymn of gratitude rose from our overflowing hearts.

On the 25th of January to our dismay it was snowing, snowing really hard. All day and all night the snowflakes fell, covering the city with a thick, white blanket. In the courtyard of our Carmel the snow was eighteen inches deep. For years Tokyo had not seen so much snow. The countryside looked like a fairyland, but for us there was but one important question: would the plane take off? Maybe God wanted to prolong our wait. Once more we had to close our eyes and resign ourselves to His will.

The white downy snowflakes fell less and less heavily and finally they stopped altogether and the sun shone. It shone also in our hearts. News was received that the plane was to leave at noon instead of at nine on the 27th. Fine. But the airport was far away. Would we be able to get there? The newspapers said that there had been fifty accidents on Sunday alone.

On January 27th we left by bus for the airport. It was a good hour to the airfield and en route we did a little skidding which did not seem to disturb the driver at all. His only comment was, "This is very funny."

At the airport a porter placed our packages in a corridor and there we remained quite alone in the crowd and not knowing which way to turn. Sister Henriette sat Sister Madeleine down on a chair and went to look for someone who could speak French. "Anybody speak French?" she asked on all sides. After several fruitless attempts she heard a welcome "Oui." from one of the employees who then took care of all the necessary formalities.

Suddenly a voice behind us said, "Father Kennedy." If lightning had struck us we would have been less surprised, but it was a happy surprise. Father Kennedy is the American military chaplain who from 1945 to 1948 had been our great benefactor and who had interested the soldiers in helping us. Father was delighted at our surprise. Unfortunately as Father knew no French or Korean and we no English our conversation was short. We managed to exchange a few words then Father could talk no more but he acted. Sitting us down on a sofa, he took care of the customs than he disappeared for a moment

and returned with a large package. It was two big boxes of chocolates. Gathering together the few words of English that we remembered we told him of our gratitude and that we would keep these delicacies for our Sisters in Seoul. Then as the plane's departure was further delayed Father disappeared again and returned with coffee and sandwiches for us. When the snow stopped completely we boarded the plane where our new guardian angel had already marked our places. After a discreet but very affectionate blessing Father got off while the two birds, well comforted by this kindness, flew towards the promised land. We may know one day how Father Kennedy ever happened to be there at that particular moment to pull us out of our difficulties, but in the meantime a new song of thanksgiving went up from our hearts to our Father in Heaven.

The hours passed and around six o'clock we felt the disagreeable sensation of the descent -- Pusan! It was with much emotion that we felt the plane touch Korean soil. Bishop Carroll was there with a Sister of St. Paul and some other friends. We were presented with flowers; tears flowed. There was a strong wind blowing for once more in Korea we found the Siberian north winds. The flowers, the icy wind: it was Korea which was welcoming us; sad, but full of hope.

We stayed at the Maryknoll Sisters' hospital where we received a most sisterly welcome. Ties of deep gratitude united us for their kindness to our little Sisters during their long stay in Pusan.

Bishop Carroll had already arranged our departure. We were to leave on Friday -- since the flight on Thursday had no more seats. The stopover was restful, and we had the joy of meeting three applicants requesting admission.

The 29th of January -- this was the great day and the sun shone very brightly. In the morning we had a visit from a Belgian gentleman, the director of a big orphanage in Seoul. He spoke to us of the misery in this poor country which one must have seen to comprehend. The American generosity was magnificent, but even this was powerless to assist all of the unfortunates.

After dinner Bishop Carroll arrived to take us to the airport: with what kindness he took care of everything! The wait was long as it was rare that a plane left on schedule. Finally we were off. The Bishop blessed us and we were on our way to Seoul. Was it a dream or reality?

An hour later the loudspeaker in the plane announced: "In ten minutes we will arrive at Yoido," which is one of the airfields near the capital. What deep emotions filled our hearts, but at the same time an inexpressible peace enveloped our whole being. While in the prison camps we had often sung sadly the air ; "Sky of Seoul, will I ever see you again?" and here it was welcoming us today.

The moment we appeared on the ramp we were squeezed and embraced. It was our dear Korean outsisters. They laughed and wept at the same time. That our children should be there was normal but we were amazed at the huge crowd. Korean priests, American military chaplains, the Sisters of St. Paul and many other Catholics were there. As we made our way from the plane they applauded while the mayor of the city gave us a bouquet of flowers through a small Korean girl who looked very cute in her silk dress. The commander of the American army saluted us and the Vicar General of Seoul, Father Thomas Lee, greeted us. We were disappointed at not seeing Bishop Ro who had always been so good to us, but discovered that he had not received our telegram and had left that morning to meet us in Pusan.

We were led toward an automobile beautifully decorated with flowers while the crowd intoned the chant of the Korean martyrs. This grave and pious chant commemorates the martyrs of 1839 and 1866 and is sung by Korean Catholics on all joyful occasions. To this glorious phalanx of martyrs our hearts added two more, our dear Mothers. We had never previously used the heroic title of martyrs when speaking of them for their offering had been so very simple. Nevertheless we felt that it was to them that our hymns and cheers were being sent on this day.

We got into an automobile covered with flowers. The priests and the sisters took their places in six other automobiles and we went in a slow procession from the airfield to the Cathedral where all the bells were ringing when the automobiles arrived. We entered the Cathedral which was fully illuminated and which had suffered only slightly from the bombings. The "Te Deum," that hymn of praise and gratitude, well expressed the feelings that filled our hearts.

After Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament we paid a brief visit to the convent of St. Paul which in 1939 had taken us in with such kindness in the early days of the foundation. We did not want to prolong this visit as we were anxious to reach our blessed little Carmel so quickly left. Soon we reached St. Benedict's, our parish church, whose bells were pealing joyously. Hundreds of people with candles in their hands were lining the road waiting for us. The whole route up to Carmel was illuminated!

As soon as we reached the outsisters' yard we heard the bell of our Carmel with its frail and joyful tune. The throng crowded into the Chapel, which was much too small for all, and overflowed into the yard from where they could receive the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament through the open doors. A choir of students from the seminary sang and once more the "Te Deum" rose from our hearts to God.

Finally, the door to the cloister was opened and we were in the arms of our children in religion who tried their utmost to master their emotion in order to sing the "Magnificat." Through an arch of flowers we were led to the recreation room and we knew that we were home at last. There we felt the living presence of our two Mothers of whom we spoke before anything else. We talked for hours, but no one noticed the time, and it was after midnight when we went to bed.

Our cells had been prepared for us lovingly. In the familiar silence and calm of the cloister, we were wrapped in a deep peace, and the three and a half years of exile seemed to disappear. By a delicate touch of our heavenly Mother, our first Mass was that which is said by special permission every Saturday in Carmel all over the world...the Mass of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. She had indeed given us a sign of her protection.


ARMEL